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In reply please quote:

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MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2003

Figures released today by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, show that NSW experienced substantial decreases in eight of the 16 major categories of offence between 2002 and 2003. \

Over the 24 months to December 2003, the recorded rate of:

- Robbery without a weapon fell 4.6 per cent
- Robbery with a weapon other than a firearm fell 19.3 per cent
- Break and enter dwelling fell 11.4 per cent
- Break and enter non-dwelling fell 12.8 per cent
- Motor vehicle theft fell 17.3 per cent
- Steal from a motor vehicle fell 14.7 per cent
- Steal from the person fell 6.8 per cent
- Fraud fell 15.2 per cent

The remaining eight major categories of crime (murder, assault, robbery with a firearm, sexual assault, indecent assault, steal from a retail store, steal from a dwelling and malicious damage to property) showed no significant upward or downward trend.

Despite the widely reported spate of shooting incidents in Sydney toward the end of last year, there has been no increase in shooting incidents, either across NSW as a whole or in the two statistical subdivisions that have the highest proportion of such incidents (Fairfield-Liverpool and Canterbury-Bankstown).

The overall decline in recorded crime was much more pronounced in the Sydney statistical division than it was in rural and regional NSW. With just a few exceptions¹, recorded crime in each of the 14 statistical subdivisions in Sydney is either stable or down. However, while there were falls in crime in eight of the 11 rural or regional statistical divisions, six of them² also experienced a growth in at least one category of crime.

According to the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, the decline in crime owes much to the national heroin shortage, which began around Christmas 2000. This shortage greatly increased the cost of heroin and greatly reduced its purity.

“2001 marks the turning point for many categories of property crime, not just in NSW but in other States as well. Our research indicates that many offenders who used to commit crime to pay for their heroin have now either given up using heroin or are consuming far less of it than they were”, he said.

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- ¹ The statistical subdivisions in Sydney showing an increase in crime were the Eastern Suburbs (sexual assault up 12.7%), Outer South Western Sydney (steal from a dwelling up 8.1%), Outer Western Sydney (malicious damage to property up 6.5%), Central Northern Sydney (sexual assault up 44.2%) and Gosford Wyong (sexual assault up 36.0%). Note that the changes in sexual assault in these last two regions involve very small numbers of offences.
- ² The rural or regional statistical divisions showing an increase in crime were Richmond Tweed (steal from a retail store up 10.2 per cent), Mid-North Coast (motor vehicle theft up 17.5%; steal from a dwelling up 9.7%), Northern (malicious damage to property up 6.1 per cent), Central West (malicious damage to property up 5.8 %), South Eastern (motor vehicle theft up 25.2 per cent; steal from a motor vehicle up 12.6%, malicious damage up 9.5%) and Murrumbidgee (steal from a retail store up 18.0%).