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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **ABS Crime and Safety Survey - 1998 (BCSR Commentary)**

The latest national crime survey confirms police crime data in showing a significant increase in the rate of break and enter across Australia between 1993 and 1998.

In 1993 one in 23 Australian households experienced a break and enter in the preceding 12 months. By 1998 one in 20 Australian households had experienced a break and enter in the preceding 12 months, an increase of 14 per cent.

The 1998 survey revealed some large differences between States in the risk of break and enter. Western Australia had the highest rate of break and enter, with one in 13 households broken into in the preceding 12 months.

However the Northern Territory and the ACT also had high rates of break and enter, with one in 16 households in the Northern Territory having been broken into in the past 12 months and one in 17 having been broken into over the same period.

The ABS surveys figures once again highlight the fact that no one Australian State or Territory has the highest rate of all offences.

The risk of motor vehicle theft is highest in Western Australia, the risk of robbery is highest in the Northern Territory and the risk of assault is highest in the ACT.

There is broad consensus among Australians in the crime problems they perceive to exist in their neighbourhood.

Unsurprisingly, the problem of most concerns to Australian is break and enter. Australia-wide, 44 per cent of Australia's population aged 15 and over regard this as a problem in their neighbourhood.

Somewhat surprisingly, however, the second biggest perceived problem is dangerous/noisy driving. Australia-wide, 34 per cent are concerned about this problem.

There are some interesting differences between States and Territories, however, in the other problems which are of concern.

NSW residents are more concerned about louts/youth gangs in their neighbourhood than residents of any other State. Northern Territorians are more than twice as likely to see drunkenness as a neighbourhood problem than other Australian residents.

The ABS survey, for the first time, also provides information on what puts households at risk of break and enter.

One person and single-parent households or those which are next to laneways or have a large amount of traffic in their street are more at risk than other types of household. So too are households in areas where more than 10 per cent of the population are unemployed or where 9 per cent or more of the population are 15-24 year old males.

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Perhaps the most surprising finding to come out of the survey, however, is the extent to which a small group of household and people account for a large amount of crime.

Forty-five per cent of victims of assault experienced more than one assault in the preceding 12 months. They accounted for 78 per cent of all assaults in that period.

Twenty-three of robbery victims experienced more than one robbery in the preceding 12 months. They accounted for 48 per cent of all robberies during that period.

Twenty-seven per cent of sexual assault victims experienced more than one sexual assault in the preceding 12 months. They accounted for 54 per cent of all sexual assaults recorded during that period.

Commenting on the figures, the Director of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, said that they show the increase in break and enter revealed in national police data is not just an artefact of increased willingness to report crime.

‘The ABS survey also provides with us with fresh insights into the pattern of household and personal victimisation in Australia.’

‘We now have a much clearer picture of the households most of risk of break and enter. This should help householders make more informed decisions about whether to invest in security. It should also help police allocate their surveillance resources more efficiently.’

‘The findings on repeat victimisation highlight the importance of concentrating crime prevention resources on people who experience more than one type of crime over a 12 month period.’

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