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In reply please quote:

MEDIA RELEASE

ABS National Recorded Crime Statistics - 1996 (BCSR Commentary)

The 1996 National Crime Statistics Report released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that no one State or Territory has the highest rate of all crime.

NSW has the highest recorded rate of unarmed robbery, kidnapping/abduction and driving causing death but the highest recorded rates of assault and sexual assault are found in the Northern Territory while the highest rates of armed robbery, housebreaking and vehicle theft are to be found in Western Australia.

It should be noted that the ABS has substantially revised its 1995 estimate of the recorded rate of armed robbery in New South Wales.

The 1995 estimate indicated that NSW had a recorded armed robbery rate of 62.32/100,000 of population. The revision shows that the recorded rate of armed robbery in NSW in 1995 should have been 39.40/100,000 of population, about 37 per cent lower.

The ABS crime report confirms figures released by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research earlier this year covering the same period showing that NSW experienced increases in recorded crime between 1995 and 1996 in a large number of offence categories.

They also show, however, that all States and Territories experienced increases in several categories of recorded crime between 1995 and 1996.

Commenting on the figures the Director of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that they contained few surprises.

'The ABS report is right in observing that crimes recorded in New South Wales accounted for the major proportion of the overall increase in recorded crime in Australia over the period in question. But it is important to remember that the proportion of crime victims in New South Wales remains fairly comparable to its share of Australia's population'.

'NSW accounts for about 34 per cent of Australia's population and last year accounted for about 35 per cent of all crime victims, as counted by the ABS'.

'We knew from our own figures that NSW had experienced big increases in recorded crime in a number of categories of offence between 1995 and 1996. What remains unclear is how much of this increase is due to changes in crime recording or reporting practices and how much to a real increase in crime. The present ABS report does not resolve this issue'.

'We will have to wait for the household crime survey figures due for release by the ABS in November this year to get a clear answer to this question'.

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