



DR. DON WEATHERBURN
DIRECTOR

Release date: 21 January 2002

In reply please quote:

MEDIA RELEASE

Reducing juvenile crime: Conferencing versus court

Youth Justice Conferencing — in which juvenile offenders face their victims, make restitution for their offence and, in turn, receive support to help them stop offending — is an effective way of reducing the juvenile crime, the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) has found.

This finding emerged today from BOCSAR's evaluation of the effect of the Young Offenders Act, introduced by the State (NSW) Government in 1997.

To conduct the research BOCSAR followed up 590 juveniles referred to a Youth Justice Conference (YJC) and compared them with 9,346 juveniles dealt with by the Children's Court either before (5,516 juveniles) or after the introduction of YJCs (3,830 juveniles).

The study found that the proportion of juveniles who re-offended (i.e. were subsequently charged and brought before the Children's Court) was about 28 per cent lower for those who had been before a YJC than for those who had originally been dealt with by a Children's Court.

BOCSAR also found that the number of re-appearances in court was about 24 per cent lower among those who had originally been referred to YJC than among those who had originally been dealt with by a Children's Court.

The effectiveness of YJCs is not limited to property crime. In fact, although YJCs reduced the likelihood of re-offending for both property and violent crime, the beneficial effects of a YJC were larger for violent crime than for property crime.

Because Aboriginal juveniles are over-represented among those charged by police with criminal offences, BOCSAR made a special point of examining the effect of YJCs on Aboriginal offending. The results revealed that Aboriginal juveniles are also less likely to re-offend if brought before a YJC than if brought before a Children's Court.

Commenting on the research findings the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that they were very encouraging.

'Our earlier research showed that the vast majority of victims who participate in Youth Justice Conferences are satisfied both with the way Conferences are run and with outcome of the Conference. Now we know they are also an effective way of reducing juvenile crime', he said.

Further enquiries:

Dr Don Weatherburn: 02 9231 9190 (wk), 0419 494 408 (mob)