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In reply please quote:

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MEDIA RELEASE

Unemployment duration, schooling & property crime

Eliminating long-term unemployment and boosting school retention rates could bring about a 16 per cent reduction in the rate of home break-ins in NSW according to research conducted by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) and the Australian National University (ANU).

The joint study by BOCSAR and the ANU examined the influence of school retention and long-term unemployment among males aged 15-24 on trends in home-break-ins in NSW over the 10-year period between 1989 and 1999. Controls were introduced for a wide range of other factors likely to affect the rate of home break-in over this period (e.g. changes in heroin use).

The study showed that, the number of home break-ins in NSW would be 16 per cent (i.e. 11,000 offences) lower if long-term unemployment among young males aged 15-24 was eliminated and those in long-term unemployment had successfully completed high school (i.e. year 12).

Reducing long-term unemployment among 15-24 year old males without increasing the rate at which they complete high school produces only marginal crime-reduction benefits. However even if only 50 per cent of those currently in long-term unemployment had completed school, the reduction in home break-ins would still have been substantial (nearly 10%).

A targeted labour market program that created permanent jobs for young men aged 15-24 would be almost as effective – reducing the annual number of home break-ins by more than eight per cent (i.e. more than 6,000 offences).

Commenting on the study findings, the director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that they underscored the importance of education and employment policy to crime control.

‘Reducing crime is not just about apprehending and punishing offenders’, he said. ‘It’s also about getting young men through school and into a decent job’.

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