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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Sentencing high-range PCA drink-drivers in NSW

Drivers caught with a high range blood alcohol reading who have more than two previous drink-drive convictions are likely to end up in prison, according to new figures released today by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Prison sentences are imposed on nine per cent of those with one prior PCA conviction in the preceding five years, thirty-one per cent of those with two prior PCA convictions in the preceding five years and more than 67 per cent of those with three or more prior PCA convictions in the preceding five years.

The odds of a prison sentence double if one of those previous convictions involves a high range blood alcohol reading.

Overall, across NSW, only about 4.5 per cent of the 5,700 NSW drivers convicted each year of a high-range PCA offence in NSW are given a prison sentence. Most of these drivers, though, (i.e. more than 77%) have no prior conviction for a PCA offence in the preceding five years. For these drivers the risk of imprisonment is only 1.5 per cent.

Overall, the likelihood of a prison sentence for a high range PCA offence is higher for men than for women (4.4% versus 0.9%), higher for those aged 25-49, compared with those aged under 25 (5.2% versus 2.7%), and higher for those who have concurrent convictions for other offences, compared with those who do not (13% versus 1%).

The Bureau found that those who live in socially disadvantaged areas are more likely to receive a prison sentence than those who live in more socially advantaged areas (5.8% versus 2.4%), even after controlling for other relevant factors, such as the prior drink driving history of the offender.

According to the Bureau, however, this finding does not necessarily mean the courts are biased against drink-drive offenders from low socio-economic backgrounds. It may simply reflect the greater prevalence of drink-driving in low socio-economic status areas.

Commenting on the findings, the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that in the lead up to Christmas they provided a timely warning about the penalties courts impose on those who repeatedly drink and drive.

#### Further enquiries:

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