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In reply please quote:

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Long-term trends in trial court delay in NSW

Serious criminal cases are taking less time to dispose of in the NSW District Criminal Court and more time to dispose of in the NSW Local Court, according to a new report released today by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

The Bureau examined trends in trial court delay between 1988 and 2003. Where the accused is on bail, it now takes less than a third of the time (about 214 days) it took in 1988 (about 596 days) to dispose of a trial in the NSW District Court. Where the accused is in custody it now takes about half the time (about 169 days) it took in 1988 (more than 330 days).

In recent years, however, the reduction in delay between committal for trial and trial finalisation has been offset to some extent by a growth in the time it takes the Local Court to move cases from arrest to committal.

Between 1998 and 2003, the median delay between arrest and committal, for cases committed for trial, rose from 101 days to 182 days (an increase of more than 80 per cent).

Over the same period, the median delay between arrest and committal, for cases committed for sentence, rose from 72 days to 137 days (an increase of more than 90 per cent).

Commenting on the growth in delays for committal proceedings, the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that they were probably at least in part a reflection of the growing volume and complexity of matters now handled in the Local Court.

'The volume of complex criminal cases handled by the Local Court seems to have risen since the advent of centralised committal proceedings', he said.

'These more complex cases are often held up by delays in obtaining drug analyst certificates, transcripts of interviews or telephone interceptions, DNA and fingerprint test results and ballistic evidence'.

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