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MEDIA RELEASE

Key Trends in Crime and Justice 1999

Over the two years ending June 1999, sentenced prisoner receptions in New South Wales rose by 14 per cent, the sentenced prisoner population rose by 5 per cent and the remand prisoner population rose by 21 per cent.

While the proportions of convicted males and females sent to prison have been increasing over the last few years, the increase in the rate at which women are being sent to prison has been particularly marked.

In 1994/95, about 25 per cent of women convicted in the District Court were given a prison sentence. In 1998/99, about 53 per cent of women convicted in the District Court were given a prison sentence.

These findings emerged today from the annual summary of Key Trends in Crime and Justice published by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

The increase in the prison population coincides with a 5 per cent increase in the number of new cases registered in the Local Court (which hears the vast majority of criminal cases). In 1997/98 the Local Court registered 230,825 new cases. By 1998/99 this figure had risen to 242,222.

It also coincides with a growth in bail refusal rates. Between July 1994 and June 1999 the percentage of persons refused bail increased by about 24 per cent in the Local Court and by about 32 per cent in the District Court.

In absolute terms the percentage refused bail by the Local Courts now stands at 4.6 per cent (up from 3.7% in 1994/95) while the corresponding District Court figure now stands at 34 per cent (up from 25% in 1994/95).

Commenting on the prison trends the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn said that the growth in prisoner numbers was due to a number of factors; including increased arrest rates, increased rates of imprisonment and a growth in rates of bail refusal.

(please note: the key trends in crime in this report were released in April this year in the publication entitled NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1999)

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