



**DR. DON WEATHERBURN**  
DIRECTOR

In reply please quote:

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **An Evaluation of the NSW Apprehended Violence Order Scheme**

Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) are effective in stopping violence against women, according to a new study released today (October 15, 1997) by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

In the first study of its kind in Australia, the Bureau tracked a group of people who obtained AVOs. Interviews were conducted with them immediately after the order was granted. Follow-up interviews were then conducted one month, three months and six months after the order was granted.

The respondents' experiences of violence, intimidation and harassment prior to obtaining the AVO were compared with their experience of these problems one month, three months and six months after obtaining it.

The results of the study showed that, for the vast majority of respondents, there was a significant reduction in stalking, physical assaults, threats of physical assault, verbal abuse, nuisance phone calls and other forms of intimidation and harassment.

These benefits were still present six months after the AVO was granted and existed even amongst those who remained in contact with the person against whom the order was taken out (i.e. the defendant).

For a very small group of respondents, problems of violence, intimidation or harassment increased after an AVO was obtained. But only one form of negative behaviour increased for the majority of respondents. Consequent upon obtaining the order a larger proportion of defendants approached the family and/or friends of those who obtained an AVO.

Most (77%) respondents were satisfied with the services they received from either the chamber magistrate or the police when they applied for an AVO. Amongst those who were dissatisfied, the complaints included that the court or police officer who dealt with them had been unsympathetic, rude or indifferent, provided insufficient information or explanation or did not take the complaint seriously.

Notwithstanding the effectiveness of AVOs, breaches of the orders were reported by approximately 31 per cent of the respondents interviewed by the Bureau. Thirty-six per cent of these breaches were reported to police. Surprisingly, however, police were reported as having taken no action in response to approximately 73 per cent of these alleged breaches.

The Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that, in view of the demonstrable effectiveness of AVOs in stopping violence, police need to become more vigilant in investigating and prosecuting those who breach AVOs.

#### **Further enquiries:**

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