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MEDIA RELEASE

Public housing and crime

Neither the proportion, type or design of public dwellings in a postcode exerts any significant independent effect on its crime rate, according to a new report by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

The research was commissioned by the NSW Department of Public Housing following a series of disturbances of a public housing estate in Villawood in December, 1995.

A special feature of the study was that it sought to control for certain social and economic factors (e.g. single parent families, low income, unemployment) which are known to influence the crime rate but which also affect the allocation of public rental accommodation.

The study examined three main issues:

1. Is the crime rate in a postcode related to the proportion of public renters/dwellings in the postcode?
2. Is the crime rate in a postcode related to the predominant type of public dwelling located in the postcode (e.g. detached, high rise, etc)?
3. Is the crime rate in a postcode related to whether or not its public housing is concentrated in the form of public housing estates?

These questions were examined in relation to five offences; assault, break and enter (dwelling), malicious damage to property, motor vehicle theft and robbery.

The study found that between 48 per cent (malicious damage) and 69 per cent (assault) of the variation in these offences across postcodes could be accounted for in terms of social factors alone.

Once social factors have been controlled for, neither the proportion of public renters or the proportion of public housing dwellings or the type of public dwellings or whether a postcode has a public housing estate exerts much effect on its measured crime rate.

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