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In reply please quote:

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### NSW Criminal Courts Statistics 2002

Figures released by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research today show a toughening of bail and sentence policy over the last two years in NSW.

The percentage of persons finalised in the Local Court refused bail increased from 5.7 per cent in 2001 to 6.3 per cent in 2002 (i.e. an additional 813 people were refused bail in the Local Court). The percentage of persons refused bail in the Higher Courts rose from 40.6 per cent in 2001 to 44.6 per cent in 2002 (i.e. an additional 121 people were refused bail in the Higher Criminal Courts).

In the Local Courts the percentage of convicted offenders given a prison sentence increased slightly, from 6.6 per cent in 2001 to 6.9 per cent in 2002 (i.e. an additional 318 people were imprisoned). In the Higher Criminal Courts the percentage of convicted offenders given a prison sentence increased from 66.7 per cent in 2001 to 68.5 per cent in 2002 (i.e. an additional 147 people were imprisoned).

Although the number of Aboriginal people appearing before the NSW Local Court remained unchanged between 2001 and 2002 (11,814 versus 11,797 respectively), the percentage of Aboriginal people convicted in the Local Court who received a penalty of imprisonment also increased, from 14.8 per cent in 2001 to 16.3 per cent in 2002.

There were no major changes in the average duration of the prison sentences imposed upon offenders for most categories of offence, but the long prison sentences imposed in a series of highly publicised cases of serious sexual assault in South Western Sydney last year have pushed the average prison sentence for this offence up by nearly 40 per cent, from 29.9 months in 2001 to 41.7 months in 2002.

Trial court delay in the Higher Criminal Courts has continued to decline, with the median delay between committal and case finalisation for trial cases where the accused was on bail falling by 15 per cent, from 240 days in 2001 to 203 days in 2002. In the Local Courts, however, delays for defended cases rose from 109 days in 2001 to 119 days in 2002 (an increase of 9%).

#### Further enquiries:

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