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In reply please quote:

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MEDIA RELEASE

Women in prison

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island women, while only one per cent of the population, make up 18.4 per cent of the adult female prison population in New South Wales.

This is significantly higher than the corresponding figures for indigenous men, who make up 11.8 per cent of the NSW prison population while constituting only one per cent of the general NSW adult population.

This is one of the main findings contained in a recently released report by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research on women in prison.

The report also points out that, in 1994, while most women were classified as minimum security prisoners, most (72.2%) incarcerated women were held in Mulawa Correctional Centre, a prison with an overall medium security rating.

This means that many women in prison were held at a security level higher than their designated security rating. The Bureau's Director, Dr Don Weatherburn, commented that this situation has eased since the opening of the new Emu Plains Correctional Centre for women. The new centre has a minimum security rating.

The Bureau report shows that most women sentenced to prison during 1994 were convicted of theft offences. Only 12.3 per cent were sentenced to prison for offences against the person, and only 2.4 per cent were sentenced to prison for robbery and extortion.

Women sentenced to prison in New South Wales are generally given short sentences, with over 87 per cent receiving sentences of less than one year.

Nevertheless, women in general make up five per cent of the total prisoner population of NSW. This is higher than the percentage of female prisoners in Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

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