



DR. DON WEATHERBURN
DIRECTOR

In reply please quote:

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MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1996

Recorded rates of murder, indecent assault, robbery with a firearm, steal from the person, steal from a retail store, offensive conduct and offensive language remained stable in New South Wales over the period January 1995 to December 1996, according to figures released today by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

However the number of criminal incidents recorded by the NSW Police increased for assault (+23%), sexual assault (+23%), robbery without a weapon (+8%), robbery with a non-firearm weapon (+28%), break and enter dwelling (+21%), break and enter non-dwelling (+7%), steal from a motor vehicle (+14%), steal from a dwelling (+11%), fraud (+17 %) and malicious damage to property (+9%).

Commenting on the upward trends, the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn said that, 'taken at face value they suggest that a substantial increase in crime occurred in New South Wales between 1995 and 1996. There are two reasons, however, why the police figures should be treated with caution'.

'Firstly, the change-over to COPS (Computerised Operational Policing System) has in many ways made it easier for police to record crime. They no longer have to engage in any paperwork to record crime discovered by or reported to them', he said. 'It can all be entered directly onto computer at the local police station'.

'Secondly, some of the increase in recorded crime might also have come about because the public have become more willing to report crime to police'.

'The 1996 NSW Crime and Safety Survey data showed an increase in the percentage of victims of break and enter, vehicle theft, robbery and assault who chose to report the offence to police'.

'Unfortunately, because the survey data lag one year behind the police crime data we will not know until the next survey report (due out in November 1997) how much of the current increase in recorded crime during 1996 was just an artefact of greater public willingness to report crime', Dr Weatherburn said.

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