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MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2001

Over the 24-month period to December 2001, recorded rates of crime in most categories remained stable, but recorded rates of assault, robbery with a firearm and fraud rose¹, and recorded rates of home break-ins and some sexual offences fell.

These are the main findings to emerge from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research annual crime statistics report, released today.

Offences in the category of indecent assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences fell by six per cent, while home break-ins fell by about three per cent.

The recorded rate of assault rose by approximately eight per cent, the recorded rate of fraud rose approximately 16 per cent and the recorded rate of robbery with a firearm rose by approximately 34 per cent. The increase in assault came about as a result of increases in both domestic (up 10%) and non-domestic (up 6%) assault.

All of the remaining categories of crime: murder, sexual assault, robbery with a weapon (other than a firearm), unarmed robbery, break and enter (non-dwelling), motor vehicle theft, stealing from a motor vehicle, stealing from a retail store, stealing from a dwelling and malicious damage to property, remained stable.

According to the Director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, the significant increase in firearm robbery was restricted to just four areas of the State, namely, Blacktown, Canterbury-Bankstown, St George-Sutherland and Central Western Sydney. He also suggested that the increase in firearm robbery may have been partly a result of the heroin drought.

‘The heroin shortage which began just after Christmas 2000 and continued through 2001 pushed the price of half a gram of heroin up from \$138 to \$186 and the price of a gram of heroin up from \$218 to \$381. The purity of heroin also fell’.

‘Heroin users who wanted to maintain their level of heroin use in the face of these changes may have been tempted to commit more robberies to purchase their supplies of heroin. That may be why the increases in robbery are restricted to just a few areas’, he said.

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¹ The Bureau also recorded an increase in stealing from the person but attributed this increase to changed crime recording procedures introduced by the NSW Police Service on August 6th last year. The changes resulted in a re-classification of some general stealing offences into the category of stealing from the person.