



THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MEDIA STATEMENT

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LATEST REPORT SEES CRIME DROP AND IMPRISONMENT RISE

The University of Western Australia's Crime Research Centre's latest report *Crime and Justice Statistics for Western Australia: 2003*, describes trends and patterns in crime, police arrests, criminal court activity, imprisonment and juvenile contact with criminal justice.

The Centre's Director, Frank Morgan, identified two of the trends emerging from the 2003 report – decreases in crime and increases in the prison population.

On the decrease in crime rates, Mr Morgan said: "In 2003, offences against the person decreased by 10.6 percent. For example, murders decreased from 40 to 26, and sexual offence rates decreased by 11.3 percent. However, increases were recorded for assault (up 1.4 percent) and robbery (up 9.4 percent)".

"Property crime rates decreased by 5.4 percent; including burglary (down 6.5 percent) and motor vehicle theft (down 7.8 percent). Fraud and other theft also dropped, but property damage offences increased," he said.

National comparisons are included in the report.

"Western Australia recorded lower rates than the rest of Australia for most violent offences, but recorded higher rates for property offences. The State remained in highest position for burglary in 2003," Mr Morgan said.

Theft and attempted theft of motor vehicles dropped by 7.8 percent.

"Western Australia led Australia's motor vehicle theft decline, but was above the Australian average for the first time since 1999. Nevertheless, motor vehicle theft rates have halved since 1995," Mr Morgan said.

Commenting on increases in the prison population and court activity, Mr Morgan said: "The prison population increased by 3.4 percent in 2003, and the trend has continued into 2004."

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Imprisonment has increasingly involved indigenous offenders, particularly indigenous women.

“Over three fifths of all prison receptions for motor vehicle or driving-related offences were of indigenous offenders, and almost half of all female indigenous prisoners were imprisoned for fine-default. Indigenous people accounted for 37 percent of prisoners on census night,” Mr Morgan said.

In the adult criminal courts, there was a 5.8 percent increase in the number of charges dealt with in the Courts of Petty Sessions, and a 3.1 percent increase in the Higher Courts. The number of juvenile cautions issued by police decreased by 17 percent while police referrals to justice teams (0.9 percent) and the Children’s Court (5.6 percent) rose. Total community based orders decreased in 2003, but intensive supervision orders rose by 11 percent.

The report, Crime and Justice Statistics for Western Australia contains detailed information on these and other crime and justice trends, and can be purchased (\$30) by contacting the Administrative Secretary, Crime Research Centre at UWA, +61 8 6488 2830 or email crime.research@uwa.edu.au

Electronic copies of the report will be available (in PDF format) at:
<http://www.crc.law.uwa.edu.au/>

MEDIA REFERENCE:

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