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NSW RECORDED CRIME STATISTICS 2002: REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF CRIME TRENDS

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Between January 2001 and December 2002, a significant upward monthly trend was recorded in just one of the sixteen major crime categories in New South Wales, namely steal from retail store. During the two year period there were significant decreases in six major crime categories: robbery without a weapon, robbery with a weapon not a firearm, break and enter – dwelling, break and enter – non-dwelling, motor vehicle theft and steal from motor vehicle. The monthly number of recorded incidents was stable for the remaining nine crime categories over this period.

The trends in most geographical regions in New South Wales reflect, at least in part, the State decrease or stability in crime for the majority of offences. The Sydney Statistical Division reported more offences trending downwards than any other area. Sydney Statistical Division showed significant reductions in each of the six offences decreasing across the State plus a reduction in steal from dwelling. Nevertheless, some regional areas reported no support for the State downward trends. Three New South Wales Statistical Divisions, Richmond – Tweed, Northern and Far West, did not report downward trends in any of the major crime categories. In the Hunter Statistical Division five offences were trending upwards, more than any other region.

INTRODUCTION

This briefing paper summarises the trends in recorded crime in New South Wales as presented in *New South Wales Recorded Crime Statistics 2002*.¹ Firstly, recent crime trends in New South Wales are reviewed for the 16 major criminal offence categories. Secondly, regional trends are examined for these major offence categories in each of the 12 Statistical Divisions within New South Wales and in each of the 14 Statistical Subdivisions within Sydney. Finally, regions exhibiting significant upward trends are examined at a more detailed level of regional disaggregation.

The recorded crime statistics reported here are useful for monitoring trends in crime in New South Wales. However, these statistics should be interpreted with care. Changes in recorded crime rates may reflect any of several things:

- There may have been a change in the number of crimes that have occurred;

- Public willingness or the ability to report crime to the police may have altered. This is particularly true for some personal offence categories such as assault or sexual assault, and property crimes such as malicious damage to property;
- Trends may reflect changes in policing policy and activity. For this reason the analysis of crime trends in this paper is mainly restricted to those offence categories which are reported to, rather than detected by, police;
- Where the number of recorded incidents is very low, a very small change in the actual number of incidents may result in a disproportionately large change in derived ratios such as the rate per resident population or the percentage change over time. Caution should be exercised when regional crime statistics are being compared, particularly for the less frequently occurring offences, such as robbery and sexual assault.

Table 1: Summary of NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2001 and 2002: Comparison of twenty-four month trends and annual percentage changes for selected offence categories

<i>Offence category</i>	<i>January 2000 to December 2001</i>	<i>January 2001 to December 2002</i>
Murder	No significant trend	No significant trend
Assault	7.6%	No significant trend
Sexual assault	No significant trend	No significant trend
Indecent assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences	-6.0%	No significant trend
Robbery without a weapon	No significant trend	-17.9%
Robbery with a firearm	34.1%	No significant trend
Robbery with a weapon not a firearm	No significant trend	-36.5%
Break and enter - dwelling	-3.2%	-12.9%
Break and enter - non-dwelling	No significant trend	-20.9%
Motor vehicle theft	No significant trend	-22.2%
Steal from motor vehicle	No significant trend	-15.7%
Steal from retail store	No significant trend	7.5%
Steal from dwelling	No significant trend	No significant trend
Steal from person*	not available*	No significant trend*
Fraud	16.3%	No significant trend
Malicious damage to property	No significant trend	No significant trend

* Due to a discontinuity in the recording of this offence the 2000 to 2001 trend is not reported and the 2001 to 2002 trend covers the 17 months from August 2001 to December 2002.

SUMMARY OF TRENDS

Table 1 compares the trends in recorded crime in New South Wales reported in the 2001 and 2002 annual reports. Statistical trend tests were applied to check for a statistically significant upward or downward trend in the monthly number of incidents recorded by the police for the offence categories of *assault*, *sexual offences*, *robbery*, *break and enter*, *motor vehicle theft*, *stealing* and *malicious damage*.² With the exception of the offence category *steal from person*, the trend tests cover the 24 month period January 2000 to December 2001 (in the 2001 report), and January 2001 to December 2002 (in the 2002 report). When a statistically significant trend is detected, the percentage change between the annual numbers of recorded criminal incidents is reported.

Due to a discontinuity in the recording of steal from person the test for trend in this offence was applied over a shorter period than for other offence categories. The discontinuity in recording followed the issue of a guideline to New South Wales Police in August 2001 clarifying the definition of the *steal from person* offence category.³ This directive caused a sharp increase in the number of *steal from person* incidents in August 2001. The test for trend in *steal from person* has been applied to the 17 month period following the directive, August 2001 to December 2002. The trend in *steal from person* between January 2000 and December 2001 is not included in Table 1 due to the irregularity in recording.

Significant upward trends

Over the period considered to December 2002, one major offence showed a statistically significant upward trend in the monthly numbers of recorded criminal incidents in New South Wales.

- Steal from retail store (up by 7.5%)

Excluding *steal from person*, 12 months ago there were three offences showing a statistically significant upward trend compared to the single offence this year.

Offences where there was no upward or downward trend

Between January 2001 and December 2002, there was no statistically significant upward or downward trend in the monthly numbers of recorded criminal incidents for any of the following offences:

- Murder
- Assault
- Sexual assault
- Indecent assault, act of indecency, other sexual offences
- Robbery with a firearm
- Steal from dwelling
- Steal from person (trend covers the 17 months Aug 01 to Dec 02)
- Fraud
- Malicious damage to property

Significant downward trends

Between January 2001 and December 2002, there was a statistically significant downward trend in the number of recorded criminal incidents in New South Wales for the following six offences:

- Robbery without a weapon (down by 17.9%)
- Robbery with a weapon not a firearm (down by 36.5%)
- Break and enter – dwelling (down by 12.9%)
- Break and enter – non-dwelling (down by 20.9%)
- Motor vehicle theft (down by 22.2%)
- Steal from motor vehicle (down by 15.7%)

In the 2001 report only two offences were trending downwards, these being *indecent assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences* and *break and enter – dwelling*.

REGIONAL CRIME TRENDS

This section examines significant trends in recorded crime at a regional level for the major offence categories noted above.

Regional trends are analysed by offence category as follows:

- Significant trends are reported for monthly recorded incidents over the 24 months to December 2002 within each New South Wales Statistical Division (SD) and each Statistical Subdivision (SSD) within Sydney SD (a total of 12 SDs and 14 SSDs). Note that there is no regional analysis of the murder offence category because of the small number of incidents recorded in New South Wales each year.
- Where a significant trend is found in a region, the percentage change in the total number of incidents between consecutive 12 month periods is shown in Table 2 for New South Wales SDs and Table 3 for New South Wales SSDs with Sydney SD.
- Where a significant upward trend is detected in one of the 26 regions, monthly data at the next level of regional disaggregation are examined for a significant upward trend. For SDs outside Sydney, the next level of disaggregation is the SSD. For SSDs within Sydney SD, this next level of

Table 2: Percentage change in number of recorded incidents in 2002, compared with 2001, for major offences showing statistically significant trends in NSW Statistical Divisions

Statistical Division	Assault	Sexual assault	Indecent assault	Indecent assault, act of indecency	Robbery without a weapon	Robbery with a weapon	Break and enter – dwelling	Break and enter – non-dwelling	Motor vehicle theft	Steal from motor vehicle	Steal from retail store	Steal from dwelling	Fraud	Malicious damage
Sydney				-18.7	-37.6	-17.7	-23.7	-20.7	-18.3		-8.5			
Hunter	8.7	31.3	38.6			20.0	-21.8	-24.2				13.3*		
Illawarra						-18.8	-25.2	-42.5	-30.6	20.7	7.5	-27.0*		
Richmond – Tweed			73.6							18.9	7.9			
Mid-North Coast						-9.2		-22.8		13.9				7.8
Northern						9.1				28.5				
North Western				-37.5	-76.0	-14.3								
Central West								-35.3						
South Eastern	-11.1				-75.0	-13.3	-22.6		-17.2					
Murrumbidgee						-16.4		-27.7					-38.5	
Murray		-44.3												13.9
Far West	15.8													

* Due to a discontinuity in the recording of this offence, the test for trend was applied to the 17 month period Aug 01 to Dec 02. The percentage change reflects a comparison between the last five months of 2001 and the last five months of 2002.

disaggregation is the Local Government Area (LGA). These results are shown in Tables 4 and 5 respectively, at the end of this paper.⁴

- As mentioned above, in August 2001 New South Wales Police clarified their definition of the offence category *steal from person*, resulting in a discontinuity in the recording of this offence. For this reason, in all cases, trend results for this offence apply to the 16 month period from August 2001 to December 2002. Where a significant trend was found in a region for *steal from person* the percentage change reported is a comparison between the last five months of 2001 and the last five months of 2002.

Significant trends in New South Wales regions

For each of the major offence categories shown in Table 1, the monthly number of incidents between January 2001 and December 2002 was tested for a statistically

significant upward or downward trend in each SD of New South Wales. Where a statistically significant trend was found, the percentage change between 2001 and 2002 was calculated.⁵ These percentage changes are shown in Table 2. Note that the offence category *robbery with a firearm* is not shown in Table 2 because the offence showed no statistically significant upward or downward trend in any New South Wales SD. As noted above, the *murder* offence category is not included because the annual number of incidents of this offence is too small to undertake a meaningful regional comparison.

Table 2 shows that five of the 12 New South Wales SDs considered showed no growth in any of these offence categories. *Steal from retail store*, which showed a significant upward trend in New South Wales, showed significant increases in four SDs (Illawarra, Richmond – Tweed, Northern and Mid-North Coast), more than any other offence.

Table 3: Percentage change in number of recorded incidents in 2002, compared with 2001, for major offences showing statistically significant trends in Sydney Statistical Subdivisions

Statistical Division	Assault	Sexual assault	Indecent assault	Robbery without a weapon	Robbery with a weapon	Robbery with a firearm	Break and enter – dwelling	Break and enter – non-dwelling	Motor vehicle theft	Steal from motor vehicle	Steal from retail store	Fraud	Malicious damage
Inner Sydney			-25.4		-48.0	-16.8	-22.6	-20.8	-19.2		-14.8		
Eastern Suburbs					-31.0			-12.6	-24.4		-9.2		
St George – Sutherland			-10.3		-23.7	-33.3	-11.4	-22.4	-14.8				
Canterbury – Bankstown			-23.1	-35.4	-31.6	-27.4		-19.7	-15.2		-18.2	-14.0	
Fairfield – Liverpool			-33.9		-52.5	-18.3	-38.9	-25.6	-17.1				
Outer South Western Sydney			-28.3			-17.1	-45.0	-19.6	-24.7	27.2		-23.6	
Inner Western Sydney						-17.9		-22.4	-23.1		-14.4		
Central Western Sydney					-34.9	-20.6	-22.5	-19.6	-10.1				
Outer Western Sydney						-18.6	-22.1	-13.6					-3.0
Blacktown		-20.7				-12.6	-11.6	-15.1	-14.6	24.8		-12.0	
Lower Northern Sydney	-20.8		-16.6		-34.0		-30.7	-16.3	-28.5				
Central Northern Sydney					-36.3		-24.9	-23.6		18.1		23.9	
Northern Beaches	13.1	-35.6		a	-58.6	-13.6	-12.3	-27.6	-14.6		-18.2		-22.6
Gosford – Wyong					-43.1	-23.0	-26.9	-35.0	-24.4				

a Significant upward trend; numbers too small to show percentage increase (5 incidents in 2001; 20 incidents in 2002).

Three offences that annually occur in considerable numbers in New South Wales and which each showed sizeable decreases in the 24 months to December 2002 were *break and enter – dwelling*, *break and enter – non-dwelling* and *motor vehicle theft*. For each of these offences at least five SDs reported significant downward trends.

In opposition to the State trend and the trends in other SDs, the Hunter SD reported increases in the incidence of three offences against the person: *assault*, *sexual assault*, and *indecent assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences*. The Hunter SD also reported a large increase in the incidence of *break and enter – dwelling* and an increase in *steal from person* also contrary to the State result.

In contrast, the Sydney SD did not report increases in any of the offences shown and reported decreases in seven of the offences considered.

Note that a reported upward trend in a region does not suggest that the area necessarily has a high crime risk. While some SDs may have experienced an increase over the two-year period examined the rate of crime in 2002 may remain lower in these areas than elsewhere in New South Wales.

Table 3 shows the results of monthly trend tests by offence category, for each SSD within Sydney. The offence category *steal from person* is not shown in Table 3 because the offence showed no statistically significant upward or downward trend in any SSDs within Sydney. As with Table 2, where a statistically significant trend was found, the percentage change between 2001 and 2002 in the annual total number of incidents was calculated.

Table 3 shows that, with just a few exceptions, recorded crime in the 14 Sydney SSDs is overwhelmingly either stable or trending downwards. As reported above, there was a statistically significant downward trend in six major offence categories in New South Wales in the 24 months to December 2002. Each of these offences showed significant decreases in a large number of Sydney SSDs. All 14 Sydney SSDs reported significant reductions in *motor vehicle theft*, 12 Sydney SSDs reported decreases in *steal from motor vehicle*, both *break and enter – dwelling* and *non-dwelling* fell in 11 Sydney SSDs, six Sydney SSDs showed decreases in *robbery without a weapon*, and 10 Sydney SSDs reported reductions in the number of *robberies with weapons other than firearms*.

Steal from dwelling and *fraud* also decreased significantly in more than one Sydney SSD.

Only four offences, *assault*, *robbery with a firearm*, *steal from retail store* and *fraud* showed increases in any of the 14 SSDs within the Sydney SD.

Steal from retail store was the only offence to show an increase in the number of recorded incidents between 2001 and 2002 in New South Wales. Correspondingly, the incidence of *steal from retail store* rose significantly in three Sydney SSDs (Outer South Western Sydney SSD, Blacktown SSD and Central Northern Sydney SSD).

Regional trends for each offence category are examined in detail below. For each offence category, regions which showed a statistically significant upward or downward trend in the monthly number of recorded incidents will be noted. The regions considered are the 12 New South Wales SDs and the 14 SSDs within the Sydney SD.

TRENDS IN ASSAULT

There was no statistically significant upward or downward trend in the number of assault incidents recorded between January 2001 and December 2002 in New South Wales.

Significant upward trends

The following two SDs in New South Wales and single SSD within Sydney SD showed significant upward trends in *assault* over the two-year period to December 2002:

- Hunter SD (up 8.7%)
- Far West SD (up 15.8%)
- Northern Beaches SSD (up 13.1%)

The increase in assault in the Far West SD is of particular concern as in both 2001 and 2002 this area had the highest rate of *assault* per head of population of any region in New South Wales. Despite the increase in recorded *assault* in the Northern Beaches SSD, the rate of *assault* in this area is still very low. The rate of *assault* in the Hunter SD is similar to the State average.

Significant downward trends

There was one SD showing a statistically significant downward monthly trend in *assault* over the two years to December 2002.

- South Eastern SD (down 11.1%)

The rate of *assault* in the South Eastern SD in 2002 was similar to the State average.

TRENDS IN SEXUAL OFFENCES

The offence categories *sexual assault* and *indecent assault, act of indecency, other sexual offences* showed no statistically significant upward or downward trend in the number of incidents recorded between January 2001 and December 2002 in New South Wales.

Sexual assault

Significant upward trends

Only one SD in New South Wales showed a significant increase in the incidence of *sexual assault* over the two-year period to December 2001:

- Hunter SD (up 31.3%)

In 2002 the Hunter SD recorded a rate of *sexual assault* 37 per cent higher than the State rate.

Significant downward trends

One New South Wales SD and one SSD within the Sydney SD showed decreases in the recorded incidence of *sexual assault* in the 24 months to December 2001:

- Murray SD (down 44.3%)
- Lower Northern Sydney SSD (down 20.8%)

In past years the Murray SD has shown extremely high rates of recorded *sexual assault*. In 2001 the rate of *sexual assault* in Murray SD was the third highest of any region in the State. The rate is now much closer to the State average following the substantial reduction in recorded incidents of this offence between 2001 and 2002.

It should be considered that the rate of reporting of *sexual assault* is very low and the recorded crime statistics are very sensitive to changes in this.

Indecent assault, act of indecency, other sexual offences

Significant upward trends

Two SDs showed significant increases in the incidence of *indecent assault, act of indecency, other sexual offences* over the two-year period to December 2002:

- Hunter SD (up by 38.6%)
- Richmond - Tweed SD (up by 73.6%)

The two areas showing significant increases in *indecent assault, act of indecency, other sexual offences* both had rates above the State average for this offence.

Significant downward trends

Two SSDs within Sydney recorded significant downward trends in the incidence of *indecent assault, act of indecency, other sexual offences* over the two-year period to December 2002:

- Blacktown SSD (down 20.7%)
- Northern Beaches SSD (down 35.6%)

TRENDS IN ROBBERY

The offence categories *robbery without a weapon* and *robbery with a weapon not a firearm* both showed statistically significant decreases in the number of recorded incidents over the two years to December 2002 (down 17.9% and 36.5% respectively). Over the same period there was no significant upward or downward trend in the incidence of *robbery with a firearm*.

Robbery without a weapon

As noted above, the recorded incidence of *robbery without a weapon* fell by 17.9 per cent over the two-year period from January 2001 to December 2002.

Significant upward trends

No regions in New South Wales showed a significant upwards trend for *robbery without a weapon* in the reference period.

Significant downward trends

Two SDs and six Sydney SSDs showed significant downward trends in *robbery without a weapon* over the reference period.

- Sydney SD (down 18.7%)
- North Western SD (down 37.5%)
- Inner Sydney SSD (down 25.4%)
- St George - Sutherland SSD (down 10.3%)
- Canterbury - Bankstown SSD (down 23.1%)
- Fairfield - Liverpool SSD (down 33.9%)
- Outer South Western Sydney SSD (down 28.3%)
- Lower Northern Sydney SSD (down 16.6%)

The incidence of all types of robbery is very high in particular areas within the Sydney SD. Despite the significant reduction in unarmed robbery in the Inner Sydney SSD the incidence of this offence in this area is still the highest in the State. In 2002 one in every four *robbery without a weapon* incidents in New South Wales occurred in the Inner Sydney SSD. Canterbury - Bankstown and Fairfield - Liverpool SSDs both also continue to show high rates of *robbery without a weapon*.

Robbery with a firearm

Over the two-year period January 2001 to December 2002, there was no statistically significant upward or downward trend in the incidence of *robbery with a firearm* in New South Wales.

Significant upward trends

One Sydney SSD showed a significant upwards trend in *robbery with a firearm* in the time period considered.

- Northern Beaches SSD (up 300.0%)

This increase was based on a very small number of incidents (five in 2001 versus 20 in 2002).

Significant downward trends

One SSD within Sydney showed a significant downward trend in *robbery with a firearm*.

- Canterbury - Bankstown SSD (down 35.4%)

Despite the reduction, the rate of *robbery with a firearm* in the Canterbury - Bankstown SSD remained very high in 2002.

Robbery with a weapon other than a firearm

As noted above the incidence of *robbery with a weapon not a firearm* fell in New South Wales by 36.5 per cent in the 24 months to December 2002.

Significant upward trends

No regions in New South Wales showed significant increases in *robbery with a weapon not a firearm* over the time period considered.

Significant downwards trends

Consistent with the downward State trend, three SDs and ten Sydney SSDs recorded significant downward trends in *robbery with a weapon not a firearm* in the time period considered.

- Sydney SD (down 37.6%)
- North Western SD (down 76.0%)
- South Eastern SD (down 75.0%)
- Inner Sydney SSD (down 48.0%)
- Eastern Suburbs SSD (down 31.0%)
- St George - Sutherland SSD (down 23.7%)
- Canterbury - Bankstown SSD (down 31.6%)
- Fairfield - Liverpool SSD (down 52.5%)
- Central Western Sydney SSD (down 34.9%)
- Lower Northern Sydney SSD (down 34.0%)
- Central Northern Sydney SSD (down 36.3%)
- Northern Beaches SSD (down 58.6%)
- Gosford - Wyong SSD (down 43.1%)

The regions trending downwards include the Inner Sydney SSD, Canterbury - Bankstown SSD, Fairfield - Liverpool SSD and Central Western Sydney SSD, all of which continue to show high rates of *robbery with a weapon not a firearm* despite the recent decreases.

TRENDS IN BREAK AND ENTER OFFENCES

Both the number of recorded incidents of *break and enter - dwelling* and *break and enter - non-dwelling* fell significantly in New South Wales in the 24 months to December 2002 (down by 12.9% and 20.9% respectively).

Break and enter - dwelling

The State downward trend in the recorded incidence of *break and enter - dwelling* was reflected in a large number of regions within New South Wales.

Significant upward trends

Only two SDs showed significant upward trends in the number of *break and enter - dwelling* incidents.

- Hunter SD (up 20.0%)
- Northern SD (up 9.1%)

In 2002 the rate of *break and enter - dwelling* in the Hunter SD was considerable, being 26 per cent higher than the State average. The rate of *break and enter - dwelling* in the Northern SD was similar to the State average.

Significant downward trends

Consistent with the State trend, six of the 12 New South Wales SDs and 11 of the 14 SSDs within Sydney showed significant decreases in *break and enter - dwelling* in the 24 months to December 2002.

- Sydney SD (down 17.7%)
- Illawarra SD (down 18.8%)
- Mid-North Coast SD (down 9.2%)
- North Western SD (down 14.3%)
- South Eastern SD (down 13.3%)
- Murrumbidgee SD (down 16.4%)
- Inner Sydney SSD (down 16.8%)
- St George - Sutherland SSD (down 33.3%)
- Canterbury - Bankstown SSD (down 27.4%)
- Fairfield - Liverpool SSD (down 18.3%)
- Outer South Western Sydney SSD (down 17.1%)
- Inner Western Sydney SSD (down 17.9%)
- Central Western Sydney SSD (down 20.6%)
- Outer Western Sydney SSD (down 18.6%)
- Blacktown SSD (down 12.6%)
- Northern Beaches SSD (down 13.6%)
- Gosford - Wyong SSD (down 23.0%)

Despite reporting significant decreases in *break and enter - dwelling* Illawarra SD, North Western SD, Inner Sydney SSD and Inner Western Sydney SSD continue to report very high rates of this offence.

Break and enter - non-dwelling

Significant upward trends

No regions in New South Wales showed a significant upward trend in the incidence of *break and enter - non-dwelling* between January 2001 and December 2002.

Significant downward trends

The incidence of *break and enter - non-dwelling* was in decline in much of the State in the 24 months to December 2002.

- Sydney SD (down 23.7%)
- Hunter SD (down 21.8%)
- Illawarra SD (down 25.2%)
- Central West SD (down 35.3%)
- South Eastern SD (down 22.6%)
- Inner Sydney SSD (down 22.6%)

- St George – Sutherland SSD (down 11.4%)
- Fairfield – Liverpool SSD (down 38.9%)
- Outer South Western Sydney SSD (down 45.0%)
- Central Western Sydney SSD (down 22.5%)
- Outer Western Sydney SSD (down 22.1%)
- Blacktown SSD (down 11.6%)
- Lower Northern Sydney SSD (down 30.7%)
- Central Northern Sydney SSD (down 24.9%)
- Northern Beaches SSD (down 12.3%)
- Gosford – Wyong SSD (down 26.9%)

TRENDS IN MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

The incidence of motor vehicle theft fell by 22.2 per cent in New South Wales between January 2001 and December 2002.

Significant upward trends

No regions in New South Wales showed an increase in the incidence of motor vehicle theft over the period considered.

Significant downward trends

The incidence of motor vehicle theft fell in five out of the 12 New South Wales SDs. Each of the 14 SSDs within the Sydney SD reported significant decreases in this offence.

- Sydney SD (down 20.7%)
- Hunter SD (down 24.2%)
- Illawarra SD (down 42.5%)
- Mid-North Coast SD (down 22.8%)
- Murrumbidgee SD (down 27.7%)
- Inner Sydney SSD (down 20.8%)
- Eastern Suburbs SSD (down 12.6%)
- St George – Sutherland SSD (down 22.4%)
- Canterbury – Bankstown SSD (down 19.7%)
- Fairfield – Liverpool SSD (down 25.6%)
- Outer South Western Sydney SSD (down 19.6%)
- Inner Western Sydney SSD (down 22.4%)
- Central Western Sydney SSD (down 19.6%)
- Outer Western Sydney SSD (down 13.6%)
- Blacktown SSD (down 15.1%)
- Lower Northern Sydney SSD (down 16.3%)
- Central Northern Sydney SSD (down 23.6%)
- Northern Beaches SSD (down 27.6%)
- Gosford – Wyong SSD (down 35.0%)

The areas with the highest rates of *motor vehicle theft*, Inner Sydney SSD, Central Western Sydney SSD and Canterbury – Bankstown SSD, are among those showing significant decreases.

TRENDS IN STEALING OFFENCES

Four types of stealing are among the 16 major crime categories considered here. Of these, *steal from retail store* was the only offence category to show a significant increase in the reference period. *Steal from motor vehicle* decreased by 15.7 per cent between January 2001 and December 2002 and *steal from dwelling* remained stable.

Due to a discontinuity in the recording of *steal from person* (see page 2 and endnote 3 for more details), the trend in the incidence of *steal from person* was calculated over the 17 month period from August 2001 to December 2002. In that time there was no significant upward or downward trend in the incidence of *steal from person*.

Steal from motor vehicle

As mentioned above, the incidence of *steal from motor vehicle* fell 15.7 per cent in the 24 months to December 2002.

Significant upward trends

Only one region in New South Wales showed an increase in *steal from motor vehicle*.

- Richmond – Tweed SD (up 18.9%)

The rate of *steal from motor vehicle* in the Richmond – Tweed SD is on par with the New South Wales average rate.

Significant downward trends

The downward State pattern was evident in three New South Wales SDs and 12 Sydney SSDs.

- Sydney SD (down 18.3%)
- Illawarra SD (down 30.6%)
- South Eastern SD (down 17.2%)
- Inner Sydney SSD (down 19.2%)
- Eastern Suburbs SSD (down 24.4%)
- St George – Sutherland SSD (down 14.8%)
- Canterbury – Bankstown SSD (down 15.2%)
- Fairfield – Liverpool SSD (down 17.1%)
- Outer South Western Sydney SSD (down 24.7%)
- Inner Western Sydney SSD (down 23.1%)
- Central Western Sydney SSD (down 10.1%)
- Blacktown SSD (down 14.6%)
- Lower Northern Sydney SSD (down 28.5%)
- Northern Beaches SSD (down 14.6%)
- Gosford – Wyong SSD (down 24.4%)

Four of the regions listed above recorded a rate of *steal from motor vehicle* above the State average: Inner Sydney SSD, Eastern Suburbs SSD, Central Western Sydney SSD and Sydney SD.

Steal from retail store

Steal from retail store was the only offence to show a significant increase between 2001 and 2002 (up by 7.5%) in New South Wales.

Significant upward trends

Four New South Wales SDs and three SSDs within Sydney showed significant increases in the incidence of *steal from retail store* between January 2001 and December 2002.

- Illawarra SD (up 20.7%)
- Richmond – Tweed SD (up 7.9%)
- Mid-North Coast SD (up 13.9%)
- Northern SD (up 28.5%)
- Outer South Western Sydney SSD (up 27.2%)
- Blacktown SSD (up 24.8%)
- Central Northern Sydney SSD (up 18.1%)

Four of these regions reported *steal from retail store* rates considerably higher than the State average: Illawarra SD; Richmond – Tweed; Northern SD and Blacktown SSD. The rate of *steal from retail store* in Blacktown is very high, being the second highest of all regions in the State.

Significant downward trends

No region in New South Wales showed a significant downward trend for this offence.

Steal from dwelling

In the 24 months to December 2002, the incidence of *steal from dwelling* was stable in New South Wales.

Significant upward trends

One SD in New South Wales showed an increase in *steal from dwelling*.

- Illawarra SD (up 7.5%)

As reported earlier the Illawarra SD showed a statistically significant downward trend in the related offence of *steal from dwelling* (down 18.8%). The Illawarra SD was the only region in New South Wales to experience an increase in *steal from dwelling* and a decrease in *break and enter – dwelling*.

Significant downward trends

One SD and five SSDs within Sydney showed significant decreases in *steal from dwelling*.

- Sydney SD (down 8.5%)
- Inner Sydney SSD (down 14.8%)
- Eastern Suburbs SSD (down 9.2%)
- Canterbury – Bankstown SSD (down 18.2%)
- Inner Western Sydney SSD (down 14.4%)
- Northern Beaches SSD (down 18.2%)

Despite the decrease in recorded incidents of *steal from dwelling* in the Inner Sydney and Eastern Suburbs SSD, the rate of this offence is above the State average. The rate of *steal from dwelling* in Canterbury – Bankstown SSD was the lowest of any region in New South Wales. Sydney SD, Inner Western Sydney SSD and the Northern Beaches SSD were all below the State in their recorded rate of occurrence of this offence.

Steal from person

The incidence of *steal from person* showed no significant upward or downward trend in the 17 months between August 2001 and December 2002. This pattern was reflected in the majority of regions in New South Wales.

Significant upward trends

A single SD was the only region in New South Wales to report an increase in *steal from person* over the 17 month period considered.

- Hunter SD (up 13.3%*)

* This percentage change reflects a comparison between the last five months of 2001 and the last five months of 2002.

Despite the increase, the Hunter SD had a low rate of *steal from person* in 2002 compared with the State average.

Significant downward trends

A single SD in the State reported a significant decrease in *steal from person*.

- Illawarra SD (down 27.0%*)

* This percentage change reflects a comparison between the last five months of 2001 and the last five months of 2002.

Illawarra SD is not an area with a high rate of *steal from person* relative to the State average.

Trends in fraud

The recorded incidence of *fraud* remained unchanged between January 2001 and December 2002 in New South Wales. There were several areas within the State which did record changes in this offence over this time.

Significant upward trends

One SSD within Sydney recorded an increased incidence of *fraud* in the two years to December 2002.

- Central Northern Sydney SSD (up 23.9%)

Despite recording a significant increase in the incidence of *fraud*, Central Northern Sydney SSD had the lowest incidence of this offence of any region in New South Wales in 2002.

Significant downward trends

One New South Wales SD and four Sydney SSDs recorded decreases in the incidence of *fraud* in the 24 months to December 2002.

- Murrumbidgee SD (down 38.5%)
- Canterbury – Bankstown SSD (down 14.0%)
- Outer South Western Sydney SSD (down 23.6%)
- Outer Western Sydney SSD (down 3.0%)
- Blacktown SSD (down 12.0%)

Blacktown SSD and Canterbury – Bankstown SSD both have recorded rates of *fraud* above the State average. The remaining three regions listed above, Murrumbidgee SD, Outer South Western Sydney SSD and Outer Western Sydney SSD, have low rates of *fraud* relative to the State average.

Trends in malicious damage to property

The incidence of *malicious damage to property* showed no significant recorded increase or decrease in New South Wales between January 2001 and December 2002.

Significant upward trends

Two New South Wales SDs showed significant upward trends in *malicious damage to property* over this time period.

- Mid-North Coast SD (up 7.8%)
- Murray SD (up 13.9%)

Both regions trending upwards in *malicious damage to property* and listed above recorded a rate higher than the average State rate in 2002.

Significant downward trends

One SSD within New South Wales showed a significant decrease in the incidence of *malicious damage to property* over this time period.

- Northern Beaches SSD (down 22.6%)

The Northern Beaches SSD has a lower recorded rate of *malicious damage to property* than the State average.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The regional trends in recorded crime for 15 major offence categories have been presented in this paper. Table 1 shows an improvement in crime for nine offence categories at the State level. The three offences reported to be rising in last year's report, *assault*, *robbery with a firearm* and *fraud*, are now stable. Five offences that were stable in the 24 months to December 2001, are now showing a downward trend: *robbery without a weapon*, *robbery with a weapon not a firearm*, *break and enter – non-dwelling*, *motor vehicle theft*, and *steal from motor vehicle*. One offence continued to decrease, although at a greater rate. *Break and enter – dwelling*, which was reported to be trending downwards by 3.2 per cent to the end of 2001, showed a decrease of 12.9 per cent in the 24 months to December 2002.

The only crime category to show a statistically significant upward trend in 2002 was *steal from retail store* (up 7.5%). Tables 2 and 3 show that seven regions in New South Wales increased their incidence of *steal from retail store*: Outer South Western Sydney (up 27.2%), Blacktown SSD (up 24.8%), Central Northern Sydney SSD (up 18.1%), Illawarra SD (up 20.7%), Richmond – Tweed SD (up 7.9%), Mid-North Coast SD (up 13.9%) and Northern SD (up 28.5%). These regions accounted for 70.5 per cent of the State increase in *steal from retail store*.

The patterns of decline in the six major offences were evident across much of Sydney. The incidence of *robbery with a weapon not a firearm*, *break and enter – dwelling*, *break and enter – non-dwelling*, *motor vehicle theft* and *steal from motor vehicle* all fell in at least ten of the 14 Sydney SSDs.

The offence category *assault* rose in three New South Wales regions and fell in one. Table 6 shows the trend in domestic violence related assault in all regions of the State. From this table it can be seen that the increases in *assault* in the Northern Beaches SSD and the Far West SD were attributable to an upward trend in domestic violence related assaults. The increase in the Hunter was not domestic violence related.

The area in the State with the greatest number of offences increasing was the Hunter SD. Five offences rose in this region in the 24 months to December 2002: *assault*; *sexual assault*; *indecent assault*, *act of indecency*, *other sexual offences*; *break and enter – dwelling* and *steal from person*. Two offences showed significant decreases: *break and enter – non-dwelling* and *motor vehicle theft*.

Some other regional areas showed little evidence of the State downward trends in crime. Three SDs, Richmond – Tweed, Northern and Far West, reported no decreases in any of the 16 major crime categories. The Murray SD reported a decrease only in *sexual assault* and Central West fell only in *break and enter – non-dwelling*.

NOTES

- 1 Doak P., Fitzgerald, J. and Ramsay, M., 2003, *New South Wales Recorded Crime Statistics 2002*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Sydney.
- 2 The statistical test used is Kendall's rank order correlation test for trend; see, for example, Conover, W. J. 1980, *Practical Non-parametric Statistics*, 2nd edition, John Wiley and Sons, pp. 256-260. A 5% two-tailed test was used to determine whether there was an increasing or decreasing trend in the monthly rates of recorded criminal incidents. Some month-to-month variations in the rates of recorded criminal incidents suggest seasonal factors may be at work. The test for trend is not sensitive to seasonal variations; it is sensitive only to a generally increasing or decreasing trend over the time period examined.
- 3 NSW Police Service 2001, *Police Services Weekly*, Vol 13, no. 31, p. 10, NSW Police Services, Sydney. The guideline stipulated that stealing property from the presence of a person but not in the physical possession of the person should be recorded as a steal from person offence rather than general stealing.
- 4 Note that where a significant upward trend or an increase in annual incidents has been detected over the two-year period, it is useful to compare the current rate of the offence within the region with the overall NSW rate for the same offence category. While the incidence of a particular offence may have increased in a region, that area may still have a comparatively low crime rate. The situation where a crime rate is rising in an area which already has a high rate of that offence is identified in Tables 4 and 5.
- 5 In the case of the offence category steal from person, the trend test was applied to the 17 months August 2001 to December 2002, and the percentage change reflects the difference in the number of recorded incidents in the last five months of 2001 compared with the last five months of 2002.

**Table 4: NSW Statistical Divisions with upward trends in crime rates
for major offence categories: January 2001 to December 2002**

Offence category	Significant upward trends in NSW Statistical Divisions (SD), other than Sydney SD	Increases in Statistical Subdivisions (SSD) within listed Statistical Divisions
Assault	<i>Far West SD* (15.8%)</i> <i>Hunter SD* (8.7%)</i>	<i>Far West SSD* (15.8%)</i> <i>Newcastle SSD* (10.6%)</i>
Sexual assault	<i>Hunter SD* (31.3%)</i>	<i>Newcastle SSD* (36.8%)</i>
Indecent assault, act of indecency and other sexual offences	<i>Richmond – Tweed SD* (73.6%)</i> <i>Hunter SD* (38.6%)</i>	<i>Tweed Heads SSD (77.8%)</i> Richmond – Tweed (Balance) SSD (72.5%) <i>Newcastle SSD* (40.9%)</i> <i>Hunter (Balance) SSD (25.7%)</i>
Break and enter - dwelling	<i>Hunter SD* (20.0%)</i> <i>Northern SD* (9.1%)</i>	<i>Newcastle SSD* (20.4%)</i> Hunter (Balance) SSD (16.0%) <i>North Central Plain SSD* (35.6%)</i> Northern Slopes SSD (7.7%)
Steal from motor vehicle	Richmond – Tweed SD* (18.9%)	Richmond – Tweed (Balance) SSD (22.2%) Tweed Heads SSD* (12.8%)
Steal from retail store	<i>Northern SD* (28.5%)</i> <i>Illawarra SD* (20.7%)</i> <i>Mid-North Coast SD* (13.9%)</i> <i>Richmond – Tweed SD* (7.9%)</i>	<i>Northern Slopes SSD* (42.1%)</i> <i>North Central Plain SSD* (16.1%)</i> Northern Tablelands SSD (14.9%) Illawarra (Balance) SSD* (49.8%) <i>Wollongong SSD* (12.0%)</i> <i>Hastings SSD* (23.4%)</i> <i>Clarence SSD (5.9%)</i> Richmond – Tweed (Balance) SSD* (23.4%)
Steal from dwelling	<i>Illawarra SD* (97.5%)</i>	<i>Illawarra (Balance) SSD* (23.3%)</i> <i>Wollongong SSD (0.9%)</i>
Steal from person	Hunter SD* (13.3%)	Newcastle SSD* (18.0%)
Malicious damage to property	<i>Murray SD* (13.9%)</i> <i>Mid-North Coast SD* (7.8%)</i>	<i>Albury SSD* (32.9%)</i> Upper Murray SSD (2.3%) <i>Clarence SSD* (25.3%)</i>

* indicates statistically significant upward monthly trend

'**bold italics**' indicates that the rate of offences per 100,000 population in that region (with population more than 3,000) is **higher** than the State rate in 2002.

For the offence steal from person, the test for trend was applied to the 17-month period August 2001 to December 2002. The percentage increases shown represent the change from Aug 2001-Dec 2001 to Aug 2002-Dec 2002.

Table 5: Sydney Statistical Subdivisions with upward trends in crime rates for major offence categories: January 2001 to December 2002

<i>Offence category</i>	<i>Significant upward trends in Statistical Subdivisions (SSD), within Sydney Statistical Division</i>	<i>Increases in Local Government Areas (LGA) within Sydney Statistical Subdivisions</i>
Assault	Northern Beaches SSD* (13.1%)	Pittwater LGA (20.1%) Warringah LGA* (19.2%)
Robbery with a firearm	Northern Beaches SSD* n/a	Pittwater LGA n/a Warringah LGA n/a
Steal from retail store	<i>Outer South Western Sydney SSD* (27.2%)</i> <i>Blacktown SSD* (24.8%)</i> Central Northern Sydney SSD* (18.1%)	<i>Penrith LGA (6.8%)</i> Hawkesbury LGA (0.8%) <i>Blacktown LGA* (24.8%)</i> Hornsby LGA* (45.9%) Baulkham Hills LGA (0.9%)
Fraud	Central Northern Sydney SSD* (23.9%)	Hornsby LGA* (38.2%) Baulkham Hills LGA (18.2%) Ku-ring-gai LGA (12.4%)

* indicates statistically significant upward monthly trend

'bold italics' indicates that the rate of offences per 100,000 population in that region (with population more than 3,000) is **higher** than the State rate in 2002.

n/a indicates less than 10 offences occurred in a year.

Table 6: Percentage change in recorded incidents of assault in 2002, compared with 2001, for regions showing statistically significant trends*

<i>Statistical Division</i>	<i>Total assault</i>	<i>Non-domestic</i>	<i>Domestic assault</i>
Sydney			
Inner Sydney			
Eastern Suburbs			
St George – Sutherland			
Canterbury – Bankstown			
Fairfield – Liverpool			35.0
Outer South Western Sydney			
Inner Western Sydney			
Central Western Sydney			
Outer Western Sydney			
Blacktown			
Lower Northern Sydney			45.5
Central Northern Sydney			
Northern Beaches	13.1		26.3
Gosford – Wyong			
Hunter	8.7	13.8	
Illawarra			
Richmond – Tweed			
Mid-North Coast			
Northern			
North Western			
Central West			
South Eastern	-11.1	-11.1	
Murrumbidgee		-11.0	
Murray			
Far West	15.8		32.4
New South Wales			

* All regions are shown in this table, but percentage changes are only shown for those regions where the 24-month trend was statistically significant.