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In reply please quote:

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Media Release

Risk of re-offending among parolees **Embargo: Friday, 17 February 2006, 10.30AM**

Sixty-four per cent of offenders released from prison on parole re-offend within two years of release, according to a joint study released today by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and the Research Division of the NSW Department of Corrective Services.

In one of the largest studies of re-offending among parolees ever undertaken in Australia, the Bureau and the Department tracked a cohort of 2,793 prisoners released to parole between 2001 and 2002 in order to find out which factors best predict rates of re-offending.

The study found that the time to re-offend was significantly shorter for parolees who:

- Had a greater number of custodial episodes in the eight years preceding release
- Were younger at the time of release
- Were Indigenous
- Had committed a violent offence; a property or deception offence; or had breached a previous court order
- Had been issued with a court order from a court (as opposed to the Parole Authority)
- Had one or more offences for using or possessing heroin, amphetamine or cocaine in the previous eight years
- Had spent less time in custody prior to being released on parole

Commenting on the findings, the director of the Bureau, Dr Don Weatherburn, said that while a 64 per cent re-offending rate is high, it is actually slightly lower than that recently recorded by researchers studying re-offending amongst parolees in Britain.

"Given that prison is reserved for the most serious and persistent offenders, it's not surprising that a high proportion of them re-offend," he said.

"At the same time, we obviously need to do all we can to reduce the rate at which people released from prison re-offend".

"The present study does not tell us **why** a significant proportion of parolees re-offend. However it does tell us **who** among them is most likely to re-offend. These are the people we need to focus our rehabilitation programs on."

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