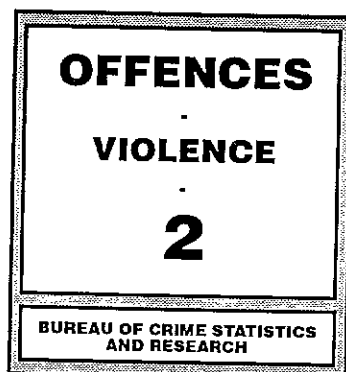


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TRENDS IN VIOLENT CRIME IN NEW SOUTH WALES
1972-1978

Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research,

N.S.W. Department of the Attorney General and of Justice.

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The Bureau is frequently asked for statistics on trends in violent crime in New South Wales. Our main statistical collection is of appearances before the Courts. Such statistics although essential to describe charges, convictions and outcomes do not indicate the full extent of crime known to the Police. The number of reports of serious crime in New South Wales accepted as genuine by the Police can be obtained from the Police crime intelligence information system and are published annually in the Annual Report of the Police Department.

The following table shows the number of accepted reports of violent crimes for the years 1972 to 1978. Not all crimes are included in the intelligence system; where the offence is relatively minor and does not potentially involve investigation by a detective no return is submitted.

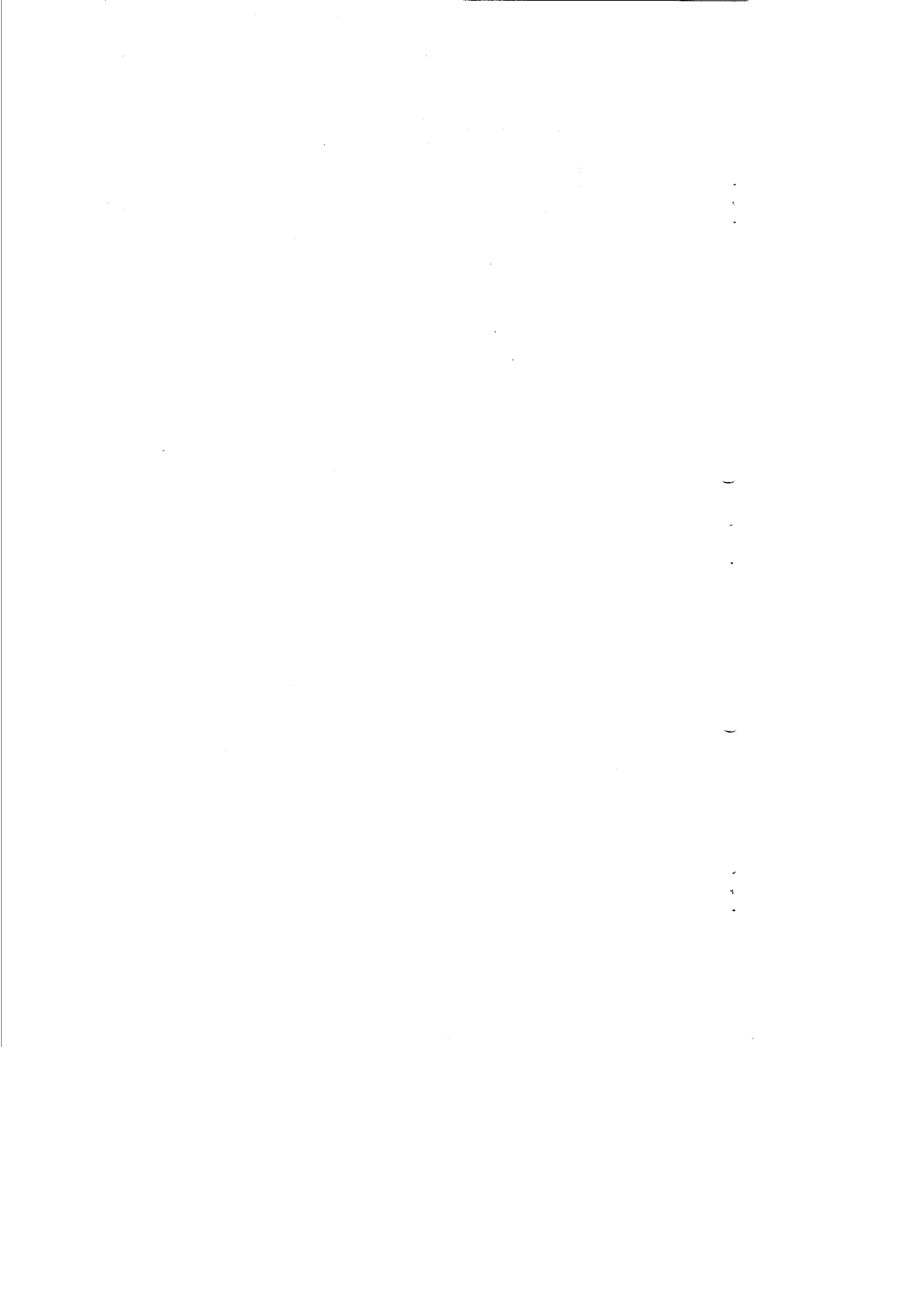


TABLE 1. Accepted reports of violent crime in New South Wales

	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>
<u>Offences against the person</u>							
Abduction	35	39	39	20	22	43	51
Abortion and attempts	11	1	-	5	-	2	1
Armed hold-up	271	226	350	305	286	339	605
Assault and rob	1158	1033	1142	932	864	866	976
Assault - aggravated	839	922	844	906	836	915	1098
Assault - non aggravated	2131	2417	2525	3372	3574	4104	4752
Demand money with menaces	60	79	60	69	61	80	115
Manslaughter (excl) motoring	21	22	19	19	18	19	19
Murder	71	94	60	85	85	89	96
Murder - accessory, conspiracy to	3	2	2	5	1	13	3
Murder - attempts	41	39	25	50	44	36	41
<u>Sexual Offences</u>							
Indecent assault female	517	558	588	501	464	480	479
Indecent assault on child	191	181	136	132	159	122	127
Rape	120	140	181	154	119	154	191
Attempted Rape	54	47	38	50	67	47	59
<u>Serious Motoring Offences</u>							
Culpable driving (leading to death or injury)	155	149	168	253	280	328	332
Manslaughter	53	64	41	10	5	6	3

The significance of the trends can best be understood if the figures are presented in the form of rates per head of population. Sometimes such rates are calculated using the size of the adult population, but to facilitate interstate comparisons to be discussed later in this report the total population of the state has been used as the base for calculation.

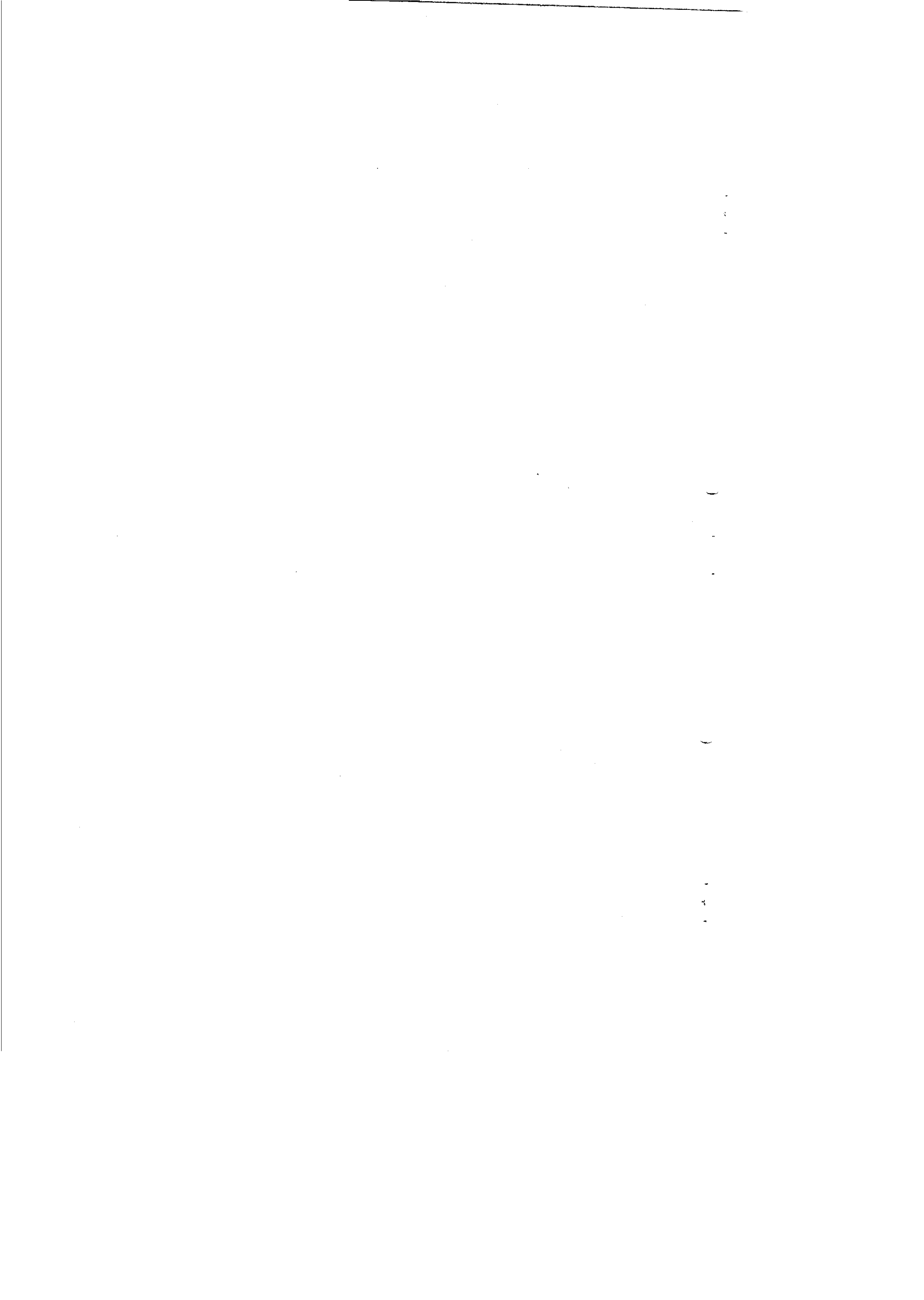


Table 2. Rates of Violent crime in major categories in N.S.W.
(per ten thousand population)

	Population in '000 at 30 June	Offences against the person		Sexual assaults		Motoring	
		Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
1972	4747	4641	9.8	882	1.9	208	0.44
1973	4793	4874	10.2	926	1.9	213	0.44
1974	4839	5056	10.5	943	1.9	209	0.43
1975	4884	5768	11.7	837	1.7	263	0.54
1976	4914	5791	11.8	809	1.6	285	0.58
1977	4857	6506	13.1	803	1.6	334	0.67
1978	5012	7757	15.5	856	1.7	335	0.67

Comparisons of crime rates between States are difficult because of variations in definition. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has devoted a great deal of effort to establishing a series of crime statistics on selected crimes where the definitions are sufficiently similar to permit legitimate interstate comparison. The definitions used do not correspond exactly to those published in the NSW Police Department Annual Report and so the rates given in the following table cannot directly be compared with those in Table 2. However, they do show the relative position of New South Wales with respect to other states. The information in the table has been obtained from a more comprehensive report published by the Australian Institute of Criminology.¹

Table 3. Crime rates for selected crimes 1977/1978 (per 10,000 population)

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUST
Homicide	.60	.37	.56	.38	.21	.22	1.94	.24	.47
Robbery	3.44	2.92	1.48	1.66	1.28	.63	2.22	.71	2.53
Serious Assault	2.16	4.03	3.43	2.04	3.03	2.06	3.89	2.51	2.93
Rape	.73	.61	.33	1.34	.81	.39	1.57	.47	.69

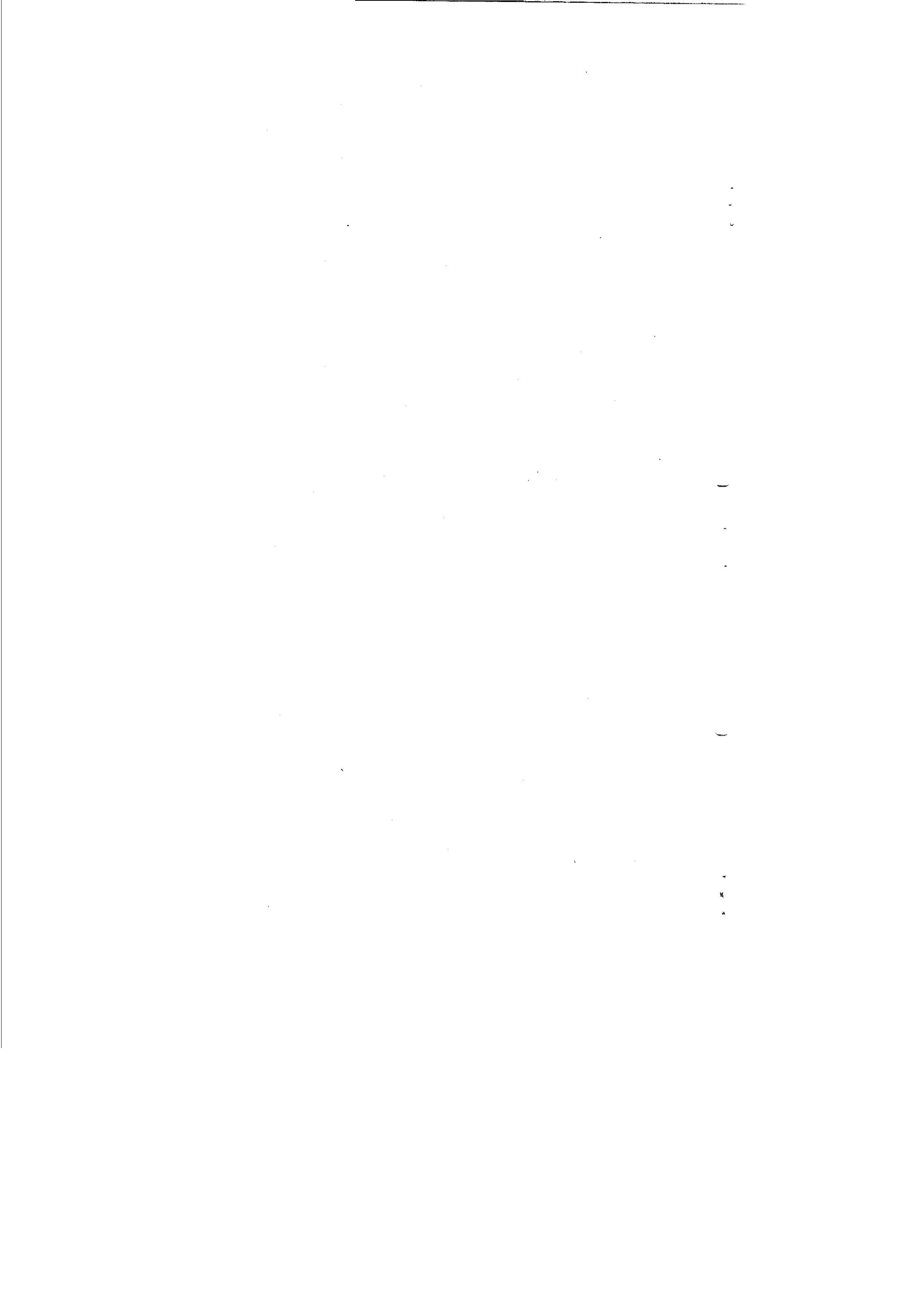
Note: Homicide includes murder, attempted murder, manslaughter and manslaughter arising from traffic accidents. Rape includes attempted rape and assault with intent to rape. Robbery includes armed holdup and assault and rob.

Rates for the categories of violent crime in Table 3 indicate that New South Wales occupies an intermediate position with respect to other states except for robbery, where it has the highest rate.

The incidence of armed hold-up with assault and rob increased substantially from 1977 to 1978 (Table 1) but the assault and rob category is still at a lower level than it was in the period 1972 to 1974, the longer series of rates for robbery shown in the Biles report² indicates that the New South Wales robbery rate was similar to

1. Biles D: The Size of the Crime Problem in Australia.
Australian Institute of Criminology, 1979.

2. Ibid, p.10 table 3.



Victoria and the Northern Territory until 1971/72 when the New South Wales rate increased by 45 per cent from the previous year. The definition of robbery used in these National Statistics includes the N.S.W. Police categories of armed robbery and assault and rob. The distinction between the latter categories is somewhat blurred, therefore caution is needed in interpreting trends.

Accepted reports of aggravated assault have fluctuated within a 30 per cent range over the years 1972 to 1978. Prior to 1978, the greatest number of accepted reports of aggravated assault occurred in 1973.

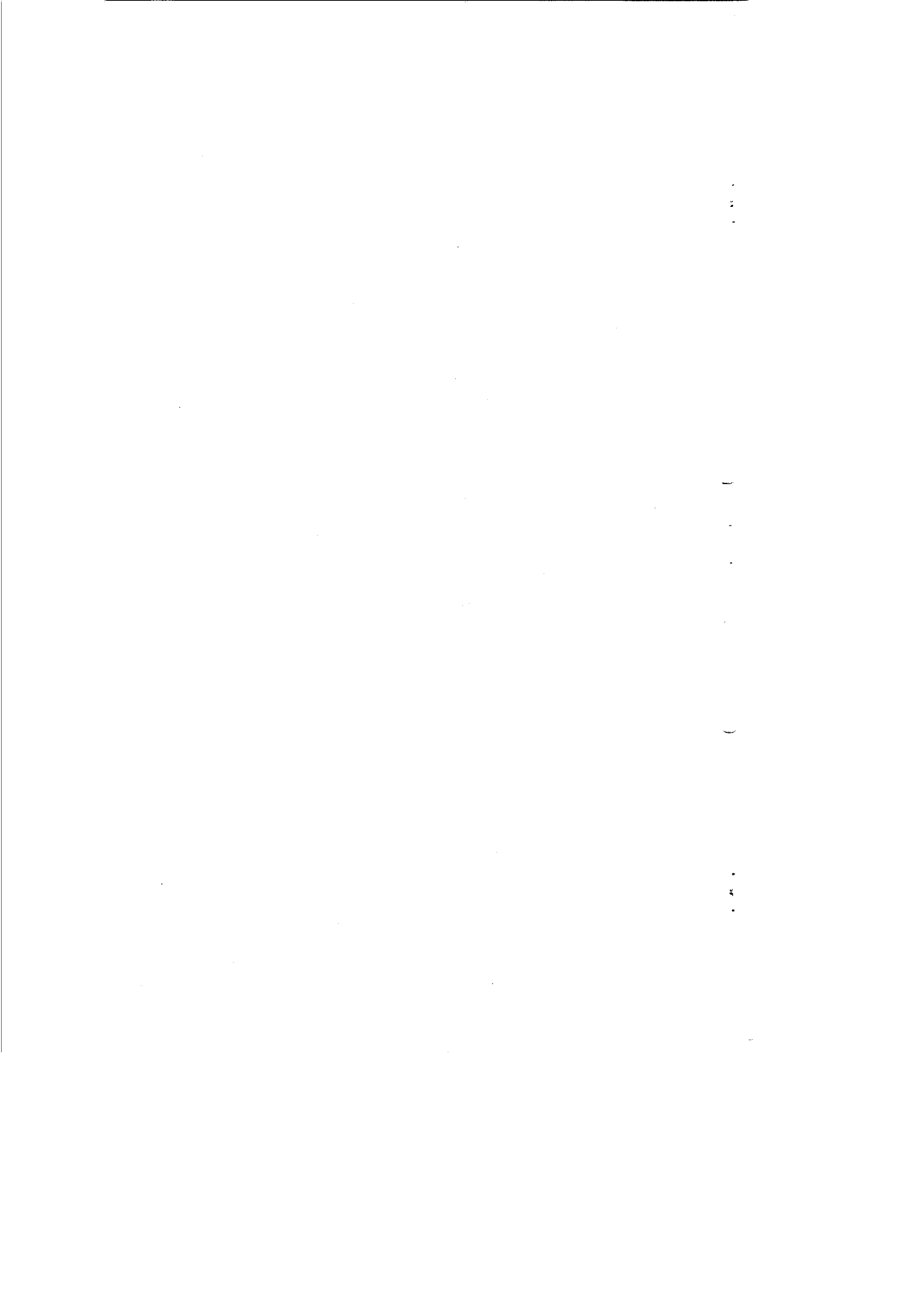
The substantial increases in non-aggravated assault (Table 1) between 1972 and 1978 have to be seen in context. Some preliminary bureau research¹ suggests that many such assaults are between people who have at least an acquaintance with each other or live together in a domestic situation (as indeed are many murders). The increase may be partly due to an increased readiness to report such domestic assaults.

The incidence of rape has also increased from 1977 to 1978. (Table 1), but only to just above the level it was in 1974. The data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics discussed in the Biles Report² show a similar trend but the absolute number of rapes given in the report and used as a basis for comparison with other states (Table 3) is much higher than quoted in the New South Wales Police Department Annual Report.³ This is because the number of rapes reported to the Australian Bureau of Statistics included all rapes reported. Subsequently, some complaints were withdrawn and some considered unfounded. The Police Departments Annual Report figure represents the final number accepted as "genuine".

Trends in violent crime in New South Wales and the reasons for their direction are discussed by Kraus⁴ in a recent article. He states that it is the trend in juvenile rather than adult violence that should warrant serious public concern. From 1968 to 1976, the rate of male juveniles committing robberies increased by over 300 per cent in N.S.W. (ie. in 1968 the rate was 2.6/100,000 population, in 1976 that rate was 27.5/100,000 population.). Kraus is not the only person to hold this view, F.H. McClintock writes "one of the outstanding features of the growth in criminal violence in the last decade had been the increased involvement of the younger generation".⁵ Kraus suggests a possible reason for this increased juvenile violence in that violence shown in the mass media breeds violent crime by contagion and some experts have little doubt about the adverse effect it has on children and juveniles.

One way of obtaining a perspective on violent crime is obtained when all activities causing "social harm" (whether criminal or not) are compared. Technology and greater affluence has meant more cars and more deaths and serious injury on the roads. Factories represent the greatest danger to most citizens health and safety. The quest for greater profits generally means short cuts in production methods which create greater threats to the environment. Our statistics show that few violations of environmental and safety regulations (for what they are worth) reach the courts. When they do they receive lenient treatment.

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1. Bureau Statistical Report No. 9. Gun and Knife Attacks, 1973.
 2. The Size of the Crime Problem in Australia - David Biles 1979 The Australian Institute of Criminology.
 3. New South Wales Police Department Annual Report, 1978.
 4. Trends in Violent Crime and Public Concern - J.Kraus, 1979 Australian Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 13 No.3.
 5. Quote from F.N' Mc Clintock, F.H. Phenomenological and Contextual Analysis of Criminal Violence, in Violence and Society, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1974.



This provides no solution to violent crime but sets it into a perspective which forces a lesser degree of seriousness or threat ascribed to it. It also throws into question the drastic response to it, such as long prison sentences. However, there is still no room for complacency and continuous monitoring and research into violent crime is essential "since our knowledge of this phenomenon is so rudimentary that our observations and comments are based largely on impressions and rather restricted ad hoc research"¹

Dr. Satyanshu Mukherjee of the Australia Institute of Criminology has been studying long term trends in crime. His study has involved the collation of records on the number of charges and convictions in the courts of all States and Territories from 1900 to 1976. The results of this project should provide information on the legislative provisions that seem to be effective and provide an essential long term perspective.

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1. "Trends in Violent Crime and Public Concern" J. Kraus, 1979, Australian Journal of Social Issues, Vol.13 No.3.
 2. McClintock F.H. 'Phenomenological and Contextual Analysis of Criminal Violence, in Violence and Society, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1974.

