

Statistical Bulletin No. 8.

August 1980.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DISTINCT PUBLIC  
DRUNKENNESS OFFENDERS IN COUNTRY AREAS  
OF NEW SOUTH WALES, 1979.

Bureau of crime statistics and Research,  
N.S.W. Department of the Attorney General and of Justice,  
Box 6, G.P.O. Sydney, N.S.W. 2001.

BUREAU OF CRIME STATISTICS AND RESEARCH

with the co-operation of the  
New South Wales Drug and Alcohol Authority

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DISTINCT PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS

OFFENDERS IN COUNTRY AREAS OF NEW SOUTH WALES: 1979

B. FLAHERTY  
(New South Wales Drug and Alcohol  
Authority)

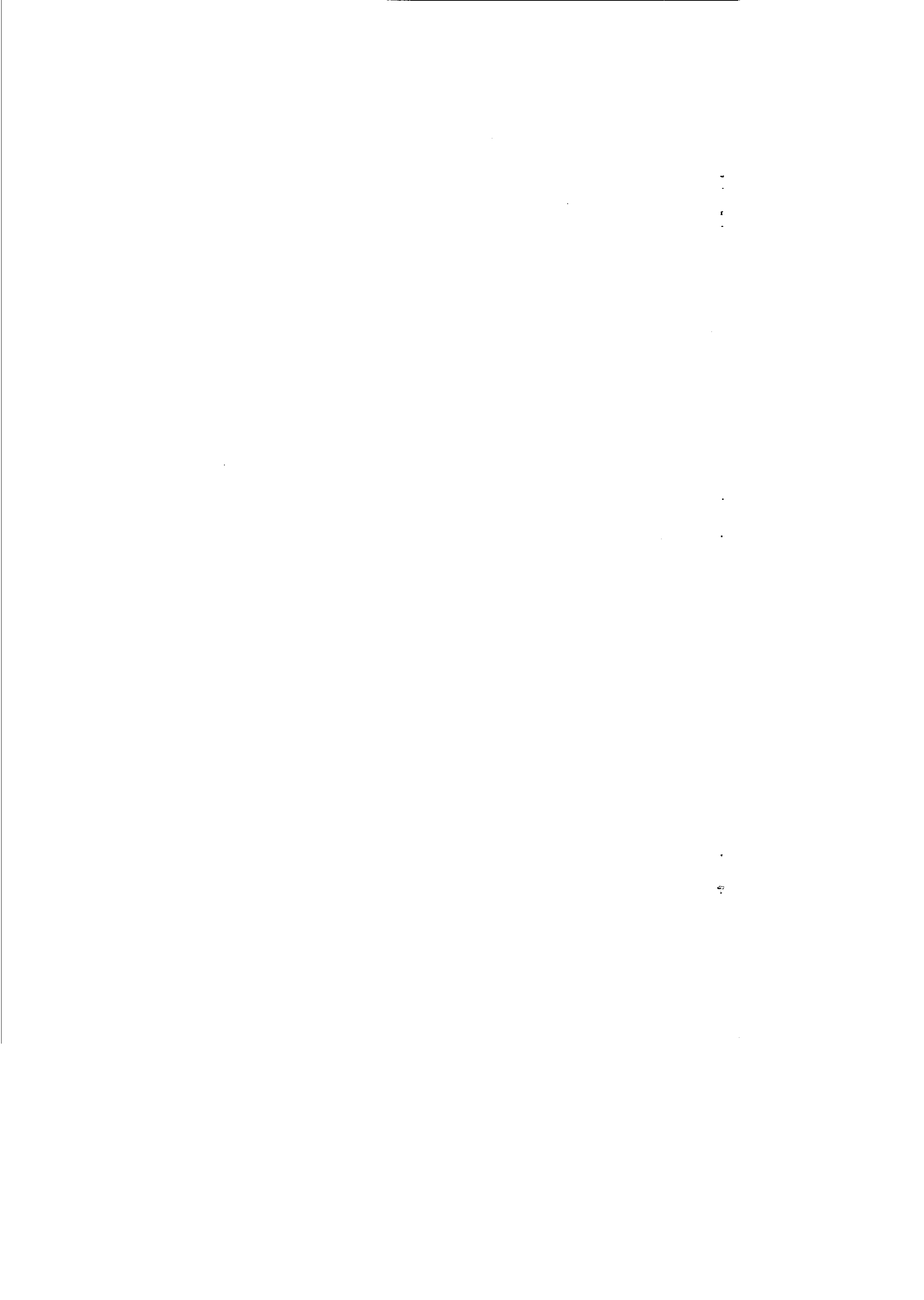
J. HARRIS  
(Division of Drug and Alcohol  
Services)

T. MILNE  
(Bureau of Crime Statistics and  
Research)

September 1980

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Acknowledgements: Sincere thanks to Susana Forrester, Paul Smith and Kerry MacDermott of the New South Wales Drug and Alcohol Authority, and Ms. Debbie Jones of the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research for their patient work and assistance.



## INTRODUCTION

The general aim of the report is pragmatic: it is to present information of relevance to the planners and administrators of programs for persons with alcohol related problems. Specifically, an attempt has been made to determine the number of individuals who have been arrested for public drunkenness in the country regions (i.e. outside of the Sydney Statistical Division) of New South Wales in 1979. In utilising comparative rates of public drunkenness, it has been assumed that these statistics provide a reasonable, if somewhat limited, indicator of the level of alcohol problems in a given area.

It is believed that this information may assist decision-makers to select appropriate locations for detoxication units, doss houses or other societal response deemed necessary for the problems presented by the public inebriate.

Data presented in this report were obtained from statistics collected by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (B.C.S.R.). As such, this report should be read in conjunction with other reports on public drunkenness prepared by the Bureau (see Bibliography).

## THE PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS STATISTICAL COLLECTION OF THE BUREAU OF CRIME STATISTICS AND RESEARCH

The offence of public drunkenness was prescribed by Section 6 of the Summary Offences Act, 1970,<sup>(1)</sup> which stated:

"a person found drunk in a public place or a school is guilty of an offence."

The public drunkenness collection of the Bureau is an ad hoc collection, which achieved State-wide coverage in 1974. It is not part of the routine Courts of Petty Session collection which forms the bulk of the Bureau's work. Accordingly, only essential information is forwarded to the Bureau in cases where public drunkenness offence are sent. The figures held by the Bureau thus understate the level of public drunkenness arrests in the State.

Only four items for each drunkenness case, viz. age and sex of the defendant, outcome of the case and the court are recorded and

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1. In March 1980 Section 6 of the Summary Offences Act, 1970, was repealed and replaced by the Intoxicated Persons Act which meant that public drunkenness was no longer a criminal offence.

analysed. Personal details such as the name and address of the defendant are also forwarded by the courts but they are not recorded by the Bureau. It was on the basis of this latter information that an attempt to determine the number of distinct persons arrested for public drunkenness in New South Wales was possible.

The figures presented in Table 1 reveal a trend towards an increasing number of arrests which peaked in 1974 followed by a decline in both the total number of arrests and the rate of arrests per 1,000 population.

#### TOTAL NUMBER OF DRUNKENNESS ARRESTS

Table 1. Trend in Total Number of Drunkenness Arrests in New South Wales.

	1972	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Total	50238	56384	54158	54928	46450	50377	41375
Arrests per 1,000 pop,n.	14.6	15.9	15.1	15.2	12.8	13.5	8.2

#### REGIONAL DISPARITIES

It has been noted in previous Bureau reports that there are differences in the trend of public drunkenness arrests across the State. For example, in 1977 there was a large increase of 19.2% for drunkenness arrests in courthouses in "aboriginal towns", but substantial decreases in the other courthouse categories (Inner City, Suburban, Rest of State) (B.C.S.R., Court Statistics, 1977).

To assist with the aim of providing data relevant for planning alcohol resources across the State, it was necessary to select a regional classification scheme. The regional classifications of the Health Commission were chosen because they were based on the Statistical Divisions of the Australian Bureau of Statistics and hence relatively accurate population figures were available. The relationship between Health regions and courthouses is outlined in Appendix 1.

The total number of arrests in each of the country Health regions as well as the four Sydney metropolitan Health regions amalgamated is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Trends in Total Number of Arrests  
for Country Health Regions

Health Region	1974(i)	1975(i)	1976(i)	1977(i)	1978(i)	1979(a)
Metropolitan	38,505	38,719	38,447	30,678	33,500	27,664
Orana/Far West	4,342	5,927	6,059	6,390	6,584	5,470
New England	1,552	1,810	1,869	1,883	1,948	1,749
Central WEst	1,104	1,609	2,089	1,832	1,890	1,244
North Coast	1,029	998	1,002	927	1,158	944
Riverina	907	971	990	786	808	633
Murray	551	764	748	657	649	848
Hunter	1,577	2,018	2,275	1,952	2,272	1,667
Illawarra	514	559	564	524	730	520
South East	732	738	848	811	825	636

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Source: (i) New South Wales Bureau of  
Crime Statistics and Research,  
computer printouts of individual  
courthouse returns.

Note: (a) 1979 data were estimated by  
hand-counting for country regions,  
and the grand total for New South  
Wales was estimated by the data  
recording clerk at the Bureau of  
Crime Statistics and Research.

An unevenness in the trend in the total number of public drunkenness arrests for the various regions is evident in Table 2. This point may be seen more clearly in Table 3. Most commonly observed was an increasing trend (5 regions) or a stable number of offences (3 regions) from 1974 to 1979, when there was an almost uniform (with one exception, the Murray Region) decline in the number of offences.

Regions with an increasing trend: As indicated, the five regions showing an overall trend of increasing arrests in the period 1974 - 1979 were Orana/Far West, New England, Central West, Murray, Hunter. The size in the increase varied substantially between these regions. The Orana/Far West and the Central West showed the largest increases whilst there was a more modest increase in the New England Region. The annual change in the number of arrests showed more variation in the Hunter and Murray Regions.

Regions with a decreasing trend: Two regions which showed a trend towards a decrease in the number of arrests were the amalgamated Metropolitan Region and the Riverina.

Regions with a stable trend: The three regions with a trend towards relatively stable numbers of public drunkenness offences were the North Coast, Illawarra and South East. These regions showed an increase in 1978, followed by a decline in 1979 which was also found in the other regions with the exception of Murray.

It is possible that the foreshadowed introduction of the Intoxicated Persons Act had some impact on the number of public drunkenness offences in 1979.

Table 3: Number of Public Drunkenness Offences per Region  
with 1974 total as index

HEALTH REGION	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	Overall Trend (1974 - 1979)
Metropolitan	100	101	100	80	87	72	Decreasing
Orana	100	137	140	147	152	126	Increasing
New England	100	117	120	121	126	113	Increasing
Central West	100	146	189	166	171	113	Increasing
North Coast	100	97	97	90	113	92	Stable
Riverina	100	107	109	87	89	70	Decreasing
Murray	100	139	136	119	118	154	Increasing
Hunter	100	128	144	124	144	106	Increasing
Illawarra	100	109	110	102	142	101	Stable
South East	100	101	116	111	113	87	Stable

NUMBER OF DISTINCT PERSONS ARRESTED FOR PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS

In 1972, the Bureau reported the initial results of a survey of public drunkenness offences in a three-month period. There was a very heavy concentration of offenders at the lower end of the frequency distribution. Four out of every five (83%) were involved in a single offence. At the top end of the distribution, only 7% of offenders were responsible for 20% of all drunkenness offences. Since that time, it would appear that no further work on the frequency with which individuals are arrested for drunkenness has been reported.

The estimation of the number of distinct persons involved in public drunkenness presented some difficulty in view of the large number of cases and the large number of courthouses (over 200) involved.

Since the focus of the study was country regions, it was decided to sort court returns manually into alphabetical order for the country courts only. By this procedure an unduplicated set of offenders per courthouse could be derived. However, since offenders could have appearances at more than one court within a region it was necessary to amalgamate the unduplicated individual courthouse data to provide an unduplicated set of offenders for the region. This second procedure was performed for the Orana/Far West Region only, as this region could be shown (on Table 2 data) to have the highest rate of drunkenness arrests per 1,000 population.

To provide the most accurate estimate of the number of individual public drunkenness offenders it would be necessary to complete the above two steps for each region and then to develop a master list of names in alphabetical order for the whole State, since an offender could have appeared in more than one region.

The results of the above sorting procedure are set out in Table 4.



Table 4. Number of Individual Public Drunkenness Offenders in  
1979: Comparative Data on New South Wales Country  
Health Regions.

Health Region	Popul'n <sup>(a)</sup>	Distinct Persons	Total No. of Cases	Average No. of Cases Per Person	Rate Distinct
					Persons Per 1,000 Population
Orana/Far West	139,450	1,472	5,470	3.7	10.5
Murray	98,000	611	848	1.4	6.2
New England	178,800	1,013	1,749	1.7	5.6
Central West	165,000	781	1,244	1.6	4.7
South Eastern	138,400	473	636	1.3	3.4
Riverina	143,950	503	633	1.3	3.4
Hunter	441,300	1,168	1,667	1.4	2.6
North Coast	284,550	724	944	1.3	2.5
Illawarra	289,250	390	520	1.3	1.3

(a) Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (New South Wales office)

Note that only in the case of the Orana/Far West Region do the results indicate the exact number of distinct persons. In the other regions, the number of distinct persons per courthouse were added together to form the regional total. This procedure does not separate out the number of persons who appear at more than one courthouse. The results of the total count for the Orana Region would indicate, however, that appearance before more than one courthouse is relatively infrequent. When a master list of names for drunkenness offenders in the Orana Region was compiled, it was found that only 90 persons (i.e. 6% of all offenders in the region) had charges at more than one court, and that of these the majority (76%) had charges at only two courts. Consequently, the amount of error introduced to the estimation procedure if these persons had been counted separately for each of the different courts would not be excessive. On this basis, it was decided that for the other regions the number of distinct persons per courthouse would be added to form the total number of distinct persons per region and to tolerate the

slight double counting due to persons presenting at more than one courthouse.

#### Rate of Arrest

The data in Table 4 indicate that the rate of drunkenness arrests of distinct persons in the Orana Region is significantly greater than the arrest rate for the other country regions. The Orana Region contains towns with a relatively large number of aboriginals. For example, eleven out of the 19 "aboriginal towns" identified by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (B.C.S.R. Court Statistics, 1978) are in Orana Region (see Appendix 2). Inspection of the forms submitted to the Bureau by the courts indicated that a disproportionately high number of persons arrested for drunkenness gave an aboriginal reserve as their address.

A relationship between being aboriginal and being arrested for drunkenness has been reported previously. (B.C.S.R. Statistics, Bulletin No. 3). The Bureau in analysing trends in the number of drunkenness arrests for different areas of the State has also documented a higher rate of arrests and the imposition of more punitive penalties in "aboriginal towns".

Further, in a comparison between aboriginals and non-aboriginal male admissions to an alcohol withdrawal unit, Chegwidan and Flaherty (1976) found that the aboriginal patients were significantly more likely to have been arrested for public drunkenness than the non-aboriginal patients. Whereas, non-aboriginal patients were significantly more likely to have been admitted to a psychiatric hospital for treatment of their alcohol problems than the aboriginal patients. This difference in arrest experience was also found when female aboriginal patients were compared with female non-aboriginal patients. (Flaherty and Harris, 1980).

#### FREQUENCY OF NUMBER OF DRUNKENNESS ARRESTS PER PERSON.

The average number of arrests per offender was significantly greater for the Orana Region than for other regions (refer Table 4). The distribution of arrests in the Orana Region is set out in Table 5. From the table it may be calculated that approximately 10% of offenders were responsible for approximately 62% of all arrests. Six people in the region in 1979 had totals of 100 or more public drunkenness arrests, the highest being 150 arrests. The six were apparently, on

the basis of their addresses, all aboriginal people. It is doubtful whether any of the "skid row" type persons encountered in the inner city areas of Sydney would be able to match the dubiously impressive total of 100 or more arrests in a year.

Even so, it should be noted that the majority (64%) of individual offenders in Orana had only one arrest per year. In comparison, at Newcastle City Courts, 9% of offenders were responsible for only 38% of all arrests. The highest individual total was 32 arrests and approximately 80% of all offenders had a single arrest before that court (refer Appendix 3).

Table 5. Frequency Distribution of Public Drunkenness in 1979:  
Orana/Far West Health Region

Number of Arrests	Frequency	% Offenders	Frequency x Number of Arrests	% Offences
1	924	62.8	924	16.9
2	210	14.3	420	7.7
3	92	6.3	276	5.0
4	63	4.3	252	4.6
5	40	2.7	200	3.7
6-9	60	4.1	427	7.8
10-19	40	2.7	656	12.0
20-49	26	1.8	799	14.6
50-99	11	0.7	725	13.3
100+	6	0.4	791	14.5
TOTAL:	1472		5470	

Finally, ten local government areas with the highest rates of public drunkenness are presented in Table 6 (see next page).

The information in Table 6 would appear to be a relevant starting point when considering the relative needs of specific areas in the New South Wales country for alcohol services.

Table 6. Local Government Areas in Country Regions with the Highest Rates of Public Drunkenness

Area	Region	% Aboriginal Population	No. of Distinct Persons With Public Drunkenness	Average No. of Arrests Per Offender	Rate Distinct Persons With P.D. per 1,000 Population
*Brewarrina	Orana	36.5%	239	11.2	85.4
*Bourke (incl. Enngonia)	Orana	17.8%	315	2.7	62.4
*Central Darling (Ivanhoe, Menindee, Wilcannia)	Orana	18.3%	91	2.9	28.4
Wentworth	Murray	4.8%	162	1.9	24.0
*Walgett (incl. Burren Jctn., Collarenebri, Lightning Ridge)	Orana	17.4%	174	3.3	23.1
*Narrabri (incl. Wee Waa)	New England	3.8%	338	2.4	21.1
*Condobolin (incl. Lake Cargelligo, Tottenham)	Central West	12.8%	184	2.6	20.4
*Moree (incl. Boomi, Boolooroo)	New England	10.6%	299	1.7	18.3
Warren	Orana	6.9%	58	1.5	14.0
*Coonamble (incl. Gulargambone)	Orana	6.8%	65	1.4	10.8

(a) 1976 Census estimates.

\* Indicates that this LGA also appears as an "aboriginal town" in the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research reports on public drunkenness.

N.B. The percentage of aboriginals in the New South Wales population is approximately 0.5%.

On the basis of the data set out in this bulletin, three points may be noted in the context of planning for alcohol services:

- there is substantial variation between the health regions of New South Wales in the rate of distinct persons arrested for public drunkenness. The data (See Table 4) indicates that the Orana/Far West region has a significantly greater rate of drunkenness arrests than that of other country regions.
  
- the rate of public drunkenness varies significantly between specific local government areas and the local government areas with a relatively large aboriginal population have the highest rates of public drunkenness. The Local Government Area with the highest rate of drunkenness arrests being Brewarrina, followed by Bourke, Central Darling, Wentworth and Walgett (See Table 6).
  
- the frequency distribution of number of arrests per person indicates that in most large courthouses there is a small core of persons who contribute a disproportionately large number of arrests (Table 5; Appendix 2). The importance of these multiple offenders varies between courthouses and between regions. Consequently, the total number of offences is not necessarily a reliable guide to the number of distinct offenders.

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COURTHOUSES IN HEALTH COMMISSION REGIONS

<u>NORTH COAST</u>	<u>NEW ENGLAND</u>	<u>CENTRAL WEST</u>	<u>MURRAY</u>
Lismore	Armidale	Orange	Albury
Casino	Barraba	Molong	Wentworth
Grafton	Bellata	Canowindra	Deniliquin
Mackville	Boggabilla	Cudal	Balranald
Kempsey	Moree	Lithgow	Euston
Taree	Mungundi	Portland	Jerilderie
Wingham	Bingara	Lake Cargelligo	Urana
Coffs Harbour	Glen Innes	Tottenham	Barham
Port Macquarie	Gunnedah	Condobolin	Moulamein
Murwillumbah	Guyra	Bathurst	Holbrook
Tweed Heads	Tingha	Cowra	Finley
Ballina	Inverell	Forbes	Tocumwal
Byron Bay	Narrabri	Ungarie	Henty
Maclean	Wee Waa	West Wyalong	Culcairn
Wauchope	Quirindi	Rylstone	Corowa
Mullumbimby	Tamworth	Blayney	Mulwala
Woodburn	Werris Creek	Trundle	Moana
Bellingen	Uralla	Peak Hill	Tumbarumba
Dorrigo	Walcha	Tullamore	
Kyogle	Warialda	Oberon	
		Grenfell	
		Hill End	

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<u>ORANA/FAR WEST</u>	<u>RIVERINA</u>	<u>HUNTER</u>	<u>SOUTH EASTERN</u>
Bourke	Griffith	Newcastle	Queanbeyan
Enngonia	Hillston	Wallsend	Goulburn
Brewarrina	Darlington Point	Belmont	Cooma
Broken Hill	Wagga Wagga	Hamilton	Bega
Burren Junction	Leeton	Mayfield	Murrumburrah
Collarenebri	Narrandera	Cessnock	Young
Lightning Ridge	Cootamundra	Kurri Kurri	Yass
Walgett	Temora	Maitland	Moruya
Cobar	Hay	East Maitland	Bateman's Bay
Nymagee	Coolamon	Forster	Narooma
Coonabarabran	Ardlethan	Tea Gardens	Pambula
Baradine	Junee	Stroud	Eden
Coonamble	Lockhart	Muswellbrook	Bombala
Gulargambone		Raymond Terrace	Braidwood
Dubbo		Scone	Gunning
Dunedoo	<u>ILLAWARRA</u>	Singleton	Crookwell
Gilgandra		Murrurundi	
Gulgong	Kiama		
Mudgee	Nowra		
Ivanhoe	Berry		
Menindee	Milton		
Wilcannia	Bowral		
Narromine	Picton		
Trangie	Moss Vale		
Nyngan	Port Kembla		
Warren	Wollongong		
Wellington	Shellharbour		

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF "ABORIGINAL TOWNS" AS IDENTIFIED BY  
BUREAU OF CRIME STATISTICS AND RESEARCH -  
"COURT STATISTICS, 1978"

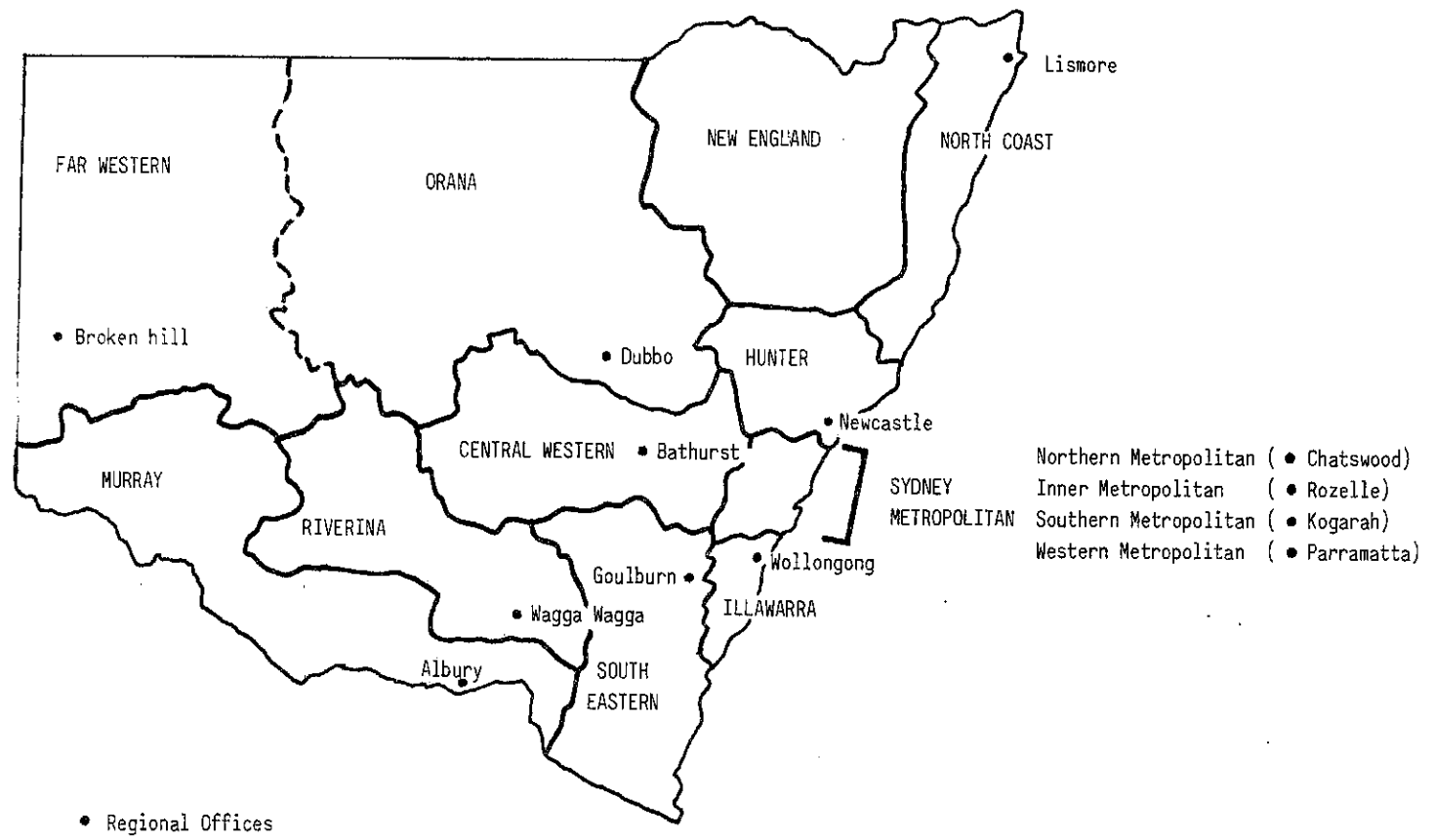
<u>TOWN</u>	<u>HEALTH REGION</u>
Boggabilla	NEW ENGLAND
Bourke	ORANA/FAR WEST
Brewarrina	ORANA/FAR WEST
Collarenabri	ORANA/FAR WEST
Condobolin	CENTRAL WEST
Lightning Ridge	ORANA/FAR WEST
Moree	NEW ENGLAND
Walgett	ORANA/FAR WEST
Wee Waa	NEW ENGLAND
Wilcannia	ORANA/FAR WEST
Burren Junction	ORANA/FAR WEST
Carinda	ORANA/FAR WEST
Cobar	ORANA/FAR WEST
Enngonia	ORANA/FAR WEST
Goodooga	ORANA/FAR WEST
Ivanhoe	ORANA/FAR WEST
Menindee	ORANA/FAR WEST
Mungindi	NEW ENGLAND
Warren	ORANA/FAR WEST



APPENDIX 3: Frequency Distribution of Number of Arrests, Selected Courthouses

Number of Arrests	NEWCASTLE		ARMIDALE		MOREE		WEE WAA		BRENARRINA		BOURKE		DUBBO		BROKEN HILL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	508	79.9	73	92.4	147	73.8	113	57.7	87	36.4	159	63.9	112	84.2	77	80.2
2	70	11.0	5	6.3	37	13.9	36	18.4	37	15.5	38	15.3	10	7.5	6	6.3
3	16	2.5	1	1.3	17	6.4	10	5.1	22	9.2	24	9.6	2	1.5	5	5.2
4	14	2.2			5	1.9	9	4.6	9	3.8	12	4.8	5	3.8	2	2.1
5 - 9	17	2.7			5	1.9	18	9.2	40	16.7	13	5.2	2	1.5	3	3.1
10 - 19	9	1.4			5	1.9	8	4.1	17	7.1	2	0.8	1	0.8	2	2.1
20 - 49	2	0.3			1	0.4	2	1.0	11	4.6	1	0.4	1	0.8	1	1.0
50+							0		16	6.7	0		0		0	
<u>TOTAL</u>	636		79		267		196		239		249		133		96	

Highest Number of Arrests      32                      3                      21                      28                      150                      28                      20                      13



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