10 June 2003
March quarter crime figures report dropping crime rate

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The level of recorded criminal offences for the March period dropped significantly across the Territory compared to the same period last year and was down on the previous quarter.

The findings of the latest report of NT Quarterly Crime and Justice Statistics released by the Office of Crime Prevention today and audited by Ernst and Young, indicate the overall level of offences across the Territory in the last 12 months has fallen compared to the previous 12 months.

The Minister for Justice, Dr Peter Toyne, said the decline in recorded crime was encouraging, particularly the 28% drop in house break-ins across the Territory compared to last year.

"The 28% drop, or 1,185 less victims of house break-ins, tells us we are on the right track, but obviously there is still more work to do to further reduce crime in our community.

"However, the level of house break-ins is still too high and we will keep working on reducing those levels through targeted law enforcement and crime prevention measures," Dr Toyne said.

A total of 7868 offences were recorded by police in the quarter (1130 against the person, 6738 property), well below the same period in 2002 (9648) and 2001 (9033), and a drop of 92 offences on last quarter. (p12 of report)

The report shows a decrease of 7% or 91 offences for offences against the person in the March 2003 quarter from the same period in 2002, and a 7% drop (or 84 offences) from the previous quarter. (p13)

In the March quarter 2003, there was a 20% drop in property offences (or decrease of 1689 offences) from March 2002, and a drop of 1% (or 8 offences) compared to the previous quarter. (p17).

Year on year data, which provides comparable information on how crime is tracking from one 12-month period to the next, shows that during the 12 months to the end of March 2003 compared to the previous 12 months:

- House break-ins fell by 28% or 1,185 less offences
- Break-ins to commercial or other premises fell by 7% of 177 less offences
- Motor Vehicle theft and related offences fell by 11% or 325 less offences
- Assaults fell by 1% or 38 less offences
- Sexual assault fell by 5% or 16 less offences
Robbery increased by 29% or 21 more offences

During the March 2003 quarter, house break-ins across the Territory fell by 28% compared to the same period last year but increased 1% or by seven offences compared to the past quarter.

Territory-wide, the current level of house break-ins is at a two-year low while the levels of assaults are possibly trending upwards.

"The drops in crime levels are significant, which really means we are seeing less victims of housebreaks and we are making some inroads into reducing this type of crime.

"The possible upward trend in assaults is of concern and we will continue to monitor it but assaults showed a decrease of 5% from the previous quarter and a fall of 7% form the same quarter last year," Dr Toyne said.

"While overall these figures are positive we still have a lot of work to do. We will continue to focus on attacking the causes of crime through targeted crime prevention strategies and supporting the special operations and general work of our police force."

Dr Toyne said that in relation to property offences, the figures showed:

- The underlying average level of house break-ins across the Territory at 237 offences per month is the lowest in two years
- In Darwin the underlying level of house break-ins at 118 offences per month is the lowest in two years
- In Palmerston, the underlying average level of house break-ins is currently at 50 offences per month, at the lower end of a range of between 47 to 70 offences per month recorded for the past two years.
- House break-ins at Katherine are currently at eight offences per month, which is at the middle of a range of 4 to 17 offences per month recorded over the past two years.
- In Nhulunbuy, the underlying level of house break-ins has remained stable over the past two years at two offences per month.
- In Tennant Creek, the underlying average for house break-ins is currently at eight offences per month, the lowest it has been for the past two years.
- In Alice Springs, the underlying average for house break-ins is currently at 19 offences per month, the lowest it has been for the past two years.

"Overall we are making some inroads into reducing crime levels and will continue the efforts on all fronts – law enforcement and crime prevention - to continue to bring the rates of crime down," Dr Toyne said.

NOTE: The Crime and Justice Statistics are a measure of recorded crime across the Territory.

- The data is collected from the Police Real-time On-line Management Information System and the Northern Territory Courts IJIS system
- Nationally it is recognised that there are varying levels of un-
reported crime in our community but that recorded crime is the best available measure of changes in the level of crime in a community.

March Quarter 2003 Crime and Justice Statistics and regional fact sheets are available online at www.crimeprevention.nt.gov.au