



# News

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## Contact Us

Office of Crime Statistics  
and Research  
Justice Strategy Division

GPO Box 464, Adelaide  
South Australia 5001

Telephone: (08) 8207 1731  
Facsimile: (08) 8204 9575

info@ocsar.sa.gov.au  
www.ocsar.sa.gov.au

## Director's Report

This month, OCSAR, in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Criminology, is convening a one day conference entitled "Understanding and responding to chronic youth offending". This conference has attracted approximately 280 delegates, including a number from interstate. Within this context, I thought it may be useful to provide a brief overview of who we are and what we do.

The Office of Crime Statistics and Research, which was established by a Cabinet Minute in 1978, has three key objectives:

- To provide timely, accurate and comprehensive statistical information on crime and criminal justice;
- To conduct research into crime and criminal justice issues in South Australia to assist in policy and strategic development, and to conduct evaluations of the impact of legislative change and new criminal justice practices; and
- To disseminate information on crime and criminal justice to Government, members of Parliament, relevant agencies and the community in order to increase the general level of understanding of, and inform public debate and policy development in, these areas.

The Office's 22 staff service the statistical monitoring, research and evaluation needs of a broad range of stakeholders both within and external to

justice including:

- the Premier, the Attorney-General and other members of parliament;
- Justice Portfolio agencies, including SAPOL, DCS, CAA, Legal Services Commission and the Justice and Attorney-General's Departments (notably the Justice Strategy Division, Strategic Development Division, the Office of the DPP, and Policy and Legislation);
- other Government departments (including the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department for Families and Communities, and the Department of Health) and non-Government agencies (including Victim Support Services and Local Governments).

In addition, through its Public Information Service, OCSAR annually responds to hundreds of ad-hoc requests for information about crime and the criminal justice system for a diverse cross-section of individuals and agencies.

Further information about the Office and copies of its publications released in the last ten years can be found on the website [www.ocsar.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au).

For those of you attending the conference on Chronic Youth Offending, we welcome you and hope that you find the presentations and discussions both stimulating and informative.

**Joy Wundersitz**

# Drug Use Monitoring in Australia - Drug Driving

An addendum on drug driving was included in the DUMA (Drug Use Monitoring in Australia) project during the second quarter of 2005. This addendum was also included in the second quarters of 2003 and 2004.

The purpose of this addendum was to gain a better understanding of the extent and nature of drug driving amongst detainees. Figure 1 shows the percentage of Adelaide City Watch House detainees who reported driving after using drugs in the past 12 months for each quarter that the drug driving addendum has operated in South Australia. As shown:

- There was a decrease in the percentage of detainees who reported driving after using alcohol only (down from 41.9% in 2003 to 26.5% in 2005).
- The percentage of detainees who reported driving after using amphetamines remained relatively stable over the three years at around four in ten.
- After recording a decrease in the previous year, the percentage of detainees who reported driving after using cannabis increased to its highest level (up to 56.6%).
- The percentage of detainees who reported that they had used alcohol in combination with any drug decreased slightly (down to 18.1%).

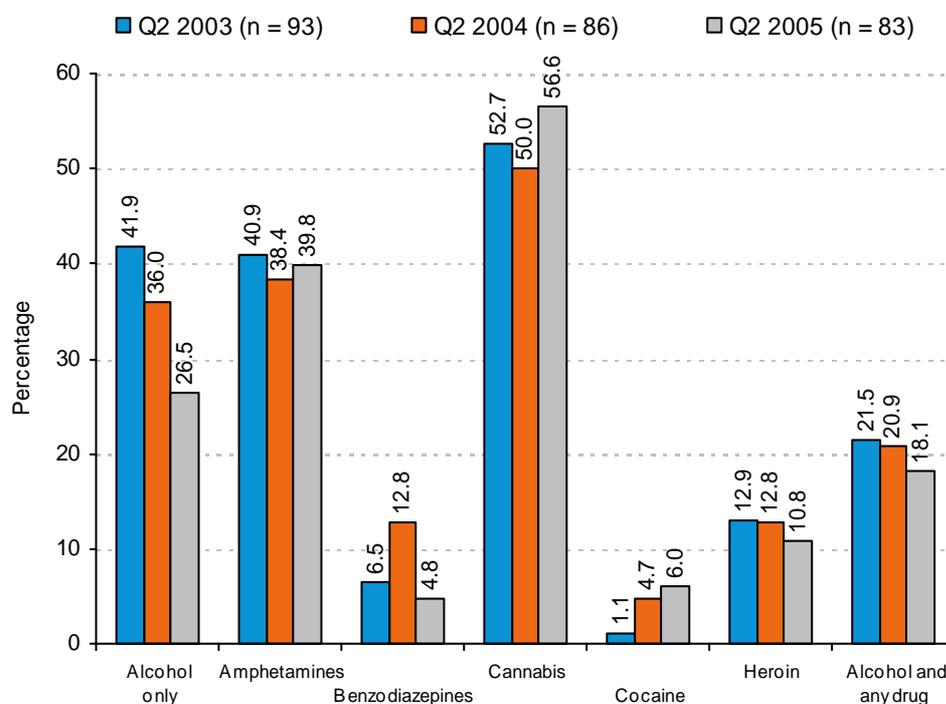
Other key findings from this addendum include:

Over nine in ten detainees who reported that they had been driving, just before being arrested tested positive, to at least one drug (94.7% of Adelaide and 91.7% of Elizabeth detainees).

The vast majority of detainees believed that their driving ability was not affected or affected only 'some of the time' after they had taken drugs.

Over one in ten detainees believed that it was not an offence to drive while under the influence of illegal drugs (15.7% of

Figure 1: The percentage of Adelaide Watchhouse detainees who reported driving after using drugs by drug type, Quarter 2, 2003, Quarter 2, 2004 and Quarter 2, 2005.



Adelaide and 12.5% of Elizabeth detainees). A further 5.2% of Adelaide and 17.2% of Elizabeth detainees were not sure whether it was an offence.

Very few of the detainees (n=15) indicated that they had driven a vehicle that had been pursued by police. However, of these 15 the majority (n=12) reported that they were under the influence of drugs or medications at the

time of the police pursuit.

The most common drug detainees reported that they had used before a police pursuit was methamphetamine (four of the eight Elizabeth detainees and two of four Adelaide detainees) and cannabis (three detainees from each site).

To download this report please visit the OCSAR website: [www.ocsar.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au)

## Staff Developments

Senior Statistical and Research Officer, Nick Turner, has announced that he will be leaving OCSAR in November to take up a position with Victoria's Sentencing Advisory Council.

Nick joined OCSAR after he and his fiancée, Kirsty, moved to Adelaide from Melbourne. Now, three years later, Nick and Kirsty have both obtained positions back in Melbourne. During his time with

OCSAR Nick developed our regional demographic and crime profiles as well as being responsible for OCSAR's analysis of the DUMA and DUCO data. We will miss Nick and wish both him and Kirsty well with their new jobs and their wedding in March.

On a more positive note, we are pleased that both Bevan Fletcher and Grace Skrzypiec have had their contract positions converted to ongoing positions within the office.

# Release of Crime and Justice: Juvenile Justice Report

The second volume of OCSAR's three volume 'Crime and Justice in South Australia, 2004' series has been released. This volume focuses on Juvenile Justice and includes data for the 2004 calendar year. The report, which can be downloaded from our website, includes statistics on:

- Police apprehensions of juveniles and actions taken;
- Formal cautions administered by police;
- Attendance by juveniles at family conferences;
- Appearances by juveniles before the Youth Court;
- Juveniles held in custody in the Youth Training Centres.

Some of the key findings of the report were:

## Police statistics

- During 2004 there were 6,482 police apprehension reports involving young people, which was 9.3% lower than the 7,145 reports in 2003 and 35.9% lower than the peak of 10,118 recorded in 1995.
- Of these, 43.1% were brought about by way of an arrest rather than a report. The figure was higher for those apprehensions involving Aboriginal youths, with 62.9% being arrest-based.
- The 6,482 apprehension reports involved 4,198 discrete individuals. This gives an average of 1.5 apprehensions per youth.
- For those 5,463 apprehension reports where the type of action taken was recorded, 33.0% resulted in a referral to a formal police caution, while 46.9% were directed to the Youth Court. A further 18.8% were referred to a family conference, while 1.3% were withdrawn.
- In total, the 1,802 referrals to a caution in 2004 resulted in 1,793 formal cautions being administered. In just over one quarter of these formal

cautions (26.1%), the young person was required to apologise to the victim while 14.1% involved the payment of compensation, 5.7% required the young person to perform community work, and 41.2% involved some 'other' condition.

- Just under half (46.6%) of the compensation payments were for \$50 or less, while only 2.0% were for amounts in excess of \$500.

## Family Conferences

- In 2004, 1,607 case referrals were finalised by the Family Conference Team. This is 4.1% higher than the 1,543 cases finalised in 2003.
- By the end of the survey period 65.5% were positively finalised, with all undertakings having been complied with. In a further 12.6% of cases, compliance data for undertakings were not available at the time the database was closed off, and so these matters still had the potential to be positively resolved at this level. In contrast, 22.0% of referrals were not resolved, either because the conference had not gone ahead (10.1%) or, if held, had not reached agreement (2.3%) or the resultant undertaking had not been subsequently complied with (9.6%).
- The level of positive finalisation was lower for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal referrals (57.2% compared with 67.3% respectively) largely because of the higher proportion of cases where no conference was convened because the youth failed to attend or could not be located.
- Of the 279 cases that resulted in a compensation agreement, 47.7% were for amounts of \$100 or less. The average amount agreed to was \$246 while the maximum was \$5,497.
- The average number of hours of community work agreed to was 27 (up from 24 in the previous year), while the maximum was 150 (compared with 100 in 2003).

## Youth Court

- The Youth Court finalised 2,402 cases in 2004, which was 12.5% fewer than in 2003.
- In the majority of cases (74.6%) the major charge was proved. In a further 131 appearances (5.5%), the major charge was not proved but there was a finding of guilt to a lesser or other charge. In total then, of the 2,402 cases finalised, 80.1% resulted in at least one charge being proved.
- Obligations were listed as the major penalty in 22.8% of the cases where at least one charge was proved. Fines accounted for 17.8% of cases, licence disqualifications for 14.1% and community service orders for 13.0%.
- The number of 'proved' cases resulting in a detention order was 5.0% while a further 10.5% received a suspended sentence.
- Of the secure detention orders, the average duration was 19 weeks (shorter than the 23 weeks recorded in 2003 but equal to the 2002 average), while the maximum was 69 weeks. For home detention orders the average was 16 weeks and the maximum 26 weeks.

## Juveniles in custody

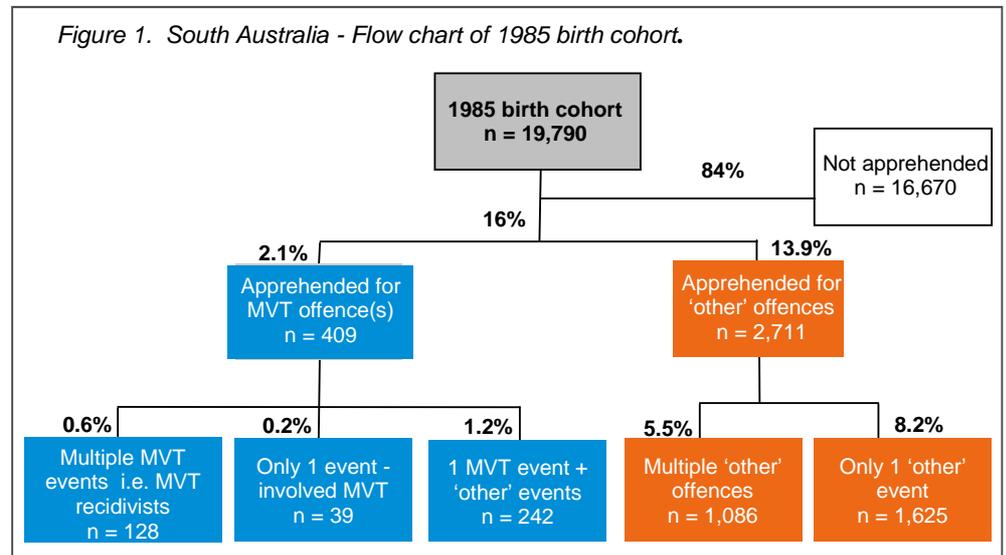
- In 2004, there were 1,121 admissions to the State's two youth training centres. This figure was 5.3% lower than in 2003 and 8.3% lower than in 2002.
- The majority of admissions involved males (84.4%) and Aboriginal youths comprised almost four in ten admissions (38.6%) where racial identity was known.
- On average, 61.30 youths were held in custody per day during 2004 compared with 62.09 in 2003.

To download the full report visit the publications page on the OCSAR website: [www.ocsar.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au)

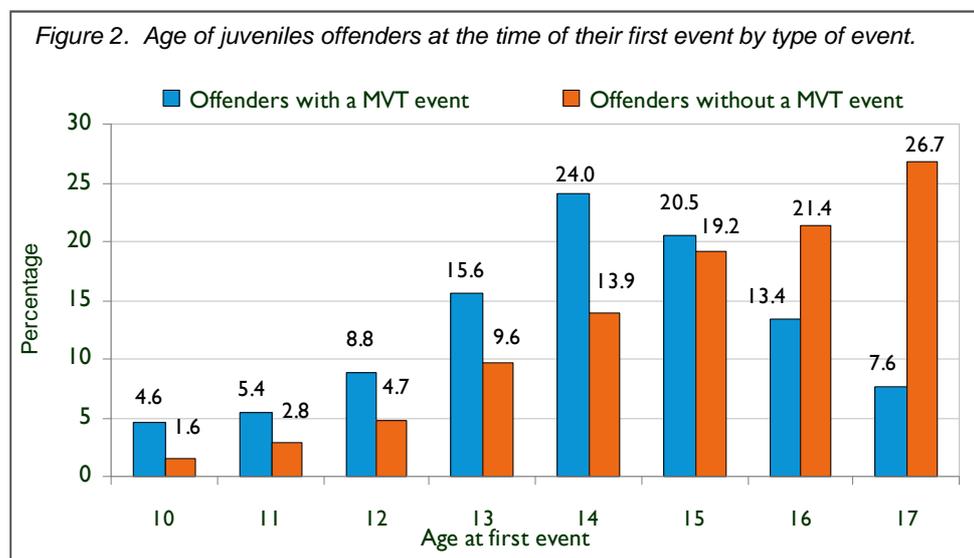
# Juvenile Motor Vehicle Theft Offenders in South Australia

In recent years South Australia's vehicle theft ranking has shown a gradual deterioration. As a result, research was undertaken by the Comprehensive Auto-theft Research System (CARS) on juvenile motor vehicle theft offenders who have been found to comprise around 40% of vehicle theft apprehensions in South Australia. Using cohort data, the study found that:

- Approximately 16 out of every 100 individuals born in 1985 were apprehended for at least one criminal event as a juvenile and of those, around 13% (or 2.1% of the total cohort) recorded an event that involved a motor vehicle theft (MVT) charge;
- For those with a MVT event, 91% recorded further contact with the criminal justice system;
- The average age at which MVT offenders recorded their first criminal event involving any offence was 14.0 years compared to 15.1 years for those who recorded any other criminal event;
- As Figure 2 indicates, one-fifth of the MVT offenders recorded their first event (involving any offence) by the age of 12 compared to 9% for those who recorded any other criminal event;



- Juvenile MVT offenders were nearly three times more likely than other offenders to be identified by police as Aboriginal. Approximately 18% of those with a vehicle theft event were identified as Aboriginal compared to 6% for non-vehicle theft offenders;
- For those with multiple vehicle theft events, the proportion involving Aboriginals rose to 32%;
- Around one-fifth of Aboriginal offenders who recorded a MVT event recorded their first criminal event (for any offence) by the age of 10;
- The majority of those charged with at least one MVT event recorded a more serious criminal event prior to the first vehicle theft event and for those with multiple vehicle theft events the proportion with a prior, more serious event was even greater. This does not support the commonly held belief that MVT is a gateway to more serious offending behaviour.
- Offenders with multiple MVT events recorded an average of 20 events during their juvenile years compared to 4 for those who recorded multiple non-MVT events.



For more information, please contact Emma Ziersch, Project Officer, National CARS Project ph 8207 1954 or download the report from the OCSAR website: [www.ocsar.sa.gov.au](http://www.ocsar.sa.gov.au)

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Natalie Gatis  
 Library/Admin Officer  
 Ph. 8204 9569  
 Fax. 8204 9575  
 or email  
[info@ocsar.sa.gov.au](mailto:info@ocsar.sa.gov.au)