Main Features

Defendant numbers finalised in Higher Courts, annual change:
Queensland 4.3%
Australia 0.2%

Average defendant finalisation time in Higher Courts, annual change:
Queensland 4.6%
Australia 4.7%

Defendant numbers finalised by a guilty verdict in Higher Courts, annual change:
Queensland 19.1%
Australia 14.4%

Commentary

• In 2001-02, there were 7,230 defendants finalised in higher courts in Queensland, a 4.3% increase from 6,932 in 2000-01. Australia had a total of 17,997 defendants finalised in higher courts, down marginally (0.2%) from 18,029 (revised) in 2000-01. Queensland had the highest number of defendants finalised (40.2% of Australia’s total) of all states (Figure 1). One reason for this is because Queensland higher courts process matters such as minor drug offences, whereas other states process these matters in magistrates courts.

Figure 1: Defendants finalised in higher courts, Queensland and rest of Australia

• Of the 7,230 defendants finalised in higher courts in Queensland, 754 defendants (10.4%) were finalised in the Supreme Courts and 6,476 (89.6%) defendants were finalised in the District Courts. Australia had 11.9% of defendants finalised in Supreme Courts and 88.1% finalised in District and Country Courts.

• In Queensland, 6,065 (83.9%) of the defendants finalised were adjudicated. The remaining 1,165 defendants (16.1%) were non-adjudicated. Australia had 84.6% of defendants adjudicated and 15.4% non-adjudicated.

• Figure 2 shows the age profile for defendants finalised in 2001-02. The 25-34 years age group had the highest number of defendants finalised by adjudication.

Figure 2: Adjudicated defendants in higher courts by age, 2001-02

• The average time for defendants finalised in higher courts in Queensland was 20.7 weeks, down 4.6% from last year’s average time of 21.7 weeks. South Australia had shortest average times of 13.1 weeks. The average time for Australia was 20.3 weeks, slightly down (4.7%) from last year.

• There were 266 defendants finalised by a guilty verdict in Queensland higher courts in 2001-02, a decrease of 19.1% over last year. This was third highest after New South Wales and Western Australia. Australian defendants finalised by a guilty verdict decreased by 14.4% to 1,318 defendants.

Explanatory Notes

Defendant: A person or corporation against whom one or more criminal charges have been laid and which are heard together as the one unit of work by a court level.

Finalised defendant: A defendant for whom all charges have been formally completed so that the defendant ceases to be dealt with by the Higher Courts.

Adjudicated: When a defendant’s charge(s) is (are) resolved through a trial or sentence hearing.

Non-adjudicated: When charges are withdrawn, the defendant dies, a bench warrant is issued for a defendant who absconded or an indefinite stay of proceedings is ordered.

Experimental data: This year additional tables containing experimental data for magistrates criminal courts were included, to allow a greater basis for comparison between the states. These tables do not include data from New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory. In addition there are data quality issues which have impacted on the data published for the magistrates criminal courts. Since there are data issues with magistrates courts data no commentary has been included in this brief.