

## Australian Institute of Criminology and The Criminology Research Council

The Australian Criminology Research Act (1971, amended 1986), evolving out of a commitment between the Commonwealth and the states of Australia to promote criminology research, paved the way for the establishment of the Australian Institute of Criminology, The Criminology Research Council and The Criminology Research Fund. The Institute of Criminology and the Criminology Research Council, now a successful joint operation of the Commonwealth, State and Northern Territory governments, provides a bridge between criminal justice administrators and academic researchers.

In seeking methods to reduce the incidence and cost of crime, Australia has acknowledged the need for a systematic plan of legal action supported by practical criminological research. The **Institute of Criminology** was created to assist in criminal justice policy making for all levels of Australian administration and to prevent the duplication of effort and expense by various governments. The basic objective of the Institute is to make an original contribution to knowledge about crime and the operation of criminal justice systems in Australia. The research activity of the Institute revolves around nine major program areas:

- Criminal Justice Statistics
- Policing/Public Security
- Courts and Sentencing
- Penal Policy and Corrections
- Aboriginals and Criminal Justice
- Migrants and Crime
- Corporate and White Collar Crime
- Juvenile Justice
- Special Research Projects.

The present complement of the Institute of Criminology, approximately 25 staff members, work in either the Research and Statistics Division or the Information and Training Division. The Research and Statistics Division focuses on research which has practical policy relevance for Australian society. Information is disseminated through Institute reports, journal articles and media interviews. Recently, *Violence Today*, a newsletter that documents trends in violent crime in Australia was introduced. Members of the Division are frequently invited to prepare submissions on a wide range of criminal justice matters for a diverse number of state and federal agencies.

Researchers and practitioners representing all of the Australian States as well as New Zealand have attended research seminars presented by the Information and Training Division of the Institute. Subjects covered in these seminars include correctional officer training, prevention of property crimes, prevention of suicide in custody, armed robbery and children as witnesses.

**The Criminology Research Council**, which is serviced and supported by the Institute, administers a research fund that awards criminology research grants to universities, government departments and private organizations and individuals. The Council reviews research proposals to determine the

importance and urgency of proposed projects and their relative merit for funding. Funds for the grants are contributed by the various state and territorial governments on a population pro rata basis.

The following is a sampling of ongoing or recently completed research in the corrections area that has been undertaken by the Australian Institute of Criminology or by researchers awarded grants by The Criminology Research Council.

**Careers of Institutionalized Serious Offenders**, Dr. R. Maller, University of Western Australia and R. G. Broadhurst, Health Department of Western Australia. The proposed research aims to describe the institutional history of chronic and serious offenders and will utilize computerized prison records to search for the prevalence of repeat offence and/or examples of progressively serious offences. The proposed research also seeks to demonstrate the evaluative potential of analyzing longitudinal data sets to observe trends in serious criminal behaviour, and to assess the applied utility of incapacitation strategies and targeting or other special identification methods.

**Drug Research Program, Research and Statistics**, Dr. G. Wardlaw. This research program involves the establishment of an extensive reporting and monitoring system for all major health and criminal justice agencies. In-depth interviews with illegal drug users are also being conducted. In addition, a major study has been undertaken on the processing of drug-related cases through the court system and a national conference on drug use indicators has been organized.

**Factors Related to Weapon Choice by Violent Offenders**, Dr. R. W. Harding, Law School, University of Western Australia. The proposed research aims to obtain direct information from adult and juvenile violent offenders convicted of homicide, sexual assault, robbery and serious assault within the last three years. The study is designed to identify the factors relevant to offender weapon choice. The relevance of possible sentences to weapon choice is one area that is being explored. The main contribution of this research is not so much to the prevention of criminal behaviour, as to the prevention of particularly dangerous forms of such behaviour.

**The Morale of Prison Officers in N.S.W.**, Dr. K. R. Smith, Armidale College of Advanced Education. The project focuses on the development of a Prison Officer Morale Questionnaire and collation of baseline data which will provide a resource for future use among Australian prison officers. The identification of morale strengths and weaknesses is a particular focus of this research. The findings from the study will provide a basis for improved or better informed management of prison officers.

**Trends and Issues: Aboriginal Criminal Justice, Research and Statistics**, J. Walker. This paper summarizes the involvement of Aboriginal people in the Australian criminal justice system between 1982 and 1986. It was published in May 1988. Trends in the nature of Aboriginal offending and in Aboriginal imprisonment rates are compared with rates for the general population. The report highlights some of the weaknesses in policing, judicial and other criminal justice procedure. Sentencing options and programs with potential for reducing Aboriginal over-representation in correctional institutions are also outlined in the report.

**Aboriginal Deaths in Custody**, Research and Statistics, Dr. P. Wilson, Dr. P. Grabosky, and A. Scandia. The research is concerned with the incidences of Aboriginal deaths in custody, and concentrates on a

seven-year period beginning in 1980. The aims of the project are to record and present relevant statistical data on the subject and to identify factors which may be contributing to Aboriginal deaths. The information for this overview was derived from the Sixteenth Annual Report of the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Criminology Research Council. Readers who wish to obtain more information on corrections in Australia can consult the recent collection of papers edited by David Biles. The papers were presented at the Australian Bicentennial International Congress on Corrective Services held in January 1988 in Sydney, Australia.

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Biles, D. (Ed.) (1988). *Current Australian Trends in Corrections*. Sydney:Federation Press.