

# President's Message



1st March, 1978

I welcome the opportunity of writing this short note to you all in our Bulletin. Perhaps only those of you who are on the Management Committee, or who have read the detailed minutes of the last meeting of that Committee will appreciate that the last few months have been worrying and busy — worrying because the future of the Secretariat and of those who work for us is in issue, busy because it has been necessary to do everything possible to ensure the Council's survival as a co-ordinated body.

At this stage I believe we have done all we can and we must now await developments. We require a supplementary grant from the Commonwealth without delay and we will require an increased annual grant from the Commonwealth to maintain the Secretariat in the future. Of course the Commonwealth is interested to know how State governments view the problem and the fact is that to date my correspondence with the States has yielded nothing. I do ask that State Committees should do everything possible to inspire some interest and understanding not only of our work, but of our present predicament. Following the response to the letter I wrote to State representatives before Christmas I am satisfied that the Branches agree the necessity of maintaining the Secretariat as a means of promoting and co-ordinating the activities of the State Branches. May I stress that "activity" is the only justification we have in seeking Government funds and I emphasise again how important it is that our activities continue to involve and encourage the volunteer and continue to reach out to those sections of the community who work in the fields of prevention and correction outside the Government agencies.

Because of the many problems involved I remained at the Secretariat for some days after the last Management Committee meeting in January. During that time I prepared a preliminary redraft of the Constitution which is now being considered by other members of the Subcommittee which we set up in August last. My own views are probably well known. Now we have a Secretariat I consider that the number of members on the Executive is too great and the travelling and sustenance expenses thus necessitated not only absorb much of our funding but makes it impracticable to hold sufficient National Executive Meetings. It is essential of course that we have representatives of each State and Territory on the Executive but as our activities are carried out in the States and Territories I query the necessity of co-opted members attending our National Executive meetings, as almost the entire meetings are taken up with administrative and policy matters. I am thus concerned that we are unable to afford more frequent National Executive meetings. They are important for many reasons and they should be held in various centres. Perhaps if we can prune the numbers attending meetings of the National Executive we will further this objective. Another matter which concerns me is to ensure, as a matter of policy, that we do not have an Executive the basic qualification of which is that the members should have their fares paid by Government. This may intrude on the role of the volunteer in our Council. These are personal views and I would welcome your consideration of same at Branch level. If funding permits our next National Executive meeting will be in Adelaide in August and I am anxious that such policy matters be discussed and a new draft constitution be considered so that it can be tabled for decision in Hobart in 1979.

Plans are well in hand for next year's Conference in Tasmania. I was grateful to receive an early refund of \$2,500 from the New South Wales Committee and we have now allocated that sum for the purposes of the Tasmanian Branch.

I am writing this on the assumption it will be included in the second quarterly publication of our Bulletin, a project which is initially experimental but which has great potential. I am sure it will foster comment and criticism. That will not concern me so long as it is read and the circumstances under which it is published are well understood. I would prefer a clamour of criticism to apathetic silence.

We are experiencing disturbed times. The general approach of governments and people to crime prevention is likely to become more authoritarian, more simplistic. The role of some welfare agencies may be in jeopardy. There is a public tendency to believe the emphasis upon rehabilitation has failed to solve any problems. People are being increasingly hurt by crime. Australians are perhaps tiring of an era in which provocation and confrontation has been fashionable and in which obedience to lawful authority has in some quarters been associated to weakness. Confidence in the Criminal Justice System may be wavering. It is important that our activities remain as a catalyst to progressive and humane thinking and as a medium by which we can gain better understanding of the roles of others and of the plight of others.

I think the questions we must ask are whether the work of this Council, our personal efforts as members, our level of activity and the benefit gained, justify our continuing approach to governments and others for considerable funding? In short, is A.C.P.C. making a worthwhile contribution?

Mr. Justice J. H. Muirhead  
President