

# Report To National Executive

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### by Co-Opted Member for Criminology

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The period 1977-79 has been one of difficult yet sustained development in the field of criminology in Australia. Even though criminology is pursued in a number of universities and colleges, the central focus of attention has been on the Australian Institute of Criminology and its sister organisation, the Criminology Research Council.

Notwithstanding severe budget cuts and staff ceiling restrictions, in the past two years the Training Division of the Institute has conducted 27 seminars attended by more than 650 invited participants. These have included judges, senior police and correctional officials, research workers, criminologists, educationists, ex-prisoners and volunteers in the criminal justice system. A number of these seminars focused on the agenda items of the Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. Most Institute seminars have resulted in the publication of proceedings or summary reports, but limited resources have not allowed the Institute to publish full reports of them all. Major Institute training seminar reports include: Armed Robbery; Aborigines and the Law; Penal Philosophies and Practices in the 1970s; and The Police Role in Juvenile Delinquency.

The Research Division of the Institute over the past two years has published books or major reports under the following titles: Crim and Justice in Australia; Crime, Law and Business; Committal for Trial; Drug Use and Crime; The Classification of Convicted Offenders in Victoria; and In Search of Female Criminality. A number of minor reports and research papers have also been produced, including monthly statistical publications on prison trends; probation and parole; and juveniles under detention. Current work of the Research Division covers crime patterns and trends in Australia; principles of sentencing; child welfare law (for the Australian Law Reform Commission); crime in the family; the management of long-term prisoners; white collar crime; prisoners' work; and a number of aspects of police research.

The Institute, through the J.V. Barry Memorial Library, conducts a computerised bibliographical retrieval service (known as CINCH) which is widely used by researchers and criminal justice administrators throughout Australia.

The Criminology Research Council, in the period 1977-79, made 20 grants for research projects to be undertaken at the state or regional level. Since its establishment in 1972 the

Council has provided funds for 59 separate projects with a total cost of approximately \$600,000. In recent years the Council's funds, which come from the Federal and all State Governments, have been severely reduced, but worthwhile work is still being done. The Annual Reports of the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Criminology Research Council provide full details of all of the work being done by these bodies.

In the universities, Melbourne and Sydney are the main centres of criminological teaching and research, but courses in criminology are now being offered at a number of other tertiary institutions.

A further major source of criminological information are the government agencies, namely the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and the South Australian Office of Crime Statistics. Both of these bodies have published invaluable data on the operation of criminal justice within their jurisdictions.

The development of Australian criminology suffered a severe blow when in June 1979 the Federal Government announced that it had withdrawn its invitation to host the Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, which was to have been held in Sydney in August-September 1980. Much of the preparatory work which has been done for this Congress will be of use to the Australian delegation, but the opportunity for active participation in the Congress will now be limited to a very small number of people.

The period under review has not been an easy one for criminology, even though progress has been made. The community is apparently moving towards a "hard line" attitude to the treatment of offenders, as is shown by ever-increasing prison populations, and the limited evidence available suggests that rates of violent crime are increasing. Economic restrictions have placed severe strains on universities and research organisations at the very time when more research and better informed public discussion are urgently needed. The lack of adequate crim and criminal justice statistics is also hindering the development of rational and effective policies for reducing crime. It is hoped that the Australian Crime Prevention Council will continue to give its full support to the advancement of Australian criminology as it has done in the past.

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