

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Phone: 02 6277 3560
legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir or Madam

Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Criminology Research) Bill 2016 Inquiry

I am forwarding this submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for the inquiry on the implications of incorporating the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) into the operations of the Australian Crime Commission (ACC). This is a statement in support of retaining the Institute as an independent statutory authority.

I was employed for 17 years as principal librarian for the Institute and since my public sector retirement I have continued to work on criminal justice research projects in libraries and archives.

The J V Barry Library of the Australian Institute of Criminology, named in honour of Justice Sir John Barry, was opened in 1974, twelve months after the establishment of the Institute. The library would develop, not only to provide valuable support for the Institute's research work, but also to have a significant impact in supporting the work of criminal justice researchers and practitioners in Australia and the wider international community.

The Library now includes the most comprehensive library-based collection in the field of criminology and criminal justice in Australia and has developed into a major criminal justice information resource. It has been a critical feature of the Library's work that the collection and information services should (a) be comprehensive and (b) be readily accessible for researchers and practitioners. Unfortunately the current library has been reduced in physical size with a significant proportion of the collection housed off-site. Located within the high-security premises of the Australian Crime Commission the Library is no longer accessible for genuine researchers.

Until recently the Library was a significant contributor to various information networks. These included *Crimnet* operated by the University of Sydney's Institute of Criminology, in which members contribute current criminal justice information, news of significant events and appointments, and details of new publications. The Institute no longer contributes to *Crimnet*. Internationally, the J V Barry Library was a founding member of the World Criminal Justice Library Network (WCJLN) (founded in 1991) that promotes the sharing of information and resources on an international level. While the Institute still exploits this service, it no longer actively contributes news of events, of appointments or the publication and availability of new resources. The reality is that as a result of the reduction in the Library's outreach there is no other Australian government agency currently providing such information.

Overall, the Institute's J V Barry Library has retreated from being a highly regarded open source information centre with comprehensive criminal justice collections, to a narrower

service, principally serving the research requirements of the Australian Crime Commission. The irony is that the Institute's Library could operate in an open environment as part of an independent statutory authority and still provide information services for staff of the ACC.

Should it be required, I would be happy to elaborate on these issues for the Committee.

Sincerely

John Myrtle