

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee
Submission on proposed *Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Criminology Research)*
Bill 2016

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Introduction

I am former President of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology (ANZSOC) (2005 to 2009), a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, and a Fellow of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) (just one of two Australians to have been elected). I have received book awards from the ASC (1995) and ANZSOC (2015), and was named Distinguished Criminologist by ANZSOC in 2015. I have been an academic for over 35 years, working in the United States (Yale University and University of Michigan) before coming to Australia (Australian National University and Griffith University). I am editor or author of 6 books and over 90 journal articles or book chapters, 20 of which have been reprinted, and 8 translated into Chinese, Dutch, Serbian, Portuguese, and Spanish. I have received six Australian Research Council grants, five as sole CI, totalling over \$1.8 million dollars. These funds have supported my research on restorative justice, Indigenous justice, innovative justice responses to sexual violence and Indigenous partner violence, and redress for institutional abuse of children in Australia and Canada.

Opposition to the proposed merger

The Bill seeks to merge the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) within the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC).

1. This merger will be a profound blow to Australian criminology and its stature internationally. It should not occur. The AIC is the sole national body in Australia, which gathers and analyses statistical data on crime and victimisation, justice responses, and modes of crime prevention. Its capacity to carry out fundamental research in a variety of criminological areas would be diminished significantly by a merger.

2. The AIC was originally established as an independent criminological research body for the Government in 1973. Its data gathering and analysis roles must remain independent to ensure integrity and trust in the data gathered and results reported.

3. The ACIC and AIC have different roles and functions, and their merger will positively hinder AIC's research and dissemination capacity.

4. The ACIC's role is to gather intelligence for effective policing and security of the nation. The AIC's role is to produce research to understand crime patterns, causes of crime, crime prevention, victimisation, justice activities, and prisons. The Bill subsumes AIC's role as a secondary player within an organisation that has an intelligence mandate.

- 4.1 This will result in an erosion of the capacity to build independent knowledge in crime and justice, broadly defined, and to disseminate it to the public.
- 4.2 It will undermine the ability of the AIC to conduct survey research under its own name.

- 4.3 It will lead to potentially questionable research findings that have not been subject to human research ethics review and approval (the ACIC does not require such review).
- 4.4 It will shift AIC's broadly-based research agenda to align with a more narrow one of policing and security on serious and organised crime, which is the focus of the ACIC. Both AIC's and the ACIC's agendas are appropriate and must be carried out, but the AIC's agenda will be subservient to that of the ACIC. This will impoverish fundamental research on crime and justice.

5. ACIC's intelligence role necessitates security burdens that are not required for a research-oriented body like the AIC.

- 5.1 This will hinder the ability of the AIC to conduct research with other national or international organisations because of security concerns.
- 5.2 It creates heavier (but not necessary) administrative and security burdens on the AIC in conducting its research.
- 5.3 It may lead to loss of staff members, who are unwilling to work for an intelligence agency.

6. The merger is unnecessary, inefficient, and will deliver small savings. But at the same time:

- 6.1 It will result in a loss of the AIC's accommodation space and research expertise.
- 6.2 It will reduce the capacity, holdings, and stature of one of Australia's national treasures, the internationally renowned the JV Barry Library.

7. The Government's stated aim for the merger is to provide a comprehensive criminal research resource, but such information sharing (when it is relevant) can be better accomplished in other ways.