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**Crime Inquiry 2014
Submission 077**

Research Director
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Queensland Parliament
Parliament House
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Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) welcomes the opportunity to make the following submission to the Queensland Parliament's Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee as part of its inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland.

The AIC is Australia's national research and knowledge centre on crime and justice and seeks to promote justice and reduce crime by undertaking and communicating evidence-based research to inform policy and practice. This submission provides information regarding a number of aspects of the inquiry as outlined in the call for submissions. This includes information on:

- Key social and economic contributors to crime;
- The role of crime prevention in addressing the social and economic impact of criminal activity on families, businesses or the community at large;
- The effectiveness (including the cost effectiveness) of crime prevention strategies such as imprisonment, justice reinvestment, early intervention and alternative dispute resolution; and
- Models in national and international jurisdictions that could be implemented in Queensland and whether these would be more effective.

If you would like to discuss the submission please contact Dr Rick Brown (Deputy Director Research) via email (rick.brown@aic.gov.au) or phone (tel. 02 6260 9231).

Yours sincerely

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Submission to the Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland

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1. Key social and economic contributors to crime

There are a range of social and economic factors that may contribute to the type and level of crime in the short term. The evidence of the relationship of various social and economic contributors to crime is briefly outlined below. The causes of crime are wide ranging, complex and require a response from a range of agencies, not just from within the criminal justice system. The prevention of crime requires individuals, communities, businesses, non-government organisations and all levels of government to work together in a coordinated way to develop and implement effective strategies to address the short and longer-term causes of crime.

Social exclusion

- The risk of becoming involved in crime, or being victimised, is greater in communities that experience high levels of social exclusion or a lack of social cohesion.
- Social exclusion is both a contributing factor to and consequence of crime in a community.
- Aspects of social exclusion including neighbourhood disadvantage, unemployment, intergenerational disadvantage, limited education prospects, poor child health and wellbeing and homelessness are important risk factors for criminal behaviour (Hayes et al. 2008).
- Victimisation and fear of crime can lead to further social isolation and exclusion (Hayes et al. 2008).
- Recent Australian research has identified the following social and economic factors as being associated with Indigenous people being in contact with the justice system:
 - substance abuse, including the abuse of alcohol, cannabis, inhalants and, increasingly, amphetamines
 - early school leaving
 - unemployment
 - low rates of social involvement
 - living within households that have experienced financial stress
 - living in a crowded household
 - living in an area with perceived neighbourhood or community problems
 - being a member of the 'stolen generation' (Delahunty & Putt 2006; Putt et al. 2005; Weatherburn et al. 2006)
- Other factors have also been identified including child neglect and abuse, poor physical and mental health, a lack of support from parents, families and friends, and the prevalence of family violence and abuse (Snowball & Weatherburn 2006).



Social capital

- Social capital comprises the social norms, social networks and level of trust within a community.
- There is evidence of the benefits of improving social capital in reducing crime and increasing public safety (Johnson et al. 2005).
- Social capital has been linked to better health, improved educational outcomes, improved child welfare, lower crime rates, improved governmental responsiveness and efficiency, as well as productivity gains (Productivity Commission 2003).
- There is evidence that variation in crime rates between different countries could be explained by differences in economic inequality, self-interested behaviour and social trust (Productivity Commission 2003).
- Social cohesion has been found to be related with lower rates of violence (Sampson et al. 1997).

Illicit drug use

- A review of the research into the relationship between drug use and crime found that the drug using population is responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime and that a significant proportion of offenders report using illicit drugs (Urbis Keys Young 2004). This research also found:
 - the relationship is complex: there is little evidence of a direct effect on propensity to offend, and the direction of the relationship is disputed
 - drug use and offending are associated with one another, and both can be considered as the manifestation of deviant behaviour and are mutually reinforcing
 - poly drug use is common among offenders
 - illicit drug use is associated with violent and property crime, with property crime having a stronger association
 - there are marked geographical variations in the relationship between illicit drug use and crime
 - organised crime groups are closely involved in illicit drug markets, and these markets are associated with other types of criminal activity (Urbis Keys Young 2004)
- A meta-analysis conducted by Bennett, Holloway and Farrington (2008) identified that the odds of offending for drug users were three to four times greater than for non-drug users.
- Since 1999, the Australian Institute of Criminology has undertaken the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia Program which has collected data, on a quarterly basis, on alcohol and other drug use and criminal offending in the Australian police detainee population. Data from 2011-12 reveals that:
 - 69 percent of police detainees (n=2,912) who provided a urine sample tested positive to at least one drug
 - approximately a third of police detainees (33%; n=1,378) who provided a urine sample tested positive to two or more substances
 - 23 percent of detainees (n=1,738) self-reported that illicit drug use was a contributing factor in their current offending, for which they were being held by police at the time of interview
 - 19 percent of detainees classified as violent offenders (n=393), by most serious offence classification, and 31 percent of those classified as property offenders (n=445) attributed drugs as a cause of their current offending

Alcohol consumption

- There is strong evidence of an association between the consumption of alcohol and violence (Graham & Homel 2008)
- Frequent heavy drinking episodes are associated with aggression and violence (Wells & Graham 2003).



- In Australia in 2004-05 total costs attributable to alcohol-related crime was \$1.7b (Collins & Lapsley 2008).
- It is estimated that between 25% to 75% of all assaults are alcohol related (McAtamney & Morgan 2009).
- The relationship between alcohol and aggression is the result of a complex interaction of the pharmacological effects of alcohol, individual characteristics, effects of the drinking environment and societal attitudes and values (McAtamney & Morgan 2009).
- Consumption of alcohol at harmful levels (otherwise known as binge drinking) is a prominent feature of the Australian drinking culture (Alcohol Working Group 2009).

Family breakdown and neglect

- Poor parenting practices and child neglect are one of the strongest predictors of juvenile involvement in crime (Weatherburn 2001).
- There is evidence of a relationship between parental abuse and neglect, parental conflict and disciplinary practices, deviant parental behaviours and attitudes and family disruption and juvenile involvement in crime (Tomison 2000; Weatherburn 2001).
- The number of children substantiated by child protection services as having suffered child abuse or neglect has increased in Australia over the past 20 years, leading to significant social and economic costs due to an increased need for child protection and out-of-home care services, as well as the short and long term costs to the child in terms of psychological and physical trauma and damage to family cohesion (Tomison 2003).

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

- The development of new technologies has been identified as a key factor in the expansion of consumer fraud (Choo et al. 2007).
- The increased use of ICT creates new opportunities for technology-enabled crime to occur, including fraud, identity related crime, computer vandalism, theft of information and the dissemination of objectionable material online (Choo et al. 2007).
- It also has the potential to increase the risk of organised crime and terrorism.

Unemployment and socioeconomic conditions

- Regional areas with less stable populations, higher unemployment and low economic stability have higher crime rates (Carcach 2000).
- Male unemployment has been identified as a significant predictor of robbery in New South Wales (Chilvers & Weatherburn 2003).
- An increase in average weekly earnings and possibly a fall in long term unemployment contributed to the decline in property offending in New South Wales (Moffat et al. 2005).
- People earn less illegally (i.e. through criminal activity) when they are working, when they are living with a spouse, when they associate greater risks with crime, and when the unemployment rate is low in their communities (Uggen & Thomson 2003).
- Social and economic stress can have an impact on parenting practices resulting in neglect, poor supervision and inconsistent disciplinary practices, which increase the risk of juvenile involvement in crime (Weatherburn 2001).



2. The role of crime prevention in addressing the social and economic impact of criminal activity on families, businesses or communities at large.

Crime continues to represent a significant social and economic cost. Public concern regarding high crime rates and an increasingly complex global environment suggests that Australia still confronts a considerable challenge. Crime is estimated to cost the Australian community approximately \$35.8 billion per year, which equates to around four percent of national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Rollings 2008).

The AIC is a strong advocate for evidence-based crime prevention. There is a significant body of high quality evidence demonstrating that crime prevention can deliver significant and sustained reductions in crime rates. Effective, evidence-based crime prevention can reduce the long term costs associated with the criminal justice system and the cost of crime, both economic and social, and can achieve a significant return on investment in terms of savings in justice, welfare, health care and the protection of social and human capital (ECOSOC 2002; Homel et al 2006). Crime prevention is recognised internationally as an important component of a national approach to building sustainable communities:

- Evidence from several countries clearly indicates that implementing and sustaining effective and efficient crime prevention programs can contribute significantly to the achievement of safe and secure societies, with significant declines in almost all categories of crime (AIC 2010; Dauvergne 2008; Kershaw et al. 2008; van Dijk et al. 2007).
- There is increasing recognition that well-planned interventions can prevent crime and victimisation, promote community safety and make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of vibrant communities (Bodson et al. 2008; ECOSOC 2002).
- A safe and secure society is an important foundation for the delivery of other key services and community safety and security is a prerequisite for sound economic growth through continuing business investment as well as community well-being and cohesion (Idriss et al. 2010).
- Crime prevention can reduce the long term costs associated with the criminal justice system and the costs of crime, both economic and social, and can achieve a significant return on investment in terms of savings in justice, welfare, health care, and the protection of social and human capital (ECOSOC 2002; Homel et al 2006).
- There is an international trend towards comprehensive integrated approaches to crime prevention, and a growing recognition of the characteristics of effective programs that must be adapted to specific circumstances (Bodson et al. 2008; Homel 2009; Idriss et al. 2010).
- There has been a notable improvement in knowledge based policies and programs, particularly in terms of basing crime prevention on reliable data about crime problems and responses, but there is still room for improvement (Bodson et al. 2008; Idriss et al. 2010).

Crime prevention may have a universal focus through strengthening institutions that support civil society and the rule of law, be directed at the early identification and subsequent intervention in the lives of people or groups at risk of engaging in criminal activity, or be targeted at the prevention of recidivism among those people who have already engaged in offending behaviour. Importantly, there is a range of actions delivered in other sectors (e.g. health, education, housing, human services) which will have an impact on crime levels, particularly in the long term, but which may not have the prevention of crime as their primary goal. While this activity does not necessarily fall within a strict definition of crime prevention, it is important that the potential crime prevention benefits of the policies and programs delivered in these sectors are identified, acknowledged and wherever possible enhanced.

The National Crime Prevention Framework, developed by the Australian Institute of Criminology on behalf of the Australian and New Zealand Senior Officer's Group (ANZCP SOG), sets out a clear agenda for crime prevention in Australia (AIC 2012). It outlines the most effective approaches to the prevention of crime and also describes a range of possible roles and functions for state/territory and national governments for the effective delivery of crime prevention activity in Australia.



3. The effectiveness (including cost effectiveness) of crime prevention strategies such as:

- a. imprisonment;
- b. justice reinvestment;
- c. early intervention; and
- d. alternative dispute resolution.

Imprisonment

Imprisonment aims to reduce crime through incapacitation and/or deterrence (Weatherburn et al. 2006). Incapacitation is based on the logic that offenders who are imprisoned will not be able to continue committing crime in the community (MacKenzie 2006, Weatherburn 2006). Deterrence is underpinned by the notion that imprisoning offenders discourages offenders to commit further crimes (Weatherburn et al. 2009).

- Evidence indicates that imprisonment can be effective in preventing crime, including burglary offences through an incapacitation effect (Weatherburn 2006). However, in order to achieve a 10 percent reduction in burglary the number of offenders held in prison would have to increase by 34 percent. This would cost an extra \$26 million per annum, suggesting imprisonment may not be the most cost-effective strategy for reducing crime (Weatherburn 2006).
- While prison does have an *incapacitation* effect (especially for repeat offenders) there is no evidence that custodial sentences have a *deterrence* effect on juvenile reoffending or that prison deters offenders convicted of burglary or non-aggravated assault (MacKenzie 2006; Weatherburn et al. 2009).
- Further evidence confirms there is no difference in the rate of re-offending between offenders given non-custodial and custodial sanctions (Villettaz et al. 2006).
- Research has shown that the certainty and speed with which offenders are identified and apprehended is a more important factor in deterring offending than the penalties that are imposed. A recent study found that increasing arrest rates has a greater impact on preventing crime than strategies that increase the severity of punishment (Wan et al. 2012).
- Evidence suggests that imprisonment can have a criminogenic effect whereby the risk of recidivism increases once the offender is released from prison (Kinner 2006; Morgan 2013).
- Literature has generally demonstrated that offenders who are engaged in a combination of education and other rehabilitative programs while in prison appear to have more successful outcomes in reoffending (Phipps et al. 1999). These findings are consistent with the Risk-Need-Responsivity model which emphasises the importance of delivering a suite of programs that address a wide range of risks and criminogenic needs (Andrews & Bonta 1994).

While custodial sanctions are an important part of the response to serious and repeat offending, research has repeatedly shown that the programs delivered in prison are far more important in reducing reoffending and thereby reducing the subsequent social and economic impact on the broader community (MacKenzie 2006). For example, it is well documented that prisoners experience high rates of health problems, drug dependence and premature mortality (Gisev et al. forthcoming; Hobbs et al. 2006). The programs that are delivered to offenders while in prison and the ongoing support provided to offenders post-release are crucial for improving these poor health outcomes but also in preventing reoffending. A recent study exploring the impact of Opioid Substitutional Therapy administered to offenders while in prison and post-release, demonstrated the importance of such programs in improving both recidivism and mortality outcomes for Australian prisoners (Gisev et al. forthcoming).



Justice reinvestment

Justice reinvestment originated in the United States to redirect resources spent on prisons to improving the human resources and physical infrastructure of vulnerable communities (Fox et al. 2013; Tucker and Cadora 2003). It was introduced in the US to curb cyclical spending on corrections and to strengthen the capacity of communities with high rates of imprisonment (Fox et al. 2013; Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee 2013; Tucker and Cadora 2003). Justice reinvestment involves a four step process namely justice mapping; development of options; implementation and evaluation. This process ensures limited resources are effectively targeted at communities with the greatest need (Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee 2013).

The US appears to be the only country to have implemented justice reinvestment on a large scale. Given differences in the structure of the criminal justice system and the population more generally between the US and Australia, it should not be assumed that US approach to justice reinvestment could be easily transferred to the Australian context (Baldry et al. 2011; Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee 2013).

There are aspects of the justice reinvestment approach that are relevant to Australia, including its focus on high levels of collaboration and the conduct of rigorous evaluation including cost-benefit analysis (Guthrie et al. 2011). However, the model of justice reinvestment that would most likely benefit Queensland would be a focus on investing in cost-effective strategies proven to prevent crime in order to reduce the costs associated with the criminal justice system. This requires redirecting resources away from the criminal justice system and into primary, secondary and more effective tertiary responses.

There are excellent examples of this approach being used with great effect. The Washington State Institute of Public Policy (WSIPP) was established in 1983 by the Washington Legislature to conduct independent and evidence-based research on a range of policy areas (Lee et al. 2012). The WSIPP model adopts a three-step approach to evaluating and costing policy issues. This involves systematic assessment of evidence on 'what works'; cost-benefit analysis and ranking of public policy options; and risk assessment of their conclusions (Fox et al. 2013; Lee et al. 2012). On the basis of this evidence, and in response to rapidly increasing prison populations, the legislature responded with a portfolio of evidence-based programs. As a direct result of this empirical research, in 2007 the legislature redirected funds allocated to future prison construction to evidence-based crime prevention and intervention programs on the basis of falling crime rates and a projected saving of \$2 billion (Welsh et al. 2013).

The AIC is a strong supporter of this approach, and recommends that a similar program of high quality evaluation and systematic, evidence-based decision making based on rigorous, scientific research be adopted and implemented in Australia.

Early intervention

Early intervention aims to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors that impact on the likelihood that a young person will engage in offending behaviour (Homel et al. 1999). As a crime prevention strategy, it is based on the premise that intervening early in critical transition points in a (typically young) person's development can produce significant long term personal, social and economic benefits (AIC 2007; Homel et al. 1999).

- Evidence indicates that early intervention can be effective in the longer term in achieving significant reductions in participant's involvement in crime, as well as improvements in areas such as educational performance, child maltreatment, workforce participation, child and youth behaviour, income and substance abuse (Homel 2005; Piquerio et al. 2008).
- Evidence suggests that intervening in early childhood, including the antenatal period, has the greatest potential to prevent or reduce the impact of health and wellbeing problems seen later in life (eg Moore 2006).
- Evidence indicates that appropriately designed and targeted early intervention is a cost effective approach to preventing crime (AIC 2007; Manning et al. 2013; Schweinhart 2004). In fact early intervention may generate greater returns on investment than interventions aimed at offenders, additional



expenditure on police, as well as remedial interventions focused on problem behaviour or deficiencies in learning (cited in Manning et al. 2013).

- The savings produced by early intervention programs include reductions in welfare assistance, decreased need for special education, increases in income tax revenue from the higher wages of participation (due to improved educational attainment), reduced operational costs to the criminal justice system, and reduced costs to victims (Homel et al. 2006).

The evidence is clear that investing early in the life course and at key developmental stages is one of the most effective cost-effective approach to reducing crime, particularly in high-risk communities.

Alternative dispute resolution

Restorative justice is a form of alternative dispute resolution involving 'a process whereby all parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively to deal with the aftermath of the offences and its implications for the future' (Marshall 1996: 37). There is evidence of the effectiveness of restorative justice conferencing in reducing reoffending from a number of high quality reviews, including one recently completed by the AIC (Joudo Larsen 2014; Strang et al. 2013).

- Some evidence suggests that restorative justice conferencing is more effective than traditional criminal justice approaches, specifically court proceedings, in reducing reoffending (Latimer et al. 2005; Sherman & Strang 2007). The AIC's recent study found that restorative justice conferencing is effective in reducing reoffending with more serious offences and for crimes involving personal victims (Joudo Larsen 2014).
- These studies also typically highlight that restorative justice conferencing is a highly cost effective approach to reducing reoffending (Strang et al. 2013).
- There is some research however, that has shown little or no difference between re-offending outcomes for those involved in restorative justice conferencing and those processed through traditional court mechanisms (Jones 2009; Smith & Weatherburn 2012; Weatherburn & Macadam 2013).
- Despite this mixed evidence, it is generally recognised that restorative justice conferencing holds significant benefits for the victim (Joudo Larsen 2014; Latimer et al. 2005; Strang et al. 2013; Weatherburn & Macadam 2013).
- There is a need for further research that rigorously explores the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of restorative justice in preventing reoffending.

4. Whether other models in national and international jurisdictions could be implemented in Queensland and whether they would be more effective.

There is a number of resources, some of which have been mentioned above, which highlight effective programs and practices that may be implemented in Queensland to prevent and reduce criminal activity:

- National Crime Prevention Framework, which describes effective approaches to crime prevention and the requirements for successful implementation:
http://www.aic.gov.au/crime_community/crimeprevention/ncpf.html
- Effective crime prevention strategies for implementation by local government, which describes the findings from an AIC review of local crime prevention to reduce common crime problems:
<http://aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/rpp/100-120/rpp120.html>
- Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Group systematic reviews:
http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/reviews_crime_justice/index.php
- Washington State Institute of Public Policy, which describes the evidence and cost-effectiveness for responses to a range of policy issues, not just crime and safety: <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/>
- National Institute of Justice Crime Solutions website, which has a list of effective programs and practices to reduce adult and juvenile offending based on the best available evidence:
<http://www.crimesolutions.gov>



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Using these resources to inform decision-making would assist in further development of the Queensland Government's response to criminal activity, supported by a program of high quality research to determine the benefits of future initiatives for the Queensland community.



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