

26 October 2016

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

**Submission on proposed *Australian Crime Commission Amendment
(Criminology Research) Bill 2016***

Introduction:

The Sydney Institute of Criminology is a research centre based in the Sydney Law School specialising in criminology, criminal justice and criminal law. It is a commercial publishing house producing the international research journal *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* and the Institute of Criminology book series. Institute staff teach the Masters and Graduate Diploma in Criminology at the Sydney Law School and the Institute is committed to public and professional education more broadly. Staff of the Institute advise government and private organisations on matters of crime law and policy and sit on a range of public sector committees and advisory boards.

Opposition to the proposed merger:

The Sydney Institute of Criminology opposes the *Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Criminology Research) Bill 2016*, which seeks to merge the Australian Institute of Criminology's activities with those of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC), another government department.

Our main concerns relate to:

1. Potential loss of independence of the AICs research – the AIC was originally established as an independent criminological research body for the government;
2. Difficulties of having an academic research body working within an intelligence agency – with potential problems of reduced ability to publish work in the public arena; reduced media profile; concern about survey research which requires separation from policing functions – i.e. asking the public to complete surveys that appear to come from an intelligence agency; and the need for human research ethics approval of research projects that an intelligence agency does not need to satisfy;
3. Concern that the focus of the AICs research may be required to align with law enforcement needs, particularly relating to serious and organised crime – the focus of the ACIC;
4. Loss of staff who might be unwilling to work for an intelligence agency;



5. Constraints of heavy administrative and security burden that an intelligence agency has which are generally not required for a research-oriented body like the AIC;
6. Reduced ability of the AIC to conduct research with other organisations locally and internationally through security concerns;
7. Reduced budget as part of a larger entity;
8. Reduced accommodation space and loss of library resources – the JV Barry library is nationally and internationally recognised – and has had to reduce its capacity and holdings.

The important work of the Australian Institute of Criminology holds great significance for the academic criminology community both in Australia and internationally. For over forty years, the AIC's evidence-based research has informed policy and practice on a wide range of criminal justice issues. They have also made key contributions through their regular organisation of conferences and seminars, their countless freely accessible publications, and their hosting of the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards. The Sydney Institute of Criminology opposes the proposed merger due to concerns that the AIC's work would be hindered in the ways explained above, and supports the continued research of the AIC as an independent body.

Yours sincerely,

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Sydney Institute of Criminology Co-Director

Professor Thomas Crofts
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