

## *“From the Director’s Desk”*

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I recently returned from a one semester period of study leave during which I was based at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London, as the Inns of Court Fellow. During my time in London I was able to develop several research interests, and to build on a range of connections which this Institute has with various national and international research agencies. In particular, I participated in the work of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, regarding crime and social integration. Also my involvement in the research program of the United Nations Inter-regional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) was maintained.

A particularly interesting opportunity presented itself through the evaluation of recent jury initiatives in the Russian Federation by academics from Harvard University Law School. I have previously had an involvement in the early stages of this project, and while in London I assisted in the development of a research methodology, and am presently analysing a range of information coming back through the research exercise.

The generous sponsorship of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, and the Inns of Court in London, enabled my enjoyment of a productive and rewarding Fellowship. I am grateful to both organisations, and to colleagues at various universities and research centres for their hospitality and support. I would also like to thank Julie Stubbs for shouldering the burden of the Directorship during my absence, and managing the operations of the Institute, and its publications through a particularly difficult semester. Julie was ably supported by our administrator Fiona Wright, whose enthusiastic commitment to the work of the Institute of Criminology remains invaluable. Unfortunately Fiona will be leaving the Institute before the publication of the next issue of this journal, and I take this opportunity to recognise her essential involvement in ensuring the success of *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* since its inception. Without Fiona’s management of this journal, particularly in recent years, I doubt that its existence, development and impact would have ever been the same.

As editor of this issue I would identify three important themes in the papers that follow.

1. The examination of Aboriginal deaths in custody, and more particularly the role of the police in custodial situations, presents not only a critique of law reform and its implementation, but identifies a range of impediments within police culture towards the accountable exercise of custodial discretion. The debate around the implementation of Royal Commission recommendations affecting police custodial practice in Queensland identifies the gulf between a problem, a policy and a positive impact. Some of the difficulties facing the successful implementation of reforms in policing practice can be directly connected to questions of accountability, and the NSW study on custodial management considered in this issue reveals the link between negative perceptions of accountability and poor information in custodial practice.
  
2. The papers dealing with the decriminalisation of drug use and control put an old debate in a somewhat new context. The health risks associated with drug abuse are explored, and the positive and negative consequences of a shift in control policy are compared. The international political dimension of drug control is

also examined, and the impediments in the way of decriminalisation are contextualised. The South Australian experiment in the partial decriminalisation of cannabis provides an empirical evaluation of law reform initiatives against a background of political and community concerns.

3. The legal ramifications of transsexual surgery involve much more than nice points of jurisprudence. The paper and comment here reveal the vulnerable connection between gender determination, community status and criminal justice protections. In addition the discriminatory potential of the criminal sanction through its conflation of victim and offender is vividly portrayed in the sex change case law.

If there is any common theme in this fascinating and eclectic array of considerations for this issue, it might be a concern for the implementation of law reform and the development and determination of criminal justice policy. The paper on “Regulatory Strategies for Money Laundering” identifies such themes which are then taken up throughout this issue either in the context of social control, policing practice, or legal status.

This journal has drawn a readership interested in the complex variety of crime and criminal justice, and that readership will not be disappointed by the rich range of issues that are presented in the issue that follows.

*Mark Findlay*  
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