



OFFICE OF
CRIME STATISTICS
AND RESEARCH

OCSAR NEWS

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Director's Report

In June 2005, three representatives from OCSAR attended a two day national conference entitled *Safety, Crime and Justice; From Data to Policy* which was jointly convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. While more than 40 papers were presented, covering a diverse range of topics, the most prominent theme running through these was the need for greater linkages at all levels of the research/policy hierarchy.

At the most basic level, a number of speakers stressed the need for greater linkages between data sets. OCSAR's Jayne Marshall, in her paper entitled *Criminal justice data: limitations and implications for policy research*, argued that not only was there a need to integrate the various criminal justice data sets (such as police, courts and corrections data) for the purposes of recidivism and tracking studies, but there was a growing requirement to link data from a range of Government Departments, such as Justice, Health, Human Services and Education, in order to answer the more fundamental questions now being posed by Government. For example, such information could be used to identify whether or not there is a relationship between juvenile offending and being placed under the Guardianship of the Minister, or whether having a history of mental illness leads to greater involvement in crime.

While endorsing this need, Dr

Anna Stewart (Griffith University, Queensland) outlined the range of privacy issues confronting researchers who attempted to gain access to linked data, and identified the need for changes to the national privacy legislation to allow greater flexibility in this area.

At a second level, various presenters identified the need for greater linkages in terms of who should actually conduct the research. In his paper, *Tackling the knowledge deficit in policing: strategic change versus ad hocery and paintjobs*, David Bradley (a Research Fellow from Victoria Police) noted that much of the national and international policing research suffered from the fact that it was done entirely by academics without any input from police officers. He argued that a more collaborative or linked approach based on direct police involvement in the research process would give that research greater credibility and increase the likelihood that its findings would be used by police departments for policy and operational development.

Steve Larkin (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) also raised the need for greater involvement of Indigenous communities and individuals in the research process when Indigenous issues were being investigated.

At a third level, other papers reflected the need for greater linkages between researchers and policy developers. Chris Libreri (Director of the ABS

National Centre for Crime and Justice Statistics), in outlining a national information development plan for the criminal justice sector, demonstrated how the identification of key policy needs at a state and national level could be used to stimulate new data collection processes and research agendas in the criminal justice arena. Conversely, Michael Livingston (Griffith University, Queensland), in presenting the key findings from his study of the offending trajectories of a cohort of young people, illustrated how research could help in the formulation of new policy and practice in the area of juvenile justice.

Overall, the conference raised a number of critical issues and has triggered OCSAR's involvement in several new national initiatives relating to data sharing and privacy legislation.

A selection of papers from this conference should be available in the near future on the AIC website at <http://www.AIC.gov.au>.

Joy Wundersitz



Government
of South Australia

OCSAR's Year in Review, 2004

The recently released "Office of Crime Statistics and Research: Year in Review, 2004" seeks to present, in one document, a comprehensive overview of the work being undertaken by the Office.

The report is divided into a number of chapters, with the first providing a description of OCSAR's role and structure. Chapters in the remainder of the document are devoted to the Office's six key work areas. Some of the key achievements within each work area as detailed in the report, are described below.

Work Area 1: Data management and application development:

In 2004, this included

- The development of an offender based tracking system which gives the Office the capacity to 'track' from the initial report to police through to finalisation in court and incarceration in a correctional facility; and
- The development of three computer-based applications to better

enable the Office to respond to the increased demand for spatially-based crime data.

Work Area 2: Research into crime and criminal justice issues:

While the research projects undertaken during 2004 covered a broad range of topics, a number focused on young people and their involvement with the juvenile justice system. One such study profiled 'chronic offenders' aged 16 to 20 years. This research is feeding into the Social Inclusion Unit's 'Breaking the Cycle' initiative and highlights how the Office's work can influence policy and program development.

Work Area 3: Evaluation of criminal justice initiatives:

During 2004 OCSAR's evaluation activities continued to expand, as reflected by the provision of an advice service designed to assist other agencies to undertake their own evaluations. By evaluating programs such as the Police Drug Diversion Initiative (PDDI) and Court Assessment and Referral Drug Scheme (CARDS),

which have been introduced to respond to illicit drug use and related offending, OCSAR again provides a strong evidence base for policy and program development.

Work Area 4: Statistical monitoring:

While still producing the traditional three volume *Crime and Justice* report based on calendar year data, work commenced on the conversion to a financial year report. After reviewing the content, presentation and usability of the information contained within *Crime and Justice*, an experimental version of the revised report is now being developed. This is a major undertaking, which will continue during 2005.

Work Area 5: Information dissemination:

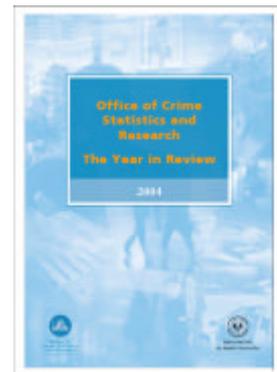
During 2004 OCSAR continued to respond to a large number of requests for information from a variety of sources. It also explored alternative methods of information dissemination. The website remained a key point of contact for external clients, while other avenues explored for disseminating information in 2004 included a

seminar series and the launching of this newsletter.

Work Area 6: National CARS (Comprehensive Auto-theft Research System) project:

Highlights during 2004 include the receipt of an award from the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators for "Outstanding contribution to the reduction of motor vehicle theft throughout Australia" and being commissioned to undertake a study on the feasibility of expanding CARS to New Zealand.

The 'Year in Review' report can be downloaded from the OCSAR website www.ocsar.sa.gov.au



Evaluation of Local Vehicle Theft Reduction Initiative

OCSAR has recently been invited by the South Australian Vehicle Theft Reduction Committee (SAVTRC) to undertake an evaluation of a scheme which aims to reduce vehicle theft by offering subsidised engine immobilisers to University and TAFE students.

The pilot program developed by the SAVTRC and jointly funded by the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council,

RAA, Attorney General's Department, SAPOL, Transport SA, and the Adelaide City Council, has identified that students are likely to drive older, non-immobilised vehicles, park in high risk locations and are less likely to be covered by insurance.

Data from the OCSAR's CARS database also reveals that:

- 84% of all vehicle thefts involve non-immobilised vehicles,

- 25% of all vehicles stolen are valued at less than \$1,000 and 70% are valued at less than \$5,000
- 30% of vehicle thefts within the Adelaide metropolitan area during 2004 occurred within a 1 km radius of the major tertiary institutions.

Under the Immobiliser Subsidy scheme tertiary students who drive older vehicles receive an approved engine immobiliser fitted to their vehicle for \$50 - a

rebate of \$100 off the normal retail price.

The evaluation will be completed later this year and will involve the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data from a range of sources.

For further information about this evaluation please contact:

Bevan Fletcher, Senior Research and Evaluation Officer on ph.(08) 8207 2157

Recorded Crime-Victims, Australia, 2004: the South Australian perspective

In June 2005 OCSAR published an Information Bulletin summarising the key South Australian findings from *Recorded Crime-Victims, Australia: 2004* (cat. no. 4510.0), released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on 23rd June 2005. *Recorded Crime* is an annual publication produced by the National Crime Statistics Unit within the ABS. It enables comparisons of rates of recorded crime between the states for those offences for which nationally comparable definitions have been developed (namely: *homicide and related offences, kidnapping/abduction, robbery, blackmail/extortion, unlawful entry with intent, motor vehicle theft and other theft*).

While a summary of the key national findings are presented at the beginning of the ABS publication, the OCSAR Information Bulletin provides an overview of the South Australian data. More specifically, it details

- the number of South Australian victims per offence category recorded by police between January and December 2004 and;
- examines changes in victimisation rates within South Australia between 2003 and 2004;
- compares recorded crime rates in South Australia with other jurisdictions in 2004; and
- compares South Australian and national crime trends from 1995 to 2004.

As detailed in the Bulletin, compared with the previous year, South Australia recorded decreases in the rate of victimisation in 2004 for *robbery, blackmail/extortion, unlawful entry with intent and other theft*.

Conversely, increases were recorded for *homicide and*

related offences and kidnapping/abduction. However for both offence categories the rates of victimisation remained relatively low. A small increase in the rate of victimisation per 100,000 persons (of 2.5%) was also recorded for *motor vehicle theft*.

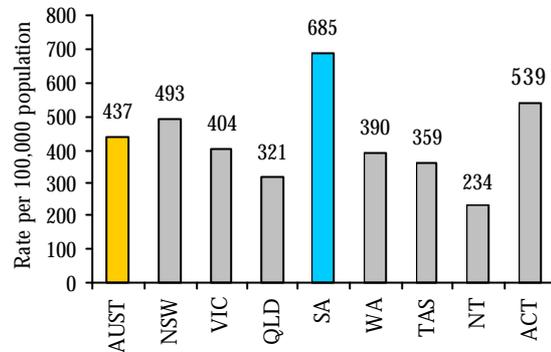
Despite experiencing decreases in the victimisation rates for a number of offences, in 2004 South Australia had a higher rate of recorded victimisation than the national average for the following offence types:

- *homicide and related offences* (6 victims per 100,000 persons in South Australia compared with 4 in Australia);
- *blackmail/extortion* (3 victims per 100,000 persons compared with 2 respectively);
- *unlawful entry with intent* (1,742 victims per 100,000 persons compared with 1,534). However, within this category, while South Australia recorded a markedly higher rate for *UEWI-other*, it recorded a slightly lower rate for *UEWI involving the taking of property*;
- *motor vehicle theft* (685 victims per 100,000 persons compared with 437); and
- *other theft* (3,422 victims per 100,000 persons compared with 2,724).

South Australia recorded a lower rate than Australia for:

- *kidnapping/abduction* (2 victims per 100,000 persons compared with 4); and
- *robbery* (81 victims per 100,000 persons compared with 82). However, within this category, South Australia had a higher rate for *armed robbery* and a lower rate for *unarmed robbery*.

Figure 1 Victims of motor vehicle theft by state/territory, 2004



In 2004, South Australia recorded the highest rate of *motor vehicle theft* of any jurisdiction (refer to Fig 1). This may, in part, be due to this state having one of the oldest fleets in Australia. In terms of the other six offence types included in the national collection, in 2004:

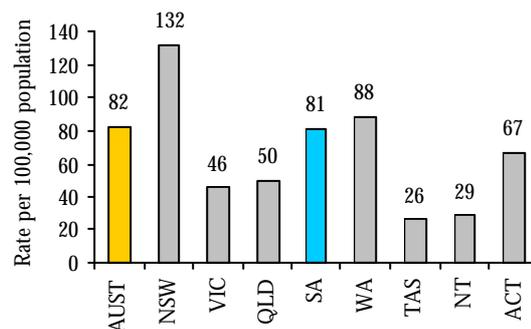
- South Australia's rate for *homicide and related offences* was second behind the Northern Territory;
- all Australian jurisdictions recorded very low rates of *kidnapping/abduction* (between 1 and 3 victims per 100,000 persons), with the exception of New South Wales (7 victims per 100,000 persons);
- while all jurisdictions recorded low rates of *blackmail/extortion* (4 or less victims per 100,000 persons), South Australia's

rate was second behind Western Australia;

- South Australia recorded the third highest rate of *robbery*, behind Western Australia and New South Wales (refer to Fig 2). The latter's rate of 132 victims per 100,000 persons was well above the other jurisdictions;
- South Australia recorded the second highest rate of *UEWI* behind Western Australia;
- South Australia also recorded the second highest rate of *other theft* behind Western Australia.

For further information go to the OCSAR website www.ocsar.sa.gov.au

Figure 2 Victims of all robbery by state/territory, 2004



Chronically Offending Youth and Multiple Service Use

OCSAR has recently commenced a national consultancy, funded by the Australian Criminology Research Council, to investigate the link between chronic offending amongst young people and their multiple use of social services.

The study was prompted by anecdotal information which suggests that chronically offending youth are also likely to have a history of contact with social service agencies. If true, it opens up important questions about the potential impact of service provision on the criminal pathways of young people. Yet, despite its importance, the link between chronic offending and multiple service use has not been empirically tested in Australia.

The aims of the study are to:

- Examine the nature and extent of the relationship between chronic offending and multiple service use amongst young people (aged 10 to 17 years);
- Identify whether the factors associated with multiple service use amongst chronic young offenders differ from those of non-chronic offenders;

- Assess the effectiveness of service delivery amongst chronic young offenders, including its impact on key outcomes in the criminal justice system; and
- Identify policy implications, including identification of best practice in the type and timing of multiple service provision for chronic young offenders.

The project will involve identifying a group of chronic young offenders and one or more comparison groups of non-chronic offenders and linking these offenders to records maintained by other relevant agencies (eg Health, Families and Communities and Education) to determine their level of service use both prior to and after contact with the criminal justice system.

The study will be conducted in two stages. Stage 1, currently underway, is a feasibility study to determine:

- whether the electronic linking of data across Portfolios is possible and if so, how;
- whether sufficient information is available from both electronic data bases and

manual case files to answer the key research questions; and

- whether privacy and ethical issues can be resolved.

If the results of Stage 1 are positive, actual data collection and analysis will be undertaken in Stage 2.

The consultancy will provide information that will assist agencies to understand how their current service delivery models are impacting on offending, particularly amongst chronic offenders, which should help agencies deliver more appropriate, more efficient and more coordinated services for this group of youths.

In addition, this project will act as a 'demonstration model' to develop and test a methodology for linking electronic data bases across South Australian Government agencies. If the methodology succeeds, this will open the way for a whole range of research and evaluation initiatives that are currently not feasible.

For further information please contact:

Jayne Marshall, Senior Research Officer on ph.(08) 8207 1735

The next issue of OCSAR NEWS will be released in August 2005

Staff Developments

Sophie Kriven joined the Office of Crime Statistics and Research in May 2005 as a Senior Research Officer with the Comprehensive Auto-theft Research System (CARS) project. In this role Sophie will begin by researching the effectiveness of new car security in Australia. She will also be involved with the ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of Datadots as a theft deterrent for professional vehicle theft.

Prior to her appointment with OCSAR, Sophie worked for five years as a research and evaluation officer with the

Cancer Council of South Australia's Tobacco Control Research and Evaluation Program (TCRE).

Russell Brewer joined the Office of Crime Statistics and Research in June 2005 as a visiting Criminology student from Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. During his semester long work experience practicum at OCSAR, Russell has been working with the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) project, examining current trends and issues relating to substance abuse and drug dependence among

Indigenous police detainees in South Australia.

In conjunction with his position at OCSAR, Russell is also currently working at the School of Law at Flinders University as another separate component of his field placement. At Flinders, Russell has been working with Professors Kathy Mack and Sharyn Roach Anleu in relation to the Magistrate Research Project, as well as with Professor Andrew Goldsmith with respect to his research regarding the performance of Australian police in recent and continuing assistance roles offshore.