



Careers in Criminology and Criminal Justice in Australia

Garner Clancey



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This book is dedicated to NH, IC and NC –
you make it all worthwhile and remind me that
work is only part of life.

Thanks also to my parents (Bev and Ken)
and Aunty and Uncle (Kay and Barry)
who, in their lifetimes, made the most of the
chances that befell them
and made sure I was given a solid start,
a good education, and love and guidance –
I will never be able to thank you enough.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| AIC | Australian Institute of Criminology |
| AOD | alcohol and other drugs |
| BOCSAR | NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research |
| CALD | culturally and linguistically diverse |
| CPTED | crime prevention through environmental design |
| LGA | local government area |
| NAAJA | North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency |
| PCYC | Police and Community Youth Club |
| YAPA | Youth Action and Policy Association |
| YLO | Youth Liaison Officer |

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Garner Clancey
September 2025

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY CAREERS CENTRE

Visit the Careers Centre, located in Carlaw West (or www.sydney.edu.au/careers), to learn more about the extensive range of free services available to support you in planning and achieving your career goals.

The Careers Centre offers a variety of opportunities designed to help you explore career options, build employability skills, and connect with potential employers, including:

- Careers workshops, fairs, and events that provide practical guidance and industry insights
- Employer information sessions to meet and learn directly from organisations across diverse sectors
- Individual consultations with the Career Development Team, offering tailored advice on career planning, job applications, interviews, and more.

Whether you are preparing for internships, graduate roles, or simply exploring future career directions, the Careers Centre is here to support you every step of the way.

INTRODUCTION

Crime devastates victims, attracts headlines, and fascinates many around the world. But definitions of criminology are, and the work of criminologists is, often less dramatic. The *Oxford Dictionary of Law* defines criminology as the study of crime – interesting, but what jobs are there for criminologists? Very few, if you take the name only. There are next to no jobs advertised for criminologists per se, which can leave criminology students uncertain about how they move from a degree to a job.

And yet, at any one time, thousands of university students are studying criminology in Australia, and many more thousands across the world – perhaps you are one of them. This might be through enrolment in a Bachelor of Criminology or a Master of Criminology. Or it might be through one of numerous variations – a Bachelor of Justice Studies, a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Criminology, a Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, a Bachelor of Criminology and Psychology. Or you might take criminology as a major or minor component of a broader undergraduate degree. Alternatively, you might be studying a related degree but hanker for a job in the criminal justice system.

Many universities offering criminology and criminal justice degrees in Australia (and elsewhere) have developed career guides of one kind or another. They tend to list some possible career paths, and often include pictures of and stories about former students who have embarked on their careers. Most do not describe in great detail what the various jobs entail, or the breadth of roles potentially open to criminology graduates, or the skills and knowledge required to do the job.

Some of the roles and careers mentioned include case managers, court officers, intelligence officers, police detectives, and various specialisations including crime prevention, cybercrime, terrorism, youth justice, law enforcement, victim support or offender rehabilitation and reintegration.

To take a recent sample, one university in its online career guide lists the top skills employers look for in criminology and criminal justice professionals:

- A broad knowledge of the criminal justice system, and the causes and effects of criminal behaviour.
- An understanding of new and emerging digital innovations and applied technology used in the field.
- Advanced research, investigative and analytical abilities.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills.
- Excellent interpersonal and teamwork skills, with a passion for helping others.

Helpful, but a little generic.

Another university in its online promotional material lists some career outcomes:

- Policing and security
- Intelligence

- Probation and parole
- Child protection
- Crime analysis
- Courts and justice services
- Crime prevention
- Regulatory agencies
- Research and policy
- Community welfare and victim support.

Useful, but very broad.

A third university says the following about career opportunities:

Demand for criminologists in Australia is high in both public and private sectors. As a graduate, you can expect to apply to work in law enforcement agencies, government agencies, non-profit organisations (eg, criminal justice reform, victims' rights, or crime prevention, and the private sector (eg, in security, insurance or investigations). Roles might include criminologist, intelligence analyst, correctional officer or investigator.

I even created my own guide:



These are helpful, but limited in various ways. Listing roles does not engage deeply with the nature of the work: the 'usual suspects' are often listed without the non-traditional roles that criminology graduates might find attractive, and the day-to-day cut and thrust of the roles is rarely described. I hope to address some of these limitations.

Many students, it seems to me, are drawn to criminology because of the perceived vocational opportunities post-graduation. And yet their experiences as a student might not offer them a chance to develop the skills that are needed for work in the various criminal justice and related agencies. I've written this book to illuminate some of the many different roles to which a criminology graduate might be well suited.

Part 1 explores some of the roles that a criminology graduate might find themselves in, exploring many that are not routinely captured in career guides prepared by universities. In doing this, I hope to open up possible career options that might not readily be apparent to students, and to stimulate some reflection about how you might prepare for a career in criminology or criminal justice. Having some appreciation of the work done in these roles and the skills required can be useful. Theory is critical but applying theory in various settings invariably requires working with people individually and in groups, with IT systems, and with policies and politics. Acquiring the relevant soft skills to do this work is critical yet, in my opinion, undervalued within the academy (with some notable exceptions).

Part 2 of the book is autobiographical. I have documented my own journey (retrospectively), reflecting on various roles I have held over the years, some of which are 'bread and butter' roles within criminal justice settings which provide good career options for criminology graduates. While some of the roles and projects I mention in Part 2 are now necessarily a long time ago, I have tried to tease out general and contemporary insights to help you consider what pathways you might take and the skills you might need to develop. This is likely to require participation in training courses and experiences outside the academy.

My career, like many, has been a combination of serendipity, good fortune and happenstance. I spent nearly 10 years working in criminal justice roles in the NSW Public Service; a further 10 years consulting (effectively working for myself), which brought me into contact with various non-traditional roles that criminologists might find themselves in; and a further 13 years (and counting) as an academic criminologist. My experience might not be especially representative, but the diversity of experiences sheds light on different career options.

I have been incredibly privileged to have made a career (to date) from working as a criminologist. It has taken me into people's lives in ways I could not have imagined; immersed me in areas and geographies that otherwise would have been foreign to me; and allowed me to travel, make life-long friends and witness people's struggles and triumphs. I have loved almost every minute of my working life, for which I am incredibly thankful. I hope that sharing some of my experiences helps you think about your own career.

Another reason for writing this book is to encourage thinking outside the discipline of criminology. In my experience, there is a need to engage with human services systems and policies. It probably goes without saying that people coming into contact with the criminal justice system are frequently from certain postcodes and backgrounds of disadvantage. No amount of cognitive behavioural therapy will address issues of disadvantage, or the hopelessness engendered by outrageously high rates of youth unemployment in many areas. No amount of wishing things to be different will make it so. Thus, policy areas that cover homelessness, social housing, child protection, employment, education, vocational training, mental health, disability, welfare and child care are all critical. This can be daunting, especially given the speed of change in many of these areas, but they are crucial to understanding the conditions confronting the

individuals who fill prisons. Criminologists can and do find themselves working in these policy and practice areas, sometimes after starting in frontline criminal justice roles and moving elsewhere as their insights, knowledge and connections develop. Others are drawn to work in criminal justice and related agencies by various personal motivations or by opportunities that arise. And given student debts, mortgage stress, cost of living pressures and the like, a job is a job is a job.

Not every possible job or career option is, or can be, covered here. I have tried to provide suggestions in diverse areas where criminologists work, but I acknowledge that gaps remain. In our environment of rapid technological change, it is also likely that some roles do not exist at the time of writing. Developments in artificial intelligence may greatly impact some aspects of criminal justice work: reports may be written and case plans drafted by artificial intelligence; virtual caseworkers may provide round-the-clock assistance, etc. That said, many roles have been largely unchanged for decades and are likely to persist into the future with only limited impacts of technology.

I have made this book available as a free download. I would welcome your feedback so I can improve future editions. Please email me at garner.clancey@sydney.edu.au with your feedback.

PART 1:

AN OVERVIEW OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE ROLES

Many career guides drafted for criminology students outline similar roles, often within the three major pillars of the criminal justice system – police, courts and corrections. While these are all relevant, there are so many more possible career options for graduates of criminology and related degrees. I outline many in this part of the book. I have tried to not only show the diversity of possible roles, but also reflect roles at different levels – entry level through to more senior roles. This is to show that there are many possible permeations of a career in criminology and criminal justice and to highlight the real prospects for career advancement, should you be so inclined. Many people spend much or all of their working lives in criminology and criminal justice systems and institutions. Many won't have had very clear plans at the start of the careers, but knowing the different skills, qualifications and experience required to move up the career ladder, should that be desirable, will be beneficial.

In compiling this section, I have drawn heavily on position descriptions from job advertisements that I have collected over the last few years. The position descriptions incorporated throughout are from different jurisdictions in Australia (and some beyond) for jobs with government agencies, non-government organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, research institutes, universities and for-profit companies. I have liberally used text from job advertisements and position descriptions to show what employers expect from future employees. This does not necessarily make for the most dynamic text, but it is very informative (I believe) with regards to the qualifications, skills, expertise and work contexts of various roles. The job descriptions included are obviously no longer positions that are open. The point is not that you will be applying for these exact jobs but that you will use them as a guide to plan your studies, possible voluntary and casual work, decide what if any short courses would usefully augment your studies, and how you might start building a case for a future job application and plan your career.

I have also provided a deep dive into some of the job descriptions to unpack different terminology and concepts that might not be immediately understood. It is hoped that this will help to identify areas of personal and professional development. If you are just starting your criminology (or related) degree, you will have considerable time to strategically plan the subjects or units you take, the extracurricular activities you engage in, and how you might demonstrate particular competencies, including through highlighting how experiences from your life can be applied in a criminology or criminal justice work context. For example, you might have experience as a sporting coach or a referee, or have volunteered for the State Emergency Service or as a surf life saver. You

might have deep experience in your community (faith, cultural, local). Or you might have lived experiences that provide you with valuable insights into the experiences of people impacted by crime or the criminal justice system. All of these experiences can be mobilised in your application for one of the many roles considered here.

This book is not designed to help you prepare a résumé or to replace employment search engines. There are numerous online resources, career guidance supports at universities, and job finding search engines that you will undoubtedly utilise (including university career centres, such as the [University of Sydney Careers Centre](#)). Rather, this book presents an array of career options that might not immediately be apparent and provides you with some personal reflections on my own (necessarily limited) experiences working in youth detention, restorative justice, community corrections, consulting, evaluation, program design, policy implementation, teaching, researching, training and numerous other aspects during my journey of 34 years (and counting) in criminology and criminal justice. Taken together, I hope that you finish the book feeling better informed about career options and the nature of some of the work, and ready to craft your own career in criminology and criminal justice.

The remainder of Part 1 will work through the many roles that you might consider, covering (in no particular order):

- policing;
- courts, legal services and sheriffs;
- corrections (community and prison/detention) – adult and youth
- victims of crime agencies and services;
- crime statistics and research agencies;
- universities;
- non-government organisations;
- universities;
- local government; and
- retail theft, risk management and intelligence.

What will quickly become apparent is that there is a complex web of agencies, and roles at various levels in any one jurisdiction, that make the above distinctions somewhat arbitrary. They are used as a general guide but, in reality, you might find yourself working inside a policing agency doing research or conducting evaluations, or in a crime prevention role in a local government or council, or doing important program development and implementation work in an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, amongst many other permeations. Thus, the borders between areas of work and organisations will be much more porous than might appear obvious from the outside.

Police

Policing agencies are some of the largest employers in Australian criminal justice systems, with nearly 70,000 employees in Australia. Table 1 provides a list of these policing organisations.

Table 1: Police Agencies in Australia (at August 2025)

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|
| Cth | Australian Federal Police | https://www.afp.gov.au |
| ACT | ACT Policing | https://police.act.gov.au |
| NSW | NSW Police Force | http://www.police.nsw.gov.au |
| NT | NT Police | https://pfes.nt.gov.au/police |
| Qld | Queensland Police Service | http://www.police.qld.gov.au |
| SA | South Australia Police | http://www.police.sa.gov.au |
| Tas | Tasmania Police | http://www.police.tas.gov.au |
| Vic | Victoria Police | http://www.police.vic.gov.au |
| WA | WA Police Force | http://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/western-australia-police-force |

The bulk of the positions in any policing organisation will be for sworn police officers – that is, officers who have formally joined the organisation, completed relevant training and been sworn in as police officers. They will be the ones who are depicted in police dramas, TV shows, movies and the like, driving fast, investigating crimes, policing the streets, etc. Some criminology students might pursue a career in frontline policing but many are unlikely to do so. Nonetheless, policing agencies might still provide opportunities for criminology students. Every policing agency will have a significant number of unsworn roles in diverse areas such as policy branches, training units, public affairs teams, research and statistics departments, etc. These unsworn or civilian roles might be attractive to criminology graduates – a number are described below.

The website of the [Queensland Police Service](#) lists numerous roles under the following headings:

- aviation;
- communications operator;
- communications, culture and engagement;
- corporate and administration;
- education and training;
- forensics;
- health and wellbeing;
- information technology;
- intelligence;

- operational frontline support;
- police liaison officers;
- prosecutions (legal roles); and
- safety strategy.

This shows the diversity of activities and functions within a policing agency. Various roles in each of these branches or sections will be performed by unsworn public servants and criminology graduates would be suitable for some of these roles.

A position description for a Program Coordinator with the Queensland Police Service includes the following information and accountabilities:

Program Coordinator

This position will be working on delivering, updating and revitalising the Neighbourhood Watch Queensland (NHWQ) Program and will be part of the Crime Prevention Programs Unit (CPPU). Enhancing the NHWQ Program will see you working with members from CPPU and our District Crime Prevention Coordinators.

It will also require extensive engagement and interaction with NHWQ Police Officers, members of the NHWQ Community Advisory Group and various NHWQ and community members.

The core capability requirements for this role include:

- Identify opportunities for improvement and conduct research and contribute to the development of policy, strategy, procedures, practices and provide sound advice regarding NHWQ Program to NHWQ members and Police.
- Coordinate and gather information from Police, community and NHWQ members for the improvement of program outcomes and the development and implementation of strategies to improve NHWQ Program.
- Prepare and present submissions, reports and other correspondence to management, and provide recommendations on matters relating to NHWQ.
- Develop and maintain effective networks and communication channels with internal and external clients and stakeholders, including representing the QPS in various forums.
- Apply problem solving approaches, contribute to and manage, the delivery of projects which improve service delivery of NHWQ programs.
- Coordinate program launches, displays, events and presentations, including workshops as required.

Source: Queensland Government

A position description for a Policy Officer with the WA Police Force lists a number of work-related requirements:

Policy Officer

- Policy development skills – Experience in developing corporate and operational policies and demonstrating alignment with legislation, procedures and guidelines.
- Analytical and conceptual skills – Undertaking research on a broad range of issues, conceptualising and analysing trends, patterns, and issues to provide advice and evidence-based recommendations to mitigate problems. Thinking laterally and identifying improved work practices.

- Communication skills – Imparting information in a clear, concise manner to bring awareness and influence change. Seeking to understand the audience, targeting key points and presenting messages accordingly. Developing and maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders at all levels. Liaising and consulting with a range of personnel in various contexts to ensure quality deliverables.
- Teamwork skills – Builds and sustains positive relationships with team members. Involves others and recognises their contributions. Recognises the different working styles of individuals, and factors this into the management of people and tasks.
- Organisational skills – Managing own workload and demonstrating flexibility in managing competing priorities. Establishing tasks and timeframes to successfully achieve objectives.

Source: [WA Police Force](#)

This provides useful insight into some of the skills used when working in a policy role in policing agencies (which are broadly similar to the skills required of policy roles in various criminal justice agencies). There is a clear emphasis on what might be considered to be soft skills – communication, teamwork, project management, organisational ability. Content knowledge is important, but not especially useful if you aren't good at communicating with different stakeholders, aren't effective at working in a team, are hopelessly disorganised, miss deadlines or are unreliable. Reflecting deeply on these skills – and any gaps between what you might learn or have learnt while at university and roles of this kind – can be very instructive. Any deficits that you identify might be usefully addressed through short courses or other professional development outside a criminology degree.

Some of what is included in the Program Coordinator and Policy Officer job descriptions suggests some competence around event management, marketing and communication, and stakeholder engagement – skills that might more commonly be the domain of business degrees or marketing and communication degrees. Understanding the importance of these skills can be very beneficial while studying a criminology degree, because it might inform your choice of elective units, decisions about completing short courses outside your degree, and learning about concepts and systems not likely to be found in a criminology text.

A role description for a Senior Policy Officer with the NSW Police Force provides some insight into the nature of this more senior role. Key accountabilities of a role of this type include:

Senior Policy Officer

- Research, analyse, review and provide advice on complex policy issues and develop sound options that support the NSWPF and Government's policy directions
- Engage and consult with key stakeholders to identify and develop solutions that support sound policy decisions and approaches
- Contribute to the implementation of, evaluate and report on policy initiatives to monitor achievement of desired outcomes
- Identify emerging issues and recommend solutions to resolve problems and mitigate risks
- Work as a senior member of a team to deliver agreed policy priorities and initiatives

- Develop and maintain good working relationships with representatives from other agencies, and key stakeholders when undertaking negotiations and consultations on matters of common concern
- Participate in committees as required

Key challenges listed in the role description include:

- Operate flexibly, be adaptable and assimilate information quickly in an often changing and unpredictable environment
- Providing policy advice that is accurate, objective and timely in a high-volume work environment with competing priorities and deadlines
- Building and maintaining effective working relationships both within and outside the organisation

Source: NSW Police Force

This information says much about the role and the types of task to be undertaken on a daily, monthly and yearly basis, and highlights the organisational and operational contexts of this work. Let's look more closely at some key aspects of this role:

- **Policy domains:** Policy work of this kind will be aided by a deep understanding of its specific focus. Policy teams of this kind often include specialists working in various policy domains – child protection, family and domestic violence, sexual assault, Indigenous issues, cultural diversity, LGBTIQ issues, etc. Having a deep understanding of these policy domains would likely be considered an asset.
- **Context:** Understanding the organisational context and how it connects to work across other criminal justice agencies would also be desirable. Inter-governmental and interagency liaison and relationships will be an aspect of this work. In many policy specialisations, it is necessary to understand the wider context including the government's position, some of the history of interagency relationships, and the internal dynamics of the organisation. For example, it would be beneficial to be familiar with any public policy positions held by the organisation and how they align with any relevant whole-of-government policies. It might be a stated policy of a government to prevent and reduce family and domestic violence. The role that police might play in this would be important to understand in this context.
- **Stakeholders:** Understanding and being familiar with relevant stakeholders in the specific policy portfolio would be beneficial. There will be many stakeholders in any one policy area. If one takes a short history of the policing of LGBTIQ communities in any Australian jurisdiction, it will be clear that there were moments when these relationships were ruptured (see the [report](#) of the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes, amongst many examples). Organisations that support LGBTIQ communities should be known by those working in these areas. This is also true with respect to the policing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (including, for example, the

over-policing of Aboriginal children in Australia). Knowing these organisations and aspects of the history of policing in this area would be advantageous in a role in these portfolio areas.

- **Pace:** The work will generally be fast paced with regular deadlines for the provision of advice. This might require the quick synthesis of information or collation of data and information from other parts of the organisation. This might also require the quick and timely preparation of advice in very truncated formats – a single page of content that will go through the police hierarchy on its way to the minister’s office, for example. This will require a set of skills perhaps not prioritised at university where long-form writing over parts of a semester might be the norm.

A role like this one with the NSW Police Force will generally not be considered an entry-level role (unless you are a superstar). The role description notes that the position is a grade 9/10 public service role. Entry-level roles will generally be closer to grade 1. Entry-level roles in policy units might provide support to more senior staff and be responsible for more basic administrative tasks – gathering information, taking minutes, maintaining contact with internal working groups, providing low-level secretariat support to internal committees, etc.

By way of context, each jurisdictional public service including the federal public service has its own system for ranking roles and allocating pay. Different terminology and systems may be used but the logic is universal – jobs requiring less responsibility and more basic functions will be graded lower than a senior manager or the head of the agency. In New South Wales, as an example, jobs are graded 1–12 and above these are senior executive bands: Director (band 1), Executive Director (band 2), Deputy Secretary (band 3), and Secretary (band 4). This hierarchy provides some sense of the level you might apply for and how you might also contemplate a career potentially involving rising through the ranks, which will improve remuneration over your career.

A job description for another role with the WA Police Force – a Senior Research and Legislation Officer – highlights the research-related roles that exist in policing organisations. Demonstrating the hierarchy (and therefore opportunities for career advancement) within police and other criminal justice agencies, this role is stated as being at level 6. It reports to an Assistant Director (level 8), and supervises a Research and Legislation Officer (level 5) and a Research Support Officer (level 3):

Senior Research and Legislation Officer

Leads and manages a team to conduct research, engage with stakeholders and develop high level proposals for legislative reform to support the agency’s and Government’s priorities. Prepares detailed submissions, reports and recommendations related to current and proposed legislation, drafts changes to legislation and outlines the impact on police operations and procedures.

Some of the key accountabilities include:

- Develops proposals for, and manages, statutory and other operational reviews of legislation administered by the agency

- Develops and maintains positive relationships with the public sector and community representatives including the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, State Solicitor's Office, Office of the Minister for Police, Department of Justice and Department of Transport
- Liaises and consults with key officers within the Agency, on all relevant issues during the development and drafting of legislation
- Leads and manages a team in achieving specific legislative projects.
- Prepares detailed recommendations on behalf of the Commissioner of Police (CoP) to the Minister for Police for new legislation and amendments to existing legislation
- Prepares broad legislation outlines with recommendations on behalf of the Minister for Police to Cabinet seeking approval to draft legislation
- Prepares detailed drafting instructions to Parliamentary Counsel for the drafting of legislation
- Researches legal, policy and implementation issues and briefs Parliamentary Counsel on those issues as they arise during the drafting of legislation
- Briefs Executive and relevant branch heads on nature and effect of draft legislation, including relevant legal, policy and implementation issues
- Initiates and chairs Working Groups set up to evaluate proposed legislation.
- Prepares detailed recommendations and explanatory précis on the legislation, on behalf of the Minister for Police, to Cabinet seeking approval to print legislation
- Attends Parliament to advise Minister for Police during debate of the draft legislation

Source: [WA Police](#)

Again, it is clear that many aspects of this role point to skills not routinely covered in a criminology (or related) degree. If roles of this kind are of interest, then you might benefit from understanding all of the agencies and entities mentioned, considering what skills you might be lacking that need to be developed, and upskilling in those areas.

Various government agencies are active in family and domestic violence work, including the police. The job description for a Manager – Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Intelligence for the NSW Police Force lists the following accountabilities:

Manager – Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Intelligence

- Manage and lead the production of Domestic and Family Violence related strategic intelligence to inform senior decision making on criminal issues including predicting future trends, providing understanding of criminal markets and methodologies and assess harms and risks
- Develop, coordinate and manage systems for the collection, analysis, dissemination and review of intelligence for strategic targeting, planning, collection and reporting on the prevention, early intervention, response and recovery of Domestic and Family Violence
- Lead and manage an intelligence team by providing high-level leadership through the provision of mentoring, coaching and performance feedback.
- Represent the Region Commander, PAC/PD Commander and Commander, Domestic and Family Violence Registry on relevant working parties, committees, conferences and forums

- Contribute to the development of intelligence tools, policy and products in support of operational intelligence requirements to enhance investigation capability relating to Domestic and Family Violence
- Champion strategic intelligence and intelligence policy in the organisation through expertise, advice and advocacy
- Prioritise work allocation and deployment of resources to ensure the delivery of timely strategic intelligence reporting and intelligence policy development to inform decision making

Source: NSW Police Force

This is again a more senior role than some of those listed earlier (it is a grade 9/10 role). Thus, managing a team of staff and undertaking more strategic responsibilities are required, rather than working with individual clients, managing a case load of clients or delivering specific programs in various locations, which would likely be responsibilities of lower graded (and lower paid) roles. This is not meant to suggest that any specific role or type of work is more important, but it does highlight how different responsibilities will increase for more senior roles.

In addition to the above state, territory and federal police agencies, there are a host of law enforcement agencies operating in parts of or across Australia. Some are listed here:

- The [Australian Crime and Intelligence Commission](#) (ACIC) provides mission-critical intelligence to combat the threats Australia faces from transnational serious and organised crime.
- [Australian Border Force](#) seeks to protect Australia's border and enable legitimate travel and trade.
- [AUSTRAC](#) performs a dual role as Australia's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regulator and financial intelligence unit. This dual role helps to build resilience in the financial system and enables AUSTRAC to use financial intelligence and regulation to disrupt money laundering, terrorism financing and other serious crime.
- The [Australian Securities and Investments Commission](#) is Australia's integrated corporate, markets, financial services and consumer credit regulator.
- [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation](#) is the nation's security service, which 'protects Australia and Australians from threats to their security'.
- The [NSW Crime Commission](#) investigates matters relating to organised criminal activity and other serious crime within New South Wales.

Some of these agencies might provide career opportunities for criminology graduates. For example, the [website](#) of the NSW Crime Commission states that the Commission welcomes 'applications from talented and driven individuals to fill various roles. Employment opportunities may include: Intelligence Analysts, Forensic Accountants, Lawyers, Human Resources and Corporate Support, Governance, and Information and Communication Technology'.

The Australian Crime and Intelligence Commission runs a graduate program based in Canberra. According to ACIC's website, the 10-month program 'will provide you with an opportunity to develop your professional skills and hone your tradecraft, in a diverse and supportive agency'. ACIC seeks 'graduates who are driven and passionate about the important work we do. We want graduates who are problem solvers, innovative thinkers and committed to making a difference'. The ACIC [careers webpage](#) indicates that ACIC looks for graduates with degrees in these fields (among others):

- communications and media;
- criminal justice;
- criminology;
- cyber security;
- data analytics;
- data science;
- engineering and programming;
- finance and accounting;
- human resources;
- international relations;
- legal;
- national security;
- policy;
- project management; and
- social science.

PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE ROLE

This section has provided a short overview of the types of policing agencies in Australia and some of the roles for unsworn employees. The excerpts from position descriptions illustrate the skills required and tasks performed by people serving in these roles at different levels.

It is clear that a criminology degree is a good platform from which to pursue jobs in many of these agencies. However, it is also clear that many of the skills required will not automatically flow from studying criminology. Policy-oriented roles often require skills associated with managing staff, being part of interagency working groups, preparing diverse correspondence for different audiences, liaising with internal and external stakeholders, synthesising information quickly and succinctly, working to tight deadlines, managing projects and delivering programs.

Some of these skills might be best developed outside a criminology degree, which might mean that you participate in extracurricular activities, complete relevant short courses, and seek out relevant opportunities to observe and participate, where possible, in relevant organisations and activities.

In addition, there are a number of reflections worth pondering if you are interested in potentially working in a policing agency:

- If you are an unsworn staff member working in a policy area, how will you feel about frequently liaising with sworn officers? Some criminology graduates might have negative personal experiences of police or have read academic literature critical of

police use of powers are targeting of particular communities. Will you be able to work in a policing organisation?

- Many roles might require travel. Will this be possible?
- Some roles will require reading distressing material or being confronted with some harsh realities of the policing world. How will you cope?
- Policing organisations are often large, with many discrete units. Internal networking will be important to managing particular roles and issues. How will you go in developing these networks and relationships, especially if you are inclined to introversion?
- Police are routinely engaged in interagency working groups. How will you represent the agency in these contexts, especially when there might be conflict about the best approach to a particular issue – how will you manage conflict?
- You will likely be exposed to sensitive material and information if you work in a policing agency. Maintaining confidentiality will be required – how might you manage this when dealing with issues that are being discussed within your personal networks/peer groups?

These are just some of the things you might consider and reflect on if you are considering a role or career with a policing organisation.

Courts, Legal Services and Sheriffs

Police send a proportion of people charged with an alleged offence to court (various courts such as children’s courts, local courts, district courts or supreme courts, depending on the nature of the charges and the age of the alleged offender). For the accused person, this might mean interacting with legal services (publicly funded or privately engaged) and the court system.

While this system will generally be the domain of legally qualified staff, there are various jobs associated with the court system that might be of interest to criminology graduates. I have only mentioned a small number here given that other areas of the criminal justice system are likely to be more relevant to criminology students and future graduates.

Below is a job description for a Caseworker with Legal Aid NSW:

Caseworker

About the role

Provide support to clients going through family law and/or care and protection proceedings with complex social and legal needs including referral assistance, risk assessment, safety planning, support in attending Court as well as other services. Provide clinical expertise to address the socio-legal needs of victims of domestic and family violence, people experiencing mental health issues and/or with complex trauma histories.

About you

You bring a strong social science background and a commitment to understanding the legal system, enabling you to work autonomously as the sole allied professional within a team of

solicitors. Confident with limited face-to-face support, you manage your own workload with initiative and resilience, offering informed consultations that contribute meaningfully to legal strategy and client outcomes. Your ability to build collaborative relationships with in-house legal staff allows you to develop holistic, culturally appropriate approaches to complex family law matters.

Thriving in high-volume environments, you effectively navigate competing demands and rigid deadlines while maintaining a client-centred focus. Your work is grounded in empathy, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to improving outcomes for clients navigating challenging legal and personal circumstances.

The essential requirements for this role

You must:

- have 5 years minimum relevant experience
- have Diploma Level 5 and above (minimum 2 years study)
- be willing to do a Criminal Record Check and Working with Children Check
- hold Australian or NZ citizenship, Australian Permanent Residency (for ongoing vacancies)
- live in NSW or be willing to relocate to NSW
- some roles may require the ability for remote travel.

Source: NSW Government

This role and ones like it provides support to Legal Aid solicitors, in this case solicitors working in family law. Casework roles are common in various parts of the criminal justice and wider human services sector. These roles provide a human face to systems that can be difficult and stressful to navigate. They involve client-centred and client-facing work which would draw on skills associated with good communication, empathy for the challenges facing clients, understanding of relevant systems to help inform your advice to clients, and an ability to work with diverse clients from diverse backgrounds.

The Offices of the Director of Public Prosecutions in various jurisdictions are responsible for witness assistance schemes. Roles in these offices might be of interest to you. Below is a job description for a role with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions:

Witness Assistance Officer

Empower victims and witnesses through compassionate support – become a Witness Assistance Officer (WAO) within the Witness Assistance Service (WAS) team at the CDPP.

The WAS aims to minimise the stress and risk of potential re-traumatisation for victims of crime, their families and vulnerable witnesses involved in matters prosecuted by the CDPP. We work with a diverse range of victims/witnesses including those involved in prosecutions relating to online child sexual exploitation, people trafficking and work health and safety offences. The vast majority of matters referred to the WAS involve children/young people and online child sexual exploitation offences, such matters require WAS staff to communicate with children/young people and their parents and caregivers.

The WAO is a high-volume casework role. The WAO provides prosecution-related information and support to victims of crime and vulnerable witnesses and helps to ensure the Office meets its various legal and policy obligations. The WAO does not perform a counselling role, but does

provide victims of crime and vulnerable witnesses with referrals and information to various support services, including counselling services.

The nature of WAO work involves a significant amount of communication via telephone, in writing and via virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Some intra and interstate travel involving overnight stays may be required, however this is expected to be minimal.

Source: [Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions](#)

Many court-related agencies will host policy roles of one kind or another. Some might require specific legal training and expertise, but others will be more traditional policy roles.

Below is a job description for a senior role with Victoria Legal Aid:

Senior Policy and Projects Officer

Improve access to and responsiveness of legal assistance services by undertaking improvement initiatives and projects designed to make it easier and quicker for people with legal problems to get effective help.

Responsibilities

- Intake, triage and referral policy and practice: play a leading role in improving the consistency and quality of intake, triage and referral across VLA [Victoria Legal Aid] and the legal assistance sector by:
 - Leading development of VLA's Access and Intake Strategy and implementation plan in consultation with key internal and external stakeholders
 - Developing and reviewing client intake and inclusion policies and procedures
 - Supporting the strategic review and development of recommendations for VLA's online referral and booking information tool;
- Client experience: embedding client experience into program design, delivery and evaluation by supporting development of the implementation plan for VLA's Client First Strategy so VLA staff and programs adopt and maintain consistent, client-centric practices;
- Stakeholder engagement: build, develop and maintain effective relationships with legal assistance stakeholders (inside and outside VLA) and support collaboration and partnership activities to improve service delivery and client outcomes; and
- Other priorities as required.

Key selection criteria

- Demonstrated experience using project management and change management skills to successfully design, implement and evaluate improvement projects and initiatives.
- Highly developed interpersonal and communication skills with the ability to communicate effectively with individuals across all levels of an organisation and negotiate and influence others to both deliver on project objectives and bring about positive change.
- An ability to understand and maintain contemporary knowledge of legal assistance sector intake, triage and referrals policies, practices and services, gained within the legal services sector or a similar public or community service delivery context.
- Strong commitment to social justice and understanding of service design and delivery, including an understanding of the factors that cause disadvantage and affect people's capacity to access assistance.

- Adaptability, curiosity, a willingness to learn and apply new approaches and techniques to improve the client experience.
- Demonstrated experience working with First Nations Australians, including an understanding of the cultural norms, communication styles and complex issues experienced by Australian First Nations peoples.
- A knowledge of the general business of VLA and a commitment to our vision and values.

Source: [Victoria Legal Aid](#)

While this might not be an entry-level job, it does show a possible pathway to a more senior role within a legal agency that doesn't require a law degree. It also shows that many jobs are focused on operational and managerial aspects of running an organisation in the criminal justice system. Many criminal justice agencies are dealing with a high volume of work, which requires analysis, planning, restructuring and resourcing. While not an immediately obvious role for a criminology graduate, you might find yourself interested in roles of this kind once you get a start in an organisation. Systems thinking might become an interest after working in a frontline role. In such a role you start to appreciate the volume of work being managed by the organisation and you might develop insights into how to manage it more effectively.

Sheriffs play various roles related to the operation of the criminal justice system. Below is a job description for a Sheriffs Officer (Criminal Enforcement):

Sheriffs Officer (Criminal Enforcement)

About the role

The Sheriff's Office Enforcements Team is a specialised unit that conducts the enforcement of outstanding warrants or orders issued by the courts. The team performs activities which include the service of documents, wheel clamping, number plate removal, property seizure and delivery orders and the seizure and sale of property to recover outstanding debts in circumstances where debtors have failed to make payment.

This is a unique opportunity to join a committed operational team and make a positive contribution to the Western Australian justice system.

The purpose of this role:

- Undertake the enforcement of civil, criminal process and transport services.
- Liaise with internal and external stakeholders inclusive of law enforcement agencies to facilitate the enforcement process.
- Co-ordinate the execution and service of Fines Enforcement and court processes and liaises with all interested parties to facilitate the enforcement of those processes.

The position holder will be required to maintain a general level of fitness, hold and maintain a C class driver's licence. A medical fitness assessment is required.

The position holder will be required to undertake travel within the state which may include regional and remote locations involving overnight stays. On occasion this may involve travel on light aircraft.

To be eligible for a permanent appointment to the Western Australian public sector it is essential that you are an Australian citizen or have permanent residency status in Australia. To be eligible

for a fixed term appointment you must have documentary evidence of your entitlement to live and work in Australia for the duration of the contract.

The position holder will be appointed as a Deputy Sheriff for the purpose of executing warrants and orders on behalf of the Sheriff of Western Australia. It is a requirement that the position holder is successful in obtaining and maintaining a Baseline Level National Security Clearance and successfully completing a National Criminal History Check. The position holder will also be required to undergo and maintain a Western Australia Police Integrity Check.

Source: [WA Government Jobs](#)

This again might not be a role that immediately piques the interest of a criminology student or graduate. However, as has been stated, taking an initial job that gets you a start in the criminal justice system will almost invariably lead to other opportunities, or you might become committed to an agency that you hadn't expected and stay longer than you anticipated. Being within government, Sheriff units provide opportunities for advancement, and experiences you gain will be relevant to more senior roles and roles in other parts of the criminal justice system.

There will also be research roles within the courts and legal systems: these will be considered in the [Crime Statistics and Research Agencies](#) section.

Corrections

According to the Productivity Commission's 2025 [report on government services](#), there were 113 adult custodial facilities nationally on 30 June 2024. Of these, 86 were government run, 9 were privately operated and 4 were transitional centres, and there were 14 court cell complexes that operated 24 hours per day to accommodate fresh custodies, or those people recently arrested and bail refused. This is in addition to the 21 youth detention facilities in Australia, and the significantly greater number of community-based facilities in each state and territory (community offices which supervise young people and adults sentenced to community-based orders).

Youth Justice

Youth justice systems in Australia manage all young people who have been charged or found guilty of offending and who are being held in custodial facilities or have been sentenced to community-based orders. These are young people aged between 10 (or 12 or 14 in some jurisdictions, depending on the minimum age of criminal responsibility) and 18 years of age. Youth justice agencies in Australia are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Youth Justice Agencies in Australia

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| ACT | Youth Justice – Health and Community Services Directorate | www.act.gov.au/community/child-protection-and-youth-justice#Youth-justice |
| NSW | Youth Justice NSW – Department of Communities and Justice | www.nsw.gov.au/legal-and-justice/youth-justice |
| NT | Youth Justice – Department of Corrections | https://corrections.nt.gov.au/youth-justice |
| Qld | Youth Justice – Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support | www.qld.gov.au/law/sentencing-prisons-and-probation/young-offenders-and-the-justice-system |
| SA | Youth Justice – Department of Human Services | https://dhs.sa.gov.au/how-we-help/youth-justice |
| Tas | Youth Justice Services – Department for Education, Children and Young People | www.decyp.tas.gov.au/safe-children/youth-justice-services |
| Vic | Youth Justice – Department of Justice and Community Safety | www.justice.vic.gov.au/justice-system/youth-justice |
| WA | Youth Justice Services – Department of Justice | www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-justice/corrective-services/youth-justice-services |

While agency names and government departmental positioning differ in each state and territory, many features of the youth justice system are similar across Australia. Youth justice centres (or similar titles), will securely detain young people on remand (waiting to appear in court) or sentenced to a period of detention. Each jurisdiction has legislation and policies guiding this work. These will not be considered here. Rather, consideration is given to some of the roles commonly found in youth justice centres.

There are various roles in a youth justice centre. Most will be engaged directly in custodial functions, which involve locking young people in their rooms and maintaining the routines of the centre. The job description below describes the nature of this role and usefully includes information about more senior roles within a youth justice centre (see also Part 2 for a brief description of my work in a [similar role](#) in the early 1990s):

Youth Officer / Detention Youth Worker

As a detention youth worker you will have a frontline role in the rehabilitation of young people in detention. You will work closely with young people who are separated from their family, friends and community. You will make sure young people are engaged in constructive activities and help them integrate back into the community.

Detention youth workers:

- demonstrate positive and socially appropriate behaviour to young people in detention
- manage the complex and challenging behaviours of young people using a suite of techniques that may include physical restraint in some circumstances

- manage and document incidents, on-unit activities and responses
- participate in multi-disciplinary meetings and discussions about young people
- escort young people in detention to school and other activities.

Senior detention youth worker

As a senior detention youth worker you will work as part of a dynamic operational team to provide professional development and mentoring support to detention youth workers while also undertaking direct care and management responsibilities for young people. You will:

- undertake key responsibilities of the detention youth worker role
- actively promote and monitor a high standard of safety and security within the centre
- play a key role in supporting operational staff through their induction program and youth worker probation and progression requirements.

Section supervisor

As a section supervisor you will supervise, coach and lead detention youth workers to manage daily activities and routines in the detention centre. You will develop and coordinate the plans that are used to rehabilitate and reintegrate young people in detention and make a difference in the lives of young people in detention by focusing on:

- achieving positive outcomes
- addressing offending behaviour.

You will make critical decisions in an immediate response to manage events, incidents and activities.

Program support officer

As a program support officer you will be part of a team that continually looks for new and better ways to address the criminal behaviour of young people in detention.

Program support officers work closely with program providers to develop, deliver and review programs to:

- address offending behaviour
- rehabilitate young people
- reintegrate young people with their family and the community.

You will also help maintain communication between youth detention centres and community agencies.

Source: [Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support \(Qld\)](#)

Youth officer and custodial roles are just one aspect of youth detention. Staff will also be employed as caseworkers, psychologists, counsellors, teachers or in various allied health roles (depending on the setting this might include speech pathologists and occupational therapists). Other staff work as cooks, in cleaning roles, or in various management roles responsible for different aspects of custodial life such as security, programs or casework. Criminology graduates might not be drawn to be youth officer or custodial staff roles, however these can be good positions to get a start in the youth justice system (as they were for me).

Below is a job description for a Caseworker:

Caseworker

Caseworkers provide professional intervention to young offenders subject to youth justice intervention, with the aim of reducing re-offending.

As a Caseworker, you will specifically:

- Work effectively within a statutory environment to manage the dual roles of monitoring young offenders' compliance with court orders and intervening to address issues that place them at risk of re-offending.
- Proactively work to reduce re-offending through the use of culturally appropriate, collaborative and evidence-based assessment and intervention skills, processes and programs including restorative justice activities.
- Work collaboratively as part of a team including a range of internal and external stakeholders, to achieve positive outcomes for victims, young offenders, their families, and the community.
- Prepare and present verbal and written reports to the Children's Court on behalf of the Chief Executive. Conduct pre and post court interviews, prepare quality pre-sentence reports, affidavits, and other relevant documentation to support best practice outcomes for young people in the justice system.
- Undertake record keeping and information management tasks to ensure accountability.
- Actively participate in a range of continuing professional development activities to continuously improve your ability to contribute to organisational goals, including training, supervision and relevant accreditation.

Source: Queensland Government

This type of role is not significantly different from community-based youth justice roles. There is significant focus on helping young people with their particular needs and serving various justice functions such as record-keeping, case planning, report writing, family liaison, and engagement with wider services.

This job description is for a Youth Justice Case Manager with Victoria Corrections:

Youth Justice Case Manager

The Youth Justice Team provides community-based supervision and a range of case management and support services for young people who are appearing before, or have been sentenced by, the Children's Court, Children's Koori Court and adult criminal courts and who have been placed on youth justice supervised orders.

The team promotes the personal development of young offenders and contributes to the reduction of crime in the community including:

- youth-specific court liaison, advice and support services to the Children's Court, Children's Koori Court and adult courts
- reports to and advises the Youth Residential Board and Youth Parole Board
- community-based supervision and support services for young people
- age-appropriate case management, casework interventions and links to programs and supports in the community, to respond to factors that contribute to offending.

Case Managers supervise and provide support to clients subject to Youth Justice court orders. The position ensures that all cases are managed to a high standard. This includes preparing Court and Youth Parole Board reports, developing Client Service Plans and attending court for client matters. Case Managers provide assessments, develop case plans/reports and advocate for the provision of support services. They also maintain professional relationships with Youth Justice Centres, the Youth Parole Board, Courts and community service organisations. The Youth Justice Team places emphasis on diversion and rehabilitation of young offenders in order to minimise further offending. Operating outside normal office hours may be required at times.

Source: Victoria Corrections

The government is not the only option if you are interested in working with young people in contact with the criminal justice system. NGOs play a variety of roles, as do some for-profit companies.

Below is some information from a job advertisement for a major consulting firm looking to engage a senior consultant in the youth justice area:

Senior Consultant

As a Senior Consultant you will:

- Play a key role in delivering projects which may include (but is not limited to) strategic advice on policy reforms, organisational transformation, program design and administration, business cases and feasibility studies, organisational and program reviews and evaluations. You will work closely with senior team members and clients to achieve high-quality outcomes within tight deadlines
- Work with senior team members to support business development activities such as opportunity identification, qualification, planning, and more
- Support stakeholder communication and engagement activities in a variety of settings, including facilitating workshops, interviews and other consultation activities
- Support the development of our health, ageing and human services offerings
- Collaborate with sector and technical experts to grow your knowledge and network

To be considered for this opportunity, you will identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. Your skills and experience may include:

- Demonstrated experience in a public / social policy environment, including, but not limited to, youth justice, justice and community safety
- Experience working with or for government or sector organisations, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)
- Strong interest in and commitment to continuing to develop your skills in these areas
- Proven track record in contributing to and delivering projects successfully
- Strong communications skills with demonstrated business writing and presentation skills
- Stakeholder engagement and management skills including conducting interviews, workshops, and delivering presentations
- Critical thinking skills and ability to quickly acquire and apply new knowledge across a range of policy areas
- A self-starter with the ability to work effectively in a team
- Tertiary qualification in a relevant discipline (Bachelor's degree or higher)

Source: KPMG

This job description is for a more traditional, entry-level role with an NGO:

Youth Worker Engagement and Support

The Youth Worker's role is the primary contact with the program target group of young people aged 12–24 and is responsible for providing support to acquire, develop and maintain skills that will enable them to successfully connect with their community.

- The position focuses on engagement of at-risk young people and identifying their issues and support needs as well as taking steps to address these needs through provision of client-centred individual support and advocacy.
- The role responds directly and immediately to a young person's needs and circumstances.
- This is done through program facilitation and attendance of programs, street-based engagement, establishing rapport with young people, and building trusting and professional relationships that foster person-centred practice.
- It is a requirement of the role that evening shifts up until 9pm are rostered weekly
- Base location is Bankstown, however you will be requested to start and finish at different locations across South Western Sydney.

Some of the functions of the role include:

- Establishes rapport with young people who are involved with or at risk of involvement with the justice system who are from varied backgrounds and levels of ability and assist them to develop skills for living within the community
- Consults and collaborates with the community to identify, develop and implement effective and meaningful activities and programs that assist with the individual's development and inclusion
- Facilitates local youth engagement activities which promote youth empowerment within a community development framework
- Provides holistic individual support for young people to improve life circumstances and enhance wellbeing
- Develops strong networks with service providers, local community groups, and Government bodies and provides a platform for young people to access services from these multiple service providers
- Promotes and maintains a safe and inclusive environment
- Maintains awareness of local needs and emerging issues
- Maintains a high standard of reporting and data collection
- Maintains professional boundaries with clients and stakeholders
- Provides individual support and group facilitation and adheres to child protection legislation, procedures and best practices
- Facilitates capacity building workshops in a group setting
- Builds referral pathways and promotes service in community to support business growth and achieve KPI targets
- Collaborates with youth justice and law enforcement agencies to advocate for and support young people involved in the youth justice system
- Offers guidance and support to young people navigating the court system to help achieve more positive outcomes

Qualifications required:

- Minimum Certificate IV qualifications in Youth Work or Community Services

Experience:

- Sound knowledge, and experience in the youth services field

Skills and knowledge:

- Maintain a high degree of objectivity, integrity, empathy and compassion
- Build trusted and professional relationships with young people, groups, family networks and community
- Balance conflicting priorities and tasks
- Ability to apply a harm reduction approach in assessing the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged families
- Ability to apply Trauma Informed Care principles
- Respect and work effectively with young people of diverse cultural backgrounds
- An understanding of the importance of Evidence Based Quality Practice
- Ability to work flexible working hours to meet service delivery requirements, including evenings.

This position description includes a lot of information laying out expectations for what is a relatively junior, entry-level role. In being expansive, it demonstrates the types of skill and knowledge expected in such a role. An understanding of local dynamics, service systems, engagement and collaboration, individual and group work, and use of various intervention modalities are expected. Again, these elements provide an insight into the type of preparation required to be competitive when going for a role of this kind. Some of these skills and knowledge will likely fall outside what might be covered in a criminology (or related) degree, but they can be developed through undertaking desktop reviews, site visits, informal networking and short courses, or by selecting units of study (possibly outside of criminology electives) that provide access to the types of models and approaches listed above. Acquiring these skills and knowledge may also shape any choices you make about voluntary or part-time work.

Below is a job description for a Youth Worker at a Police and Community Youth Club (PCYC). Similar roles are found in many states and territories. There is considerable overlap with what might be learnt in a criminology degree, making this a potential initial career step:

Youth Worker PCYC

Working alongside a co-mentor with a maximum class size of 10 students (Ratio of 1:5), you will be responsible for providing support services to youth who are showing early signs of disengagement from learning. Working with these students you will:

- Provide group facilitation within a classroom-style environment addressing social issues, implementing practical information and strategies to assist students to thrive to become positive citizens within their communities.
- Provide support to help students remain focused on re-engagement into school life
- Identify and support young people's educational needs and goals.

- Use a holistic approach to highlight the current needs and supports to students, in collaboration with Well-Being Teams in Schools.
- Identify and support young people's educational needs and goals.
- Ensure mandatory reporting in line with legislative requirements.
- Deliver individual and/or group sessions within a defined structure in resilience building, relationships, and emotional regulation skills.
- Support the engagement of students from various backgrounds and assist with connections within a school environment and local PCYC services.
- Ensure mandatory reporting in line with legislative and [Department of Education] requirements.

About you – Are you a passionate person, as well as:

- Do you have prior experience working with young people within a social work, educational, mediation, or conflict resolution capacity?
- Do you have a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) and National Police Criminal History check? (Issued within the last 6 months)
- Do you have Qualification/s in Youth Work, Social Work, Education, Community Development or a *related discipline*? [emphasis added]
- Do you have excellent communication skills and proven ability to engage with young people with group activities.
- Do you have prior experience working with young people with behavioural issues, who are experiencing poor mental health, homelessness, drug and alcohol dependency or family conflict?

Source: [PCYC NSW](#)

I have emphasised the words 'related discipline' in the job description to highlight that a criminology degree might be considered a related discipline.

Again, information of this kind is very instructive. It demonstrates the type of work undertaken by such a role, but also points to important requirements which will be common in youth justice, criminal justice and human services roles, such as a Working with Children Check and a National Police Check. These might also be augmented by requirements around first aid certificates and a drivers licence. These are practical requirements that will need to be considered, and the clearances or qualifications obtained, where possible, prior to applying for any jobs.

PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE ROLE

There are clearly a variety of roles in and associated with youth justice that might be of interest to you and relevant to your criminology (or related) degree. Some roles will work directly with young people in community settings, while others will be in youth detention. Some might involve working for the government, while others might involve working for an NGO.

In contemplating some of these roles, it is worth pondering these and other questions:

- How might you feel about working in youth detention facilities, especially given the ongoing national shame of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention?

- How might you feel when working directly with a young person who has been charged with or found guilty of a serious violent or sexual offence?
- How might you work with family members who have a lengthy history of interacting with the criminal justice system and who are not especially enamoured about being contacted by a youth justice worker?
- How might you work with family members who have harmed their children?
- How will you work in a cross-cultural context with young people in the youth justice system who come from cultural backgrounds different to your own?
- Self-harm is a tragic feature of youth detention (and adult detention). How will you cope with seeing or hearing about self-harm and suicide attempts?

This work can be enormously rewarding. Helping a young person tackle problems, fulfil their goals and leave behind engagement in crime are some of the reasons people choose to do this work. That said, the questions above highlight some of the challenges and emotional distress that can arise from such work. It is not only beneficial to consider the skills and knowledge you need to acquire, but also the emotional and personal challenges likely to arise.

Adult Corrections

The adult correctional systems in each state and territory in Australia are far bigger than the youth justice systems. By way of example, in New South Wales at any one time something in the order of 240 young people are in detention and 800 will be serving community-based orders (noting that numbers fluctuate). In comparison, approximately 13,500 adults will be in prison, and closer to 40,000 will be serving a community-based order. Consequently, the number of staff required will be far greater for the adult correctional systems than the youth justice systems.

Adult correctional agencies in Australia are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Adult Correctional Agencies in Australia

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| ACT | ACT Corrective Services – Justice and Community Safety Directorate | www.act.gov.au/directorates-and-agencies/justice-and-community-safety-directorate/act-corrective-services |
| NSW | Corrective Services NSW – Department of Communities and Justice | https://correctiveservices.dcj.nsw.gov.au |
| NT | Department of Corrections | https://corrections.nt.gov.au |
| Qld | Corrective Services | https://corrections.qld.gov.au |
| SA | Department for Correctional Services | www.corrections.sa.gov.au |
| Tas | Corrective Services – Department of Justice | www.justice.tas.gov.au/correctiveservices |
| Vic | Corrections, Prisons and Parole | www.corrections.vic.gov.au |
| WA | Corrective Services – Department of Justice | www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-justice/corrective-services |

In many jurisdictions, there is a division between adult and youth correctional services and programs. In Western Australia and the Northern Territory, adult and youth detention and community supervision are managed by the same agency. Correctional agencies might also be standalone departments or agencies within mega-departments (eg, the NSW Department of Community and Justice). These arrangements have very particular impacts on governance and management, but are of less relevance here.

The role description for a Correctional Officer in an adult correctional centre sets out the primary purpose and requirements of this role:

Correctional Officer

Officers contribute to community safety and assist offenders in finding paths for improvement in their lives. They supervise inmates in correctional facilities, including prisons and court cells throughout New South Wales.

They are required to interact with inmates and ensure the safety and security of the facility by undertaking searches, monitoring behaviours, and communicating effectively.

Correctional Officers work within a supportive team environment where no two shifts are the same. Some of the vital tasks you can expect to perform include:

- Carrying out daily tasks and duties following legislation, CSNSW [Corrective Services NSW] and DCJ [Department of Community and Justice] policies and procedures to ensure the safety, wellbeing, security, and rehabilitation of inmates.
- Perform daily accountability routines including muster, head checks, ongoing observation of offenders.
- Conduct searches and other detection activities to find and remove contraband from the facility or court complex, and to monitor inmates/offenders, boosting security and safety for everyone.
- Manage inmates' requests for services or escalate them on if needed.
- Supervise offender activities in their designated work, living, or approved zones, ensuring sure everything runs in accordance with principles of fairness, equity and efficient safe practice.

Requirements of the role:

- Minimum age of 18 years old
- Current MR (Medium Rigid) drivers licence OR willingness to obtain MR licence within 3 months from appointment
- Australia or New Zealand Citizen or Permanent Resident
- Willing to complete Certificate III in Correctional Practice
- Meet the medical standards to be a correctional officer and have reasonable level of fitness
- Body art or modifications on the face, scalp, ears, neck, or hands are prohibited. For this policy, the prohibited areas of the neck and hands are anything visible beyond the fastened collar or buttoned cuff of a long-sleeve shirt.

Source: NSW Government

As with youth justice custodial roles, criminology graduates might not be especially inclined to work in roles such as these. That said, some might start their careers in roles such as these, with the prospect of career progression through a correctional agency.

Perhaps a more likely initial career option for criminology graduates interested in correctional services is a role such as a Services and Program Officer:

Services and Program Officer

Corrective Services NSW employs services and program officers who work with offenders in custody and in the community.

Successful applicants for positions of services and program officer:

- should have relevant tertiary qualifications in social work, psychology, mental-health or other human service fields; or relevant experience working with family, social and/or drug and alcohol related issues;
- must demonstrate good skills and experience in group processes and program facilitation, conflict resolution;
- should have excellent interpersonal and written communication skills;
- must be confident and competent in crisis interventions and keep up to date with professional knowledge.

Services and program officers are required to undertake offender assessments for case planning and delivery of programs and services for offenders to reduce the risk of re-offending and support integration into the community. They are part of a case management team and must provide reports to courts and the State Parole Authority as required.

Source: [Corrective Services NSW](#)

Job descriptions for these roles tend to include the following essential requirements:

- Relevant tertiary qualifications in social work, psychology, mental health or other human service fields; and/or demonstrated relevant equivalent experience working with family, social and/or drug and alcohol related issues
- Current Certificate IV in Correctional Practice with the necessary Units of Competency for this role (or equivalent proven experience) or capacity to complete Certificate IV in Correctional Practice in accordance with specified CSNSW timeframes
- Current driver licence with ability and willingness to travel throughout NSW
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons who are culturally aware and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people and communities (for identified roles only)
- Australian or New Zealand Citizen or Permanent Resident for ongoing appointments

Skills and experience also sought include:

- Thorough knowledge and understanding of the transitional factors affecting offenders and their families
- Demonstrated ability and experience in assessment, case management and intervention with clients with complex welfare and alcohol and drug related needs
- Demonstrated ability and/or experience in delivering group-based interventions
- Thorough knowledge and understanding of alcohol and other drug dependence and evidence-based interventions
- Be able to work collaboratively with clients and colleagues from a variety of backgrounds
- Be comfortable and confident in running group and/or individual sessions with inmates in a correctional setting
- Be able to act with integrity and display resilience in face of challenges.

This information is again illuminating with regard to what is required when performing a role of this kind, and how you might position yourself in applying for a role like this: namely, running individual and group sessions, knowing about alcohol and other drug (AOD) dependence and interventions, working collaboratively, having a current drivers licence and being an Australian or New Zealand citizen or resident.

As with many of the job roles discussed, information like this could usefully guide your choice of electives while at university, engagement with extracurricular activities such as attending lectures and seminars related to corrections, completing relevant short courses, and seeking out relevant internship, voluntary or casual work – all of which would be beneficial actions.

A number of companies run private prisons in Australia, including The GEO Group, Serco, MTC Australia and G4S. A position description from one of these companies shows the similarities with and differences from government operated prisons:

Correctional Case Officer

As a Correctional Case Officer, you will play a key role in supervising, managing, and supporting inmates while ensuring safety, security, and rehabilitation in a respectful and structured environment. You'll be working at Clarence Correctional Centre, helping inmates prepare for reintegration into society.

In this role, you will:

- Supervise and manage inmates while promoting rehabilitation and reintegration
- Conduct searches, monitor inmate activities, and maintain a structured, secure environment
- Use communication and problem-solving skills to defuse tense situations and maintain order
- Work closely with multidisciplinary teams to ensure inmate welfare

You don't need experience – just the right mindset. We'll provide full training!

To be successful in this role, you'll require:

- Willingness to complete Certificate III in Correctional Practice (fully funded)
- Strong communication, empathy, and resilience
- Ability to stay calm under pressure and solve problems with sound judgment
- Physical fitness to meet role demands
- A valid Driver's Licence

Source: [SEEK](#)

Working in prisons will not be for everyone, or even for you. Community corrections jobs provide significant employment opportunities for criminology graduates. More people on any one day are supervised on community-based orders than are held in custody.

Across Australia there are various jobs, but the mainstay of community corrections is the role of Community Corrections Officer:

Community Corrections Officer

A CCO provides offender assessment and advice to courts, works within a broader justice framework which incorporates victims of crime, crime prevention and wider community relationships.

The duties are varied and involve case managing offenders, preparing reports for sentencing and releasing authorities, and working alongside other stakeholders in the community for effective outcomes. If you are resilient and want a rewarding career where you can make a difference this may be the role for you.

As a CCO you will report to the Team Leader and operate as part of the Region or Centre case management team. You will have responsibility for case management of offenders and defendants (in accordance with Orders and appropriate standards). Working as a CCO in a community setting you will be involved in:

- Providing written and verbal recommendations to courts, releasing authorities and external agencies.
- Undertaking screening and assessment of offenders to determine risk and develop viable management plans.
- Using culturally appropriate work practices when working with Aboriginal people and other cultural groups.
- Working collaboratively with other agencies, divisions and communities in relation to allocated offenders and defendants.
- Providing offenders with guidance and encouragement to address offending behaviour and to comply with the requirements of their order and be accountable for their actions.
- Regionally based CCOs are required to regularly travel to and work in regional and remote areas and liaise with communities and stakeholders in those areas.

To be eligible for an appointment as a CCO, you will need:

- Australian citizenship or permanent residency or New Zealand citizenship.
- A current unrestricted C class drivers' licence (automatic licence and P plate drivers are acceptable).
- If working in a regional office, a willingness to fulfill requirements of being away from home for periods of time to undertake regional and remote travel.
- Be prepared to travel via airplane (including light aircraft) to service regional locations.

Source: [WA Government](#)

The above position description is from Western Australia, hence the reference to preparedness to travel via light aircraft to service regional locations. This isn't something likely to be required of similar roles in many parts of Australia, or the rest of the world!

The requirements for roles of this kind working with youth or adult clients will largely be similar – and will also largely be similar across Australian states and territories. These similarities mean that preparation for a role like that described above will be beneficial if you are applying in either the youth or adult corrections systems, and in any state and territory.

Prison management in some Australian jurisdictions is overseen by Inspectors of Custodial Services. Various roles exist within these (generally small) agencies. The job description below is for a role in the WA Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services:

Research and Review Officer

With strong expertise, this position is responsible for taking a senior role in the development, planning and conduct of reviews of custodial services, identifying key findings and preparing draft statutory and non-statutory reports.

The position works as a senior member of a research and review team providing technical leadership, guidance and support to less experienced officers across complex review and research and analysis projects requiring a high level of technical expertise and rigour.

The position engages with external agency personnel and excellent stakeholder engagement and relationship management skills are required to effectively develop and conduct reviews, and influence to gain cooperation and support.

- Highly developed investigative, research, analysis and evaluation skills demonstrating sound judgement and ability to draw sound conclusions.
- Demonstrated ability to plan and manage projects and work under pressure to tight deadlines to successfully deliver outputs.
- Demonstrated negotiation, facilitation and consultation skills with the ability to build and maintain effective relationships with diverse groups.
- Excellent writing skills to produce high-quality written reports.
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and to be a constructive and positive member of a small team.
- Highly developed interpersonal skills with demonstrated ability to work effectively within the values of this Office, apply high levels of integrity and a willingness to learn.
- Advanced skills in extraction and analysis of data from large relational databases, including the ability to write complex queries using MS SQL or similar.

Source: [WA Government](#)

As might be expected given the job title, skills in research, report writing, consultation and data analysis are more central to a role like this than the more client-facing roles mentioned earlier in this section. While the content of the work might be geared toward adult corrections, the processes undertaken, and skills and knowledge required, are more consistent with research roles (which will be covered in more detail later).

Similar research roles will also exist inside many correctional agencies. Those roles are likely to work on research and evaluation projects to determine whether particular approaches to rehabilitation are effective, monitor key trends in inmate and community-based order populations, and support senior executive staff in their work with government ministers and agencies.

PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE ROLE

Some of the key considerations relevant to working in adult corrections are reminiscent of those outlined earlier in the [Youth Justice](#) section.

Working in correctional settings can be challenging. Inmates might have committed very serious offences and have a strong desire to escape and/or continue offending. The sheer scale of some prison systems in Australia means that a lot of energy is invested in operational issues, which might be some distance from your personal motivations to help people desist from offending. Conditions in some prisons will be less than ideal, making working life in such settings uncomfortable, to say the least. And of course, the ethical dilemmas associated with incarceration are many.

In addition to these considerations, I have listed some further questions that you might consider if you have an interest in this work:

- How might you feel when working with a physically intimidating client?
- How might you respond to a client reoffending after lengthy engagement and positive support which you provided?
- How might you feel entering a maximum security prison yard to meet a client?
- How will you respond if a member of a group you are running repeatedly disrupts the group and tries to antagonise other group members?
- How will you deal with taunts being directed at you in a correctional context?
- What will you do if you witness problematic or unlawful behaviour from colleagues toward inmates?
- Violence is not uncommon in prison settings – how will you cope?

Victims of Crime Agencies and Services

Victims of crime were once somewhat (if not completely) neglected in criminological discourse and research. This has changed quite dramatically in the last three to four decades. There are now numerous victim-oriented government agencies and NGOs which do a variety of things including:

- provide various forms of support to victims of crime, including counselling, financial assistance and support through legal matters;
- run and manage victim registers in which victims of crime might be advised of key developments relevant to the offender in their case; and
- develop legislation and policies to guide how a jurisdiction responds to the diverse needs of victims of crime.

This means that there will be positions ranging from frontline roles working directly with victims to provide various forms of support through to senior government roles leading how jurisdictions respond to the many victims of crime. Consequently, entire careers might be spent working with victims of crime in various contexts.

An example of a very senior role working with and for victims of crime is the Queensland Victims' Commissioner and the associated Office of the Victims'

Commissioner. Roles of this kind exist in various Australian jurisdictions (see Table 4) and demonstrate growing recognition of the need for governments to respond to the diverse needs of victims of crime and the need to include voices of victims in various legislation and policy development discussions.

Table 4: Victims of Crime Agencies in Australia

| | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|
| ACT | Victim Support ACT (VSACT) | www.hrc.act.gov.au/victim-support |
| NSW | Victims Services | https://victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au |
| NT | Victims of Crime NT (VOCNT) | https://victimsofcrime.org.au |
| Qld | Victim Assist Queensland | www.qld.gov.au/law/crime-and-police/victim-assist-queensland |
| SA | Victims of Crime South Australia | www.voc.sa.gov.au |
| Tas | Victims of Crime Service | www.justice.tas.gov.au/victims/services/victims-of-crime-service |
| Vic | Victims of Crime | www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au |
| WA | Commissioner for Victims of Crime | www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-justice/commissioner-victims-of-crime |

While many roles in the victims of crime area will be for counsellors and trained psychological specialists, some roles might be relevant to criminology graduates. Government agencies have various policy roles working to ensure victims of crime are appropriately supported in various ways; some of these agencies will have research and training roles. And NGOs will have various roles ranging from frontline support in refuges through to senior personnel running victim-specific organisations, some of which are listed below. As is common with NGOs in various policy domains, many will be relatively small, meaning they have a small staff establishment, limiting the number and variety of possible roles. Nonetheless, this will be an area of work that is of great interest to some criminology graduates, especially those that might have relevant lived experience.

NGOs working in the victims of crime area include some of the following (noting that this is not an exhaustive list and noting that organisations will come and go over time so the list might not remain absolutely accurate over time):

- [Homicide Victims' Support Group](#) is 'a not-for-profit organisation based in NSW dedicated to helping support families of homicide victims'.
- [Survivors and Mates Support Network](#) 'was founded in 2011 by a small group of male survivors, who were searching for a support group to meet other male survivors and deal with the effects of child sexual abuse on their lives'.

- [The Survivor Hub](#) 'is a survivor-led initiative harnessing our knowledge and lived experiences to support, inform and empower people impacted by sexual assault'.
- [Victims of Crime Assistance League](#) is an organisation with a mission to '[shape] the future by validating, honouring and empowering victims of crime'.

Related organisations established after a tragic incident of violence and committed to preventing violence and crime include the following:

- The [Matthew Stanley Foundation](#) 'promote[s] nonviolence and mutual respect among young people and responsible behaviour in the adult community'.
- [Enough is Enough](#) 'work[s] with individuals and groups to encourage them to take personal responsibility for their actions. We aim to promote violence prevention strategies in society'.
- The [Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation](#) promotes 'the prevention of harmful behaviour, including that associated with alcohol abuse, self-harm and suicide, is at the core of the Foundation's Take Care and Stay Kind work'.
- [Safe and Equal](#) 'work[s] towards a world where everyone is safe, respected and thriving, living free from family and gender-based violence. We are the peak body for Victorian organisations that specialise in family and gender-based violence across the continuum, including primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery. We are an independent, non-government organisation'. Safe and Equal lists the diverse roles in the specialist family violence workforce including:
 - direct service roles including intake and assessment, case management, crisis support and counsellors
 - court and legal support, service managers and leaders
 - policy and practice professionals
 - survivor advocacy
 - primary prevention, and
 - working with perpetrators.

This provides a good overview of the type of roles that exist in the non-government sector in the family and domestic violence domain.

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified position with a Queensland domestic and family violence service includes the following information:

Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Service (Identified Role)

What you'll be doing

- Providing high-quality, culturally appropriate support and case management to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients experiencing domestic and family violence
- Assessing client needs and developing tailored safety plans and support strategies
- Advocating on behalf of clients to facilitate access to relevant services and support

- Collaborating with other agencies and organisations to deliver a coordinated response to domestic and family violence
- Facilitating group programs and workshops to raise awareness and promote prevention
- Maintaining accurate client records and contributing to service reporting and evaluation

What we're looking for

- Demonstrated experience in domestic and family violence support work, preferably within the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community
- Strong understanding of the complexities and dynamics of domestic and family violence, including the unique challenges faced by Indigenous clients
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to build trust and rapport with clients from diverse backgrounds
- Proficient in case management, including risk assessment, safety planning, and referral to relevant services
- Minimum of a Certificate 3 in Community Services or working towards
- Commitment to personal and professional development, and a willingness to engage in ongoing training and supervision
- Ability to work collaboratively within a team and contribute to a positive, supportive work environment

Source: [SEEK](#)

Reviewing this in a little detail demonstrates the in-depth knowledge of the area that would obviously be beneficial for a role of this kind. This might go beyond what might be learnt in a criminology degree. Attending relevant conferences and events, reviewing the latest policies and commentary about the sector in your jurisdiction, trying to meet with people already working in the sector, being updated through any relevant e-alerts or social media feeds, and monitoring LinkedIn feeds and threads from key actors and networks, are just some of the things that you might do to build this knowledge of the sector and agencies operating in the family and domestic violence space.

Similarly, developing an understanding of the relevant service sector in your jurisdiction will be beneficial. Many roles in various areas of the human services and criminal justice sectors require an understanding of referral pathways and available services. Desktop reviews of available services in an area, region or jurisdiction will equip you with knowledge of where clients might be referred, the client population characteristics serviced by a particular agency, program duration (if appropriate), whether payment is required, opening hours, location and other critical information required for an appropriate referral.

This job description also makes mention of case management, risk assessment and safety planning. Familiarising yourself with these activities and the tools frequently used in a jurisdiction will be beneficial. For example, there are various family and domestic violence risk assessment tools, such as the [CRASF](#) risk assessment and safety planning tools used by the Queensland government and the Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool ([DVSAT](#)) used by the NSW government. Being familiar with these (and similar tools) and reflecting on how you might use one in the context of working with various clients will help place you in the mindset of a worker in such a role. The

more you can imagine yourself in such a role and reflect on the challenges you might encounter, the better.

And a final observation with regard to this job description. A degree is not required for this role. A criminology graduate would be suitable (if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander). As will have become apparent, some roles are suited to psychology or social work graduates, but other roles are less specific regarding tertiary qualifications. In any case, highlighting specific aspects of your degree and specific skills developed during and outside your studies, and showing an understanding of the area of work (in this case family and domestic violence) will be critical when applying for any opportunity.

The below description is for a Caseworker with an NGO in New South Wales. The service is a crisis accommodation service for women with or without dependent children, who are experiencing homelessness due to domestic or family violence:

Caseworker

Your responsibility:

- Engage with persons sleeping rough and/or in danger of becoming homeless.
- Conduct initial intakes and assessments.
- Provide a range of client supports including but not limited to: providing information and resources, crisis interventions, appropriate referrals, and advocacy to other services as required.
- Undertake home visits with clients living in the community.
- Provide client support with a respectful, non-judgmental, and inclusive attitude and manner, always upholding and respecting the rights of clients.
- Provide a range of on-site client supports at our refuges as required, assisting and/or supervising activities as directed.
- Support clients by developing, monitoring, and reviewing case plans to assist them to achieve their goals.
- Address all administrative requirements of the position.

You will need:

- Minimum TAFE Certificate IV or currently undertaking tertiary study, in welfare or related field.
- Previous experience providing support to marginalised and vulnerable people support to homeless persons.
- Demonstrated knowledge of issues relating to homelessness including but not limited to family breakdown, mental illness, drug, alcohol and gambling addictions.
- Demonstrated awareness of appropriate local community support services for homeless clients, including government agencies and NGOs, and the capacity to build and maintain strong relationships with such service providers.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Ability to use sound judgement and act appropriately in crisis and emergency situations.
- NSW driver licence.

Source: [SEEK](#)

Again, there are very specific insights, experience and knowledge that would be helpful for a role of this kind. In addition to some of what was discussed above, understanding trauma informed practice would be beneficial. This might be another area for professional development in the form of short courses, or independent research. Immersing yourself in the available literature (of which there is a lot) will help in preparing for a job of this kind. Of course, on-the-job training will often be provided – in some cases extensive – but it is advisable to not state in an application or interview that you’ll learn something important on the job – the next candidate with those skills and insights will get the job.

The below role is with an NGO in Queensland focused on delivering men’s behaviour change programs to ex-offenders:

Men’s Behaviour Intervention Program Facilitator

This role provides group-work and therapeutic support to men participating in our Men’s Behaviour Intervention Program (MBIP). This casual position works collaboratively with our current MBIP team to engage and provide services to men using family violence.

Responsibilities will include:

- Provide therapeutic group facilitation in accordance with the program guidelines for the delivery of the Men’s Behaviour Intervention Program
- Maintain accurate group notes
- Participate in supervision and professional development
- Contribute to the continuous improvement of the Men’s Behaviour Intervention Program

About you:

- Tertiary qualifications in social work, counselling, psychology or a related discipline
- Experience in delivering behaviour change programs for men who use violence or similar
- Demonstrated understanding of the dynamics of gender-based violence
- Excellent group facilitation and conflict resolution skills
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to empathise and build trust with clients
- Commitment to ongoing professional development and a trauma-informed, strengths-based approach

Source: [SEEK](#)

Given the group nature of the intervention, some understanding of and experience in running groups would clearly be beneficial if you were applying for a job of this kind. Again, this might mean topping up any knowledge or skills gained through a criminology degree or life experience (for example, being a coach or after-school-care worker) with completion of a relevant short course. Understanding – and being comfortable with – group dynamics will be important for a role of this kind.

PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE ROLE

The victims of crime area has become a significant part of criminal justice systems. The national ongoing shame regarding family and domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse (in all forms) has resulted in growing governmental and NGO responses, support services and laws and policies. This means there are an increasing number of roles and opportunities for criminology graduates in this area. Work of this kind is likely to be very rewarding, but challenging.

Some of these challenges are highlighted below:

- Vicarious trauma is possible when working with highly victimised clients. How will you take care of yourself doing work of this kind?
- How would you feel about working with perpetrators of family and domestic violence in men's behaviour change programs?
- How would you separate work from your personal life?
- Are you confident in running groups?
- How will you cope with situations that seem to prosecute victims of family and domestic violence?
- How will you go working for an organisation that might have a very specific philosophy which might be influenced by any religious history of the organisation?

Crime Statistics and Research Agencies

There are numerous research groups outside the academy that are home to criminologists. There are also various research centres that directly or indirectly focus on crime and criminal justice issues. Some are listed below with a brief explanation of each, starting with state and territory entities before considering national organisations.

Agencies at the State Level

Some states and territories have established research units or institutions dedicated to crime and criminal justice research. They include the following.

The [NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research](#) (BOCSAR) was established in 1969. According to its website its main areas of activity are:

- developing and maintaining statistical databases on crime and criminal justice in NSW;
- conducting research on crime and criminal justice issues and problems;
- monitoring trends in crime and criminal justice;
- providing information and advice on crime and criminal justice in NSW.

These activities seek to address the key aims of the Agency, which are to:

- identify factors that affect the distribution and frequency of crime;
- identify factors that affect the effectiveness, efficiency or equity of the NSW criminal justice system;

- ensure that information on these factors and on crime and justice trends is available and accessible to our clients.

By meeting these objectives BOCSAR assists policy makers and administrators in the criminal justice system to develop and implement strategies which reduce crime, and provide a more efficient, effective and equitable justice system.

BOCSAR also provides an information service covering various aspects of criminal justice activities in New South Wales. This service includes responding to requests but also providing freely available data including crime maps, data on crime trends, and data on custody trends (adult and youth).

The [Victorian Crime Statistics Agency](#) was established in 2015 by the *Crime Statistics Act 2014* (Vic) as an independent entity responsible for publishing and releasing Victorian crime statistical information. According to the Agency's website, its strategic objectives are to:

- Improve the accessibility of crime statistics for all Victorians
- Strengthen the integrity and quality of recorded crime data and instil public confidence in crime statistics
- Build an evidence base to support decision making and policy development
- Provide tools that improve the statistical literacy of stakeholders and clients, including data users and commentators.

The establishment of the Victorian Crime Statistics Agency followed an [inquiry](#) by the Victorian Ombudsman in 2011. This inquiry was prompted by a complaint by a whistleblower who suggested that the release of certain crime statistics just prior to the announcement of the caretaker period preceding the Victorian election in 2010 was problematic. Victoria Police was at that time responsible for collecting and publishing Victorian crime statistics, which raised problems regarding independence. The Ombudsman had recommended the establishment of an independent crime statistics agency for some period prior to receiving and investigating this complaint.

Other states and territories tend to have crime data gathered and released by policing agencies. For example, the Queensland Police Service releases online crime maps and crime trend data. South Australia Police also provides online crime statistics, as does WA Police. The Tasmanian Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management produces a crime statistics supplement report, while NT Police provides data to the Department of Attorney-General for release. ACT Policing provides online access to crime statistics for Canberra.

These agencies will employ statisticians, researchers and other staff to work with the crime data and prepare relevant reports. There is scope for criminology graduates to be employed in these agencies, but they will be expected to have strong statistical and data management skills, knowledge and training.

Below is a job advertisement for a Senior Research Officer for BOCSAR:

Senior Research Officer

The Senior Research Officer is part of a multidisciplinary team of economists, statisticians, psychologists, and epidemiologists working in a highly collaborative and supportive environment. This team supports the efficiency, fairness, and effectiveness of the NSW criminal justice system by producing high-quality, evidence-based research.

In this role, you will:

- Evaluate the impact of programs on crime, the criminal justice system, and reoffending.
- Prepare research reports and briefing notes to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Present research findings at seminars, conferences, and stakeholder meetings.
- Provide technical advice on research methodologies to departmental staff and staff from other agencies.
- Review external research proposals and papers submitted by individuals and organisations.

This position plays a critical role in contributing to the Bureau's objective of delivering accurate, objective, and accessible information to inform both public and government decisions on crime and justice.

Essential requirements

An Honours degree or higher, or equivalent in statistics, economics, epidemiology, psychology, or another discipline with a strong statistical component.

Desirable experience and knowledge

In addition to meeting the essential requirements, the successful candidate will demonstrate strong capabilities in:

- Conducting research independently, within established research designs, frameworks, and timeframes.
- Using contemporary research and statistical software relevant to the role (eg, Stata, R, SAS).
- Communicating research findings effectively through written reports, presentations, and other stakeholder-facing formats.

Source: Department of Communities and Justice (NSW)

An essential requirement is an honours degree or equivalent in statistics, economics, epidemiology, psychology or another discipline with a strong statistical component.

This might not automatically be easily demonstrated through a criminology degree. However, there are numerous short courses and additional training that might be undertaken to improve employment prospects in this field. For example, courses are available in various statistical packages and coding programs would be very beneficial for preparing for roles of this kind. An honours year of some kind would also be beneficial, as an honours project generally requires a student to design and complete a small research project. Similarly, research methods and statistics units of study will be very beneficial in developing your understanding of research methods, ethical research practices, data manipulation and analysis, interviewing, survey design and other relevant research skills.

Criminal justice agencies: Many criminal justice agencies have internal research units or teams. An example in New South Wales is [Corrections Research Evaluation and Statistics](#) (CRES):

[CRES] collects, analyses, interprets and disseminates information to assist Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) planning, policy formulation and operational management. It also provides an information, analysis and advice service to the CSNSW Commissioner, the Minister for Communities and Justice and responds to requests from outside CSNSW.

CRES aims to deliver research, evaluation and statistical information through the most up to date methodology and project management, the best use of resources and the development of working partnerships.

At present, CRES [consists] of a range of research professionals, information and data analysts and a small group of administrative/support staff. In addition, specialist research professionals are employed to undertake specific research projects on behalf of CRES.

Sentencing Councils: Some states have established sentencing councils to advise government on sentencing trends and practices. For example, the [NSW Sentencing Council](#) has conducted research into and released reports on fraud, homicide, assaults on emergency workers, repeat traffic offenders and fire offences, and releases an annual report on sentencing trends.

Victoria's [Sentencing Advisory Council](#) was established in 2004. According to its website, the Council's functions include:

- provide statistical information on sentencing, including information on current sentencing practices to members of the judiciary and other interested persons
- conduct research and disseminate information to members of the judiciary and other interested persons on sentencing matters
- gauge public opinion on sentencing
- consult on sentencing matters with government departments and other interested persons and bodies as well as the general public
- advise the Attorney-General on sentencing issues
- provide the Court of Appeal with the Council's written views on the giving, or review, of a guideline judgment.

The Council's organisation chart (2024) includes such positions as Manager of Statistics Analysis, Senior Data Analyst (two positions), Data Analyst, Legal Policy Officer and Legal Policy Researcher. These are all roles that might be of interest to criminology graduates, though noting that qualifications additional to a criminology degree might be required for roles of this kind.

Queensland also has a [Sentencing Advisory Council](#), which was re-established in 2016. It performs similar roles to those found in other jurisdictions. According to its website, the Council:

- informs the community about sentencing in Queensland through research and publications
- engages with Queenslanders to gather their views on sentencing
- if asked by the Attorney-General, advises the Attorney-General on matters relating to sentencing.

Judicial Commissions: Some Australian jurisdictions have Judicial Commissions. According to the website of the [Judicial Commission of New South Wales](#) its work is ‘designed to enhance public confidence in the judiciary by promoting the highest standards of judicial behaviour and decision making’. The Commission seeks to:

- provide a continuing education and training program for NSW judicial officers
- publish information about the criminal law and sentencing to assist the courts to achieve consistency in imposing sentences and more generally in the conduct of criminal proceedings
- examine complaints about judicial officers’ ability or behaviour.

Key outputs include bench books, bulletins and journals, research monographs, and sentencing trends and issues.

Again, some of the roles in an organisation of this kind require research, data analysis, statistical analysis and related skills potentially of interest or relevance to criminology graduates.

Law and justice: The [Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales](#) is an independent statutory body. As stated on its website, the Foundation was established to ‘contribute to the development of a fair and equitable justice system that addresses the legal needs of the community and improves access to justice by the community, particularly for socially and economically disadvantaged people’. The Foundation conducts research into the legal needs of the community, and what strategies work best to address these needs, and supports policy development and planning of service delivery. It produces reports and shares data collected on legal needs across Australia.

The Law and Justice Foundation employs a small number of research staff. Over the years, some of these staff have had backgrounds in criminology. Generally speaking, roles of this kind are likely to be more suitable to candidates with strong research backgrounds and skills, including those who have completed an honours project.

Law Reform Commissions: In addition to the [Australian Law Reform Commission](#), there are law reform commissions in various states and territories. These organisations undertake reviews and inquiries covering diverse legal issues and topics. For example, the [Law Reform Commission of Western Australia](#) recently conducted an [inquiry](#) into sexual offences. Numerous background and issues papers were generated as part of this review.

While many aspects reflect particular legal practices and interpretation, some aspects of the work of law reform commissions are akin to more standard criminological research including reviewing literature, reviewing submissions received, reviewing transcripts of witnesses interviewed, analysing relevant statistical trends, reviewing external jurisdictional responses to issues of relevance, and preparing reports.

Similarly the [Tasmania Law Reform Institute](#) (established in 2001 by agreement between the Tasmanian Government, the University of Tasmania and the Law Society) conducted a review into raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility in 2022. The [Queensland Law Reform Commission](#) commenced a review of particular defences in the Criminal Code in November 2023. And in 2024 the [Victorian Law Reform](#)

[Commission](#) concluded a review of recklessness in 2024. This is just a small sample of the types of issues investigated and analysed by law reform commissions.

Special Commissions of Inquiry: State and territory jurisdictions will periodically establish some form of special commission of inquiry to investigate crime and criminal justice issues. There have been a number in recent years of specific relevance or interest to criminologists including, in New South Wales, an [inquiry](#) into offending by former corrections officer Wayne Astill at Dilwynia Women’s Correctional Centre, an [inquiry](#) into the drug ‘ice’, an [inquiry](#) into LGBTIQ hate crime deaths, and an [inquiry](#) into the NSW Crime Commission.

These inquiries, like many others – be they Royal Commissions or parliamentary inquiries – often adopt broadly similar methods. These include reviewing relevant published material, calling and hearing from witnesses, calling for and receiving submissions, analysing relevant data, reviewing relevant policies, procedures and laws, and preparing various reports. Many former criminology graduates have found sustainable employment working on inquiries of one kind or another at state/territory or federal levels, often moving from one inquiry to another over many years.

Agencies at the National Level

There are also a number of national crime, criminal justice and related research agencies. The [Australian Institute of Criminology](#) (AIC) was established in 1973. According to its website it is:

Australia’s national research and knowledge centre on crime and justice, compiling trend data and disseminating research and policy advice. The AIC informs crime and justice policy and practice in Australia by undertaking, funding and disseminating policy-relevant research of national significance, by generating a crime and justice evidence base, and by establishing a national knowledge centre.

The AIC works with stakeholders both nationally and internationally to bring together a research knowledge base that is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The AIC relies upon data provided by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments in order to undertake a large range of its research activities. Stakeholders include:

- the Australian Government – national law enforcement agencies, regulatory agencies, and justice agencies
- states and territories – state and territory law enforcement agencies, regulatory agencies, and justice and corrections agencies
- international agencies – the AIC is a member of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme Network of Institutes
- others – academia, non-government organisations, general public.

The AIC manages various research programs, a research grants program (Criminology Research Grants), and an information service and library. Like many organisations of this kind, the staff establishment is modest. The 2023–24 annual report states that the AIC had 24 employees as at 30 June 2024, most of whom were located in Canberra.

The [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#) manages data and publishes reports across a number of domains. Illicit use of drugs, youth justice, child protection and homelessness services are just some of the areas that are potentially relevant to criminology students and graduates.

The [Australian Institute of Family Studies](#) is a statutory agency based in Melbourne. According to its website: 'It was established in 1980 under the *Family Law Act 1975*. AIFS' mission is to conduct high-quality, impartial research into the wellbeing of Australian families, to inform government policy and promote evidence-based practice in the family services sector. AIFS also incorporates the Australian Gambling Research Centre'. The Institute publishes on a wide variety of issues impacting children and families, including abuse and neglect, family law, divorce, gambling, child care and employment trends – all topics directly relevant to the health of families in Australia which have implications for crime and its prevention.

The [Productivity Commission](#) produces annual reports on government services (known as RoGS). These voluminous reports cover areas of government policy and expenditure including education, health, housing, justice and emergency management. The RoGS contain various parts dedicated to these portfolios and are an excellent source of information on various aspects of state and territory criminal justice systems, including the costs of various criminal justice activities.

The [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) (ABS) is probably best known for its Census collection which commenced in 1911. The national Census collects information about the population to aid planning, policy development and service delivery. The ABS also collects specific data on various issues including crime and safety. Relevant datasets and publications cover topics such as personal safety, offenders, criminal courts, women's safety survey, and the reported rates of various crimes.

[Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety](#) (ANROWS) is described on its website:

ANROWS was established as an initiative of Australia's first *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (National Plan) by the Commonwealth Government and all state and territory governments of Australia. Our primary function is to build the evidence base that supports ending violence against women and children in Australia.

ANROWS is embedded in the National Plan architecture and will continue to deliver and develop this function across the next decade under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*.

The 2023–24 annual report states that ANROWS had 45 staff nationally, which reflects the relatively small staff establishment of this organisation.

The [National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre](#) is based at UNSW. According to its website, it focuses on 'eight key activity areas and in response to emerging drug and alcohol issues in Australia'. These are:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Clinical research
- Mental and physical comorbidities
- Epidemiology of drug and alcohol use and harms

- Justice health and drug policy
- Indigenous health and wellbeing
- Health economics and biostatistics
- Families and communities
- Emergent needs.

And this is only a small list of possible research and data agencies in which criminology graduates might find themselves!

Before listing some additional organisations broadly operating in the research and data space, I have provided a few position descriptions from some of these agencies:

ANROWS Director of Research

Reporting to the CEO, the Director of Research will:

- Lead the development and implementation of Australia's National Research Agenda, (ANRA) including commissioned research and grants.
- Provide expert advice to policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders on evidence-informed directions to address violence against women and children.
- Represent ANROWS in national and international forums related to research.
- Manage and mentor a multidisciplinary research team to deliver high-quality, impactful outputs.
- Oversee flagship initiatives, including the National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS) and the Evidence Portal.

The successful candidate will possess:

- A strong research background in social sciences with a focus on violence against women and their children, with postgraduate qualifications in fields such as sociology, criminology, or social psychology.
- Extensive experience designing, leading, managing, and supervising complex research programs.
- Proven people leadership capability, including team management and strategic planning.
- A track record of building and maintaining strong relationships across government, academia, and the community sector.
- Exceptional analytical, communication, and stakeholder engagement skills.

Source: [ANROWS](#)

This is obviously a senior role. The job description highlights the lengthy track record expected in a role of this kind, and the variety of skills, knowledge and experience expected of someone at this level.

A more junior role with ANROWS is described below:

Research and Evaluation Officer

Your primary responsibility will be to assist the team in the design and implementation of evaluations, using various approaches. You will work closely with your team members to gather and analyse data and contribute to the development of practical, evidence-informed insights for our partners. Your work will contribute to informed decision-making and service-delivery improvements towards ending violence against women and children in Australia.

Key responsibilities

- Contribute to the design of evaluations at ANROWS. This may include supporting literature reviews, contributing to the preparation and implementation of evaluation planning workshops and supporting the development of logic models, theories of change and evaluation frameworks.
- Undertake qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis and other research tasks. This may include developing data collection instruments, undertaking data collection (eg, conducting interviews and focus groups, or supporting the administration of surveys), supporting data management, supporting qualitative and quantitative data analysis, and preparing and coordinating ethics applications on behalf of the evaluation team.
- Assist with project management and administration of evaluation projects. This may include assisting with monitoring of project plans and budgets, coordinating project meetings and workshops, organising data collection activities, and internal and external progress reporting.
- Support the communication of evaluation findings. This includes preparing accessible evaluation reports, synthesis papers, presentations and other outputs to communicate key insights for internal and external audiences.
- Contribute to the growth of the Evaluation and Partnerships portfolio. This may include contributing to, or coordinating proposals and applications for project funding, and supporting the development and continuous improvement of internal tools, templates and processes for the evaluation team.
- Work collaboratively with external and internal stakeholders. This includes maintaining positive relationships with clients, contributing to a positive and effective team dynamic at ANROWS and contributing to cross-team projects, as required.

Essential criteria

- Professional experience in evaluation in a relevant sector, including applying evaluation approaches and appropriate methods.
- Demonstrated research skills that can be applied to evaluation, including experience collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data.
- Experience in project management of research and/or evaluation projects including coordinating tasks, prioritising competing demands and ability to work to agreed timelines.
- A track record of effective written communication, including preparing research/evaluation reports or presentations for diverse audiences.
- Well-developed interpersonal and teamwork skills, including the capacity to maintain collaborative relationships with clients and partners.
- A tertiary qualification or equivalent in a relevant field (eg, evaluation, psychology, *criminology*, sociology, public health, gender studies). [emphasis added]

Desirable criteria

- Knowledge of a broad range of issues relating to domestic, family and sexual violence.
- Experience working with diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Understanding of decolonising and/or Indigenous research methodologies and methods.
- Ability to travel domestically, as required.

Source: [ANROWS](#)

This position description highlights the need for project management, an understanding of evaluation methodologies, report writing and communication skills – all foundational for roles of this kind.

A job description for an Evaluation Officer with Corrections Victoria is below:

Evaluation Officer

The Centre for Evaluation is the central point of evaluation expertise and knowledge providing the department with evaluation services across its diverse portfolios. These services include end-to-end evaluations of policies and programs, establishing evaluation and monitoring frameworks and tools, designing and delivering surveys, coordinating ethical research requirements for internal and external researchers, and a range of other consultancy services.

The Evaluation Officer will provide support across these services, including the design and implementation of evaluation projects by undertaking quantitative and qualitative analysis and developing high-quality written outputs to present findings. This position will work as part of a project team. Developing relationships with clients and stakeholders is a key part of this role.

Some of your duties will include:

- Provide specialist advice and support the development of mixed-methods evaluation projects to ensure outputs are delivered in a timely manner.
- Develop high-quality written evaluation outputs, including evaluation frameworks, ethics applications, quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments, and quality evaluation reports.

To be successful in this role, you will have:

- Demonstrated experience in the delivery of research and evaluation projects involving both quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- Demonstrated experience in the design of quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments, evaluation frameworks, ethics applications and program logic approaches.
- Demonstrated experience in the preparation of high-quality research and evaluation reports.
- Statistical analysis skills, including both descriptive and inferential methods.
- Experience in the use of statistical software to analyse quantitative data (eg, Excel, SPSS).
- Experience in thematic analysis of qualitative data and development of case studies.

Qualifications

- A current Working with Children Check (Employee) is required.
- Qualifications with a strong focus on evaluation, social science research and/or criminology are desirable.

Source: Corrections Victoria

This job description provides insight into relevant skills, some of which might be developed through a criminology degree (eg, report writing, statistical analysis, research methods). It also points to additional areas that the standard criminology graduate (if such a person exists) would need to develop. Skills in more advanced research methods and statistical analysis might be developed through taking particular electives, attending relevant short courses, and undertaking personal professional development (including by accessing the many free resources available online).

Other Organisations

Many organisations specialise in evaluation and social policy work. It is relevant to consider the many private organisations doing this work in addition to the government agencies mentioned above. Some have been established for a very long time and operate at the national and even international level, while others are more specifically based in particular cities or towns. Some have a specific cultural origin or focus, while others are more generic. Some focus specifically on evaluations, while others do diverse activities including evaluation. Just a couple of examples are provided here:

- [Culturally Inclusive Research Centre Australia](#) has a team of consultants who are experts in research and evaluation and an extensive national team of highly skilled bilingual and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research consultants.
- [ARTD Consultants](#) is, according to its website, a ‘leading public sector consulting firm’. Its core business ‘is working with government agencies and non-government organisations to make evidence-informed policy decisions; co-design service models and delivery strategies; plan for, track and evaluate outcomes; and continuously improve performance’.

The [Australian Evaluation Society](#) provides a consultants directory where more organisations doing evaluation work can be found. The Society also holds conferences and delivers various online training workshops.

There are numerous other research centres that directly or indirectly focus on crime and criminal justice issues, or on issues relevant to crime and criminal justice systems. Operational agencies such as police and corrective service agencies will also employ research staff, as will organisations which have other functions including oversight. For example, Ombudsman and other complaint-handling organisations produce a number of publications requiring various skills that might be relevant to criminology graduates (with or without additional training and qualifications).

For example, the Queensland [Crime and Corruption Commission](#) (CCC) prepared a [report](#) on protecting the lives of children and their sexual safety. According to the Commission’s website:

As part of this review, the CCC called for submissions, interviewed specialist police who administer the Act and prosecutors from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, collected official quantitative data from the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Courts, Queensland Corrective Services, and reviewed peer-reviewed journal articles.

Work of this kind might be relevant or of interest to criminology graduates, especially those wanting to pursue a career involving research.

Another related organisation in New South Wales is the [Law Enforcement Conduct Commission](#) (LECC). It was established to streamline aspects of how complaints against police are managed and commenced operations on 1 July 2017. Since then, it has published numerous reports following particular reviews. While compliance and complaint handling are key aspects of the LECC’s remit, aspects of the work involve

research skills. For example, the LECC spent a number of years reviewing a program used to police young people (amongst other targets). The [report](#) generated drew on analysis of records for 429 young people, which involved trawling through police electronic records on young people and analysing particular characteristics of the young people and the nature of the police interventions. The LECC also sought and received submissions from relevant agencies which provide qualitative data for analysis. Work of this kind might well be suited to criminology graduates with a solid understanding of both criminal justice system practices and relevant data systems and management techniques.

Audit agencies also periodically do work in the criminal justice system. The [Queensland Audit Office](#) recently undertook a [review](#) into reducing serious youth crime. Many of the tasks undertaken with audits of this kind are similar to research processes adopted by other agencies – analysis of available administrative data, consultations with relevant stakeholders, site visits, review of relevant literature, and preparing reports. Agencies like the Queensland Audit Office will work on diverse topics rather than only focus on crime and criminal justice related issues.

Many criminology degrees will not provide sufficient coverage of the issues, skills and knowledge required to immediately prepare a graduate for roles of this kind. However, if a career in research is of interest to you, then taking additional short courses, completing statistical courses and gaining hands-on experience either as a research assistant or through placement or internship units will be beneficial. Also, if available, an honours year research project will help you become familiar with conducting research and all the tasks needing to be managed including designing a research project, gaining ethics approval, gathering data, analysing data and reporting on the findings.

PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE ROLE

This section has listed and introduced roles in various agencies largely doing research, evaluation and producing crime statistics (amongst other activities). There are numerous roles that might be of interest to criminology graduates.

Some things to consider if you are interested in roles and a career of this kind include:

- Are you familiar with relevant statistical software packages and techniques?
- Are you happy to spend considerable time behind a computer and in an office?
- Can you write up research findings and present them to relevant audiences in a competent fashion?
- Could you undertake an evaluation of a criminal justice program?
- Would you prefer to work for a government, NGO or private research and evaluation organisation? Each will have different benefits.

Before moving away from (predominantly state) government organisations, it is worth considering the volume of non-traditional agencies that might also employ criminology graduates. Without exploring these in detail, it is worth considering roles with agencies such as Fair Trading, Roads and Maritime, Casino Control, Liquor and Gaming, Treasury (especially program evaluation units), Housing, Child Protection, Disability, Indigenous Affairs, Ethnic Affairs, Sport and Recreation and the many other agencies that work directly with vulnerable populations and high-risk environments (eg, licensed venues) and have research and policy roles that might be open to criminology graduates. I have known numerous criminology graduates who found themselves analysing road safety programs, working to prevent anti-social behaviour in public and social housing, developing policies around preventing homelessness, and monitoring responsible service of alcohol policies.

And these are just those at the state or territory government level. With the growing focus on digital crimes and borders, numerous roles are being created in federal government agencies such as Australian Border Force, the eSafety Commissioner, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission with its focus on preventing scams (amongst other things).

Universities

Australian universities employ hundreds of academic criminologists – the people that teach you. You might ultimately want to progress toward becoming an academic criminologist.

The growth in criminology programs in Australia and overseas, especially at the undergraduate level, means there is a very clear career path from an undergraduate degree in criminology to pursuing an academic job. While this might be an obvious path, it is also narrow in that there are generally very few academic criminology tertiary jobs compared with the number of criminology graduates. This path will generally require additional studies, possibly including an honours year of some kind and then most likely a doctoral degree (PhD). This can be a somewhat treacherous path not only because of the limited number of jobs, but also the often-lengthy periods of being employed in precarious roles, such as a sessional research assistant or sessional teaching staff. It might take a lengthy period to secure a tenured role, which provides job security.

A standard academic contract is based on the 40:40:20 principle. That is, 40 per cent of the job involves teaching, 40 per cent research, and 20 per cent service. This is the type of arrangement that many academic criminologists in Australia will operate under, although increasingly many will be in teaching-only roles which means that 70 per cent of their workload will be dedicated to teaching-related tasks and those employed in research centres might be 100 per cent dedicated to their research (but often find themselves on ‘soft money’ which means their employment is linked to research grant funding). For those on the standard 40:40:20 split, at least in theory, this allows for

approximately two days per week to be dedicated to research (though it rarely works out this way).

While being a university student likely gives you significant insight into the role of an academic criminologist, the following provides a brief snapshot of the types of tasks associated with the standard academic 40:40:20 contract or tenure:

- **Teaching:** You will generally be familiar with what teaching entails given your experiences as a student. Academics prepare teaching materials, establish e-learning platforms, develop teaching resources (including podcasts, videos and slide packs), set and mark assessments, manage the various university and student administration tasks, attend graduations, etc. Universities will often provide support for academic staff to enhance their teaching through the provision of seminars or additional qualifications in teaching and pedagogy.
- **Research:** Research can take many forms depending on individual and institutional directions, interests, skills, etc. Irrespective of the approach taken to conducting research, key requirements include navigating ethics committees, designing research projects, pursuing research funding, managing research staff and project budgets, analysing data, drafting publications of various kinds, and delivering conference presentations. The research work and output of each academic criminologist will differ according to many characteristics, but these are common tasks for many.

If you are interested in pursuing a career as an academic criminologist, developing relevant skills will be highly beneficial. This might mean opting to do as many research methods courses as possible. It might mean seeking to do some casual research assistant work for one or more of the academics at your university. It might mean going to free or paid training courses on data analysis techniques or on diverse research methods. This might mean accessing and analysing freely available data, of which there is a considerable amount. This might even mean working toward initial publications and becoming familiar with key research funding bodies such as the [Australian Research Council](#), Criminology Research Grants from the [Australian Institute of Criminology](#), the [National Health and Medical Research Council](#) and philanthropic funding, amongst others. You are likely to also want to consider doing honours and then doctoral studies as it is increasingly a mandatory requirement to have or be working toward a PhD.

- **Service:** Service can mean many things. It might include service to your university through contribution to committees, working groups or other governance structures. It might include service to your profession or discipline, which might include peer-reviewing articles, contributing to roles in relevant industry groups such as the [Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology](#), being appointed to advisory groups or similar, or doing related activities for community or not-for-profit organisations. Definitions of service

will differ according to the relevant university and be shaped by individual and institutional preferences and priorities.

Excerpts from a position description for an entry-level academic criminology position are provided below, noting that the academic scale in Australia generally spans:

- Level A (Associate Lecturer);
- Level B (Lecturer);
- Level C (Senior Lecturer);
- Level D (Associate Professor); and
- Level E (Professor).

Entry level is often either Level A or Level B:

Academic Criminologist

You will possess the following:

- A Doctoral qualification
- Demonstrated knowledge, skills and experience in teaching at the tertiary education level and a proven ability to administer University courses
- Demonstrated experience in course development and course coordination
- Demonstrated capacity to supervise Honours and postgraduate research students to completion
- Demonstrated ability to conduct and publish quality research, with evidence of high-quality papers and national and international research impact
- Demonstrated effective communication and interpersonal skills and the ability and commitment to work collegially and contribute to the positive culture and aspirations of the School and University, including collaborating with other staff, participating in committees and School activities, and liaising with industry partners

Key responsibilities include:

- Foster an outstanding student experience and encourage active participation and engagement in learning and teaching across the spectrum of the University's undergraduate and postgraduate program suite facilitating high-quality, student-centred learning activities
- Continuously improve teaching practice through professional development and critical reflection informed by a range of evaluation approaches
- Inform the quality, innovation, currency and evidence base of teaching and learning through scholarly activities, commitments and outputs
- Support high-quality learning and teaching strategies that facilitate improved student retention, employability and successful outcomes for students
- Foster innovation and a future-focused approach to support high-quality learning and teaching outcomes for students evidenced by technology enhanced learning, problem oriented, authentic learning and assessment practices
- Provide educational contributions through responsibility for academic courses
- Contribute to the advancement of knowledge through a balanced research portfolio of high-quality outputs that demonstrate impact

- Undertake research that has the potential to achieve impact on policy and practice in the wider community
- Ensure consistently high-quality experiences and outcomes are achieved for higher degree research (HDR) candidates
- Support a student-centred service culture and establishment of positive, respectful and supportive relationships between staff and students
- Develop meaningful and impactful partnerships with the broader community, by actively engaging and collaborating with external stakeholders
- Contribute to the enhancement of the School/Department standing and reputation by promoting educational and research activities with external communities
- Promote and enhance student learning experiences through engagement with industry and broader community to develop work integrated learning opportunities and support employability initiatives
- Support, ensure and maintain compliance with relevant legislation and University policies and procedures, including equity and health & safety and exhibit good practice in relation to same
- Be a leading example of the principles and values embodied in the University's Code of Conduct, and behave, act and communicate at all times to reflect fairness, ethics and professionalism

Source: SEEK

This position description lays out the skills, knowledge and experience you might need to acquire to transition from an undergraduate degree in criminology to a role as an academic criminologist. As noted above, this path is not a linear or easy one given the volume of interest in the relatively small number of positions available.

Non-Government Organisations

Non-government organisations (NGOs) play various roles that might be of interest to criminologists. While the list below is not exhaustive, it highlights some of the prominent work undertaken by NGOs that might be relevant to criminologists.

Post-Release Support

Various correctional systems in Australia contract NGOs to deliver a range of post-release services. These might include helping with housing, employment and life skills post incarceration and/or casework and individual interventions. Criminal justice systems likely see advantages in contracting out this work. For one, NGOs often do not pay or provide the same conditions as public service departments. For another, there is likely to be less perceived stigma attached to attending NGO offices as opposed to community correctional agencies which are clearly identified as being part of the criminal justice system. Saying 'I need to see my caseworker from [NGO]' is likely to

be qualitatively different than saying ‘I need to visit my community corrections officer’ or ‘my parole officer’.

Numerous organisations are directly or indirectly involved in post-release support work. Some are listed and described here:

- [Vacro](#) ‘supports adults in contact with Victoria’s criminal justice system and their families through a range of services and projects’. Vacro runs various programs to assist with post-release challenges including providing assistance and resources to aid post-release and with employment.
- [OARS Community Transitions](#) is ‘one of Australia’s most innovative non-government crime prevention agencies’. Based in Adelaide, OARS seeks to ‘enhance community wellbeing by reducing offending and victimisation’. It provides a range of post-release (and other) services and programs including transitional accommodation.
- The [Community Restorative Centre](#) was established in 1951 and provides a variety of housing and transition support for men and women leaving custody in different locations in New South Wales, as well as a telephone information and referral service and an AOD transitional support service in Sydney.

Each NGO employs staff, many of whom will have graduated from a criminology degree. Each (and related agencies) will employ people for diverse roles.

Some of these roles are outlined below, including this job description for a part-time role with Vacro based in Sydney:

Participant Support Worker

As a Participant Support Worker, you will assist with the day-to-day operations of the Second Chance food truck. This role involves stock management, supervising staff, participant support, cooking, driving, and pack up/down procedure.

To be considered, you’ll have

- At least 2 years of work experience within a fast-paced food and beverage establishment
- Drivers experience in Hospitality, food truck environment desirable
- Kitchen experience would be desirable with an understanding of food service operations
- Knowledge of safe food handling and food safety requirements
- Excellent customer service and interpersonal skills
- Understanding of diversity and social justice
- Ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds
- Professional experience in community and cultural engagement
- A driver’s licence is essential and a Medium Rigid duty truck licence is favourable.

You will have experience in hospitality and have a positive attitude that will create a fun working environment for staff and participants. You will be driven to lead with a hands-on approach and have the willingness to support the values of Vacro and advance its mission to care for their community and a passion for reintegration.

Source: Vacro

A role like this can provide a good bridge between university, hospitality work to pay for university, and a career in criminal justice.

Another job description is for a role with OARS based in Adelaide:

Case Manager

The Case Manager will:

- Assist clients to identify their individual accommodation needs through the provision of a comprehensive intake and assessment process
- Where assigned, support clients engaged with the organisation's ex-custodial housing services by the development of an holistic individual case plan that establishes short and long term goals across all presenting issues with an aim to achieving long term, stable, affordable accommodation, reducing recidivism and assisting clients to integrate into their local communities
- Ensure the service is provided in a manner that achieves positive client outcomes and targets, as set out via the case plans and expectations
- Review case plans on a regular basis with participating clients
- Regularly review Case Plans with the Team Manager
- Liaise with in-house services and relevant human services with the aim of achieving positive outcomes which will assist in clients achieving their negotiated goals and obtaining social reintegration
- Provide basic counselling to clients as needed
- Make appropriate referrals to a specialised service
- Provide clients with accurate and current information which empowers them to make informed decisions/choices for themselves
- Assist in supporting, developing and nurturing positive networks for clients
- Negotiate on behalf of clients with potential Landlords
- Provide appropriate written reports
- Maintain appropriate and accurate client files
- Ensure that day to day administration requirements of the program are met, particularly around entering data on the H2h database when required
- Participate in team meetings
- Promote the service in a positive manner within the community
- Maintain procedures that adhere to the requirements of Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare
- Provide a monthly report to the Team Manager

Essential minimum requirements include:

- Tertiary qualification in a human services discipline and/or equivalent knowledge and experience in case managing people who are experiencing high levels of need and disadvantage
- Ability to empathise with disadvantaged people in general and those interfacing with the criminal justice system
- Ability to interact with people who are homeless
- Ability to assess the needs of clients within a holistic framework
- Ability to prepare reports and maintain accurate records

- Effective communication and crisis intervention skills
- Interviewing and basic counselling skills
- Ability to develop and maintain professional networks
- Ability to implement service strategies and evaluate results
- General Computer skills
- Ability to enter information onto a database accurately and in a timely manner
- Ability to work within a correctional facility

Source: [OARS Community Transitions](#)

Roles like this are quite common in NGOs engaged in doing, amongst other things, post-release support for people exiting prison. The time immediately post-release can be challenging and caseworkers, support workers and transition officers play an important role in helping people find accommodation and employment, and navigate the increasingly complicated world of Centrelink and reporting to other government agencies, and by providing emotional support (amongst other things).

Culturally Specific Organisations

Criminology, as a discipline, continues to grapple with its colonial past and its contribution to the appalling over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian criminal justice systems, most especially in prisons. This has contributed to the emergence of Indigenous criminological theories and perspectives, as well as growing involvement and leadership from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. This will be an area that some criminology graduates gravitate to because of personal experiences and motivations. Being actively engaged in improving the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities will be how some criminology graduates apply what they have learnt and inspire their careers.

There are many opportunities in Aboriginal organisations, government, non-government and for-profit organisations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander criminology graduates and non-Aboriginal criminology graduates. As with other areas, it is not possible to do justice to the diversity of roles in this area. Below is just a snapshot of some of the organisations and opportunities for criminology graduates.

The [North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency](#) (NAAJA) has a team of over 160 staff across the Northern Territory. It provides law and justice-related services that aim to ensure that Aboriginal people have real access to justice, including community legal education, Indigenous prisoner throughcare, and the Kunga Stopping Violence Program (amongst many others).

NAAJA has a Senior Indigenous Youth Justice Worker role based in Darwin. The job description includes the following information:

Senior Indigenous Youth Justice Worker

NAAJA's Throughcare program delivers a voluntary and holistic approach to supporting Aboriginal people as they transition from prison back into the community. Our goal is to reduce recidivism and promote long-term reintegration through strengths-based, intensive pre- and post-release case management.

As the Senior Indigenous Youth Justice Worker (SIYJW) you will join our Throughcare team based in Darwin and play a key role in shaping the future of Aboriginal youth within the justice system. This is an exciting and rewarding opportunity to work directly with Indigenous youth at the critical intersection of early intervention, prevention, and intensive case management.

What you'll be doing

- Providing tailored early intervention and prevention services to Indigenous youth involved in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system.
- Managing complex individual casework with a focus on culturally safe, client-centred support for youth and their families.
- Developing and maintaining professional and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal youth, families, and stakeholders.
- Collaborating with local communities, agencies, and government services to advocate for youth justice reform and better outcomes.
- Contributing to the broader Throughcare program goals and Closing the Gap objectives, particularly in relation to youth justice.

What we're looking for

Essential –

- Proven experience in case management and a strong understanding of the youth and criminal justice systems.
- In-depth knowledge of the social and systemic challenges faced by Aboriginal people involved in the justice system.
- Demonstrated ability to engage with and support Aboriginal youth and their families in a culturally appropriate manner.
- Strong communication and relationship-building skills, with the ability to work effectively with diverse stakeholders.

Desirable –

- A degree in social work or a related discipline.
- the ability to speak an Aboriginal language (highly desirable).

Source: [NAAJA](#)

This role is not an identified position only open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Having strong skills and experience working in and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is important for roles of this kind. This again encourages thinking and professional development outside a criminology or related degree. If you are not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, then opportunities to complete cultural programs, take immersive learning units in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

communities (where available), and augmenting classroom learning with opportunities to develop insights, knowledge, skills and expertise in relevant contexts will be important for roles of this kind. It will also be important for many roles in the criminal justice system given the ongoing rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation.

Justice reinvestment has become popular in some jurisdictions, the logic being to invest in communities to stop the flow of offenders into youth detention and prisons. In some contexts this means actively trying to re-direct funding from prisons to the communities where many prisoners come from.

[Just Reinvest NSW](#) is one organisation doing this work in Australia:

Just Reinvest NSW supports Aboriginal communities to develop their own solutions for change, making them safer and more just. Our goal is to reduce Aboriginal People's interactions with the criminal justice system.

We do this by creating stronger and safer futures through both community-led initiatives and state-wide policy and legislative reform, redirecting funds away from systems that harm people, towards communities with high rates of contact with the justice system.

We work alongside Aboriginal communities to support place-based, community-led and data driven approaches to inform local solutions, such as devising local 'justice circuit-breakers'. Our place-based approach feeds into our broader policy and advocacy work to create levers for change.

The role description for a Research and Data Manager at Just Reinvest in Sydney includes the following:

Research and Data Manager, Just Reinvest

Reporting to the CEO, you will manage a small team to undertake research and develop data function and capabilities, and oversee our newly launched JR Data Hub. Your insights will guide evidence-based decision making, along with collaboration with our stakeholders in communities to understand the context of both place and community. We facilitate both virtual and in person connections, so a small amount of regional travel is required to meet with community to build relationships and see how things work on the ground.

What we're looking for

- It's essential that you know your way around data management, research and analysis, and tools such as SQL, R, Python and PowerBI.
- A solid 3-5 years' experience is required to be successful in this role.
- You bring tertiary qualifications in statistics, data science, public health, social sciences, or a related field.
- Ideally you'll bring working knowledge of the criminal justice system and its impacts on Indigenous Peoples, but other relevant experience in social justice or community development would also be valuable.
- You're confident managing and developing your team – some who are new to the data space – who are based in Redfern as well as in our community sites.
- Cross-cultural communication skills and cultural sensitivities are a must for our organisation.

Source: [Just Reinvest NSW](#)

Very specific data analysis skills are required in a job of this kind. Unless covered in your criminology degree (which is unlikely in most cases) additional training in the programs listed would be a good way of working toward a more senior role of this kind. Cross-cultural communication skills and cultural sensitivities are also essential in this context and will be a requirement of many organisations. If a role of this kind is appealing, then you would do well to craft a career plan to get the requisite experience and skills to move toward such a role in the future.

While the focus above has necessarily been on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and work, there is also significant need to respond to people involved in the criminal justice system from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Various CALD groups are over-represented in criminal justice statistics, requiring culturally responsive approaches.

A small number of job descriptions are provided below showing the variety of crime and criminal justice roles relevant to working with CALD communities. The following job advertisement is for a role with Parkville Youth Justice based in Melbourne:

CALD Youth Worker

Your duties include:

- Promptly respond to enquiries from young people, Parkville staff and co-health staff whether face to face or by telephone in a professional and courteous manner
- Respect language differences, cultural beliefs, and practices
- Provision of case management to young people in a culturally sensitive manner
- Defusing difficult situations and seeking assistance with critical incidents

Our ideal candidate:

- Appropriate qualification in a related field such as youth work, social work, psychology, counselling, community services
- Working with Children Check (WWCC)
- A thorough understanding of recovery-focused, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate primary health and primary mental health service delivery models.
- Current Victorian Driver's Licence

The roles in this program are required to undergo mandatory additional security screening. Details will be provided to successful candidates.

Source: [Parkville Youth Justice](#)

The following role is with Immigrant Women's Speakout Association in Sydney:

Domestic, Family, Sexual Violence Project Officer

As a Domestic, Family, Sexual Violence Project Officer, you will play a key role in providing support and advocacy for migrant and refugee women and their children affected by DFSV. You will:

- Provide case management and specialist support to women and children in a culturally sensitive, trauma-informed manner.

- Deliver comprehensive services to clients by collaborating with internal experts and external specialised services.
- Ensure compliance with regulatory and organisational obligations, especially DFSV-related legislation.
- Conduct research, data collection and prepare case studies to inform service delivery and advocacy efforts.
- Advocate for clients and communities to ensure their needs are met, their voices heard.
- Engage with relevant interagency networks to strengthen support systems.
- Maintain strict client confidentiality and privacy.
- Participate in ongoing training and professional development opportunities.
- Uphold personal safety and the safety of colleagues and clients at all times.

Essential criteria:

- Tertiary qualifications in social work, community services, or related field.
- Proven experience in case management and advocacy, particularly with migrant and refugee women and children.
- Strong understanding of domestic violence dynamics and issues facing migrant and refugee women experiencing abuse.
- Excellent communication skills, including negotiation skills.
- Ability to work independently and as part of the team.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite and internet based research.
- Experienced in preparing and maintaining accurate records and reports.
- Commitment to maintain client confidentiality and professional integrity.
- NSW Driver's licence and comprehensively insured motor vehicle.

Desirable criteria:

- In-depth knowledge of the functions of government and non-government agencies that support victims of DFSV (eg, Police, Local Courts, Community Services, Housing).

Source: [Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW Inc](#)

This job description is for a role with the Australian Aids Council of NSW:

Director, Community Programs

The Community Programs Division leads ACON's community-level programming, bringing together various teams focused on inclusive, health-promoting, and culturally responsive initiatives. The Division plays a central role in engaging communities and delivering programs that support the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people.

Community Programs works in partnership with all ACON Divisions, particularly Peer and Client Services and Population Health. The Director serves as the organisational lead for community development and local health promotion practice and coordinates ACON's offerings across Sydney and regional NSW.

Key activities within the Division include:

- Providing leadership in NSW's HIV and sexual health response, including peer education and community engagement, particularly for gay and bisexual men.
- Implementing programs to improve safety for LGBTQ+ people.

- Conducting community development work focused on culturally and linguistically diverse communities, particularly in Western Sydney.
- Development and delivery of a range of health promotion programs and initiatives for LGBTQA+SB Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- Delivering support and social connection programs for older LGBTQ+ people, including the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme.
- Facilitating leadership programs for LGBTQ+ people with disability.
- Operating Needle and Syringe Programs.
- Distributing information across community groups, venues, and services.

Who are we looking for?

We are seeking a mission-driven, values-aligned, strategic leader. You will bring deep experience in community development, health promotion, and stakeholder engagement, with a passion for improving the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ communities across NSW. You will have experience in leading and mentoring teams and a track record in delivering inclusive, place-based programs that foster connection, build health knowledge, and promote safety.

You will bring ways to understand and respond to the specific and intersectional experience of people within ACON's identified communities including people living with HIV, rural communities, culturally diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, older LGBTQ+ people, and people with disability.

Source: SEEK

Many similar roles exist working across a spectrum of issues and client populations. Criminology students with lived experience and a strong sense of social justice or activism might be especially interested in roles like these.

Civil Society Advocacy and Reform Agencies

Numerous organisations across Australia are engaged in forms of advocacy, reform and activism. A relatively small number of jobs exists within these organisations, some of which are longstanding while others are newer. In this section, I have attempted to shed light on some of these organisations and the work they do, and to highlight potential opportunities for criminology graduates, again noting that employment opportunities will be somewhat rare, but voluntary opportunities significant.

The website of the [Justice Reform Initiative](#) states:

The Justice Reform Initiative is an alliance of people who share long-standing professional experience, lived experience and/or expert knowledge of the justice system, who are further supported by a movement of Australians of goodwill from across the country and across the political spectrum.

We believe jailing is failing and that there is an urgent need to reduce the number of people in Australian prisons. We believe that the over-use of prisons is fundamentally harmful to those in prison, their family and friends, and the broader community.

We believe that prisons are ineffective as a deterrent, ineffective at reducing crime, and ineffective at addressing the drivers of criminal justice system involvement.

We believe that the over-use of incarceration is a waste of human potential and a misuse of taxpayer dollars.

The evidence shows that the majority of people entering prison usually arrive there because of an underpinning cycle of disadvantage and that prison both exacerbates and entrenches a broader cycle of disadvantage, which needs to be broken.

We believe the moment has come for change, with a combination of political, economic and social forces coalescing to create an opportunity to genuinely challenge and respond to our overreliance on incarceration – and offer up an alternative vision.

The Justice Reform Initiative has few paid staff, but its work might be of interest to criminology graduates, especially if the alliance grows. Much of the work involves meeting with politicians, doing media interviews, and gathering evidence, data and information to convince decision-makers that existing criminal justice policies are failing. The tremendous networks of the patrons and board means that many meetings are held to understand existing political and personal views of key ministers on contemporary criminal justice policies in the relevant jurisdiction and to lobby for progressive reform.

The [#RaiseTheAge](#) campaign is designed, as the name suggests, to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Australia. The campaign website states:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and activists have been pushing for the age of criminal responsibility to be changed for decades, having seen first-hand how locking away young children and removing them from their communities and families only does more damage.

In 2020 a coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and legal, medical and human rights groups came together to form a national campaign to push every single state, territory and federal government to change the laws so that children under 14 cannot be sent to prison. These organisations included the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Change the Record, Human Rights Law Centre, Law Council of Australia, Amnesty International Australia, Australian Medical Association, Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, Public Health Association of Australia and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. The campaign is now supported by over 100 organisations in every state and territory with new groups signing up every week.

Together, we have written thousands of letters and emails, lobbied politicians, built a powerful and diverse alliance, held press conferences, events and rallies, written op-eds, run social media actions and used every opportunity possible to speak out against this injustice across Australia.

As for the Justice Reform Initiative, funding is tight for campaigns of this nature and employment opportunities are very limited. Much of the work of organisations and coalitions of this kind is voluntary or within existing paid work for various coalition partners. Still, criminology graduates might well be interested in understanding the work undertaken by civil society organisations like these, in assisting in any way possible and considering paid employment opportunities as they might arise.

This job description for a senior role with the Justice Reform Initiative shows the level of experience, skills and knowledge expected of a role of this kind:

Executive Operations and Support Coordinator

- Provide governance, administrative and secretariat support to the JRI Board including setting up board, committee, and annual general meetings, drafting agendas, compiling meeting papers and recording minutes.
- Provide administrative and stakeholder engagement support to the ED [Executive Director] including proactively following up meetings and assisting with coordinating political delegations and other stakeholder and coalition meetings.
- Manage the ED's calendar and schedule appointments, meetings, events and travel.
- Manage a regular schedule of internal staff meetings.
- Oversee key JRI operational activities and work closely with our external accounting team to trouble-shoot all book-keeping issues and ensure invoices, reimbursements and credit card reconciliations are processed in a timely manner.
- Act as primary liaison point between JRI and external contractors responsible for operational functions such as Accounts, IT, EAP and HR.
- Provide ad-hoc operational support to staff based remotely around Australia when required including support around online operational systems such as DEXT, Xero, and Swiftfox (please note, it is not assumed applicants will be familiar with these systems and training will be provided).
- Provide response and triage to all phone, email and physical correspondence, including responding to new contacts via the website, and responding to letters from people living in prison.
- Provide administrative assistance with JRI supporter and volunteer management, including coordinating regular supporter email blasts and updates.
- Provide administrative assistance with the JRI website including uploading media releases, reports and supporter logos.
- Provide secretarial, executive, project and administrative support to the ED and the National Advocacy Campaign Manager as required.
- Any other additional responsibility the ED requests that is in line with the role and the implementation of the strategic plan.

Knowledge, skills and experience (Selection Criteria)

- Strong interpersonal skills – Ability to maintain positive, warm and professional relationships both internally (including with staff, board members and JRI patrons) and externally with diverse stakeholders (including people with lived experience of incarceration, advocacy organisations, community sector groups, parliamentarians, government representatives, members of the judiciary and the media).
- High-level communication skills – Excellent written and verbal communication skills alongside the ability to listen thoughtfully and summarise and thematise complex information (including during stakeholder and board meetings).
- Excellent computer skills – High-level skills and experience with Microsoft Office (Word, Outlook, Excel and PowerPoint), and confidence to learn new skills and new programs where required.
- Strong management and organising skills – Ability to implement and maintain solid administrative processes and systems for the smooth operation of the Justice Reform

Initiative. The ability to respond thoughtfully to multiple and competing demands, prioritise work, and manage multiple projects across multiple jurisdictions.

- Motivated and independent – The ability to work in a small team, with minimal supervision, and a high degree of autonomy, confidence and independence.
- Integrity – Demonstrated experience working in environments that have required a high degree of integrity, judgement, confidentiality, sensitivity and thoughtfulness.
- Qualifications and experience – Experience of at least three years in executive assistant, high-level administrative positions or equivalent.
- The unrestricted right to work in Australia.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply
- People with lived experience of incarceration are encouraged to apply.

Source: [Justice Reform Initiative](#)

Local Government

Local government can be an excellent way to commence a career related to criminology. Crime prevention and community safety roles can be a good way to get experience and learn about the dynamics of crime in local communities, meet relevant stakeholders, understand the challenges of responding to local crime problems, and understand the relationships between the different levels of government as it relates to preventing crime. This can then open up opportunities through meeting with and learning about different roles in other organisations, or it can open up other opportunities within local government.

Many people will have lengthy and enjoyable careers in local government, within the same council or moving across councils, knowing that there are many hundreds of councils in Australia. This job advertisement is for a Coordinator of Community Safety in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia:

Coordinator of Community Safety

The City is looking for a highly experienced Coordinator of Community Safety who will be responsible for developing and implementing activities relating to community safety and crime prevention within the community. The role includes leading and managing the Safer Streets program.

- You have a relevant qualification and/or experience in the law enforcement, justice industry, security or similar role.
- You have been involved with the ongoing analysis of local issues and therefore have strong analytical skills with a tradecraft in manipulating data and producing high-quality reports.
- You can assist in creating and maintaining partnerships with stakeholder agencies in achieving common goals.
- Advanced communication skills in both verbal and written mediums, with an ability to both resolve conflict and negotiate and influence outcomes.

Source: SEEK

This job advertisement is for a Safe City Field Officer in Gosnells, Perth:

Safe City Field Officer (Casual)

The Safe City Field Officer collaborates with the Safe City team to execute community safety and crime prevention projects in Gosnells. This role implements the Hot Spot Cocooning program and other safety initiatives with the opportunity to impact the safety of the community.

To be successful, you must be able to demonstrate:

- Experience in a Community Safety position and proven ability to deliver community programs within the context of the role requirements.
- The ability to establish and maintain positive working relationships with a diverse range of people with the aim of meeting customer needs, expectations and business goals.
- The ability to work effectively as a member of a small team, exercising initiative and judgment whilst working with minimal supervision.
- The ability to meet deadlines, prioritise competing demands and provide verbal and written information that is correct, factual, and timely.

Essential requirements

- Current National Police Clearance (less than three months old) Please note: This is not essential to apply for the role but will be required at a later stage.
- Current driver's licence.

Desirable role requirements

- Understanding of CPTED principles, and/or interest in contemporary crime prevention.

Source: SEEK

There will also be many adjacent roles in local government that might appeal to some criminology graduates. Roles in youth services, social policy, community services, and many others might be of interest and worth investigating.

Retail Theft, Risk Management and Intelligence

Retail theft is a concern for retailer outlets. Many will adopt various measures to reduce the opportunities and potential losses related to retail theft. Some of the major retail outlets will employ staff at the local level (eg, loss prevention officers) who report to more senior, central-office roles (eg, national investigators).

An advertisement for a Loss Prevention Officer states:

Loss Prevention Officer

The Loss Prevention Officer, supported by the Loss Prevention Manager, maintains store security to minimise shrinkage, aiming to reduce criminal activity, respond to incidents, and ensure compliance by completing high-profile activities, offering exceptional customer service, ensuring operational physical security systems, building relationships with stakeholders, and promoting policy compliance.

What you'll need:

Ideally have prior Loss Prevention experience, and a relevant state security licence (desired). However, if you don't have a licence or previous experience, we will provide the necessary training and certification to get you started. A strong background in customer service, especially in Retail or Hospitality and a current Australian driver's licence with access to a motor vehicle, along with basic to intermediate computer skills and the ability to work autonomously.

Source: [SEEK](#)

An advertisement for a National Investigator with a major retailer lists the following responsibilities:

National Investigator

- Identify an investigation, build a comprehensive brief for police and prosecution purpose.
- Construct and conduct internal records of interviews that are business compliant and lawful.
- Provide stakeholders with a high-level overview of the incident.
- Perform root cause analysis and provide recommendation to mitigate future and/or ongoing risk.
- Conduct a security risk assessment of a site to identify vulnerabilities and determine corrective actions.
- Work in conjunction with the Fraud analyst to provide the operations team with trends, investigation results/numbers and evolving risk for theft and fraud.

The successful applicant would ideally have:

- Certificate IV in Government Investigations (or the ability to attain it) and/or previous police background.
- Proven investigation experience in retail (highly regarded).
- Ability to create and conduct written records of interviews that are lawful.
- Working knowledge of all fraud data systems, CCTV, alarms and relevant legislation.
- Skilled in AUROR platform.
- Good knowledge of APPRISS platform (highly desired).
- Knowledge of relevant legislation and privacy compliance is essential.
- Demonstrated ability to investigate and provide business outcomes and reports with root cause analysis.
- Interest or experience in online fraud an advantage.
- Ability to travel at short notice for investigations.

Source: [SEEK](#)

While this might not be the role for you or for many criminology graduates, there is certainly a career path in and around retail theft, loss prevention and the prevention of property crimes.

Another related area of work might be in motor vehicle theft prevention. This area has contracted with reductions in motor vehicle theft in recent decades, but spikes in these offences do result in renewed interest periodically.

While jobs in an area like this are not plentiful, I have included this information to open up your thinking about non-traditional career paths and opportunities. Insurance companies might employ specialists with an understanding of crime trends, and a capacity to analyse risk, work with intelligence, and work with relevant stakeholders.

Private security and risk management companies might equally be interested in criminology graduates with expertise in data analysis. There are a diverse array of applications of risk management techniques and technologies internationally, nationally and locally. Companies, consultants and employees specialising in risk management might work with banks, transport providers, sporting and mass gathering events, or in cybercrime areas, or on mining and infrastructure projects, etc. Roles of this kind will often require additional qualifications such as a Certificate IV or Diploma in security risk management. Tertiary qualifications in these areas are also available.

With growing amounts of data and interest in predicting risks and threats, intelligence roles have proliferated in recent decades. Many organisations employ intelligence analysts of one kind or another.

Below is some text from an advertisement for an Intelligence Officer with the Victorian Fisheries Authority:

Intelligence Officer

Intelligence Officers work closely with other intelligence professionals, operational teams and external partner agencies to ensure that intelligence outputs are supporting strategic and operational needs.

Key accountabilities include:

- Responsible for accurately updating and maintaining computer-based data systems in a timely manner.
- Maintain a high level of awareness and understanding of the Biosecurity and Game Management compliance environment, including new and emerging threats and criminal activity, and assist in identifying and targeting opportunities and priorities for prevention, enforcement and intelligence.
- Assist with the collection and analysis of information from the community, compliance operations and investigations and participate in Biosecurity and Agriculture Services and Game Management intelligence collection processes for tactical, operational and strategic planning purposes.

About you:

- Recent experience in the provision of intelligence services in a regulatory or enforcement context.
- Experience in research and analysis.
- Well-developed conceptual and analytical skills.

Source: Victorian Fisheries Authority

A criminology or related degree is not required for a role of this kind, but it certainly could be advantageous. Teasing out the skills acquired through such a degree and how those skills could be used in a role of this kind will help position you for such a role. So too would completing relevant short courses, undertaking research into the operating

context of this organisation, and developing or enhancing your data analysis skills. Roles like these open up avenues for criminology students interested in green criminology and the many emerging roles associated with detecting crime against nature.

I could continue listing areas of work that criminology graduates might find themselves, but hopefully I have made my point clearly now – there are a wealth of opportunities, roles, organisations and possibilities that criminology graduates might consider.

So, at this juncture, I have drafted a number of tips for criminology students, many of which pick up on themes developed throughout Part 1 of this book.

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

Having now taught for in excess of 25 years (12 years as a casual and 13 years as a contracted then tenured academic), I have had numerous discussions with students who are anxious about how they will make their way from the academy into some area of practice. I have found myself giving similar advice over the years reflected in the following:

- **Plan your degree:** Take opportunities throughout your degree to do units that will build a strong understanding of and confidence in conducting research. There will be various units within a criminology degree structure that are more suited to a research career than others. Where possible, take research-related units. This might, depending on the rules of the relevant degree, involve taking units in other disciplines or faculties/schools. For example, many humanities and social science disciplines will offer research methods units. Selecting these will build a record of study that will be helpful in pursuing jobs and a career in research. In addition, it is beneficial to take any opportunities for internships, capstone units and the like that have a research bent. The more real-world experience that can be obtained during a degree the better.
- **Internships and placements:** Many university courses offer internship and placement opportunities. Take up these opportunities. You will derive valuable insights by working for a period as a student intern within an organisation. You will learn about the work through observing and discussing it with existing staff. You will see what a day in the life looks like, which might motivate or discourage you from pursuing certain career options. You will gain an understanding of the organisational language, culture and practices, which can be hard to penetrate from outside. You will also learn a lot about yourself and your skills, preferences, interests and the like.
- **University career support:** Universities have various career support services that you should make good use of. These can help you apply for jobs with advice on how to prepare cover letters, how to complete online applications, and how best to present yourself. Access these services early in your studies so that you hit the ground running when you graduate.
- **Build networks:** There are many ways to build networks in the areas that you might want to work. A good first step is signing up for alerts, emails and social media posts from relevant organisations and people. This will help in starting to give you a sense of the areas of interest. Some organisations include the AIC, BOCSAR (or similar organisations across Australia), and the [Sydney Institute of Criminology](#) which publishes the CrimNet e-newsletter (biased pitch!) You will receive alerts about recently released research, job opportunities and various other tidbits relevant to your potential future career. Following key

organisations on LinkedIn, X, Facebook and the like will also keep you in the loop about relevant developments. Apart from connecting you with current developments, you will also start to learn the names of key actors, as well as become familiar with relevant terminology and organisational structures – all helpful intelligence.

Beyond making these generally organisational connections, it is also beneficial to make connection with relevant individuals. Attending events, especially free events, provides an opportunity to at least see if not meet some key actors in this space. Being in the audience of an event provides an opportunity not only to hear about relevant developments but also to see and hear key actors speaking. You might also incidentally meet people in the audience who work in areas that might be of interest and if you are brave enough you might introduce yourself to some of the speakers at such events.

Many universities also periodically host events that are designed for students and provide opportunities to meet with criminal justice practitioners. These are especially useful opportunities that should not be missed. If you are attending one of these events, it is wise to prepare by familiarising yourself with any publications of the speakers and by researching their backgrounds and their work. This can help if the opportunity arises to meet and ask questions.

In addition, you can reach out to criminal justice professionals through LinkedIn or directly if their details are publicly available. You won't always get a response but it never hurts to have reached out to relevant people. In doing so, you might seek out an opportunity to meet or shout a coffee and hear a little about the person's work or career. A short discussion might prove really beneficial in learning about the nature of a role that you might, or think you might, like to do. I've been involved in meetings where students learn that the role they thought they wanted was not really for them after hearing from a practitioner in a particular role.

In the age of online events and podcasts, there is no shortage of material to review to learn about particular workplaces. There is likely to be more content in particular areas of the criminal justice system, but generally speaking something is likely to exist that will be relevant to your interests. Seek out these resources and review them in an attempt to build your contemporary understanding of the criminal justice system or the specific part that interests you and to learn about the work undertaken by different people and roles.

- **Identify your preferences, strengths and weaknesses:** I strongly encourage students to critically assess their strengths, weaknesses and job preferences. On numerous occasions students have asked for career advice on the basis of having some vague desire to get a job in the criminal justice system. This is not especially helpful. There are myriad jobs (as has been demonstrated) that require vastly different skills and involve vastly different daily activities. By way of example, I have heard numerous students say that they want to become an

intelligence analyst (or similar). I then ask about their knowledge of relevant software systems and their willingness to spend a lot of time behind a computer analysing data and trends and writing reports. Some are discouraged from pursuing this because of their self-identified weaknesses or dislike of spending long periods tied to a computer; others are encouraged to undertake particular courses and are heartened by the idea of analysing data. Other students have asked about becoming a researcher with a criminal justice research group (most often with a government agency). When asked about quantitative and qualitative research skills and report writing, some students become less enthused.

Ask yourself what you would like your workday to look like: whether you seek a face-paced environment or one more focused on reading and researching. Consider whether you want to directly work with people impacted by the criminal justice system (be they offenders, victims, or families of both) or in policy or research areas which are likely to involve little or no contact with those directly impacted by the criminal justice system. And ask yourself hard questions about your current skill levels relevant to particular jobs. All will help to shape your thinking about what might be a good starting point.

- **Do short courses:** There are numerous short courses available that will be directly beneficial (some are listed at the end of this section). Some of these will be offered at universities and might be available to existing or past students at little or no cost. For example, the University of Sydney's [Informatics Hub](#) offers a range of courses. These are generally grouped under the following areas:
 - statistics (including experimental design, power and sample calculation, linear models, meta-analysis, multivariate analysis)
 - programming and research computing (including using R and Python, and working with high-performance computing)
 - data science (including machine learning)
 - research data management (including survey design).

Software companies also run short courses on their statistical packages, and professional associations and organisations also provide courses. The Australian Evaluation Society, for example, conducts short courses on topics relevant to evaluation and research, including specific courses on program logic, cost-benefit analysis, introduction to monitoring and evaluation, trauma-informed evaluation, culturally safe evaluation for First Nations People, and many more.

Welfare associations with training arms also often provide relevant courses that can help build a familiarity with the techniques and approaches used by human services and criminal justice agencies. Similarly, some government agencies run short courses that can help build an understanding of relevant agencies and systems. By way of example, the [Corrective Services NSW Academy](#) runs courses open to non-employees. Courses on risk assessment tools, working with various offender cohorts, motivational interactions, and others can be completed

to help build an understanding of the processes, systems, tools, language and the like used in the correctional context.

Courses of this kind can be invaluable in building understanding of systems that can be difficult to penetrate from the outside and which can help future research (or operational or policy) roles. See at the end of this section some additional organisations that run short courses (I am not endorsing any; just listing some to help you get started).

- **Get position descriptions** (in addition to those provided here): Registering to get job advertisements through key recruitment sites will mean you get alerted to potential job opportunities. Even if you are just starting your studies and won't really be looking for a job for some time, having an understanding of the types of skills required and work performed by various roles within the criminal justice system will be beneficial. Over time it might guide you in a particular direction, depending on your interests and skills.

It might also assist you in deciding what additional professional development to seek out. For example, various short courses are delivered by government agencies and private training organisations that can teach skills that won't generally be acquired through a university degree. For example, anyone wanting to work directly with offenders might wish to complete short courses on topics such as relapse prevention, motivational interviewing, working with specialist offender populations (eg, sex offenders, family and domestic violence offenders) and trauma-informed practice. Those wanting to work with data might undertake additional courses in various statistics packages and analysis methods. Those wanting to work in public administration or public policy might seek out courses on project management, financial management and policy development. Those interested in working in counter-terrorism, security or risk management might benefit from a risk management or intelligence analysis course.

Taking responsibility for your own professional development, which is likely to mean doing more than a degree alone, will be helped by knowing what skills and qualification particular roles require as evidenced by information in position descriptions.

- **Read policies and plans:** Criminal justice agencies and their various units will have publicly available documentation providing insights into their operations. Becoming familiar with these through a little research can help guide your career aspirations and early decisions. Annual reports, strategic plans, evaluation of specific relevant programs or projects, published research reports and various other documents are likely to exist for each area of criminal justice work. Reviewing these relevant documents will assist your learning about organisational structures, different sections with different responsibilities, current strategic directions, the operating environment (including legislative context) and more.

All of this information is useful intelligence in the process of developing a career plan which will only be assisted by having a deep knowledge of key organisations that you might work for in the future. This process also helps you to learn critical language and terminology. Every agency involved in criminal justice and related work will use particular terms and language for aspects of their work. Knowing acronyms and frequently used terms will be very beneficial in preparing any application and performance in subsequent interviews.

- **Put yourself in the role:** I often encourage students to put themselves into a role they might be interested in (and have attempted to do this a little throughout Part 1). What does a day in that role look like? What skills will you need? What might you find interesting and challenging about the work? Will you have problems working with people who might have committed violent crimes? Will you find the work dull if it involves lots of research? Are you averse to potential danger that might be associated with particular roles? Are you philosophically opposed to working in particular organisations? What additional training might need to be completed before applying for the job? Will you be prepared to travel to get the job?

These and many more questions can be productively considered and answered if you think deeply about the role that you might be considering applying for. Also, investigating the organisational context of the role will be beneficial. What current trends are shaping the work? What are the relevant legislative parameters for the work? What are the prospects for career advancement? The more you research and consider these things in advance, the better your application and interview will be. Telling a prospective employer that you will learn about the organisation or the work on the job will not do you any favours.

- **Consider casual roles:** There are various casual roles which might provide a good entrée into full-time employment. While the types of role will differ depending on the context and jurisdiction, some common casual roles are conference convenor (running youth justice conferences), correctional centre staff member at an adult or youth detention facility, research assistant at a university, official visitor (providing oversight of the running of detention facilities), and roles within human and social service systems like refuges, youth centres, neighbourhood centres, etc. Casual employment obviously has many problems with regard to the precarity of the work and the uncertain financial situation it produces, but casual roles can also be an excellent way to get a start and to learn about particular jobs, work environments and institutions.
- **Research assistant casual employment:** Many academic criminologists will, at various times, engage casual research assistants to work on research projects. Getting experience as a research assistant can be very beneficial. While the exact experience will be shaped by the lead researcher and the nature of the project, research assistants often get experience working on ethics applications, and managing aspects of the research project (which might depend on experience

and skills) including gathering data, reviewing literature, liaising with stakeholders, doing basic data analysis, drafting text for reports or publications, and taking on various associated activities. Experience of this kind will be invaluable in teaching you research skills, testing your enjoyment of and suitability for research roles, and building your understanding of research funding schemes. And it is always beneficial to demonstrate having done related roles when applying for research roles.

- **Volunteer:** While I appreciate there is a risk that students can be exploited for their free labour, there are great opportunities to volunteer in various ways to build your skills and knowledge, and to gain some experience. Having served on various boards and management committees, I am aware of how desperate many organisations are for voluntary support of this kind. Many community-based organisations exist due to the hard work and commitment of many volunteers. Even if you have limited experience, consider joining a management committee of a local youth or community organisation. There will often be minor tasks that need to be tackled and you can learn a lot from working with others and through gaining an understanding of the sector, the client needs and the like. You might also consider volunteering for organisations with work practices similar to those of criminal justice agencies. State emergency services, army reserves (noting some payment is likely), surf lifesaving clubs and similar organisations provide practical skills relevant to working in command and control organisations such as police and correctional agencies. Voluntary organisations like these also help to build confidence while providing opportunities to manage projects and tasks, supervise others and take seriously work, health and safety provisions which will be highly relevant to working in criminal justice settings.
- **Be enthusiastic:** I frequently hear from colleagues in the public service and in community or private sector organisations say how much they value enthusiasm in potential employees. Senior colleagues who manage large teams and are frequently involved in recruitment have described the lower priority given to the nature of qualifications or the institutions from which they have been received, and the higher priority given to enthusiasm, organisation, confidence, determination, drive and resilience. These are not necessarily qualities that come with receiving a criminology degree. They are more personal and are likely to be augmented through diligent research about roles and organisations that might be of interest and through undertaking extracurricular activities, some of which are mentioned below.
- **Be humble:** I occasionally hear students saying they won't take jobs that don't offer a particular level of pay, or having a well-developed, critical view of particular agencies. I would caution against such attitudes. Working in an organisation is often very different to studying it from afar and so I would encourage you to suspend any hyper-critical analysis of criminal justice

agencies before you start working in them. This does not mean that you do not form critical views, but it does mean you are open to learning about their work from the inside and tempering any views formed during your studies. I also strongly encourage taking any job which might seem like an entry-level job. Invariably, job opportunities arise when you are working in an agency, many of which might not be advertised externally or for which you will be better suited having worked in an area for a period. Once upon a time having a degree (or degrees) might have been a significant asset or was seen as special. That is no longer the case. With the numbers of undergraduate criminology programs having exploded at many universities across Australia (and beyond), having an undergraduate criminology degree no longer sets you up as necessarily a preferred candidate. You will be competing with many candidates, some of whom have degrees that might be better suited to particular roles or with prior work experience. Consequently, it is wise to be humble. This can mean acknowledging your newness and being willing to accept lowly graded jobs. I know a number of former students who took what seemed to be jobs beneath their skill level, only to rise quickly through the ranks. Taking an entry-level role that is on offer and learning on the job is a way to gain advancement, and a good alternative to waiting on the sidelines for the plum job, which might not come for an extended period.

SOME ORGANISATIONS THAT RUN RELEVANT SHORT COURSES

As stated previously, there are numerous organisations that run short courses of various kinds that might usefully be considered in addition to a criminology degree. I am not endorsing any, rather just listing a number for you to consider. You will need to do your own due diligence and assess which courses might be most relevant to you.

- The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies' [Centre for Continuing Welfare Training](#) (based in NSW) runs a courses on alcohol and other drugs, mental health, child protection, counselling, management, group work and many other topics.
- The [Groupwork Centre](#) (Melbourne) delivers short courses on group facilitation.
- [Wesley Mission](#) provides short courses on mental health, suicide prevention and child protection among others.
- NSW Health's [Education Centre Against Violence](#) provides numerous courses related to sexual violence, mental health, domestic violence, child protection and other issues. Broadly similar organisations operating in other parts of Australia include the [Sexual Assault Resource Centre](#) (WA), [Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Services](#) (SA), the [Centre Against Sexual Assault](#) (Vic), the [Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research](#), the [Sexual Assault Support Service](#) (Tas), [SAMSSA and Canberra Rape Crisis Centre](#) (ACT) and the [Northern Territory Council of Social Service](#).
- [Australian Evaluation Society](#) offers courses related to evaluation.
- [Australian Childhood Foundation](#), among many others, delivers training on trauma-informed practice.

Spending a little time reviewing short course training providers in your area might reveal a wide variety of relevant courses.

And of course there are various international organisations delivering various forms of training that might be pertinent for you, including [United Nations University](#) and the World Health Organization's [WHO Academy](#). The [CPTED Certificate Program](#) offered by the International CPTED Association might be relevant if you wish to work in this area. [Europol](#) offers training in various areas of cybercrime, etc.

There is an enormous range of in-person, online, free content available today so you should make use of the available resources and/or attend in-person training to develop skills and knowledge not covered in your degree.

I hope that this provides you with a stronger sense of how to get the most out of your criminology (or related) degree and how to start preparing for life after university. Part 2 of this book is more autobiographical, drawing on experiences I've had in my 34 years working in and around criminology and criminal justice fields. I have included this content to provide a stronger sense of some of the day-to-day realities of various roles in the hope that it helps you contemplate your own future career.

PART 2:

REFLECTING ON MY CAREER AS A CRIMINOLOGIST

I have tried to honestly reflect my experiences and the associated emotions in the following pages – something that I feel is often lacking in criminological literature. Such an undertaking is fraught – some memories fade, some alter and some are completely lost. Such an undertaking also risks being necessarily subjective. I am very conscious that hundreds of thousands of people in Australia are impacted by crime, work in criminal justice systems and have equally valid (if not more valid) insights than those captured here. So while I hope you enjoy this part of the book, I also hope you will engage with many other voices – victims of crime, perpetrators of crime (who have often been victims of crime), police officers, prison officers, judges, sheriffs, community corrections staff, witness protection counsellors, etc (noting that certain voices are always privileged and many are frequently silent or missing from the literature, media commentary and public debate).

I have referred to places in this part. Many of the places are in New South Wales, my home state and the site of much of my work. I have done this not to exclude readers from other parts of Australia (or the world) but to ground this part of the book and my work in the sites where it happened. I firmly believe that having an understanding of place is critical to the work of many in the criminal justice system, especially those working closely with various communities.

I have also intentionally named people who have been important or influential to my career (noting that not all family names have been included for various reasons – mostly poor memory). A career is made up of many thousands of interactions. The work necessarily is centred on people but all too often this dynamic is lost in parts of our literature. You won't necessarily know the people named – they have mostly not published extensively, but rather have toiled doing important work in quiet ways. This does not diminish their contribution. There are very large numbers of people working in criminal justice and related fields across the world who will never be known beyond their workplace or locale, but do incredibly important work.

I have also tried, but not achieved in a satisfactory way, to include some history to explain particular aspects of the work covered. History is important in so many ways. Knowing that a facility was not purpose built or that a location was a site of a colonial massacre or that the waves of migration in a particular area have resulted in the most incredible cultural diversity impacts work being done today. The history mentioned is not complete and doesn't reach very far back. Nonetheless I hope that it sparks your own curiosity to explore the histories of the places where you will work as a way of better understanding your work, including what might have been tried before.

In the Beginning

I was born in August 1969 at the Mater Hospital in Crows Nest, Sydney. My father was a bread vendor and my mother a stay-at-home mother. My maternal grandparents were 'colourful', with my maternal grandmother a 'boarding house' proprietor and my maternal grandfather a shearer. My paternal grandparents were less known to me, as my paternal grandmother died early in my father's life and his father, my paternal grandfather, was generally regarded as a difficult character.

Here is me as a baby:



I'm joking. That is me as a baby, but this isn't the type of book in which you get lengthy analysis of my early years. These are obviously important to me, but not to you.

Some Early Influences

I will mention just a small number of things that influenced my career choice. The first is a TV program I watched as a teenager. It was a series about psychology starring Professor Philip Zimbardo, who had previously shot to fame through his work on the [Stanford Prison Experiment](#). This experiment involved the random allocation of university students to be prison guards or inmates. The experiment was abandoned within days because those assigned as prison guards brutalised the 'inmates'. Some of Zimbardo's other work also influenced criminology with James Wilson and George Kelling citing Zimbardo in their [Broken Windows theory of policing](#).

Zimbardo's TV shows had a significant impact on me. I wanted to become a psychologist on the basis of what I saw and the intrigue created by his exploration of human psychology. This interest informed my choices for Year 10 work experience. My first week was spent at the Bourke Street Drug and Alcohol Advisory Service in Darlinghurst in inner-city Sydney. The service (which no longer operates) conducted drug and alcohol assessments and provided treatment for people with drug and alcohol

problems. Amongst other experiences that week, sitting in on interviews with sex workers who openly discussed significant illicit drug use, and attending a Narcotics Anonymous session at the [Langton Centre](#) (which does still exist, but in a different location if memory serves me right), were profoundly impactful. My generally protected upbringing had not exposed me to such discussions and situations.

My second week of work experience was spent at Gladesville Mental Hospital (which has since closed). It was a large sandstone institution with numerous wards and treatment clinics. Some treatments involved cognitive behavioural group work interventions with patients with mild symptoms; others were more confronting and more akin to images from famous movies depicting mental asylums. Spending time in a ward for children and young people was incredibly challenging. I can still picture a seven-year-old boy in that ward who had scratches down his face from his self-destructive behaviours. The experience was disturbing, confronting and very formative for me.

While confronting, these experiences confirmed that my pathway after school was to psychology, with a tendency toward the drug and alcohol field – a path I was largely to take in the following years, although it was not exactly as I expected (which isn't uncommon).

I note that, in doing a little research for this section, I discovered that Philip Zimbardo made a TV series on psychology in 1990. This is a problem because it was a number of years after when I recall seeing it. Perhaps he appeared in some other TV programs that I watched or perhaps I watched some other series and have mistakenly placed him in it. In any case, it shows that memories are fallible. This is an important observation to make at the outset. This part and the reflections it contains are based on my recollections. They are mine alone and are open to faults, especially those from further back in time. I have used external references periodically and consulted with colleagues from different eras and settings where possible, but there are inevitably problems with relying solely on memories which are prone to being distorted over time. That said, the basis of what I've included here doesn't completely rest on having a 100 per cent accurate memory because many experiences reflect what was acquired over a longer period of time.

University

I left school and started a Bachelor of Arts (with a psychology major) at Macquarie University in 1988. The year of the Australian Bicentenary. The year of celebration (unless you were an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person). It was also a year in which university was essentially free, apart from some relatively minor fees (sorry for any pain caused by this statement). It was a year of great excitement and engagement with some of what university life had to offer. But it was probably the last year that I harboured a yearning to be a clinical psychologist. Statistics courses quickly put paid to any advancement to a clinical masters or honours year. Going to the computer lab to

run basic statistical analysis, which was printed out on large computer paper by archaic printers, was not something I relished. I found the process baffling (the statistical analysis, that is – the printing I understood) and often looked at the print-outs with curiosity and disappointment. Without reasonable marks in the introductory statistics courses, entry into more advanced courses would be prohibited. Sensing an ongoing struggle with statistics, I started to take on as many psychology and humanities courses as I could that didn't involve numbers. I also started to look toward drug and alcohol studies as a possible career plan as there was less emphasis on statistics in client-facing work.

With this growing interest in the drug and alcohol field, I started doing short courses with an organisation (that unfortunately no longer exists) known as CEIDA – the Centre for Education and Information in Drugs and Alcohol (likely taken over by [NCETA](#)). CEIDA was based at the front of Callan Park Hospital (now Rozelle Hospital) and ran courses there and in training rooms in various parts of Sydney. CEIDA had a small library and created a calendar of training events. Getting the training calendar in the post was a moment of joy for me – strange but true (and strange to think about getting hard copies of such documents, which is now largely a thing of the past). I did a number of CEIDA courses – Introduction to Pharmacology, Brief Interventions, Motivational Interviewing, Program Design and Evaluation. I loved these courses, which varied in duration from one or two days to a series of sessions over some weeks. They were the perfect mix of theory, concepts, practical rehearsal and listening to other course participants who were from the drug and alcohol field, which was becoming known as the alcohol and other drug (AOD) field. I especially enjoyed the discussions between course participants, some of whom had lived experience of AOD use and now worked in the AOD sector. There was often a divide between those who favoured the 12-step approach to rehabilitation (common with [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) and related organisations) and those who were more committed to [harm minimisation](#) and cognitive behavioural therapy. As proved to be true in various other contexts, I learnt as much if not more from the course participants as from the teachers and facilitators.

I did a small number of voluntary activities while studying, to augment what I was learning in the classroom. I recall attending some sessions for volunteers at the [Wayside Chapel](#) in Kings Cross; I had a brief connection with [Lifeline](#) through some training (I think); and I volunteered for [Odyssey House](#) which largely involved attending court in the city and helping people with AOD issues get referred to the Odyssey House drug rehabilitation program. I don't recall spending very long in any of these roles and, upon reflection, suspect that I was not an especially helpful volunteer. Having managed volunteers years later, I came to appreciate that volunteers could be fantastically beneficial, but also unpredictable and not especially productive – that was me back then. I absolutely took more from these experiences than I gave. I was intrigued by the various systems (legal, social, housing, health, etc) that impacted people's lives and needed to be negotiated. And personally I was very conscious of my tendency toward introversion, my embarrassment at knowing so little and my default orientation to avoid situations that made my uncomfortable (hence not really sticking at any of these

opportunities). But despite these personal limitations, these experiences absolutely propelled me along my journey toward working in the AOD field.

In early 1992, after taking four years to complete a three-year degree, I was at an impasse. After a holiday over the 1991–92 festive season, I returned to Sydney with few prospects, a very average degree (my fault, not that of Macquarie University) and no real contacts in the field that might help me get a job. I'd been working as a casual cleaner at a hotel (which, strangely, taught me a lot about human behaviour!) and selling textbooks at TAFE colleges; but, while enjoying both jobs, they weren't what I craved. At that time Macquarie University ran a Master of Clinical Drug Dependence Studies program. I thought that this might be something to pursue while I continued to look for work. I contacted the Director of the Clinical Drug Dependence Studies program and was invited to a meeting with him. It was a short but life-changing meeting. John Howard, later to become Dr John Howard as opposed to either the actor or the future prime minister, was energetic and efficient. He asked me a few questions including whether I had considered working in juvenile justice. I said that I hadn't, but was open to ideas. He wrote a name and a phone number on a Post-it note and suggested I call. I was then quickly dispatched, not realising that John would become a mentor and someone I still call a friend, and that this would be the beginning of my professional career.

I called the number, which was for Yasmar Juvenile Justice Centre. I spoke with David Kirwan, the Deputy Superintendent (as the role was then known) and he invited me to a meeting. I drove to Yasmar, which was located in Haberfield, just off the busy arterial Parramatta Road. I was nervous and unsure what to expect. I met David, who explained the role of Yasmar and the type of work undertaken by Senior Youth Workers (custodial staff), some of whom were casual staff members, and that they were often looking to add to the list of available casual staff. He suggested that I go out to one of the units and talk to some of the boys (detainees) and the staff on shift. I was buzzed through the door and entered the Ramsay unit where I was met with a great deal of energy and motion. Boys were darting around the basketball court and gathering in groups around an open area. Some were intrigued by the new addition to the unit and asked who I was and what I was doing. Despite being incredibly self-conscious and more than a little anxious, I found the experience invigorating and exciting. I returned to David's office and said I thought I would like to try being a Senior Youth Worker (being a senior anything seemed very cool given my complete lack of experience). Some paperwork was completed and I was scheduled to do four observation shifts (which was, as I recall, the only real preparation or training provided back then – things have changed dramatically now). My career as a public servant was beginning. My career as a criminologist was beginning, although I didn't even know of the term or discipline at that time.

A Decade of Public Service

How different a career looks from the start to some later point – at the beginning, it all lies ahead with little or no clarity about what will unfold. In 1992 I was very excited to be starting as a casual Senior Youth Worker at Yasmar Juvenile Justice Centre but had no conception of where it might lead or that I would spend the next decade as a NSW public servant. At various points through the decade I came to presume that I would be a career public servant, something I was quite happy to be. I ultimately found myself working in roles that had not been not created or did not exist in February 1992, working for agencies I couldn't have imagined working for and engaging with technology that was largely non-existent when I stepped into Yasmar for my first shift. But I also found myself leaving the public service just a few months shy of ten years – not what I would have anticipated for large parts of the decade.

I have captured some of the experiences of working as a public servant in criminal justice settings in the following pages (and in [Appendix A](#) which shows that many of the roles I filled still exist, in one form or another).

Youth Justice Roles

There are myriad roles in any youth justice system. Some that I worked in are included here along with some insights arising from each.

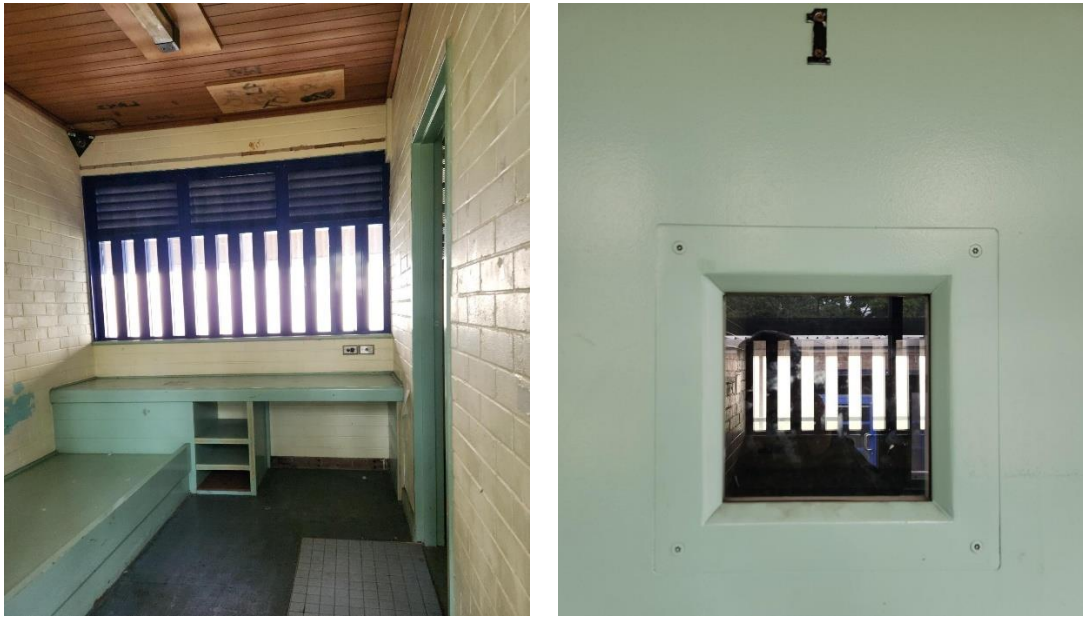
Senior Youth Worker, Yasmar Juvenile Justice Centre

The Setting

Yasmar no longer operates as a detention centre – it is now a training facility for Youth Justice NSW. It is located on Parramatta Road, Haberfield, approximately 12 kms from the Sydney CBD. [Yasmar](#) is an interesting site with heritage-listed gardens running through the middle of the Centre. There were two residential units on the edge of the site. One was two storeys, and the other a series of four individual rooms in separate 'bungalows' (see Figure 1). During the time that I worked there (on and off between 1992 and 1996), these units were known as Ramsay and Dobroyde. Linked to the gardens is a stately home, also heritage listed, which for many years operated as a children's court. At the rear of the property, adjacent to Haberfield Public School, are what were stables for the Ramsay family who had owned the home and surrounding area.

When I first worked at Yasmar in early 1992, it was an inner-city remand facility. Its role was to hold boys and young men while they awaited a court appearance. They were aged between 10 and 18 years (although at the time there was a tendency to house much older young men in the juvenile justice system, so Yasmar accommodated young men in their early twenties). Often due to the serious nature of their charges they were refused bail and remanded in custody.

Figure 1: Former Rooms/Cells at Yasmar



Note. Left: One of the rooms/cells at Yasmar. Right: An observation panel in a cell door. The photos (courtesy of author) were taken after Yasmar was decommissioned as a remand centre.

The Clients

During my first period working at Yasmar (from February 1992 until early 1993), many young men had been charged with very serious offences with a number remanded for murder, armed robbery and home invasions (which were becoming ‘popular’ in parts of south-western Sydney as a drug market exploded in Cabramatta). A number of young men came into custody from Kings Cross and Darlinghurst. Some had worked ‘the Wall’. This meant prostituting themselves along the wall of the old Darlinghurst gaol (near St Vincents Hospital). [The Wall](#) was an infamous spot. And many of the young people had pronounced AOD habits. In the 1990s, heroin was the drug of choice. Quite the combination of factors.

Other young people passed through Yasmar on much less serious charges, which presented (and still does) a problem for the youth justice system. The risks of contamination were great when very violent and serious offenders mixed with very young people (some as young as 10 years), especially because the younger boys tended to look up to the young men on serious charges. Finding ways to separate young people according to offence type has always been a challenge for youth justice systems which tend to have much smaller numbers compared to adult correctional systems.

While remand periods were generally short, many of the young men served very lengthy periods (exceeding a year) because of the seriousness of their charges. Remand is generally a period of uncertainty because a sentence has yet to be determined. Long remand periods can take a significant toll on a young person, especially given the prospect of a lengthy period of incarceration which will mostly be spent in adult prisons. That said, I was very mindful that the victims of these young men had often suffered horribly at their hands. Those awaiting sentencing for murder had indeed inflicted the

worst possible violence, sometimes involving protracted periods of violence. It is an ethos of penal establishments that passing judgement is the role of the court; the penal institution just carries out the sentence and therefore the offender is not judged for their offence. This is difficult to do, especially when details are known of the offences, as was (and is) commonly the case.

The Role

The role of Senior Youth Worker (now known as Youth Officer – see an [example job description](#)) involved running a shift. Three shifts operated daily, generally 7am–3pm, 3pm–11pm and 11pm–7am. Teams of Senior Youth Workers would commence the morning and afternoon shifts, with a reduced staffing arrangement for night shifts. A team would generally be rostered on for six shifts followed by three days off.

All teams had quite clear instructions on what their daily duties included and what was required of particular shifts. Generally, the morning shift would get the young people ready to be released from their rooms and move them to breakfast. Yasmar had shared dining rooms which were used for most meals – this is less often the practice in juvenile detention facilities now. The young people would then start school or be engaged in maintenance-type activities for the bulk of the day. This could make a morning shift go quickly. The young people would generally be locked in their rooms for the shift changeover at 3pm. The afternoon shift team would then, ideally, run programs to keep the young people busy from 3:30pm, when they would be released from their rooms, until 5:30pm, when they would generally return to their rooms for showers before dinner and evening activities. Bedtimes would be staggered according to points earned through an incentive system: this was meant to motivate young people to behave themselves during the day so that they could earn later bedtimes. Bedtimes generally ranged from 7:30pm to 9:30pm. Some of the young boys, those closer to 10 years (which was uncommon), often needed to be in bed early so were perhaps less interested in and less capable of earning the right to a late bedtime. The incentive system also worked poorly once a young person had dropped sufficient points to know they were going to bed early, which could result in a devil-may-care attitude. Designing a sophisticated incentive (or points) system in this context can be quite a challenging undertaking.

Sport was a heavy focus during periods of recreation. Pool tables in the units and card games whiled away much time. As did listening to music and smoking – yes, the young people over 18 years were allowed to smoke then (as I recall). Talking shite also occupied long periods of most days, as might be expected when a group of young men (approximately 14 of them on Dobroyde and 28 on Ramsay) get together.

Being a remand centre meant there was considerable movement of young people in and out of Yasmar. This injected a level of novelty that would be hashed and re-hashed in the hours spent on the units. This could also be a source of tension if young people were admitted to the Centre with historical grievances against young people still in the Centre, or if they came armed with unwanted news, which often involved estranged girlfriends.

The influx of young people came with particular impacts. Firstly, young people often arrived under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, requiring management through withdrawal. They might also need medical attention for injuries sustained during their arrest. I recall some quite serious injuries associated with young people being attacked by police dogs or being physically apprehended by (mostly) much larger police officers.

Separately, the significant churn of young people had an impact on staff. There was often a sense of futility in the work as many young people were repeat customers – some very frequent customers. They might spend a short time at Yasmar during which their health would often improve, only to return a few months later looking emaciated. While young people often complained about the food in detention, many benefited greatly from consistently healthy meals and medical attention, the likes of which many had not received previously, often due to their somewhat chaotic lifestyles. In any case, the return of young people looking decidedly less well than they had when discharged or transferred to another centre took a toll on staff (I believe). After some time, many felt disheartened by the cycling of young people through the Centre and the obvious backward steps some took during their short stints outside. Some staff wanted to find ways to stay in touch with young people after their release, in an attempt to positively contribute to sustained improvements in their lives. In some instances, the young people made this easier by returning voluntarily to the Centre after being released. Given that Yasmar was located on Parramatta Road and at the time had no restricted access through the central part of the facility (not the units where the cells were), young people could come back (some gates were installed later to restrict easy access). I recall one young person who was so severely institutionalised and had so little on the outside that he would often return and climb a tree in the middle of the facility or would call the staff who worked in admissions at various hours of the day and night – a practice that I recall was not uncommon for some young people. Having presumed that young people would detest their time in custody, this came as a great surprise to me and an enduring part of my experience. It spoke to the absolutely most enduring insight I gleaned from working in detention centres – the belief that most young people had been victims of often-horrible lives before they entered the juvenile justice system.

Dynamics on teams often varied according to the personalities of team members. Staff were drawn to the work for a variety of reasons. Some were interested in youth work; others were more motivated by the generally good pay and conditions, no qualifications needed. For a centre the size of Yasmar, which could accommodate around 42 detainees, the staff establishment would be considerably greater than the number of detainees. Running three shifts per day, 365 days per year requires a lot of staff. So, a team could be an interesting cohort. It quickly became clear to me that teams operated in quite different ways, which was inevitable but not necessarily helpful. One team could take a relaxed attitude to their shift which would cause problems if the following team more clearly stuck to the rules. Inconsistency across teams was a grievance frequently cited by the young people. Team dynamics mimic at a larger scale parental dynamics in families; where there are inconsistencies, opportunities for angst arise and in an environment of young people who had often been schooled in violent

ways, this could quickly escalate to violence. That said, most shifts and most hours of most shifts were quite peaceful – another challenge of running detention facilities. The general calm could be punctuated by violent episodes which could arise quickly.

There are numerous roles that contribute to the functioning of a juvenile justice facility such as cooks, cleaners, managers, psychologists, caseworkers, administrative staff and various others depending on the centre. Yasmarr, with its two residential units, also had a school (with teaching rooms on both sides of the facility). The teaching staff were additional to the juvenile justice staff. A registered nurse was also on shift for much of the day. The nurses were, at that time, employed by the Department of Juvenile Justice; they are now employees of Justice Health. Ultimately, running a centre is a labour-intensive exercise requiring a lot of staff from diverse disciplinary and other backgrounds and from different organisations – a challenge to manage and to promote consistency.

Some Reflections

My work at Yasmarr (and later in other parts of the juvenile justice system) left me with a very strong impression of the types of experiences young people had been through prior to entering custody. Spending time with the young people on the units in Yasmarr highlighted the generally impoverished, violent and chaotic circumstances they had experienced or endured. While not true for all, it certainly seemed true for most that they had witnessed or being victims of violence, had been neglected or left to fend for themselves for long periods from a young age, and had not been especially nurtured. I should have been more prepared for this, but I wasn't. Back in 1992, as highlighted previously, there was little in the way of induction training (something that has been dramatically reversed since). My degree had not really prepared me for the stark realities of the lives many of the young people had survived, so it came as a significant shock to learn about the experiences many had navigated. Burn marks on arms were explained by some as the result of their father stubbing out cigarettes on them as children; other scars and missing teeth would be explained by reference to childhood violence. I often heard stories of young men being managed by parents (fathers in particular) through corporal punishment. This often translated into a preparedness to use violence in multiple contexts as a way of resolving problems. Tragically, this resulted in horrific forms of victimisation when the young men encountered other young people at Yasmarr, or before that in their offending. One young person described with no emotion or remorse how he had used a baseball bat to execute an armed robbery on an unwilling staff member of a bottle shop. Violence was a hallmark of childhood for many of the young people I encountered in these years.

Findings from [health surveys](#) of young people in custody many years later would confirm much of what staff learnt anecdotally.

Apart from being initially and repeatedly surprised by the depth of violence experienced by many of the young people at Yasmarr, I was completely saddened by the understanding. While I thoroughly enjoyed almost all aspects of the work, I perhaps experienced a change in my outlook. While not dramatising the experience, hearing

stories routinely that challenged one's sense of the world and the way it operates affected my world view. I became much more disappointed with the world, which had largely until this time protected me from such experiences. I had mostly had an idyllic childhood and adolescence. I knew about family and domestic violence and excessive alcohol use through close connections, and I had certainly been involved in and witness to violence in the late-night economy and during school and sporting events and in sporting teams. But this was totally different: it was insidious; it was unpredictable; it was life changing. In some respects, what I learnt at Yasmar and later in other parts of the juvenile justice system fired a greater interest in social justice than I'd previously had.

By and large I only worked in these environments for a relatively short period. The impact on me was short and sharp but enduring – in some way I feel that it has animated my working life ever since. For other staff, this has been their reality for decades. I often wonder what cumulative impact it would have to enter these environments and world on a daily basis for decades. How much would it impact your sense of optimism, your sense of fairness, your sense of justice, and your willingness to engage with the next young person in an open and upbeat way? I applaud those who have managed it and continue to remain optimistic. Working some years later with police made me aware that they too are impacted by their recurring engagement with people who are damaged or who damage.

One of the things that has kept me buoyant through my period of engagement with the juvenile justice system is the general fall in the numbers of young people entering the system. This significant reduction has occurred during my working life and I firmly believe it is a very positive outcome (an outcome of what is less clear as falls have been witnessed in numerous jurisdictions around the world).

NIGHT SHIFT

It is winter. There is a gentle rain falling. I am sitting in a cosy office with a small heater running. I've just completed the log book recording that I have checked every young person on the unit. Night shifts require these checks to see that the young people are still breathing and nothing untoward has happened.

The night shift manager's keys make a loud metallic sound as he opens the gate to the unit. There are two heavy steel doors that need to be opened before he can enter the unit. He lights up a cigarette and goes down on his haunches near the rusty tin can that was formerly home to pineapple pieces and which now acts as an ashtray (smoking was permitted then).

He asks how the night shift is going and if there have been any disturbances or problems. It has been a quiet shift – the desirable kind. Knowing I'm new, he regales me with stories about the Centre, spending most time speaking of incidents on night shifts in the particular unit we are on. He asks if I've noticed anything untoward in a particular cabin block – this unit contains four cabins each accommodating four separate rooms. I've noticed nothing and say as much.

He then tells me that the last death in youth custody in New South Wales (which remains the last death of a young person in custody at the time of writing) happened in a particular room in that cabin block (see further details below). He also usefully describes an incident some years prior when young people escaped. A group of young people from outside Yasmar managed to scale the wall which gave them entry to the unit. They bashed the night shift

worker and took his keys. They then locked him in a room and let the young people out. It wasn't until the night shift supervisor visited the unit that the escape was revealed.

He then stands and prepares to leave, reminding me to do a perimeter check of the unit, before exiting.

A perimeter check involves walking around the wall of the unit to check for any intruders. At the time, the Centre had no CCTV and night shift staff were armed with a large flashlight torch and a 'communications' device that was completely redundant in such situations because it was effectively an early form of pager and would ring to indicate that you needed to access a landline to call a colleague. I spent the remainder of the shift hypervigilant, if not in terror. I was pleased to see the sun rise and to hear the glorious sounds of the morning shift staff as they approached the unit.

I never did a lot of night shifts and am very thankful for that. My inability to function in any way approaching normal during a stint of six night shifts also meant that I was incredibly thankful to hang up the night shift keys when my time was done. For other staff, night shift was a haven. Some relished the lack of contact with young people, and they managed to see their own children before and after school and to work while they slept. For them, night shifts were a prized commodity.

I didn't realise then that the information about the tragic death in custody was accurate. I later discovered that it was. Howlett (1993) catalogued deaths in juvenile custody in Australia between 1980 and 1992. The deaths of nine young people in total were categorised as deaths in custody across Australia in this period. Four of these were in New South Wales and one was at Yasmar in 1989. According to Howlett, the young man, known as Danny, was a non-Aboriginal young man born on 7 February 1973. He died aged 17 on 24 or 25 December 1990, his death the result of self-inflicted hanging.

In October that year Danny had been sentenced to a month in custody for breach of probation and remanded on two further charges of armed robbery and stealing. After serving some time at Mount Penang Juvenile Justice Centre, Danny requested and was granted permission for a transfer to Yasmar to be closer to his family for Christmas. He was admitted to Yasmar on 21 December.

Danny was reported as being happy and laughing with other detainees during a dinner and Christmas carol performance enjoyed by young people from both residential units of Yasmar. Due to his good behaviour, he was granted a late bedtime of 9:30pm and was said by youth workers to be in good spirits and looking forward to a visit from his family on Christmas Day.

It appears that routine checks of the young people were conducted at irregular intervals that night, and that sometime between 11:40pm and 12:30am Danny hanged himself. A letter suggested he was concerned that he would not receive a visit on Christmas day. What did emerge from the coronial inquest was the lack of guidance regarding conducting regular checks of young people in detention, the inadequate training for staff in dealing with such situations including the provision of first aid, and poor communication systems between staff which resulted in valuable time being lost before medical staff arrived at the Centre.

Thankfully this was the last death of a juvenile detainee in custody in New South Wales (at the time of writing), reflecting improvements in facility design, security, staff training and night shift procedures, amongst other things no doubt. Nonetheless, it serves as a tragic reminder of how detention should only be used as a measure of last resort and that tragic outcomes can arise (in various) ways through incarceration.

Reference

Howlett, C. (1993). *Deaths in juvenile detention, 1980-1992* (Deaths in Custody Australia No. 3). Australian Institute of Criminology.

AOD Counsellor, Yasmar Juvenile Justice Centre

After about eight months as a casual Senior Youth Worker, I spent a short period in 1992–93 as the Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Counsellor at Yasmar. Having an undergraduate degree majoring in psychology and having completed various AOD short courses, I was well placed to take on this role in a temporary capacity. Acting up is common in the public service and is a great way to try new roles, develop new skills and learn about different parts of an agency or the public service. Taking an initial role does not mean that this will be your only role – it is quite the opposite for many public servants, including those at the highest levels. They have often started in modest roles and worked their way up through hard effort, additional studies, networking and perhaps circumstances that worked in their favour.

The Role

As AOD Counsellor I was required to assess the AOD use of young people, often to contribute to some form of report such as a background report which would be provided to the relevant court to inform decisions about sentencing. I was also required to conduct individual sessions, and later group sessions, with young people around AOD use. I didn't feel especially well qualified for these latter tasks – sitting in a room with a young person for an extended period was not always easy or productive, and running groups was not something that I had learnt. Very few programs existed at that time that could easily be taken and delivered. A book that was published much later – *Working with involuntary clients: A guide to practice* – would have been helpful at the time.

As the AOD Counsellor, I worked closely with the onsite psychologist, casework staff, nurses and teachers. Many young people had demonstrable AOD issues, which had various consequences for their health, their schooling and their offending. Yasmar being a remand setting, brief interventions were often required because of the high turnover of young people. There was also a need to understand the AOD treatment system, which meant liaising with the Ted Noffs Foundation's AOD rehabilitation facilities and other youth treatment programs. I visited some of these facilities to learn about how they operated and also enjoyed attending the statewide meetings of AOD counsellors from other juvenile justice centres. Learning from more experienced staff was invaluable.

Some Reflections

One of my fondest memories of my time as AOD Counsellor at Yasmar has only a tenuous link to AOD issues. It involved bringing external visitors into the Centre. My logic, which seems a little flimsy now, was that it would be beneficial to expose the young people to successful role models – people they looked up to and who might embody a work ethic, a disciplined life of some kind that would be motivating and inspiring in some way.

I managed to get the bulk of the 1992 Wallabies touring party (Australian men's rugby union team) to Yasmar to meet the young men and boys in the Centre at the time. In

retrospect I'm completely unsure how I managed this. I still retain a fax (younger readers should google 'fax machine') received from Nick Farr-Jones (then the Wallabies captain) on 17 August 1992 promising that the bulk of the squad would come to Yasmar later that year. Good to his word, a bus arrived outside the Centre on 7 October 1992 and a number of tall, large Wallabies alighted. They went into the Ramsay unit, to an area that was used for celebrations and large group events, where the young men and boys were waiting. They were bubbling with excitement, even if they didn't know much about rugby union (rugby league being the more commonly discussed sport, and touch versions the common afternoon sporting activity). Some of the team spoke to the young men and then they all headed out to the basketball court and grassed area for some passing and photo opportunities (see Figure 2). Russell Fairfax and Ten News covered the moment. Visits of this kind would reverberate through the facility for many days and weeks to come.

Figure 2: The Wallabies Visit Yasmar



Note. Left to right: The author, Michael Lynagh, David Kirwan (Deputy Superintendent), Kevin Harris (Superintendent) – you decide who represented Australia in rugby union.

I also spent time trying to attract musicians, performers, sports people and others to come to the Centre to speak with the young men and boys. It partly seems corny to think there might be light-bulb moments of the sort being suggested, resulting in significant life decisions and circumstances. But I took particular pleasure in meeting the Wallabies, Damien Lovelock (from the band The Celibate Rifles and later a media personality), Sean Fonti (from the band Caligula) and many others who passed through the Centre – as did the young people and other staff. Many of these visitors did have great tales to tell and advice to give, but they also provided a sense of worth – they took

time out of their days to visit and I believe that this was understood by many of the young people.

One great disappointment during this period was having to turn down tickets to a Public Enemy concert. I had been trying to get the band to visit Yasmar during their August 1992 tour of Australia. They didn't visit, but the touring manager offered free tickets for all the young people. Taking young people from a predominantly remand custodial facility to a Public Enemy gig did not seem like a smart career choice (nor was it legally possible).

And for the record, I didn't accept any tickets for staff (including myself) to attend, something which had been suggested by more than one or two colleagues at the time.

AOD Counsellor, Liverpool Community Youth Centre

The Setting

I didn't stay long in the role of AOD Counsellor at Yasmar (or in any role, if the truth be known). I successfully applied to become the AOD Counsellor at Liverpool Community Youth Centre. The Centre was located in an old residential family home near Liverpool train station in South Western Sydney. There is no equivalent now to a community youth centre – community offices today have a mix of staff supervising young people on community-based orders, including some specialist staff (see job descriptions of relevant roles in the [Youth Justice](#) section in Part 1). Liverpool Community Youth Centre was a community-based counselling unit. There were a small number of these centres in parts of Sydney. Staff – generally social workers and psychologists – worked with young people who were on community-based orders or completing their control orders (sentences involving detention) in the community, having been released early from custody.

The catchment area (offices of this kind covered distinct geographical areas) included many parts of South Western Sydney including Campbelltown and surrounding neighbourhoods, Green Valley, Miller, Liverpool and Cabramatta, amongst others. These were areas, in part, dominated by large, low-rise public housing estates, and tended to be areas of socio-economic disadvantage, with diverse cultural groups dominant in various pockets.

The Clients

Young people from across the area might be referred to the Centre if they were in custody or were serving community-based orders. They tended to be more serious offenders in need of counselling. Those young people in custody were often assessed for early release with the remainder of their custodial sentence to be completed in the community. The clients were young people aged more than 10. Often they were older than 18 years because their offending had taken place before their 18th birthday. The bulk of the clients were young men, but a number of young women were also supervised at the Centre.

The Role

Staff generally prepared background reports for young people appearing in children's courts (and other courts as the case might have been), assessed young people for early release from detention (under section 24(1)(c) of the *Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987* (NSW)) and delivered individual and group counselling sessions to young people. As the AOD Counsellor, I was required to perform these roles with a case load of young people who had demonstrable AOD issues, which often impacted their offending. I was required to work with colleagues if some form of AOD assessment might be required, to provide advice regarding treatment interventions and referral options, and to do individual work with my allotted clients and contribute to the group work program (more on that later).

Individual sessions were and are a mainstay of community correctional work. Over recent decades these sessions have generally moved from being somewhat unstructured to more specifically focused on addressing criminogenic risks and needs (known as the [risk-need-responsivity model](#)). Those sessions that I conducted were a product of their time (and my skill level) – somewhat unstructured attempts to see how the young person was coping. I would often organise to do things with the young person, whether it included a trip to the local Centrelink office (known by another name then) to help the young person to sign on for benefits or to take care of some administrative issue, or some form of recreation. Sitting in an office staring at a case file expecting a young person to articulate their psychological vulnerabilities was not something that I felt able, comfortable or inclined to do. Walking and talking was often less confronting for both parties and often meant that more difficult conversations could be had once a rapport was developed. Given my AOD role, I also felt comfortable that introducing young people to prosocial recreational outlets and support services was a valuable use of time.

My general approach to this role was one of providing support – and at best, a form of mentoring – for young people. I would try to assist young people with the numerous life issues that frequently befell them, provide a place to discuss problems, ensure that important appointments were being kept, discuss how they were coping with various pressures (peer and otherwise) and hope that regular contact provided some form of individual deterrence from re-engaging with crime. I'm not sure I really did a great deal of good for the young people I nominally 'counselled', but I'm reasonably confident that I upheld the Hippocratic oath – do no harm.

We also conducted home visits to speak to family members, and prepared background reports (these were written by hand and then typed up by an affable assistant, Carmel, as personal computers were not a thing then). We also served breach reports at the local police stations for those young people who failed to meet the conditions of their order, visited various detention centres to assess young people from the area to determine suitability for early release (which as I recall meant most young people) and engaged in wider activities within the catchment area relevant to youth crime.

HOME VISITS

Going on home visits was especially beneficial for understanding the young person and their family life. Often conducted alone (a practice that is likely to be considered a work, health and safety risk today), home visits would provide insight into the dynamics of the home environment. Some families would be very hospitable and present food from their cultural background; others were less concerned about presenting a good image and barely hid their disinterest in the intrusion of a criminal justice agency into their lives or what would happen to their son or daughter. Many of the young people resided in public housing estates dotted around Liverpool – Green Valley, Sadleir, Ashcroft, Macquarie Fields, Minto, Airds, Bradbury. Houses were often in states of disrepair, local facilities were sparse, large areas of the estates were more like waste land than formally defined areas supporting activity, shops were boarded up or protected with heavy-duty security gates and grilles, etc. Many of these housing estates have since been redeveloped, with the goal of tackling what have proved to be entrenched problems in some areas and to rectify the many planning and design flaws common at the time.

I once escorted a young person on supervised leave from custody to a large public housing estate. The area was (and still is) home to numerous high-rise public housing towers. The unit which he and his mother shared (when he wasn't in detention) was small and heavily furnished, including with religious icons common in the Orthodox Eastern European tradition. The unit was perched high in the sky with sweeping views across southern Sydney.

The young person's mother did not speak fluent English, but was very welcoming and warm. She welcomed me with various treats and insisted I ate copious amounts of food. Her son was less warm to her and quickly disappeared into his bedroom. I was not especially confident in how I should manage the situation and was reasonably sure that he took the opportunity to have a brief encounter with his bong – this was in the days before drug testing.

The escorted leave was part of a plan to prepare the young person for his release. The dynamic between the mother and the son gave me little confidence that she would be able to supervise him closely upon his release, but that was of little consequence in the general scheme of things. He was going to be released soon and escorted leave of this kind was part of preparing him and his mother for the eventuality.

I'm not sure this particular trip or my involvement was especially beneficial, but it helped form a picture of the likely situation post-release and the challenges for the young person going forward.

Regular visits to young people in custody provided opportunities to enter juvenile justice centres, including [Reiby](#) (based at Airds where it still operates), Minda (based at Lidcombe but now closed), Mt Penang (based at Kariang and now re-purposed with an adjacent Youth Justice Centre called [Frank Baxter](#)) and Kariang (which now operates as a correctional centre for adults and is managed by Corrective Services NSW). Each of these centres and the numerous units contained within them, had fascinating histories and operated in quite different ways.

Reiby was generally for younger boys and those young women detained in New South Wales. It often had a hectic feel reflecting the energy of the younger boys housed in the various residential units. There was a grassed area outside the main administration building which was often a site of considerable activity. We would often locate the young person we were visiting and find a table and chairs to sit at to discuss how they might return to the community. Many of the young people at the time came from

Vietnam, Cambodia or to a lesser extent Laos. They were invariably serving time for drug-related charges, associated with a raging drug market in Cabramatta.

Kariong was at the time a newly built centre for high-risk young people. It was, in my opinion (and the opinion of those whose insight was greater than mine) a poorly designed facility that frequently had a sinister feel. Minda was an old centre that contained some units generally regarded with trepidation by young people in the system. Units had individual residential cells positioned around a grassed yard. Stepping into these units was often an intimidating experience.

Mount Penang was a curious mix of conviviality and menace given the serious nature of the offences committed by some of the detainees. We often visited on Fridays and after seeing individual young people would stop by the oval to watch a team from the Centre playing in a local schoolboy competition. The atmosphere was often not unlike that of a sporting event at a regular high school. In part, the good order of some of the units was dependent on older detainees, who by now were often in their early twenties and some of whom were serving time for serious and ghastly offences, which added to the sense of potential threat.

The purpose of visits to these centres was ostensibly to assess young people serving control orders (periods of confinement in custody) for early release. An assessment would be undertaken, and a report prepared and then submitted to head office for approval by a senior manager. The young person, if approved, would then serve a portion of their custodial order in the community on the basis that having part of the order supervised in the community would help with reintegration. It seemed to me that this process of assessment was often a *fait accompli*, which meant that it had an air of performance about it: performance on the part of the young person who would say what they thought we needed to hear, and performance on my part because I was not especially clear as to what would likely rule someone out. It seemed that decisions were often based on calculations associated with time served rather than any genuine measurement of motivation or capacity for change. While parts of the assessment process seemed performative, the general logic seemed sound to me as there was not a lot about incarceration that appeared to be particularly efficacious.

Preparing background reports for young people appearing in court was a key part of the role – and a continuing requirement for community corrections agencies today. These reports were prepared for the courts to consider when deciding on the appropriate sentence (community or custodial) for a young person found guilty. A report would generally include description of the background of the young person, their family circumstances (including if they had been or were in care – sadly a common situation for many young people at the time), their educational performance, the offence or offences they had been charged with, their health (including mental health) and their peer networks. A recommendation would be made, often suggesting whether the young person might be amendable to counselling (whatever that means) and whether particular penalties would be appropriate (for example whether they might be able to complete a community service order).

A rhythm would often be established in preparing a report – review the case file, gather the offending history, speak to the young person, do a home visit, call and consult the school and other agencies involved in the young person's life, match a recommendation to the seriousness of the offence and previous offending history, and explicitly refer to the potential for early release if a custodial sentence was being considered. Many thousands of these reports continue to be generated in a not dissimilar fashion.

Having prepared and sent the background report, I would often accompany a young person to the children's court for their appearance. This might mean seeing them in the cells beforehand, if they were being held in custody, or meeting them at the court. I found these experiences often a confusing mix of conventions that I was not fully accustomed to (bowing on entering the court, for example), language that seemed ill-suited to the purpose ('if it pleases the court', 'you are sentenced to a control order') and arguments suggesting that the young person had numerous mitigating factors, including (as I recall in some cases where reports were prepared by psychologists or psychiatrists) the young person having been the victim of a difficult birth (forceps birth seemed to be mentioned an unusually high number of times). There would be a flurry of conversation from adults, the magistrate would then turn their attention to the young person and utter something either inaudible or incomprehensible, and the matter would be over.

This is clearly not a fair representation of what happened in many cases, but I do recall having to explain the outcome of a court appearance to young people on more than one occasion (I am sure things have improved significantly now).

Some Reflections

Working with an amazing group of young staff (Alexandria, Rob, Brenton, Deborah, Ernie, Gerard and David) was a tremendous learning experience. The counsellors were all co-located in a large, shared office (long before open offices were the norm). A couple of adjoining rooms were used for meeting clients. While shared office spaces can have their problems, this arrangement facilitated considerable learning, much of it incidental. It also fostered a supportive environment, as it was often clear what was happening for other staff. Overhearing a colleague talking to a young person who was discussing suicide or experiencing some sort of a problem provided great insight into how to handle these situations calmly – better than any training course.

Days were busy and involved a variety of tasks: conducting home visits and gathering information about young people needing a background report; visiting young people in custody to prepare background reports for those on remand and to assess those who might be released early; supervising young people attending sessions at the office; going to training courses; participating in regular supervision sessions with an on-site manager; compiling various reports; and adding case notes to files (physical files in those days rather than electronic files). This was the days before the web, networked personal computers, mobile phones, etc. Things were very different, and yet the work

largely resembles the work of a community corrections staff member today (without the technology).

One part of the work that was particularly exciting was being involved in the development and delivery of a group work program. Given that each counsellor had a case load of numerous young people, each with requirements to report to the office on a regular basis, it was decided that there would be utility in developing a bespoke group work program. While in the scheme of things this bespoke program doesn't rate a mention in any analysis of criminal justice rehabilitation programs or interventions, it taught me a lot about how much thought, time and planning is required to develop even a modest program. This is probably the reason why many programs that are now positively evaluated get packaged and sold – it is easier to purchase and deliver programs than to develop from scratch. In any case, this experience taught me a great deal about group dynamics, about program design and about the challenges of evaluation, amongst many other things.

The objective of the group program was to bring together young people serving some form of community-based order imposed by a Court following their involvement in a crime (or crimes). The program was designed to work through various issues considered to be common to young people in contact with the criminal justice system – life skills and psycho-educational content.

We had to consider several issues in developing and delivering the program:

- **Contamination:** This is a well-documented problem of group-based programs for those involved in the criminal justice system. It is obviously not desirable for a group of young people, each with their own offending histories (minor or serious, short or lengthy) coming together and developing new relationships that facilitate further involvement in crime and/or an escalation in offending. Managing this is not easy. Friendships will form – a positive part of a group experience – but discouraging co-offending networks is obviously important.
- **Gender mix:** As mentioned, individual counsellors had their own case loads of young men and young women. Female staff supervised larger numbers of young women (generally the smaller cohort). Bringing young women and young men together required consideration of what this would mean when invariably the young men would be numerically greater than the young women. This posed challenges not just in planning but in weekly sessions, as it was often difficult to predict with any accuracy who would attend on the evening of the program. Phone calls would be made during the day to remind young people but their verbal commitment to attend did not always result in their attendance. This could then leave one young woman in a group with 9 or 10 young men.
- **Developmental needs:** Relevant legislation dictates that young people from their 10th birthday to their 18th birthday can be dealt with as juveniles. This meant that young people in the group might range in age from 10 to 18 (or older if they were finishing long sentences imposed when they were juveniles). While it was very rare to have a young person aged between 10 and 12 years, clearly

the developmental needs of a 13 year old are significantly different to those of an 18 year old. Considering and managing these developmental differences within a group context was challenging.

- **Geographical catchment:** The Liverpool office serviced a large geographical catchment. While Liverpool was well serviced with a major train station and bus routes, having young people travel to the Centre was a consideration. It was not possible to collect all the young people coming to and going home from the Centre. Consequently, most would be required to catch public transport. While the young people were confident and able to do so, it did mean that some would invariably be travelling through areas and locations that were potentially not without their own risks. Given that the program needed to run after school hours (on the assumption that many of the young people would be attending school), it would mean that some young people would be commuting long distances in darkness (especially in winter).
- **Co-facilitation:** The group sessions were always facilitated by two workers, ideally by a female and a male. This allowed for one staff member to take the lead on the content while the other took greater responsibility for managing group dynamics, which were often fraught. A group of young people ranging in age, often with limited interest in school-like contexts, with a ready-made audience (which would silence some and embolden others) took some managing. The group sessions would generally last for an hour and be followed by refreshments. Maintaining the group's focus for an hour was difficult, but managing the dynamics around refreshments also required close attention. This often required careful thought about how to manage the physical space of the Centre so as to reduce any potential problems. The group setting needed to support the sessions, to comfortably accommodate all participants and to be inviting – not easily achieved in a centre designed as a house, not purpose built. This is a problem common to many organisations in the human services field.
- **Open or closed:** The group program ran for a total of 12 weeks. Decisions needed to be made about whether it would be a closed group for the 12-week period, or whether new clients could join (an open group). A closed group has the benefit of consistency, in that group members are somewhat constant (allowing for absences). This is conducive to building a strong group presence which can become powerful. An open group is better suited to the ebb and flow of young people through their court orders, allowing new members to join as they started their supervision, which might only be for a few months. However, an open group means that the dynamic of the group can change quickly with the entry of a new client who has a particular presence or kudos associated with their offending. For example, a young person who committed a high-profile crime might potentially be very powerful in such a group. We ultimately opted for an open group because of the needs of the Centre more broadly.

The process of delivering this program was anxiety provoking, challenging and richly rewarding. It provided an invaluable insight into group dynamics, especially the well-known principles of forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. But I remember the last aspect involving mourning – there was a very real sense that while some young people expressed levels of frustration through to outright resentment at having to attend, others genuinely missed the group once they had completed all sessions. Dynamics could and would fluctuate based on who attended and required a lot of management of boundary testing, coaxing of answers from participants, and modelling of appropriate behaviour. Dynamics could be impacted by the cultural diversity within the group, especially cross-cultural conflict that might reflect historical tensions or more local and contemporary tensions. Running a group was rarely uneventful.

Being so heavily involved in the group program also provided me with an opportunity to appreciate how much content needed to be created and that contingencies needed to be developed. Some sessions would involve providing some content about a particular issue such as managing conflict and then include some practical examples that the young people might role-play or discuss in smaller groups. Knowing exactly how much content to prepare and what could reasonably be expected under the circumstances was difficult. So too was knowing how to measure the effectiveness of the program. Client feedback was an important measure, but not an especially powerful one when deciding whether time and resources should continue to be invested. As it turned out, this minor program forced me to consider issues associated with program evaluation that would recur over the following years and which continue to be debated.

CRIME PAYS, BUT COMES AT A COST

Working with individual young people often had an overtone of futility, and not just because I felt I was largely an inadequate worker. There was a sense that the goal was to persuade and assist young people to refrain from further offending – an obvious goal of a criminal justice system. In some instances, this simply bounced off a young person who was doing very nicely from their particular illicit activities.

One young woman would attend her supervision sessions dressed in the latest designer labels, adorned with expensive jewellery and driving a new red sports car. Telling her not to do crime felt preposterous – me earning a meagre wage and her making supervision appointments to not interfere with interstate holidays. We did discuss the trappings of her lifestyle, but also the risks, of which there were many. Her boyfriend at the time had a short run as a significant player in a drug market prior to his early demise. She understood the risks and was always polite and appreciative, but bigger cogs were turning that meant my interventions would always be of limited value.

Those bigger cogs involved the workings of the drug market in and around Cabramatta. Crime clearly pays and is, at least for periods, rewarding in many ways. Many young people reputedly involved in the drug market were refugees from South-East Asia, arriving in Australia often after long and treacherous journeys to flee the Vietnam War or subsequent persecution. Many young people – or young adults as it was often difficult to determine age due to the lack of official documentation accompanying them – found themselves caught up in the drug market and the associated criminal activity.

The young woman I was supervising had a somewhat prestigious role in the drug market. She managed a number of homes that accommodated some of the young street dealers. This role brought with it particular risks, but also significant rewards. To adopt the language of [motivational interviewing](#), she was pre-contemplative. Even short periods in detention did little to quell her enjoyment of the lifestyle she was leading. Again employing the language of motivational interviewing, my task was to encourage her to reflect on the good and less good things associated with her situation and choices, but at times it was difficult to feel especially optimistic about positive outcomes in such a situation.

Visiting Cabramatta today is like visiting an entirely different place. There are physical hallmarks of the past – a park, Freedom Plaza, the train station, etc. But the presence of very open and obvious drug dealing and the effects of heavy drug use are long gone – the area has been radically transformed.

Manager, Programs and Staff Development, Yasmar Juvenile Justice Centre

In keeping with the mantra that taking one job in the public service can lead to many more, I returned to Yasmar in 1994 as the Manager of Programs and Staff Development for the recently developed Young Women in Custody Program. At this time, Yasmar had been designated the sole centre for young women in New South Wales. After many years of being in a small unit at Reiby Juvenile Justice Centre, a centre predominantly housing boys, young women for the first time had a centre for themselves. This was an exciting development that had resulted from considerable planning. Being part of the management team of Yasmar at this time (which included David, Gillian and Bronwyn, amongst others) was a very exciting professional experience (one of the most rewarding of my career). It involved attending the lengthy training that all staff undertook and preparing for the arrival of the first girls and young women who were brought from Reiby in small groups to allow for a period of adjustment.

Many of our best efforts were challenged from the outset. Many of the newly recruited and extensively trained staff did not stay long because of the behaviours directed toward them when the young women arrived. Our plans for the separation of the young women according to seriousness of offending were challenged when a number of young women entered the system for alleged involvement in murder and manslaughter offences. And a number of the young women were so traumatised from prolonged abuse and neglect, the level of care they required presented challenges to staff. It was often difficult and emotionally taxing work. Incidents of self-harm and rapid return to custody following release routinely burdened staff, many of whom were amazingly dedicated to their work and to the young women.

The Clients

We did a lot of work preparing for the young women to be transferred from Reiby in 1994. A general tenet held at that time was that all young women had been abused and staff should be mindful of this, especially male staff. In many respects, the young

women I encountered were some of the most damaged that I ever encountered. Their lives had been especially harsh. Violence, sexual assault, neglect, AOD use, homelessness and many other traumatic experiences were common. It often seemed to me that much of their offending was a natural reaction to the world they had experienced – some distance from the media portrayals and descriptions in some academic texts.

The Role

Before the young women started to move from Reiby to Yasmar, the Centre underwent some remedial work, new staff were recruited, routines were established and programs developed. It was exciting being part of a new regime, which included the recruitment of a psychotherapist (Sue) in response to the very significant histories of abuse and neglect experienced by many of the girls and young women in custody. In my role, I recruited a small team of programming and vocational education staff (Rick, Andrea, Anne, Wayne, Michael, Rebekah and others at various times); liaised with the on-site school to ensure that programs (often sporting, recreational or vocational in nature) and education programs complemented each other; oversaw various outings including to a local aged care facility that the young women regularly visited to interact with the residents; and assisted with staff development, which at times included taking staff into adult prisons.

One feature of life at Yasmar, and across the system more broadly at the time, was access to outings and leave, which were allowed under the legislation. There was great use of relevant legislative provisions then, when leaving the Centre was somewhat commonplace (for those young people serving a sentence – not for those on remand). At the time we had a staff–young women touch football team that regularly played in a competition at Wentworth Park in Glebe. We ran a regular outing to a local aged care facility where the young women entertained and assisted elderly residents. Some young women assisted staff at a local childcare centre (as I recall, though this seems unlikely now I reflect on it). Young women frequently went on outings. These outings, often weekly, allowed eligible girls and young women to experience things that other young people of the same age would take for granted. Outings could be to beaches, parks, cultural facilities or numerous other locations. They provided opportunities for the girls and young women to leave the Centre, to interact with people in the community, and to experience normal weekend activities.

I recall going on a small number of these outings and often being struck by the difficulties that some girls and young women had in fitting in. They would periodically act in ways that marked them as different to other groups at these locations, even though they were dressed casually (not in the Centre-issued attire, which largely consisted of shorts, t-shirts, tracksuit pants and top in Centre colours). It seemed that for some young women the foreign nature of these regular activities caused anxiety. Having staff present (Wayne and Michael in particular) who helped prepare the girls and young women for outings and helped them to manage various situations was incredibly beneficial. I suspect that young people in the youth justice system today do not enjoy quite the same opportunities for outings and leave.

Outings that involved some form of meaningful community work were considered to be especially beneficial. The regular visits to the local aged care facility forced the girls and young women to interact with people of diverse ages and from diverse backgrounds. Incidental, unplanned interactions required them to behave in ways not commonly seen at the Centre and perhaps not frequently part of their former experiences. The sense of pride associated with helping others was also tremendously powerful. Many of the young women had not experienced gratitude and pride from helping others through structured work or volunteer opportunities. These experiences also helped to elevate them from their own difficulties and concerns, at least for a period.

I do not recall many problems with outings and leave. They proved to be very strong incentives. On returning to Yasmar, the young women would always be beaming (and often tired) and word would quickly spread around the Centre about what they had experienced. There was also a general sense among staff that if reasonable steps were taken in planning these events, then any problems that arose could be managed. I suspect this was a luxury of an era that has long since passed.

Some Reflections

At a personal level, I gained an appreciation into many things. The significant trauma experienced by the girls and young women made me question the merits of detention, a nagging concern sparked from my initial days working in detention. How to better respond to the various needs of the girls and young women gnawed at me, and continues to be a significant policy challenge. What should be done with young people who have committed the most egregious of crimes, including very sinister violence, occasionally resulting in death?

And I personally felt the sting of criticism when a program timetable that colleagues and I had developed was criticised for supposedly reinforcing gender stereotypes. I found the external criticism very frustrating and somewhat misplaced. We had spent time consulting the young women about what they wanted to do with their time outside school hours. Of the many things that they suggested (and noting that some were so thoroughly institutionalised through their contact with child protection agencies that having any novel ideas about what they might want to do was a source of difficulty for them) pampering themselves by doing hair and make-up was requested. In scheduling activities like this, it was suggested that the system was reinforcing gender stereotypes.

This, and similar criticisms – often made some distance from where decisions were taken – lives with me and has shaped various aspects of my working life. Walking a mile in someone's shoes helps to provide context that is often not easily accessed from afar. In the same role in later years, in a custodial facility for boys and young men, a tai chi program received negative media attention and was portrayed as teaching martial arts to young hoodlums. Similar frustrations arose.

I recall employing a young artist to work with the young women. From memory he was at art school at the time. He had little experience of working in custody or with young women, but he was enthusiastic and very capable. I spent time with him and

other casual staff explaining the importance of security. In the case of the art classes, this meant being completely on top of the number of items he would take in and out of the Centre – an inventory drawn up prior to entry had to be ticked off on exit, otherwise units would need to be locked down and searches conducted. One evening, he did this and had a successful class. The classes often provided a relaxing way to pass time, to perhaps learn new techniques, and to potentially express emotions and thoughts. What the artist had failed to account for was the volume of turps needed to clean the paint brushes. Some of the girls covertly tipped some of the turps into their clothes and then spent the night inhaling the fumes. Inhaling various substances was a popular way to get intoxicated at the time. The interest in art classes was perhaps not only to do with the art.

I supervised a horticultural vocational instructor (Anne). Yasmar has heritage-listed gardens and Anne maintained these, often with the assistance of girls and young women who were eligible and trusted to leave the secure parts of the Centre. One girl showed interest in this program. She was facing a serious charge and had been quite withdrawn. Her interest was therefore encouraged. The young women and Anne developed a very close bond. Anne was a gentle middle-aged woman and often brought her dog to work. All three would happily work in the gardens and the bond was encouraged as the work seemed restorative for the young woman.

At some point, the young women asked if she could take fruit from the shared dining room back to her room after meals. Eating disorders were relatively common so the request was seen as harmless and was approved. It turned out that she had managed to use a compost heap at the back of the residential unit as a homemade still and was using the fruit scraps to distil a form of hooch. Fantastically clever, if problematic.

These and numerous similar incidents demonstrated the ingenuity of the girls/young women, while also highlighting the desire to get intoxicated. They also highlighted a conundrum for staff at Yasmar and the broader juvenile justice system. Inevitably, responses to incidents of this kind result in the removal of some liberty or opportunity. These decisions in and of themselves might not be problematic, but taken together they can ultimately result in the closing down of productive experiences. At the time I couldn't know that a tragic incident (the killing of a TAFE teacher) at Yasmar some four years later would propel this trend toward greater risk aversion considerably.

Most of the time on most days, the Centre operated with little conflict. At times it felt more like a small school than a detention centre. I have very fond memories of staff versus young women sporting competitions; of the amazing singing abilities of young women performing popular songs; of their pride at completing a program; or the normality of a group of young women sitting down with popcorn to watch a movie. While I don't wish to minimise the anxiety that many girls and young woman experienced on entering the Centre, or the threats and acts of violence between detainees or physical confrontations with staff, I do want to illustrate the periods of calm, camaraderie and semi-normality. While they were locked in their rooms at night and had numerous restrictions on their movements and liberty, for many young woman, time at Yasmar was tolerated.

In my role as Manager of Programs and Staff Development, I occasionally fielded calls from religious organisations wanting to come into the Centre. It was difficult determining the motivations and bona fides of some organisations and individuals. The chaplain assigned to Yasmar was especially helpful in these cases. Religious events and support were always available to young people, and some religious groups did come to the Centre on a regular basis for singing and generally light religious events. One of the obvious challenges in this context was ensuring that the religious and pastoral needs of the young people were met and were reflected in the diversity of religious leaders and groups coming to the Centre. Given the cultural and religious diversity of the population of young people, this often required liaison with multiple faiths. Knowing who were legitimate religious leaders of particular faiths often proved to be challenging.

Overall, the role was a fantastic mix of responsibilities: interacting with the young women and the staff, undertaking administrative work associated with securing funding for programs, planning programs, organising staff training and meeting relevant bureaucratic requirements. Being part of the management team – dedicated staff working hard to help young women and to run the facility in the most humane way possible – was a real joy as well as hugely rewarding and educational. In many ways, this role at Yasmar remains a career highlight.

A Short Stint in England

From November 1995 to February 1997 I took leave without pay from Yasmar and spent approximately 14 months working in four roles in England. This work was enriching in so many ways.

Newham Borough

My first role included supervising an individual offender during the day for Newham Borough (a council in East London). Being in the East End (Stratford) and supervising a young person waiting to appear in court was a curious mix of novelty and frustration. As I recall, the cost of managing the young person fell to the local council (Newham Borough) so they were motivated to pay to keep him out of trouble. This effectively meant paying me for a small number of hours each day to keep the young person busy. He was not attending school and the logic seemed to be that if he was busy he would be less inclined to be in trouble.

In addition to being paid, I was given funds to cover daily activities such as indoor bowling, table tennis at a local recreation centre and the occasional trip to an outdoor (dry) ski slope. This seemed to me at best wrongheaded in that the young person might have believed he was being rewarded in some way, and I voiced these concerns. I also helped out with other duties when the young person would inevitably lose me somewhere in the East End once my utility had expired (ie, the daily funds had been spent). My knowledge of London was non-existent, so it was easy for him to lose me. This would necessitate my return to the office to (yet again) declare that I had failed to keep tabs on the young person for the allotted hours. I didn't last long in this job!

Camden Borough

My second role, assessing the AOD needs of (predominantly) street drinkers in and around Camden for Camden Borough (council), was eye-opening. Assessments of the quantities of alcohol being consumed by rough sleepers in the area often demonstrated the power of the human body to withstand incredible self-inflicted punishment. Once a client had been assessed, and if deemed ‘treatment ready’, I was required to liaise with appropriate rehabilitation facilities around England to line up a placement. This often involved some form of negotiation because the Council would cover the costs, and debates might be had over whether detoxification (a more expensive form of intervention than residential rehabilitation) was needed. Many of the clients I worked with absolutely needed medically supervised detoxification, as they were at risk of fitting if they withdrew in an unsupervised setting – it was not uncommon for clients to have a history of decades of daily consumption of potent levels of alcohol.

This work took me to some infamous London prisons – Holloway (a women’s prison, closed in 2016), Pentonville, Wandsworth and Brixton. I also managed to organise a trip to the Feltham Young Offender Institution, which was for personal professional interest rather than for conducting an assessment of any kind (it sounds weird but I was obviously interested in youth justice systems and settings).

I also went to an amazing facility in London which was referred to as a ‘wet house’. It was an end-of-the-line facility which allowed people to keep drinking while being accommodated (as I recall). The clients were not able or inclined to be abstinent so they were housed – in the knowledge that they would continue to drink – on the basis that at least they had some supervision and some protection from the harsh (especially by Australian standards) winter elements. My abiding memory of this facility was the intense smell of urine and disinfectant. I had incredible admiration for the staff working in this facility and a real sadness for its clientele, many of whom were drinking themselves to death.

AOD Rehabilitation Centre

While working for Camden Borough I established a connection with an intake officer at a residential rehabilitation centre in the Mendip Hills, south-west of Bristol. In the course of one conversation, I pointed out that the centre had very little in the way of treatment outcome data which made it difficult to know if council money was being spent wisely. Meg, my contact, spoke with senior staff at the centre and in a subsequent telephone conversation suggested I might like to visit and potentially help fix the identified problem. With a sense of freedom and adventure born of my situation, I duly caught a train to the West Country and met with relevant staff. They offered me a role as a research officer and tasked me with trying to compile some data on treatment outcomes. This was a case of my bravado exceeding my abilities – perhaps not the first or last time this was so.

I thoroughly enjoyed the work, including some local quirks. One that I recall involved a guinea pig being fed confidential documents. Research tells me that guinea pigs can eat small amounts of paper, which suggests this was perhaps only a partial

solution to the shredding of confidential client information. In any case, I helped to develop some promotional material for the Centre and enjoyed living and working in the West Country for a couple of months. It was made even better by the opportunity to work out of the London office on Mondays which afforded me the chance to be in London on weekends – taking the 4.5 hour bus ride between Weston-Super-Mare and London on Saturday mornings and Monday nights.

North-West London Housing Corporation

I can't recall if it was because my limited research skills were found wanting or that I yearned to be back in London for more of my limited time in England, but I ultimately found myself working as a Manager for North-West London Housing Corporation. This job involved managing two small houses which accommodated clients dealing with various AOD problems, but who were given tenancy over their individual rooms. They had generally been through detoxification and rehabilitation before entering one of these two houses and were generally more settled. I loved this job and enjoyed working with the clients and the staff. I felt there were specific gaps I could usefully aim to fill during my time, including building stronger connections between the residents, and between the residents and staff. We implemented some simple things like a shared weekly meal, group sessions and more staff supervision and training.

I have enduring memories of a number of the residents. Two were from the East End and had lived colourful lives; a number were originally from Ireland and had drifted to London like so many of their compatriots and had fallen on hard times; others were less affable, and in one case cast a dark mood over the house they resided in for a period. Listening to stories of high jinks and being introduced to literature, culture and lives diminished by predominantly excessive alcohol use was a mixture of joy and sadness.

Cobham Youth Justice Centre

I loved my limited time in London but returned to Sydney when I was told that my leave without pay would no longer be extended. In February 1997, I returned to my role of Manager of Programs and Staff Development – but this time at Cobham Youth Justice Centre, a role I held for less than a year. I was interviewed for the job while living in London (over the phone – no Zoom or Teams calls then). [Cobham](#) was (and still is) a remand facility situated at Werrington in Western Sydney. It was a bigger Centre than I had been used to, which meant it had a much bigger staff establishment. I never really felt like I settled into Cobham in the way I had at Yasmar. This was partly because of the volume of staff who I felt I didn't really get to know. But what this did expose me to was the need for clear communication to staff – a real challenge in any custodial environment with staff working shifts. Getting staff together was difficult and expensive if it involved recalling staff on their days off or having them come into the Centre between shifts. I do recall being involved in organising all-staff meetings aimed at improving communication. These were often tense events, with staff having diverse views and some willing to state and defend these views vigorously. This experience

gave me great appreciation for the challenges of running institutions requiring big staff establishments and involving shift work. They are not simple places to manage and I occasionally bristle when I read reports or articles that advocate solutions to the problems often experienced in such facilities that give little consideration to these communication and staffing challenges, amongst many others.

I wasn't at Cobham for long as a completely new role in the Department of Juvenile Justice beckoned.

Youth Justice Conference Administrator, Fairfield

In late 1997 I started work as a Conference Administrator for the Fairfield region of Sydney. The Youth Justice Conferencing Directorate was established in 1997 and was responsible for establishing youth justice conferencing in New South Wales (building on the restorative justice movement, influenced by many voices but significantly by Professor [John Braithwaite](#)). Seventeen Conference Administrators were recruited by the Director, Jenny Barga (a teacher turned community worker turned lawyer turned academic and an inspiring leader) and the Operations Manager, Tim Matthews (an experienced youth justice staff member and highly capable manager). I applied for some Sydney-based jobs and was offered and accepted the Fairfield region which covered the suburbs of Cabramatta, Bonnyrigg, Wetherill Park, Smithfield, Fairfield, Ashfield, Flemington, Hurstville, Bankstown and everything in between. While you might not know of these suburbs, one word can describe them – diverse. The cultural, linguistic and religious diversity in this region is amazing. Much of the region had been settled by waves of immigrants from different parts of the world, creating a dynamic place to work and a fabulous location to be tasked with applying restorative justice principles through implementing youth justice conferencing.

Conference administrators had to work quickly. Many were appointed, like I was, toward the end of 1997, with the *Young Offenders Act 1997* (NSW) commencing in early April 1998. In this period we were required to recruit a pool of conference convenors who would ultimately be responsible for running the youth justice conferences in our region. Links had to be established with the NSW Police Service which was expected to be the agency referring most of the young people, and with local children's courts which were also likely to refer young people (although one children's court magistrate declared that they wouldn't be referring many, if any, because it made little sense for a trained specialist magistrate to hand over responsibility for a justice outcome to a community member). We had to find suitable venues to host the conferences, which meant thinking about the nature of the venues and ensuring that there weren't any overt cultural links to one group which would be judged unfavourably by other parties. We had to establish administrative systems to accommodate receiving referrals, assessing referrals, conducting conferences and completing outcome plans. We also had to raise awareness of the Act, as it was new. This involved attending a large number of community meetings, giving presentations and distributing explanatory

material, as well as doing some media, which in my case included SBS Radio, so that messages could permeate relevant ethnic and culturally diverse communities.

One event that I found myself at to promote the Act was a training day for police at the Fairfield command. As I recall, it was held on a Sunday morning (1 March 1998). It was a generally casual occasion with a BBQ provided at lunch to balance the educational needs of the session with social needs of a police station. My session was not well received. As I recall, it was the day after a police officer had been stabbed and killed in the inner city (28 February 1998). The alleged perpetrator was an 18 year old. My presentation on the benefits of diverting young people involved in crime from appearing in a children's court was not particularly timely. Officers were rightly concerned and saddened by the death of their colleague and were suspicious of my arguments for the benefits of diversion. This was one of the more difficult sessions I have ever delivered (but obviously nothing compared with what family members of the killed officer and his wounded colleague were going through). The policing world was foreign to me at that time and I was more than a little anxious about how the session would be received. Understanding the context of your work is important and this was never truer than on that day. I came to work closely with a small number of the police at Fairfield Police Station during this time and came to very much respect their intelligence, dedication and commitment.

Running conferences in this part of Sydney could be fraught. In a region with significant cultural and linguistic diversity, there were interracial and interethnic conflicts that predated the conferences by many decades (even centuries) that might potentially seep into the conferences. Issues of shame meant that some families openly admitted to preferring that their son or daughter be dealt with by a closed children's court rather than going through what they perceived to be a more shameful conference experience. The participation of police caused some concern given the poor police–community relationships operating in the area. Conferences with multiple offenders and lone victims presented challenges regarding the potential for further victimisation. And young people – being young – might react in ways that were considered inappropriate or insufficient, such as giggling if nervous or being silent for long periods. Learning by doing was a major aspect of working in this area when conferencing was first being implemented.

It was exciting being part of the establishment of youth justice conferencing in New South Wales and it taught me a great deal about legislative and policy development, implementation and evaluation, and the myriad challenges arising throughout.

THE FIRST CONFERENCE IN MY REGION

I vividly recall the excitement associated with the first ever conference conducted in the Fairfield region. Standing outside a community centre in Belmore, I waited anxiously to meet Sue, the Conference Convenor engaged to facilitate this conference. This was the culmination of a prolonged period of work by me and other conferencing staff, and the culmination of years of work at the theoretical, legislative and policy levels.

After the conference, Sue emerged from the building and was quite happy with how it had gone. The process had been robust but people had participated in the spirit of the conference. The outcome plan negotiated toward the end seemed reasonable (though we didn't really have any benchmark to compare it with) and both the young person and the victim had signed off on it. Participants left with the matter now being resolved. Quite a moment. Many thousands of conferences have been conducted across New South Wales since, but perhaps few with as much expectation and anxiety riding on it (at least from a staff perspective).

Many of the early experiences of implementing the *Young Offenders Act* are captured in this book edited by Professor Janet Chan: Chan, J. (Ed.) (2005). [*Reshaping juvenile justice: The NSW Young Offenders Act 1997*](#). Institute of Criminology, University of Sydney.

More recent information about youth justice conferencing in New South Wales can be found on this webpage: Youth Justice NSW (2025). [Youth Justice Conferences](#). And in this video: Department of Communities and Justice NSW (2022). [What is a youth justice conference?](#)

Implementing the Young Offenders Act 1997

I had, along with many, many other people, a role in implementing the *Young Offenders Act 1997* (NSW) in New South Wales. As stated above, I was for a short period the Conference Administrator for the Fairfield region. In 1999 I took on a role as Senior Programs Officer, Youth and Child Protection Team with the NSW Police Service (as it was then known) which involved working closely with youth liaison officers in administering parts of the Act. And I served on the Youth Justice Advisory Committee (initially as a support person to the NSW Police Service representative and later as a member with an interest in youth justice) which was the intergovernmental committee that monitored the introduction and initial implementation of the Act. I also co-authored a small number of publications on aspects of the *Young Offenders Act* with staff of the Youth Justice Conferencing Directorate and those involved in researching the implementation of the Act (see the book [*Reshaping juvenile justice*](#) mentioned above). Insights regarding implementation of the Act, which can only be considered a modest reform in the context of the criminal justice system, highlight some of the general challenges of implementation in that system (and beyond).

Historically, New South Wales had low rates of diversion of young people from court, while other jurisdictions in Australia had consistently much higher rates, in particular through the use of police cautions. The Act sought to improve this situation, while also introducing youth justice conferencing, the first form of restorative justice legislated in New South Wales.

Implementation of the *Young Offenders Act* required considerable resources and effort across various agencies, as is commonly required for criminal justice reform projects. In the case of the Act, some of what was required is described below.

- **Conference Administrators:** Seventeen conference administrators needed to be recruited by the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice. The 17 administrators were distributed throughout the state. Decisions needed to be made about where the staff would be located, which involved considering where relevant offices already existed; how New South Wales would be divided up geographically; the relationship between the regions covered by these administrators and the 80 police local area commands (as they were then known); and where high numbers of referrals were expected to come from. As described above, the administrators were required to establish conferencing in their region which included recruiting an assistant; advertising for and recruiting conference convenors; identifying suitable venues for facilitating conferences; conducting community education sessions, including through local media outlets; and working closely with the police youth liaison officers in their region to develop relationships and to discuss referrals of young people for youth justice conferences.
- **Youth Liaison Officers (YLOs):** Eighty YLOs needed to be recruited within the NSW Police Service. Youth liaison officer roles predated the Act, but they were general duty roles that meant balancing youth issues with frontline policing responsibilities. The new YLO roles were (at least in theory) dedicated to youth issues and to implementing the *Young Offenders Act*.

Recruitment of these officers was a lengthy process, as consideration was given to only recruiting those with appropriate skills and commitment, rather than officers seeking a role that might be considered easy, or for respite from frontline duties. Recruitment was preceded by decisions about the rank of the role and the exact duties of the role. It was decided that YLOs would be constables to avoid the situation where interest would be linked to chasing rank. Had the role been given a rank of sergeant, there was some concern that officers would be attracted to the rank and pay rather than the role itself. This, however, presented some challenges: it meant that quite junior constables could be appointed, but be required to review decisions to refer young people to court made by more senior officers. Given the general command and control structure of policing organisations, there was concern that junior officers might be intimidated by more experienced and senior police, setting a pattern of low diversion in the relevant command. Given that the local area command structure had been relatively recently implemented and at its core was the Crime Management Unit, YLOs were attached to these units to provide them with support and supervision. The newly recruited officers were trained at Goulburn Police Academy in early 1998, just prior to the commencement of the Act in April 1998.

- **Specialist Youth Officers:** Specialist youth officers needed to be recruited across the 80 police local area commands. The *Young Offenders Act* refers to specialist youth officers making decisions to commence criminal proceedings. In practice, this meant that an arresting officer could make a decision to warn or caution a young person, but only a specialist youth officer could decide to commence criminal proceedings. The logic was to empower frontline police to make decisions to divert, but to put in place a measure of review if they preferred charging a young person. Given that YLOs would generally not be on shift at the busiest times when young people were likely to be arrested and charged, other officers needed to take on specialist youth officer responsibilities.

Decisions were made for particular roles to become specialist youth officers – roles like Custody Managers who would be on shift at all times a custody suite operated in those police stations where people could be charged and processed. Other roles and officers were also identified to become specialist youth officers which involved participating in a (then) two-day training course and being identified on COPS (computerised operational policing system) as a specialist youth officer. This obviously required the coordination and delivery of a lot of training courses, as well as modifications to COPS, along with numerous other changes required to accommodate the provisions of the Act.

- **Systems:** Numerous forms, policies and procedures, and changes to the information systems managed by various agencies needed to be developed and implemented. A form was needed for police to refer a young person for a youth justice conference; forms were needed for when an outcome plan was developed and endorsed by the young person and the victim at a youth justice conference; a form was needed to refer a matter back to police if a conference was not able to be successfully completed. This all sounds very mundane, which it was. However, these were part of the many requirements that had to evolve to support implementation of the Act. People complain about bureaucracy, but these systems are often crucial in allowing reforms to take hold. Ineffective systems can quickly stymie such efforts and cause frustration for actors and agencies.

While this provides a sense of some of what was required to implement the *Young Offenders Act*, it misses so much. For example, Legal Aid NSW established a telephone helpline that young people could call to speak to a lawyer when they were brought into police custody. Meetings were held with the Aboriginal Legal Service and Western Aboriginal Legal Service in Broken Hill (amongst others) to work through issues associated with diverting Aboriginal young people from court. This included exploring advice often given to Aboriginal young people not to admit guilt or speak during a police interview which prevented them from being diverted but was in recognition of incidences of young Aboriginal people providing an admission but police commencing criminal proceedings via court. Media strategies were developed and executed to respond to the inevitable claims that the Act was a sign that the government was ‘soft on youth crime’.

NSW Police Service

The account given above also misses the many activities within the NSW Police Service to support the introduction of the *Young Offenders Act*. Numerous articles were written and placed in *Police Weekly* to provide information about the Act and to encourage its use. Stories also appeared on Police TV and associated training videos were developed often involving senior police commending the benefits of the Act to police. Six-minute intensive training sessions and questions linked to officers getting pay raises were developed on the Act. Questions were posed to local area commanders in operational crime reviews regarding the performance of their command against the principles and objectives of the Act. A review team that travelled around New South Wales was given a set of questions they could include during their visits to local area commands. An aide-mémoire was developed by an enterprising YLO (Nicole) and then produced for all police which explained the key provisions of the Act and could be kept in a police notebook. And training packages were developed to be delivered by education and training officers at staff development days. The volume of work and the time invested in these and numerous other tasks was enormous and taught me a lot about the elbow grease required by many people to deliver what can only be considered a modest reform in a criminal justice system with many parts, programs, laws and policies.

Youth Justice Advisory Committee

The account given above also misses the importance of interagency cooperation and leadership, aided by the Youth Justice Advisory Committee, established to support the introduction of the *Young Offenders Act*. My involvement was largely as an ex-officio member while working for the NSW Police Service and then as a community member after leaving the public service. The key players on this Committee included representatives from the (then) NSW Attorney General's Department, the NSW Police Service, the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, the Senior Children's Magistrate, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid NSW, a victim's representative and various others. While the individuals representing these agencies came and went, as is the reality of such entities, the core group were consistent through the most critical period of the Committee (Ken, Bill, Ike, Jenny, Marcia, Richard and Louise). This made a significant difference and ultimately guaranteed its success, which I believe was due to the following.

- **Leadership:** The key representatives were from the senior ranks of their own organisations and they could and did make decisions and got things done. They showed and provided leadership, which was aided by a shared commitment.
- **Shared commitment:** There was general agreement and a shared commitment to the outcomes being pursued. In my limited experience, key players were aligned in seeking to increase diversion rates and introduce youth justice conferencing and associated structures. This commitment meant that there was always a basis for working out any key differences or sticking points.

- **Fondness:** I believe that there was genuine fondness between key players. People stayed connected for many years and attended social functions which helped forge deep connections. There was also a general understanding amongst the key players of the types of challenges each faced in working within their organisational context.
- **Charisma:** Key players were, in their own way, charismatic and smart. They were able to work within their organisations to make progress on agreed decisions between meetings, which meant progress was being made on multiple fronts continuously.
- **Secretariat:** A good secretariat is critical to the smooth management of such committees and the Committee benefitted from an effective secretariat, which kept people and agencies on track.

I enjoyed being part of this and other interagency committees which gave me an insight into the way policy reform takes shape and how various effective senior public servants (in this case) operated. Observing individual styles of management and how different skills and temperaments worked in particular contexts was very beneficial.

Evaluation

So how does one judge the impact of these measures and all the effort of the hundreds of people involved in advocating these changes, drafting Bills and the Act, coordinating interagency working groups, developing policies, procedures and systems to support implementation, recruiting and training staff, delivering community education sessions, placing articles in various media outlets to explain the Act, conducting reviews, and much more? What measures would indicate success? How long might one expect these reforms to continue to reverberate and to influence practice in the intended direction?

One could argue that the Act was successful because it did directly result in a reduction in children's court matters in New South Wales and a corresponding increase in diversion. However, depending on how you analyse the data, you could argue that the significant number of warnings in addition to other forms of diversion was tantamount to net-widening. One could take heart from the embedding of youth justice conferences within the youth justice landscape, but a contrary view might be that conferences have only ever represented a very small number of the total annual youth justice interventions in New South Wales and that falling victim participation renders many conferences less than ideal.

Equally, one could consider success from the perspective of the impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, who, as is well known, have been under-represented in diversionary measures and over-represented in the back end of the youth justice system (especially detention) for many decades. Seen through this lens, the Act might be considered a mixed success with some positive signs and some equally troubling signs. Assessing the impact and effectiveness of reforms such as these is not easily done and can be contingent on the types of measures considered to be important.

Despite what has been written about the *Young Offenders Act* and youth justice conferences, I have a sense that publications never quite do justice to the experience, including the time and effort invested, or appreciate the challenges of this work. I often reflect on this as it suggests a disconnect between what is often published and what is experienced by those directly engaged in the work. If this is as I suggest, what are the implications of this disconnection? Students are taught from publications that are invariably incomplete but which often take on a status they perhaps don't deserve. I find this troubling, particularly as there is a risk that narratives get established and reinforced over time that are only partial renderings of the messy realities of the systems they supposedly comment on. Additionally, publications often take an extended time from data collection to becoming publicly available, which can mean there is always a lag between what is published and what is actually happening. Publications can become 'seminal works', meaning they get used and cited for many decades, even if significant changes have occurred that render aspects of the work dated. But I digress.

This and other experiences of implementation make it difficult to not be suspicious of evaluations and meta-reviews with clean findings of success. The [realist evaluation](#) approach, with its interest in what works for who under what circumstances, seems much more consistent with my experiences. This approach reflects the realities and mess of implementation more accurately, I would argue, than other approaches.

Senior Programs Officer, NSW Police Service

As mentioned earlier, in 1999 I took up the role of Senior Programs Officer, Youth and Child Protection Team, Operational Programs Unit, NSW Police Service.

NSW Police Service Youth Policy

In the early 2000s, I was responsible (at least in part) for developing the [Youth Policy Statement](#) for the NSW Police Service. I found the process illuminating in various ways. The policing of young people is generally a fraught policy area. This was especially true during this period. Legislation had been introduced in 1998 to allow police to move people on from public spaces. These powers were shown by a NSW Ombudsman [review](#) to be used more frequently against young people. The political context at the time was volatile. Lakemba Police Station had been shot at in the late 1990s, police had been killed (most notably David Carty and Peter Forsyth), tensions in parts of Sydney were very high with a large drug market in Cabramatta and elevated police–community tension in other areas. There was much criticism of the policing of young people and hyperbole about youth crime, which we now know was at historically high levels.

Thus, the context for the development of the policy was somewhat volatile. What to include in such a policy, what priorities to highlight, what commitments could be made, were some of the broad challenges. The lengthy process of development included a number of somewhat predictable steps – internal consultation, external consultation

with key stakeholders, liaising with various partners to gauge what they were prepared to have included, analysis of relevant youth crime and youth intervention data, review of related policies within and external to the NSW Police Service, and then a series of drafts to be reviewed by various stakeholders (mostly internal). We finally got sign-off and arranged a launch at the Redfern PCYC. Invitations were circulated far and wide with a mix of government, youth sector and related agencies in attendance. I prepared a speech for that launch and it still haunts me. As you may have deduced, writing was not my strong suit. The speech was long, turgid and too detailed for the intended purpose. If good speeches entertain, lifting the gaze and mood of the audience, then this wasn't a well-written speech. Like all good lessons, this was one learnt the hard way.

The writing of the policy was somewhat easier, in that I had great guidance and assistance. A number of colleagues more experienced in such processes helped a great deal in simplifying language, cutting unnecessary text and bringing a sharp focus that was not natural to me. Colleagues also helped with some aspects of key consultations. One major consultation with key government agencies and NGOs was facilitated by an external facilitator (Paul van Ryk). Paul did an excellent job, moving through the agenda, encouraging debate, provoking discussion, distilling content and managing a mix of discussion and decision-making. I mention this because running such events is not always easy and because facilitation of this kind is an aspect of work required in many contexts but which is not often included in university criminology programs. This is another skill that can usefully be developed through education and training to aid you in your professional and career development.

I conducted a number of consultations with young people and youth organisations to capture the views of young people. These were designed to give voice to the experiences of young people and youth agencies with direct experience of dealing with police. One such consultation was in a juvenile justice centre. What better location to consult young people given that all young people in custody have had direct experience of dealing with police. What an experience it was.

I posed a question: 'What are your experiences with police?'

Quizzical looks appeared around the recreation room: 'You work for the police, and you want us to tell you what we think of them?'

While I don't remember exactly which of the expected volley of criticisms were raised, I vividly remember a conversation that followed. I asked: 'What makes a good police officer?' The common answer surprised me. The young people generally preferred dealing with older police. They felt that older police had less to prove and were generally more relaxed, which meant they might make minor allowances while still getting their job done. Younger police were seen as less flexible and more likely to be aggressive. Older police might get the same outcome, such as arresting a young person, but could do so without being so confrontational.

Correspondence and Ministerials

In addition to working to assist the implementation of the *Young Offenders Act* and developing the NSW Police Service's Youth Policy Statement, I undertook various duties common in policy settings. I was required to respond to correspondence that came from the Commissioner's Office and the Police Ministry. This correspondence would often require responses in short timeframes (hours) or over days and needed to conform to guidelines regarding ministerial correspondence. The Style Guide for the NSW Police Service set out the required format of responses, the colour of paper that needed to be used and the sign-off procedures (which could often require signatures from various staff before a response made its way back to the original source). This correspondence often required the collation of data to show the take-up of diversion measures or the use of particular police powers commonly applied to young people. This required liaison with various parts of the NSW Police Service.

I never especially relished this part of the work (preparing briefing papers) and was often not thrilled when my supervisors returned my responses asking for considerable alteration. As I saw it, this work was often of little value (at least in my eyes) and should not unduly distract from what seemed important (as determined by me). Having to make changes to responses hastily written because they seemed of little consequence did seem somewhat wasteful. Irrespective of my personal views about the value or relevance of this type of work, it is a significant part of public service work, especially in particular policy roles. Ultimately, I appreciate that it is part of democratic government and a transparent public service, but I would like to see how much time and resourcing is invested chasing issues of low importance.

At the time, the NSW Police Service identified particular portfolios and allocated them to senior police. In the case of youth, Assistant Commissioner Ike Ellis was the identified spokesperson. I thoroughly enjoyed working for Ike. He had a calmness, a wicked sense of humour, a real commitment to the portfolio and a loyalty all of which made working for him enjoyable and rewarding. At the time, Ike was the Assistant Commissioner responsible for the Georges River Region, which covered a number of prominent crime hotspots. He had to juggle some incredibly challenging operational issues with his responsibilities to the youth portfolio, something that I can't imagine was easy. There were rare occasions when you could sense his distraction with issues demanding his attention and yet he very firmly advocated and supported the work in the youth portfolio.

Working with Youth Liaison Officers

At the time we held regular meetings with YLOs from the (then) 11 regions. Meetings would often be held at Police Headquarters, which at the time was in College Street, Sydney. A YLO from each region would come to Sydney for the meeting, which was an opportunity for issues from the various regions to be raised and information that needed to be communicated back through the regions to be shared. These meetings were

always exhausting because there was a lot to work through and consider, and because they often included some form of social event the night before or after (or in some cases both). The social aspect of the work was a very memorable feature for me. The YLOs and other public servants I worked with were fantastic company. These events were also occasions where work dialogue continued. I recall one especially memorable night talking with a couple of YLOs about [radical non-intervention](#) after a number of beers.

I also learnt a great deal about police culture and police life. I learnt that police had frequently been exposed to horrendous human cruelty, observed incredibly traumatic events, enjoyed taking on various roles within the organisation, and found the relentless paperwork frustrating. A good police drama probably teaches you as much, but hearing the stories from water police describing pulling out bodies from the ocean after weeks of being in the water or of the inevitable traffic accident that resulted in a fatality made a much greater impression on me. So did seeing officers who I regarded as very progressive being verbally abused as they went about their business or being immediately set upon when entering a meeting.

Not all officers that I met could be described as progressive, or necessarily acting in ways that might be considered ideal, but a great many did and this taught me a lot and challenged some of my own preconceptions forged while working in detention centres where young people often had stories to tell about their run-ins with police.

A big part of the job involved travelling to various parts of the state to meet with police and to deliver training. On many of these trips I heard about and saw some fantastic work and initiatives that rarely received any attention. An officer in Moree (Matt) had noticed lots of young people getting fines for riding bicycles without helmets, a great many being Aboriginal youth. He organised to get bike helmets donated and worked with a local Aboriginal service to paint the helmets before distributing them to young people. A YLO (Nicole) wanted to help her colleagues understand the provisions of the *Young Offenders Act*. She developed a card that could be inserted into police notebooks summarising the key provisions of the Act. Another YLO (Sue) in a region with beaches noticed problems with under-age drinking and the associated risks and worked with a local AOD provider to do outreach and to keep young people safe at high-risk times.

These and literally hundreds more initiatives quietly operated without fanfare, without evaluation, in the background. Seeing and learning of these positive initiatives was a very powerful experience and one that partly informed my PhD research some years later.

The NSW Police Academy was, and still is, in Goulburn, about a 2.5 hour drive south of Sydney. I spent a considerable amount of time at the Academy. Annual conferences for YLOs were held there and I frequently delivered training there including to new YLOs, Aboriginal community liaison officers and various others. My first encounter with the Academy was while working as a conference administrator in 1998. We had been invited to a YLO conference a few months before commencement of the Act. It was a curious experience. We felt, or at least I did, timid entering this policing world. Walking into a large lecture theatre with 100 or so people in police

uniforms was intimidating. The conference was held over a number of days and slowly some of the barriers between the two groups fell, perhaps aided by raucous nights at the bar on-site and in town.

Providing education and assisting in running the annual YLO conference were significant parts of my role during my time with the NSW Police Service. Working with my colleague at the Academy, (then) Sergeant Joanne (Jo) Schultz was one of the highlights of the role. Jo was smart, adept at understanding issues impacting YLOs, and had a knack for balancing competing priorities when developing training and running events.

During that time, Jo and I developed a number of educational resources for YLOs, in addition to the training developed for specialist youth officers by Michaela Wengert (Conference Administrator), Jo and others. These training materials and conferences really helped to educate and continue to educate relevant staff. An incredible amount of effort was invested in developing and delivering these resources. This is perhaps why, when I see generic recommendations about the need for police or other criminal justice personnel to be trained as the answer to a particular problem, I boil a little inside. If you've not tried to train and educate 15,000 people about legislation with some complexities and potentially creating some resistance, then you have little idea of the challenges that this poses.

Sydney Olympics

This work of training police in aspects of the *Young Offenders Act* was made all the harder by a couple of factors. One was the staging of the Olympic Games in Sydney in September 2000. This might seem like an unlikely variable but it was a really significant focus at that time. The NSW Police Service was heavily involved in preparing for aspects of hosting the Olympics. This was quite apart from the significant impact on resources and staff, who were involved for an extended period in planning security, traffic and numerous other aspects of hosting the Olympics. Closer to and during the Olympics, police were restricted from taking leave, and officers from across the state were rostered to particular Olympic sites and duties. Officers were then released to return to their normal locations and many were keen to take time off when leave moratoriums were lifted.

Moreover, there was a significant impact on the training agenda of police leading into the Olympics. Olympics-related training in addition to the list of new laws passed in New South Wales (including those allowing for the collection of DNA samples, police and public safety provisions, and new child protection legislation), meant that it was a very crowded training and education space. Competing with other priorities meant that training and promotion of the *Young Offenders Act* through this period was challenging.

A Milestone

One of the features of a policing organisation that I came to appreciate was the tradition of recognition and celebration. Important milestones are marked in various ways. For uniformed or sworn police this can be through the awarding of medals for certain acts or completion of years of service. For civilians this might involve receiving letters of thanks or commendation for particular work. In my case, I enjoyed some recognition through receiving a plaque and a letter from the (then) Commissioner of Police thanking me for my service. This was augmented by an invitation to attend a Commissioner's Executive Team (CET as it was known) meeting close to the end of my work with the police. The CET meeting was being held in Dubbo. I drove to Dubbo for the meeting with the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners and others. I provided an update on various projects and then received warm thanks from the Commissioner. After a very brief appearance I was thanked and dispatched so they could attend to their lengthy agenda. I duly changed out of my suit and drove back to Sydney, only stopping to collect a speeding fine from an officer near Orange. A day of mixed emotions as I finally returned home after nine hours of driving, a short period of work and a fresh speeding ticket to pay. Perhaps it was a fitting way to conclude.

A New Adventure

It was from the NSW Police Service that I left the NSW Public Service in 2002. While I had found the work incredibly interesting and mostly very satisfying, there was an impending sense of groundhog day developing. Working closely with the Youth Liaison Officers had been a critical part of the role. I thoroughly enjoyed my interactions with the YLOs, but I started to tire of receiving calls from a new YLO in a police command who had replaced a previous YLO, who had replaced a previous YLO, etc. Providing the same advice and guidance necessitated by the significant turnover of YLOs, especially in some police commands, took its toll. Many of the original YLOs, who were attracted to the role from the outset, had started to move to other roles either to pursue promotion or for various other personal and professional reasons. This meant that there was a lot of repetition and disappointment as some very good officers left the role. It was time to move on.

My period of public service was incredibly satisfying. There were of course frustrations. Frustration that young people cycled through juvenile justice centres; frustration with political debates and media coverage that fuelled negative portrayals of young people without considering the context of their often-traumatic lives, etc. But there was also a sense of achievement and pride – sometimes in small things that would never be seen or recognised beyond the moment or location in which they happened. Working with a young person to get them connected to local services, helping to restore their connections with family members, running a program or activity that made a juvenile justice centre feel like a normal environment for staff and young people for a

moment, getting young people to undertake community service work, helping to establish Youth Justice Conferencing in a region of New South Wales, developing and assisting to run an annual conference for Youth Liaison Officers – all these things made the work challenging, engrossing, exhilarating and anxiety-provoking but rewarding.

Formal Criminology Study

It was during this period that I formally studied criminology. In 1995 I had started the Master of Criminology degree at the University of Sydney. At the time the course was taught in the Phillip Street law campus (in central Sydney). While this meant driving from Haberfield (initially) and later Werrington to get to classes two nights per week, I found the experience intoxicating. Classes then were filled with diverse students, many of whom were serving police officers, or were employed in corrections, or were working for complaint-handling bodies such as the NSW Ombudsman or for various legal entities such as Legal Aid NSW. Some classes were a wonderful mix of theory taught by high-profile academics and challenging debate from students with often very different work experiences and perspectives. There was a generally more relaxed attitude to submission of work, largely in recognition of the fact that most students worked in full-time roles. In one case, Dr Shea, who famously taught the Forensic Psychiatry course in the degree, allowed me to complete an assessment while I was in London and to send it to him when I managed to finalise it. Things have likely become more stringent now (at least in the units that I teach).

I worked my way through the required units and then was offered and embarked upon an honours year (something which is no longer offered). It was a wonderful opportunity. I was fortunate to be supervised by Professor Terry Carney and wrote a thesis on police cautioning in New South Wales. My research involved analysing cautioning trends and practices in four police commands covering Bankstown, Redfern, Dubbo and Coffs Harbour. Interviewing the Superintendents in charge of these commands and sitting in on police cautions delivered in these commands proved to be incredibly beneficial and ultimately resulted in my working with the NSW Police Service. I finally graduated in 2000 which is perhaps when I could officially be considered a criminologist.

Reflections on Public Service Work and Criminology

Before turning to the rich experiences gained through various consultancy projects, it is perhaps timely to make a few points here about public service work and criminology.

- As my experience demonstrates, there are lots of jobs that you might consider as a criminology graduate. Getting an initial job will often open up future opportunities and roles, some of which might not exist at the time of your initial role. Thus, be humble and don't wait for the perfect job – take something and get started on your career.

- There are few if any jobs with the title ‘criminologist’ in government (or elsewhere) waiting for you. Most jobs will be with key criminal justice agencies and might be some distance from what you might have been taught at university. Given that so few actual jobs carry the title ‘criminologist’, you will need to be creative about how you connect your studies and qualifications to particular jobs. Nonetheless, many jobs in the public service will be open to criminology graduates.
- Working in criminal justice roles will invariably mean grappling with many emotional and ethical challenges. Working with people who have committed horrendous crimes, while often also having been victims of abuse, neglect or violence, presents challenges. Working within systems that incarcerate, police and punish presents challenges. Making sense of the myriad systems that can help or fail people is challenging. Seeing the dedication of many staff while external commentary paints systems in a very different light is challenging. ...
- Ultimately, I found my time as a public servant incredibly rewarding and it has shaped me in many ways. For this reason I continue to promote public service work as valuable and important and encourage students to consider roles such as those that I have enjoyed working in and that have been illustrated in this section.

A Decade of Consultancy Work

I left the public service in mid-2002. I had an inkling that a contract was coming up for the development of a NSW Youth Shopping Centre Protocol and I thought that I would have a chance to get it. I was without children and, apart from covering rent on a unit I shared with a friend, I had few financial responsibilities. A now or never moment. I resigned from the NSW Police Service, went to Harvey Norman and bought a laptop (my first personal computer, which seems strange today given that I was in my early thirties) and got busy working (mostly from my bedroom).

It was exhilarating to be working for myself. The cut and thrust of chasing work was a revelation to me, although there were many dark moments, especially when invoices took months to be paid (in one case nine months) and funds were at a very low ebb (often). I quickly learnt the benefit of networks and friendships, with many of my initial projects coming through these networks. I learnt that working solo had many limitations, which meant that I quickly tried to form working relationships with like-minded colleagues. I learnt that there is a lot of work for independent consultants, but that sometimes people dream of five-star outcomes on two-star budgets. I learnt that I needed to be flexible but had to have some clear guardrails for what work I would do and how I wanted to operate, as it was easy to get distracted and easy to slip into selling fear to drum up work. I also learnt that it was advantageous to do some casual teaching at university because it guaranteed some form of regular income, provided access to library resources, pushed me to read widely and helped me connect theory and practice.

Ultimately, the decade of being a consultant was incredibly exciting, thoroughly enjoyable and a tad nerve racking.

[Appendix B](#) lists many of the projects that I worked on during this period. I do not take sole credit for this work because almost all of it was collaborative. In some projects I played major roles, while in others I played very minor roles. And while I appreciate that not many criminology graduates will necessarily enter the world of consulting, I have described some of the projects and areas of work to illustrate where a criminologist might find themselves and to highlight the array of organisations that might ultimately be home for a criminologist (including management consulting firms, private security companies and related entities). In this way I hope that this section is beneficial even though you might not end up being a consultant.

Public Space and Shopping Centres

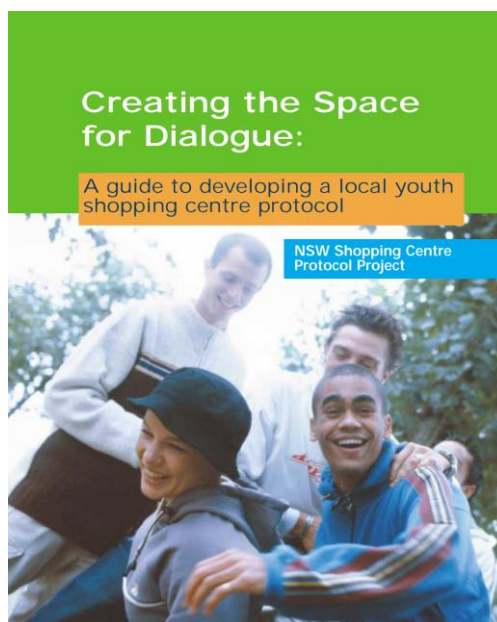
The consultancy opportunity I got wind of in 2002 was focused on young people's use of public space and problems that had been arising in shopping centres. Large – in some cases very large – cohorts of young people were descending on shopping centres, especially on Thursday nights (the key opportunity for late-night trading during the week). This was posing challenges to security companies engaged to manage these sites and had started to result in young people being banned and then being charged with trespass if they breached the banning notices. This often meant that minor misbehaviour would lead to charges of trespass and entry into the criminal justice system. Being banned from a shopping centre also carried potentially significant repercussions for young people, as shopping centres through their rapid growth had become significant places of employment (especially for young people), home to crucial services (such as Centrelink) and public transport hubs. Being banned, which might be for periods that ran into years, had consequences beyond not just being able to hang out with friends.

I contacted some colleagues – Sally Doran, an experienced and meticulous researcher, and the always affable and hugely experienced Associate Professor Don Robertson from the University of Western Sydney (as WSU was then known) – and we submitted a proposal to develop the NSW Youth Shopping Centre Protocol. This project was being managed by the Youth Action Policy Association (YAPA) (now known as Youth Action) and the Shopping Centre Council of Australia (SCCA). We were successful, and a decade of consultancy projects kicked off – many of which grew out of this initial work.

I travelled to a number of shopping centres around New South Wales, spoke to centre managers and security personnel, interviewed young people and youth workers, and tried to become conversant in the language and issues of shopping centres. I gave (atrocious) presentations with very clunky PowerPoint slide packs to shopping centre management company conferences, and read the relevant literature on increasing mass private space (see for example, [Shearing and Stenning](#)), on the pressure on young people in public spaces (especially from police), and on the design and marketing of

shopping centres, which had become very big, profitable businesses. We spent time massaging messages and text that would ultimately work for both parties – YAPA and the SCCA – which was greatly assisted by Anna Booth, an employee of the SCCA at the time (and one of the more inspiring people I’ve had the pleasure to meet). The art of negotiation and consensus building, not something I found easy, was critical in doing this work. Genuine commitment from both parties and relevant stakeholders made it possible, despite my likely obvious frustration with spending considerable time massaging the wording of the final document.

The end result of this project was the [NSW Youth Shopping Centre Protocol](#) (see below) and a related [report](#) published in 2003.



The Protocol built on work by Dr Phil Crane (at QUT at the time). Phil had worked on a project at the Myer Centre in Brisbane’s Southbank that laid the foundations for our work and the development of protocols that would articulate how young people should be treated in particular facilities and the consequences that might be expected following various forms of misbehaviour. The spirit of developing a protocol was transparency so that all parties knew what would happen in particular situations and to encourage cooperation amongst key stakeholders.

Phil’s work had built on work by Professor Rob White (at Melbourne University at the time) which had focused on young people’s access to public spaces in an era when such spaces were becoming enclosed, privatised and surveilled. Rob had produced numerous publications that sought to draw attention to the issues, especially those facing marginalised young people, and to showcase examples of good practice (see [Hanging out: Negotiating young people’s use of public space](#)).

These examples of good practice included:

- shopping centre management companies employing youth workers to engage with local young people in an attempt to defuse potential conflict between security providers and young people;

- designing spaces specifically for young people, including the establishment of youth centres within shopping centres, which would allow young people to be in a space without needing to spend money or consume; and
- providing training programs for security guards to improve their management of and interaction with young people.

We benefited greatly from this and other work.

As was my experience generally in the decade of consultancy work, projects beget projects. The development of the Protocol became the catalyst for numerous related projects over a number of years, including:

- development of individual protocols for specific shopping centres including at Penrith, Rouse Hill and Macarthur;
- development and delivery of training on Managing Young People, which resulted in the creation of a free-to-download self-paced learning package for shopping centre security guards (which was then adapted for rangers and libraries), and to the development of a training package that we delivered to shopping centre security personnel in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory and a train-the-trainer package that we sold (cheaply) to the Youth Affairs Council of South Australia;
- presentations to Diploma of Shopping Centre Management courses in Victoria and New South Wales;
- hosting of conferences on young people and shopping centres; and
- various other side projects that resulted in the development of various resources (including reports for YAPA, amongst others).

Development of the Protocol also ultimately took me to assisting with research and report writing for the NSW parliamentary Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment. As part of this project, I travelled with members of the Committee on Children and Young People (members of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly). I attended a young design professionals conference in Brisbane, where I met various exciting young professionals working in the built environment sector, some of whom I continued to intersect with for many years. The Committee's [final report](#), published in 2006, included this gushing comment about my vital contribution:

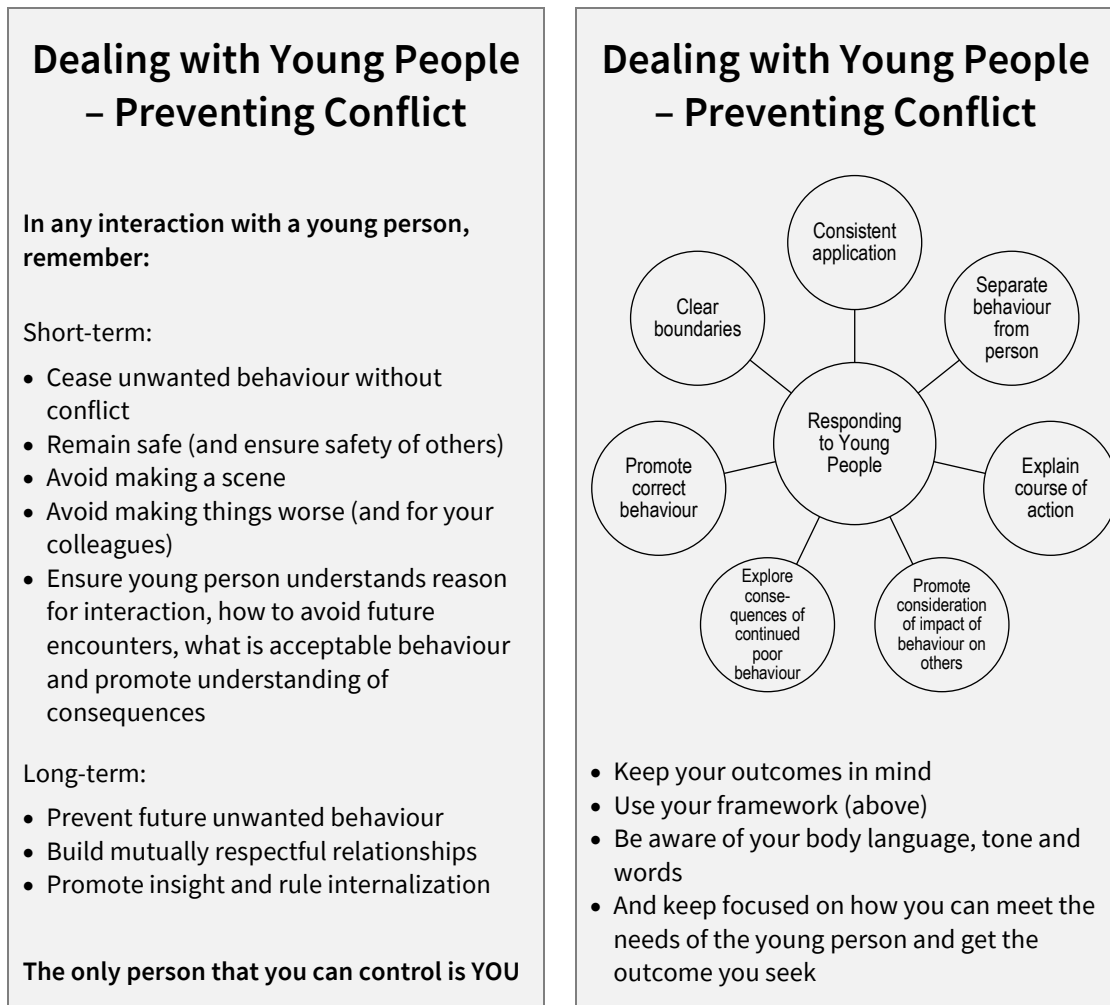
The Committee was assisted by the consultant to the inquiry, Mr Garner Clancey, and the staff of the Secretariat. (p. x)

This journey, over many years and diverse projects, was completely unexpected and thoroughly enjoyable. Turning up to a shopping centre to train a group of burly security guards, many of whom ate almost continuously through the half-day training sessions, was challenging and rewarding. To my surprise, which reflects poorly on me, the guards we met were a diverse mix of intelligent, interested and experienced staff.

We made the fatal mistake in the early training sessions of starting from the premise that they were clearly doing something wrong – the academic reports had told us so –

and that we were there to help fix the problems. We quickly discovered that this was met with hostility and defensiveness. We adjusted our approach and reframed the training. The context was wanting to help the guards get home safely to their families and loved ones at the end of a shift, and learning about and developing some skills to engage young people would be helpful in this pursuit. Resistance decreased and many participants genuinely seemed to contribute and to engage with the training. An important lesson learnt.

Figure 3: Aide-Mémoire for Security Personnel



Note. The small notebook card was developed to capture key themes of the training delivered to shopping centre security personnel. Mick Huggett, a former police officer, and I collaborated heavily on this work and benefitted greatly from our different expertise and perspectives.

A similar lesson was learnt in dealing with shopping centre management personnel. The naked profiteering of some shopping centre management companies had been confronting for me. Sitting in a shopping centre conference was a sobering experience. One keynote speaker extolled the virtues of a marketing campaign they had run which had generated incredible profits for very little investment, in part under the guise of a community building campaign. This was particularly confronting to me as I had grown

accustomed to conference presentations being about how we help marginalised young people, how we tackle various AOD disorders, how we reduce and prevent crime. Profits, return on investment, marketing campaigns, had never been part of my world. While I left the conference feeling uneasy about the praise for commercial successes, I quickly learnt that not all shopping centre management companies or shopping centre management personnel were alike. A number of companies had very clear objectives about how they might support the communities they were located in, and not just in a tokenistic fashion. Some senior personnel did extraordinary things for their local communities and things that were beyond some giving or donations. They really wanted to know their local communities and to work with them in various interesting ways.

It is difficult to know how to judge the success or otherwise of this work and to determine the best approach to advocacy. Meeting and training security personnel was richly rewarding; contributing to discussions about how problems could be managed and partnerships formed felt beneficial; documenting practices in the hope that others would benefit from some of the lessons seemed right. But knowing if or how any of this mattered is difficult to determine. I know particular documents were downloaded many times and that particular companies sought to integrate some of what we were espousing into their strategic management practices, but perhaps this is just wishful thinking. I believed wholeheartedly in what I was doing and always felt that being at the table, in the room, having the ear of a senior manager was more valuable than writing about an issue from afar. This was the classic tension between being inside the tent or outside the tent – a tension that endures. In the course of this work, I also met staff in local government social planning (and related) teams, youth workers, police, private security guards, risk management consultants, property development company personnel and so many more. Invariably, interesting roles that might be filled by criminology graduates existed in almost all of these organisations.

Local Government Crime Prevention Plans

Alongside various colleagues, I worked on the development of a number of local government crime prevention plans. In New South Wales, as in other states and territories, local councils are encouraged (more so then than now) to develop crime prevention plans. This started with the *Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997* (NSW). The NSW government effectively incentivised local councils to develop crime prevention plans by making funding available through the Safer Community Compact Fund. Once a crime prevention plan had been endorsed (a somewhat convoluted process), the council could access funding to implement particular strategies within their plan. This resulted in many councils embarking on this work. Some councils employed Crime Prevention or Community Safety Officers who prepared the plans. Other councils engaged consultants to do this work. We worked on plans (in various guises) for Wellington, Narrabri, Camden, Burwood/Canada Bay (a joint plan between the two councils), Fairfield and Parramatta councils.

Developing crime prevention plans often involved reviewing available crime data (not always easy back then), reviewing various related local plans, consulting diverse stakeholders (described below), working closely with relevant local government staff to determine priorities and draw up meaningful responses, considering relevant literature to inspire new ideas and to weave in relevant theoretical features, and – ideally – considering possible outcome measures (not an easy task given the nature of crime problems and forecasting challenges).

A significant feature of this work was extensive consultation with diverse stakeholders. In a rural council area, this often involved travelling to many small towns to consult with local community members. Gathering in small town halls, often provided with great hospitality and baked goods, community members would describe various crime-related issues impacting their slice of the rural idyll. On one memorable occasion in the Central West of New South Wales, we had a wonderful meeting with a community in which we developed a plan to respond to local problems. This meant moving beyond blame being placed on police, courts and corrections for not doing enough, to devising a series of strategies that local community members could enact themselves – arrange to get the PCYC bus to collect young people on Friday nights to provide structured activities, invite young people to join various sporting groups that they might not feel welcome to attend, provide additional educational support to some young people, and engage in similar other community-building activities.

In various areas, consulting community leaders was central to the task of developing a local crime prevention plan. This included Aboriginal elders in various towns. On one notable occasion, again in the Central West, we met a small group of Aboriginal elders in a stunning rural setting. They shared many insights, including regarding historical challenges between the council and local Aboriginal community members. They also spoke of various concerns, many of which were about environmental and social issues impacting the healthy functioning of their community. They also shared concerns about some local drug-related issues, which were having devastating impacts on the town and their community. We spent considerable time listening and discussing prevention approaches that had been tried previously, identified programs that could do with additional funding and captured the most pressing crime-related issues for them. Embarrassingly for me, this was done with tears streaming down my face – the Paterson’s curse in the adjacent field played havoc with my hay fever.

In most communities, there are existing committees of one kind or another. Many of these would be consulted in the course of working up a local crime prevention plan. Family and domestic violence committees would be consulted about the level of offending locally and the various strategies being adopted; the local Liquor Accord groups would be consulted about their local issues and priorities; existing Crime Prevention and Community Safety committees would be engaged in all aspects of the development of a plan; police and community consultation committees would be consulted about any related work. While [co-design](#) might now be the preferred approach to projects of this kind, extensive consultation was always at the heart of this work, and was an incredibly rewarding and valuable part of the work. The challenge

was avoiding duplication across committees but finding the programs and activities that would build on existing strengths, where attention could be given to shared initiatives that might have multiple positive outcomes (including the prevention of crime), and novel solutions in diverse community contexts that would have some chance of succeeding – quite the task when resources were often constrained.

Figure 4: Graffiti and Community Opinion



Note. A photo of an area that was adjacent to a ‘legal’ graffiti wall. Clearly, graffiti was not confined to the legal wall. But should we care? Opinions invariably are divided on issues such as this, and many more in a local community. Photo courtesy of author.

Some lessons learnt from this work include the following.

- **Politics, politics, politics:** As highlighted by others, this work is inherently political. One council ranked high for robberies and was very keen to tackle this problem in its local government area (LGA). After analysing the crime data, we suggested that the significant daily influx of school students into the LGA was contributing to the high number of generally less serious robberies (robberies in company rather than armed robbery). This wasn’t well received – it didn’t fix the problem or the perception of the problem. Another council had a policy of rotating mayors. The political division between Labor and Liberal mayors and councillors was stark, resulting in strident differences regarding how best to tackle local crime problems. Those in opposition were inclined to talk up the problems and criticise the incumbents for being ‘soft on crime’. Each party also tended toward fundamentally different solutions to crime, more or less punitive. The separation of elected council members and council staff was also a source of tension in many locations. Council staff often tried to manage the political machinations that could result in diverging directions being taken.
- **Place matters:** Working across such diverse locations reinforced the need to understand local geographies and histories. Rural LGAs were many thousands of kilometres in size. Crime is not evenly distributed geographically, so some parts of LGAs suffered disproportionately high levels of crime compared to other areas. Understanding these local dynamics was important but often created difficulties regarding whether responses would be universal or specific, with the

attendant concerns that the council might not be allocating resources evenly. As a consultant, time needed to be spent understanding these local histories and dynamics. Colonisation had often resulted in land being taken and Aboriginal people being moved onto missions and reserves. These were often outside major towns and were poorly serviced. In other areas, waves of migration had significant ongoing repercussions for the area and for the services required.

- **Accessing data:** Data is now generally much more abundantly accessible than it was in the 2000s. Accessing the right data was often very difficult, and when data was provided, it was often not especially user friendly. This meant that it could be difficult to identify key priorities based on crime trends. Also, it was next to impossible to consider the geographical aspects of crime because crime maps were not yet widely available. Agencies also held important data, making it difficult to access information about important risk factors in an area.
- **Challenges within challenges:** As part of developing a crime prevention plan for Narrabri Council, a colleague (Mick) and I travelled to Wee Waa, in the north-west of New South Wales. Wee Waa is approximately 40 kms west of Narrabri, which is 533 kms north-west of Sydney. It is part of the Kamilaroi region and is famous for cotton growing. As part of wide consultations that we held with diverse stakeholders, we met with a group of young Aboriginal men from the local Community Development Employment Project. As part of our discussions, the young men talked about a problem that impacted their efforts to get work. They told us that getting to Narrabri was difficult. Public transport ran regularly but at times not conducive to keeping a job (ie, the bus left too late to start work at a reasonable time and returned too early). Consequently, they spoke of driving, although some of the group did not have driver's licences and the cars they drove were of varying degrees of roadworthiness. Inevitably, given the few routes connecting the towns, the young men got fined for various driving offences, further complicating their efforts to get to work. This has been a problem in many areas of New South Wales (and Australia) for a long time (see for example the Australian Law Reform Commission report, *Driving when unlicensed*). Addressing a crime problem often benefits from taking a broader view of the source of the problem. On a previous trip to Western New South Wales involving meeting police in numerous far-west towns (including Wilcannia, Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett), we were told about repeated break-ins at a local dairy. The only items stolen were milk cartons – not for any commercial purpose but for consumption. Similar stories were heard in other towns – accessing food was often the motivation for repeated events of theft. Hardly major crimes and thoroughly depressing.
- **Strengths or risks?** Being paid to think about preventing crime problems inevitably meant hearing, talking and thinking a lot about crime problems and related issues. This could quickly become the frame through which everything was analysed, leaving little space for seeing and quantifying local strengths and

the reasons for perhaps low crime rates or good social outcomes. This is a challenge in this (and related) work which can nudge toward a deficit-based analysis. We often tried to challenge this through (perhaps limited) efforts to capture strengths and to document effective measures and practices operating locally. Building a prevention measure onto pre-existing successful measures or initiatives always seemed easier than developing completely novel solutions to add to an already busy person's workplan.

Sometimes this crime prevention work was more about trying to address social problems than 'crime' problems – social problems which were often captured in an array of other plans at different levels of government. Coordinating this work with those myriad plans was also a challenge for local councils and agencies at state and federal government levels. Despite these challenges and complexities, I thoroughly enjoyed this work and always felt that my colleagues and I had contributed something meaningful to the councils and local communities in which we worked. How sustainable any of these outcomes were or might have been is a constant conundrum – prevention often requires continues, sustained and dedicated work by many over many years or decades. This isn't easy to sustain and other problems arise needing attention.

Figure 5: Extract from a Crime Prevention Plan

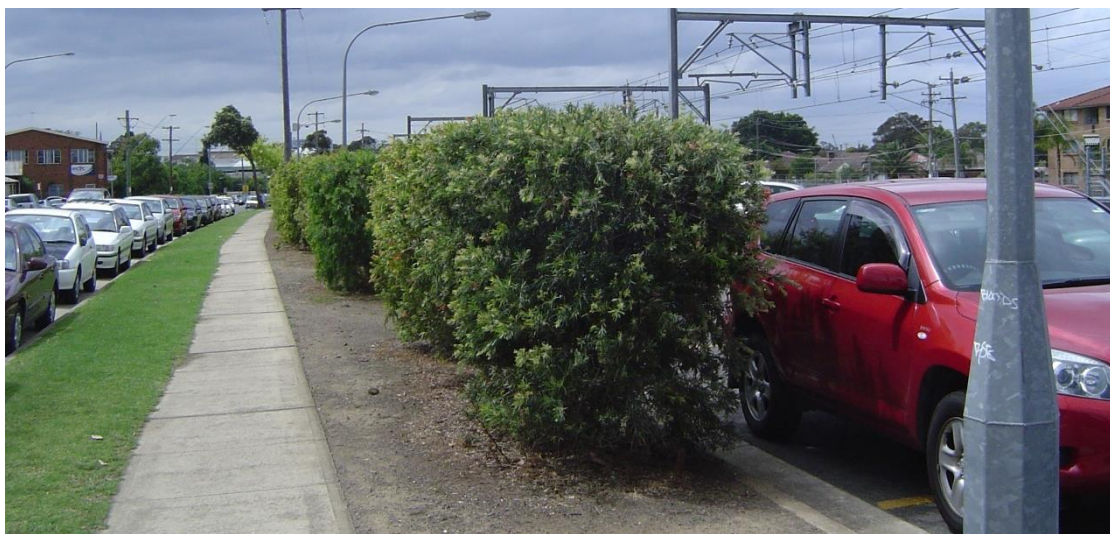
| Strategy | Outcome | Agencies Responsible | Crime Prevention Benefits | Raised By | Timeframe |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| Fund the 'Way Cool' program for young people at risk of offending | Reduce offending behaviour by young people involved in anti-social activities | Wellington Information & Neighbourhood Service, Barnados, Macquarie Area Health Service, PCYC, JPET | Build protective factors in at-risk young people through a structured group program | Youth inter-agency | Ongoing – 2 programs annually |
| Fund activities and specialists to work with the recently re-established Men's Group | Facilitate education on issues associated with violence, cultural identity and parenting for Aboriginal men | Wellington Aboriginal Community Health Service (WACHS) in conjunction with Macquarie Area Health Service | Reduce violence, especially family violence, through addressing causes of violence and family dysfunction | Aboriginal community consultation | Weekly program - ongoing |
| Fund activities and specialists to work with Women's Group | Facilitate education on issues associated with parenting, health, school preparation and other relevant issues | Wellington Aboriginal Community Health Service (WACHS) in conjunction with Macquarie Area Health Service | Build protective factors for Aboriginal mothers and families | Aboriginal community consultation | Weekly program - ongoing |
| Deliver a Parenting Program in Mumbil | Provide opportunities for parents with small children in Mumbil to meet regularly and to learn about current parenting strategies | Ridgecrest, Department of Education and Training (Mumbil Primary School) and Macquarie Area Health Service | Build protective factors for parents and families | Mumbil community consultation | Ongoing – 2 x 8 week programs annually |
| Activities for young people -Friday & Saturday nights activities to outreach to Mumbil/Stuart Town & Geurie on rotating basis | Facilitate structured activities for young people on Friday and Saturday evenings | PCYC, WINS, JPET, Barnados, Council and community representatives | Reduce boredom and promote prosocial activities to prevent antisocial behaviour (malicious damage) | Youth consultation, youth inter-agency and village consultations | A roster of monthly activities to be coordinated throughout the year |

Note. A page from a crime prevention plan which ran to 88 pages! I can't imagine many people read it from start to finish. Brevity has never been my strong suit!

Community Safety Audits – South Western Sydney

Community safety audits involve community members walking through an area and making observations about safety and security-related issues (see for example a document I wrote on [methodology](#) which I found on a council website in preparing this section). These audits often result in a list of treatments that are needed to repair damage, improve lighting, improve amenity and generally address local issues related to crime and safety, many of which might be identified in the audit.

Figure 6: Community Safety Audits



Note. By virtue of the nature of safety audits, the focus is on ways of improving design to promote safety and to prevent crime. This photo was taken during an audit of a town centre. The image shows the foliage restricting natural surveillance – unsurprisingly, incidents of steal from motor vehicles was very high in this area. But should the trees, which provide important environmental amenity, be removed for the purpose of protecting the cars? Photo courtesy of author.

Colleagues and I conducted a number of these audits in various locations such as town centres, smaller retail precincts and public housing settings. One was in a public housing estate in South Western Sydney. The audit was conducted with the assistance of interpreters, reflecting the culturally and linguistically diverse population of the estate which was home to nearly 3000 people. We gathered in a part of the estate and after some initial introductions and explanations proceeded to move through a small part of the overall estate which consisted of approximately 900 dwellings, 830 of which were public housing. The group consisted of residents from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds; it included those with small children, those living alone, those that had escaped war before arriving in Australia, those that had lived on the estate for more than a decade, and those that had resided there for less than a year.

I heard many stories, translated and relayed by the interpreters during the safety audit, that were quite shocking. One elderly resident previously from Vietnam

described how his home had been broken into nine times in the preceding year. He had become so frustrated by the continual break-ins and damage to his property that he had taken it on himself to install barbed wire. He was angry at the perceived inaction of authorities and hostile toward other residents. Another elderly resident who lived alone spoke of her fear and compared it to her experience of living through war in her country of origin. It became apparent during the audit that these two elderly residents had lived on the same street for many years but had not met each other – probably a function of fear and poor design. A couple with a small child spoke about how their home was always occupied by at least one adult to protect against burglary. They said that skylights in their public housing home made entry easy, especially for those familiar with the design and layout of the residential dwellings. During the audit they discovered a small playground for children not a very long way from their property. They, and others, spoke of their car dependency, citing the lack of public transport operating throughout the estate and their fear of walking through the estate. This car dependency meant that they were not inclined to explore parts of the estate not immediately adjacent to roads – hence their lack of familiarity of playgrounds and green spaces throughout the estate.

Time spent on the estate in preparation for and following the audit also revealed bizarre divisions of labour amongst authorities responsible for maintaining the estate. Clear boundaries were evident between parts that fell to the local council and those that fell to housing authorities to maintain – grass would be to your knee in one area alongside well-kept lawns in an adjacent area. When I asked about this situation, exasperated staff would recount the ongoing battles to coordinate maintenance across relevant agencies. On the estate there was often rubbish, burnt-out vehicles and signs of damage to communal amenities. The general effect was one of making the area feel depressed, unloved, uncared for. From the perspective of [routine activity theory](#), these were signs of limited ‘capable guardianship’.

Though significant preparation was often required, conducting a community safety audit seemed generally easy enough: gather some people; walk around an area discussing what impedes a sense of safety and what might contribute to crime; write up the findings; and give it to the relevant agency (often local government or the relevant housing authority). But this masks a number of challenges including:

- Where does one start and stop? What can realistically be included in such a report? How do the recommendations apply to the audit location and the wider estate? Who is ultimately responsible for implementing recommendations, particularly where multiple agencies are responsibilities for an estate?
- Do you start with simple fixes and progress to harder, more entrenched problems? Do you focus on the bigger design issues which will be very expensive to alter or confine your recommendations to things that are likely to be easily changed?
- How do you deal with different opinions about possible solutions? For example, increasing natural surveillance is an obvious recommendation in a situation

where high front fences limit informal neighbourly connections (see images below taken by me – before and after shots). However, removal of high front fences will be met with anxiety by some residents because retreating beyond their fence provides some form of comfort.

Figure 7: Increasing Natural Surveillance in a Public Housing Estate



Note. Left: before. Right: after. Note that the very significant changes depicted were not just because of a community safety audit. Rather they were part of a very lengthy renewal of the public housing estate area which, amongst many things, sought to improve natural surveillance (which clearly it did!) Photos courtesy of author.

In addition, I consistently struggled with my many limitations in doing this work. I felt comfortable working with community members to identify relevant problems and potential solutions, but I had little knowledge of the many treatment options that might be applied, their associated costs, and their general efficacy. For example, in improving natural surveillance in residential streets and cul-de-sacs (a common feature in this housing estate), tall, non-porous fences might be replaced by lower, porous fences (see Figure 7). Which type of fencing, how much it might cost, how quickly it might be installed, and how the process might be managed to alleviate any concerns of residents were not easily answered (by me). Various specialisations are capable of answering specific questions, but are rarely engaged in work of this kind. Similarly, improving the lighting in an area (generally very poor in this housing estate) was easy to recommend but raised numerous questions. What type of lighting? Where is it best installed? Will it create light pollution? Will it be damage resistant? Lighting engineers and specialists are well placed to assist, but not always included in work of this kind.

This work also raises numerous ethical considerations:

- What crimes are likely to generate the greatest attention? Domestic violence and sexual assault might be a significant problem but are not the focus of an audit which will generally prioritise physical characteristics of an estate.
- How do all residents get the opportunity to contribute? There might be barriers to particular groups participating. Community consultation is a taxing activity and often requires multiple approaches to ensure that different parts of the community are given opportunities to participate. Language can be a barrier if English is not a first language; cultural and gender roles might work against

women and girls being given a chance to speak up; children might not be considered to have the ability to contribute and so be excluded from participating. Rich insights can be missed as a consequence. But equally projects of this kind have limits imposed such as budgetary and timeframe limits.

- Safety is not universally defined or experienced, so how do these differences get captured and considered? Particular groups within the estate are likely to experience safety differently. Men might have few concerns about traversing the estate at night; women and girls might be apprehensive about doing so. Young men might congregate in a particular part of the estate at night; young women may feel intimidated about joining them or passing through this area. Particular cultural groups might be dominant in number and power; this might actively or unintentionally exclude other cultural groups from accessing an area.

Despite these challenges, I found this work rewarding and felt buoyed by clear evidence that positive action was undertaken as a consequence of the community safety audit and subsequent report. I also thoroughly enjoyed watching community members engaging with crime prevention concepts and talking about how additional improvements might be made. Again, it is difficult to quantify the value of this work, but it often felt productive and valuable.

Crime Profiles

It became apparent, through working with local councils and helping them develop crime prevention plans, that there was limited access to crime statistics. Consequently, for a number of years (between approximately 2005 and 2009) colleagues (generally smart young folk studying criminology with good quantitative skills – Daren Fisher and Amanda Wilson in particular, now both with PhDs!) and I prepared a number of comprehensive crime profiles for various councils. This work tended to involve accessing crime data from BOCSAR and analysing various crime trends across an LGA and for the various postcodes making up the LGA. Crime maps (such as BOCSAR's [NSW Crime Tool](#)) were not available at this time so these reports seem somewhat antiquated now. As they were often close to a hundred pages revealing trends in various types of crime for each postcode and an LGA, preparing these reports took considerable work. The availability of crime maps and an enormous amount of publicly available data with geo-spatial reference points quickly made this work redundant. But at the time, it was meaningful to compare crime trends in particular postcodes to help direct the investment of crime prevention resources.

While this exact type of work has been surpassed with the advent of crime maps, which are now widely available in many jurisdictions, there are a number of roles that directly work with crime data and conduct criminal justice research (as discussed in the [Crime Statistics and Research Agencies](#) section in Part 1).

Figure 8: Extract from a Crime Profile

| Offence | 2002 | | 2003 | | 2004 | | 2005 | | 2006 | | 2007* | |
|--|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|------|
| | No. | Rate | No. | Rate | No. | Rate | No. | Rate | No. | Rate | No. | Rate |
| Murder** | 6 | 3.2 | 3 | 1.6 | 5 | 2.7 | 5 | 2.7 | 5 | 2.7 | 5 | N/A |
| Attempted murder | 15 | 7.9 | 8 | 4.2 | 9 | 4.8 | 6 | 3.2 | 6 | 3.2 | 7 | N/A |
| Assault – domestic violence related | 839 | 3.2 | 744 | 395.1 | 789 | 420.8 | 785 | 418.0 | 680 | 362.1 | 740 | N/A |
| Assault – non-domestic violence related | 1014 | 7.9 | 966 | 512.9 | 929 | 495.4 | 945 | 503.2 | 918 | 488.8 | 911 | N/A |
| Sexual assault | 81 | 42.9 | 90 | 47.8 | 93 | 49.6 | 82 | 43.7 | 85 | 45.3 | 63 | N/A |
| Indecent assault, act of indecency | 161 | 85.3 | 92 | 48.9 | 73 | 38.9 | 79 | 42.1 | 73 | 38.9 | 81 | N/A |
| Robbery without a weapon | 244 | 129.3 | 225 | 119.5 | 187 | 99.7 | 148 | 78.8 | 192 | 102.2 | 148 | N/A |
| Robbery with a firearm | 52 | 27.6 | 46 | 24.4 | 49 | 26.1 | 43 | 22.9 | 44 | 23.4 | 40 | N/A |
| Robbery with a weapon not a firearm | 175 | 92.7 | 146 | 77.5 | 145 | 77.3 | 113 | 60.2 | 124 | 66.0 | 80 | N/A |
| Harassment, threatening behaviour and private nuisance | 501 | 265.5 | 506 | 268.7 | 534 | 284.8 | 580 | 308.9 | 663 | 353.1 | 572 | N/A |

Note. One of the many tables and graphs that littered these crime profiles. The report this one was taken from was 128 pages long – how one yearned for a good interactive crime map in those days!

Crime Risk Assessments

When a new development is proposed and it meets certain requirements (size and nature), a crime risk assessment might be required. This generally involves the developer contracting an independent entity to review architectural plans to identify crime risks that might be mitigated or minimised through some changes to the proposed design. Colleagues and I worked on a number of these crime risks assessments for diverse proposed facilities including residential and large mixed-use developments. These projects were often constrained by time (reports were needed swiftly) and cost (modest budgets). We aimed to undertake a number of tasks in developing a crime risk assessment report, including:

- reviewing available crime data for the area of the site;
- reviewing relevant council plans and design guidelines;
- analysing any relevant demographic data;
- speaking with relevant stakeholders which might include local police, the architect and other design professionals involved in the project;
- visiting the site, both during the day and at night to assess the existing activities in the area; and
- scrutinising architectural plans and ideally discussing them with the relevant design professionals.

This all seems reasonably straightforward. However, the work is often impacted by numerous variables. This process is often undertaken somewhat by sufferance. Some developers are not necessarily inclined to want to mitigate potential crime risks, and are generally not excited by having to pay for another report. Design professionals often take the view that by attending to important design principles, crime will invariably be mitigated – this is not always the case, as demonstrated by some of the projects that have driven the crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) movement. Predicting future potential crime problems was not always an easy task given the very different functions of the proposed developments compared with the prior uses (especially if it was originally a greenfield site). Most significantly, knowing about crime prevention was not always especially helpful when confronted by numerous complex architectural plans. Often the devil is in the detail, so being able to interpret and understand the myriad architectural plans was important.

These experiences as a consultant later fed a research theme that I (and colleagues) pursued for a number of years. We looked at publicly available crime risk assessment reports in New South Wales; we interviewed planners in local councils who would receive and assess development applications; we interviewed consultants working in this space (from diverse backgrounds including security, policing and urban planning); we visited sites of proposed major developments many years after crime risk assessment reports had been prepared to view the developments (assuming they had been built, which was often not the case); and we conducted focus groups with a number of crime prevention officers employed by the NSW Police Force who were often responsible for reviewing development applications. The findings of this research have been published in numerous articles (see [Appendix C](#)). Some take-out messages included:

- Consultants often felt beholden to the developers and were therefore often conscious of not wanting to bite the hand that fed them, which could result in a softening of criticisms of a proposed development so as to not lose future work.
- Local government planners highlighted that crime risks were considered quite some way down the list of priorities for assessing a development application, and it was generally suggested that crime risks would not be a reason to reject a development application.
- Police were somewhat ambivalent about this work. Some considered it useful and important police work; others felt they were inadequately trained for it and were not in a position to competently critique the work of design professionals supported by years of training and professional standards and guidelines.

I absolutely believe that assessing crime risks of proposed developments is valuable – critical even – but question the utility of it when applied to modest developments with few likely crime risks. Thorough assessment of major developments that stand to contribute significantly to ongoing crime risks should be the priority – the mechanism for making this happen is less clear to me. This is an ongoing conundrum of being a consultant – being somewhat critical of the overall contribution of the activity but valuing the experience (and let’s be honest, the occasional payment of an invoice).

CCTV Report for the Australian Institute of Criminology

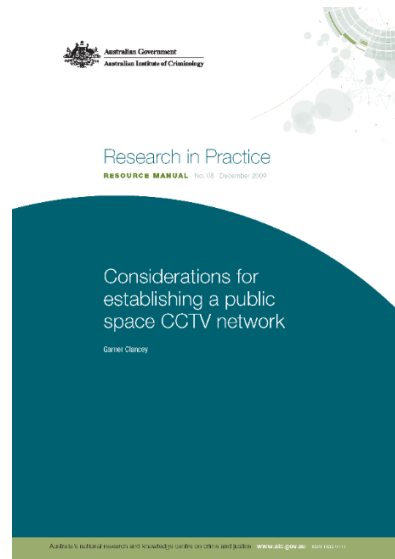
Working across various crime prevention-related projects ultimately resulted in my being contracted to write a [report](#) (still publicly available) for the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) on public space closed circuit television (CCTV) systems.

I had encountered public space CCTV systems through various local government projects. There was considerable tension around these systems: those in favour often saw them as a panacea for particular local crime problems; opponents saw them as eroding civil liberties and contributing to the fortress mentality driving much crime prevention and punitive criminal justice policymaking. The research evidence at that time, almost exclusively from the United Kingdom, was not especially positive about the crime prevention benefits of public space CCTV systems – it was much more positive about the impacts in closed settings such as car parks and retail settings.

For a project of this kind, I tended to consult as many experts as was feasible, to review relevant literature, and to spend time crafting the report with a focus on those policymakers and practitioners that might utilise the report in some way. I ultimately organised the report around the key steps that might need to be considered in developing a public space CCTV system:

- understanding crime and crime patterns (including spatial, temporal trends);
- conducting a site analysis;
- establishing objectives;
- scoping the system, including comprehensive analysis of each component of a CCTV system (cameras, monitoring, footage and governance);
- accurately estimating costs (including installation, maintenance, monitoring, staff and opportunity costs);
- installing, trialling and running the CCTV system; and
- monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the CCTV system.

Like much of my work at this time, there was considerable cross-project learning. A project in a particular setting such as a shopping centre allowed for engagement with CCTV systems; a project for a local council would facilitate contact with relevant experts at the council who ran or managed such systems; reviewing relevant literature on crime prevention techniques would benefit multiple projects, including this one. And at the time I was teaching crime prevention and community safety units at universities, which also helped me engage more deeply with the literature. I quickly found that learnings from one project would be beneficial in other settings and contexts – something that is true for many who work on projects of various kinds. The insights from this project then aided future projects in which councils often wanted public space CCTV systems because they were attractive in responding to community fears, but often without understanding the requirements to effectively and efficiently run them.



PCYC and Midnight Basketball

I've enjoyed a long involvement with [PCYC NSW](#), and a shorter but no less interesting relationship with Midnight Basketball Australia. My PCYC connections started, apart from some vague memories as a child visiting a PCYC and the odd Blue Light disco in adolescence, in the late 1990s. Due to my work with the NSW Police Service in 1999–2002, I was asked to facilitate a planning meeting for the Management Committee of the North Sydney PCYC, and then had contact in various ways over two decades. I delivered presentations to various annual general meetings; developed and delivered training to police attached to PCYCs over many years in various parts of New South Wales; facilitated planning events; conducted evaluations of specific PCYC programs (with colleagues more adept at evaluations); and developed the Targeted Programming Manual, which provided guidance to the police attached to PCYCs in responding to youth crime in their communities.

I met some amazing people committed to young people in their local communities through this work. Police, community members, young people working to improve opportunities for often disadvantaged and marginalised young people. Having attended annual conferences and related events, I'm aware that people volunteer incredible amounts of time to their local clubs. Like so many community organisations, volunteers are the backbone of PCYCs.

While the organisation has changed over time, dealing with periodic challenges (funding, purpose, etc), it has always grappled, in my opinion, with some thorny challenges. One of these is how to engage and work with young people in trouble with the law (or 'justice involved young people' as is currently the preferred terminology). The NSW Police Force continues to dedicate significant resources to PCYCs through the provision of police to clubs. The role of these police is perpetually debated. Should they work with young offenders from their local communities? Or should they try to prevent young people from becoming involved in crime? This has probably been an

issue since the first PCYC was established in 1937. The answer depends on what you see as the role of police and how you want police resources deployed or taxpayer dollars spent. Having police in clubs also raises questions about how others will respond – police for some people bring a sense of security; others are wary of going near police, or worry that police are bringing young people in trouble with the law into their club.

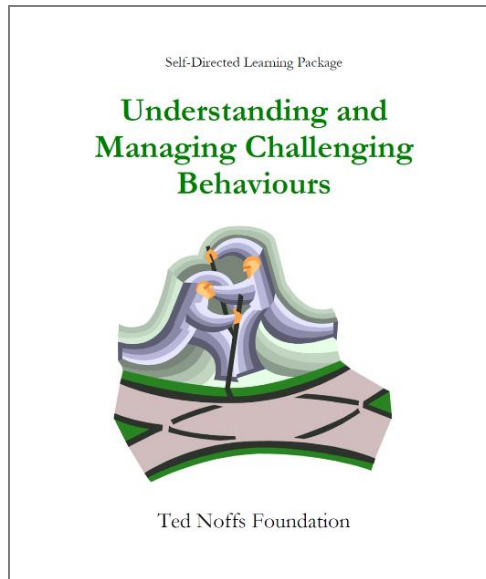
These issues are not unique to the PCYC. I have had some involvement with [Midnight Basketball Australia](#) over the years. Midnight Basketball runs basketball competitions on Friday or Saturday nights in various communities to provide young people with some structured activities. Their philosophy, for some time, was ‘no workshop, no jump shot’. This meant that in addition to playing basketball and getting a healthy meal, the young people would participate in a workshop. We wrote a program to guide these workshops (mostly led by Rohan Lulham, also now with a PhD) – not an easy task. The energy and sweat from playing basketball was not always conducive to a settled, focused group ready for a workshop. The Friday/Saturday night arrangement was also a disincentive for young people to engage in learning – school would be long over when the basketball started. The age spread, gender mix, cultural diversity and literacy levels, etc, also added to the challenge of the task.

Spending time watching Midnight Basketball in operation highlighted the challenges. Workshop rooms were not always plentiful or close to the basketball courts; and it was not always easy to ensure competent workshop facilitators were available. Maintaining commitment to the workshops in the face of collective opposition was also a challenge. That said, seeing large groups of happy young people exercising safely on Friday and Saturday nights was a thing to behold. Sustaining that over time, like many of these initiatives, has proved challenging – something faced by many programs which run successfully with the support of charismatic staff and/or volunteers but enthusiasm for which can dissipate over time as people tire of the perpetual hard work required.

Ted Noffs Foundation

The [Ted Noffs Foundation](#) continues to run adolescent AOD treatment services. Like many small and medium-sized NGOs, it was established to provide very specific services and programs. Funding came from various sources, including federal and state governments – a phenomenon not unique to the Foundation and one which can place considerable administrative burdens on small NGOs.

I worked on various projects with the Ted Noffs Foundation, including the development of a self-paced learning package for staff working in the adolescent drug rehabilitation services on Managing Challenging and Difficult Behaviour. This involved travelling to a number of the facilities, which then included sites at Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Canberra, Randwick and Westmead/Parramatta. I spent considerable time speaking with staff about their work and understanding the routines and programs operating in each facility.



The resulting 60-page self-paced learning package contained sections on understanding challenging behaviour, working in residential care, managing challenging behaviours and self-care. The package was sprinkled with practical scenarios requiring staff to provide answers and undertake practical tasks within their workplace.

I thoroughly enjoyed the contract work I undertook for the Ted Noffs Foundation. Partly because it meant working with Dr John Howard, the person who got me started on my career journey, and spending some time with dedicated staff trying to help young people. Spending time with frontline workers has been abiding joy throughout my career.

LISTENING TO FRONTLINE WORKERS

It is a freezing, winter night and I leave my motel room around 10pm. I'm spending the evening at the Ted Noffs Foundation adolescent AOD rehabilitation unit in Canberra. I'm working on a self-paced learning package on Understanding and Managing Conflict (in conjunction with Dr John Howard and Matt Stubbs). As part of this work, I'm spending a night with staff. This is a good time for the staff to chat about their work and the ways that they identify and manage conflict with the young people in the residential treatment facility. I'm not especially trained for work of this kind but I thoroughly enjoy speaking with staff and learning about their roles and the nature of the young people they see in the residential facilities.

Staff happily share their experiences and some of the challenges of working with young people who range in ages, are from different cultural backgrounds, have different drug using histories and face different social challenges. Tonight, as with similar consultations, I'm impressed with the dedication of the staff and the challenges they face. They share many stories of how they manage conflict before and as it arises. I collect these insights to add to the manual that we are writing which ultimately combines these rich insights from staff with relevant theory and models, and a series of exercises designed to help staff continually reflect on their work with young people who often present with challenging behaviours.

Evaluations

There has been a concerted effort to improve the quality of evaluations of crime prevention and criminal justice interventions. This has been an Achilles heel for crime prevention and criminal justice work over a long time. In the early 2000s as the Commonwealth Government invested in crime prevention and criminal justice programs through various competitive national funding programs, greater funding was allocated for independent evaluations to be carried out. A rough guide was the allocation of 10 per cent of program funding to cover an evaluation.

Colleagues and I had undertaken various kinds of evaluation and started to pick up more work in this area. I ultimately found this work to be difficult and challenging. Allocating 10 per cent of the overall program budget to an evaluation seemed reasonable until you had to consider what you would do for \$5000 for a project that ran over two years and in multiple sites. Those engaged in program design were not always well versed in the need to clearly articulate program goals and proposed outcomes, which also made it difficult to embark on an evaluation. Evaluations, if done well, are also quite complex undertakings (see the [Crime Prevention Evaluation Toolkit](#) for an example of the types of steps that might be undertaken as part of an evaluation). My skills in this area were quickly tested – thankfully, colleagues helped considerably. This work could also become somewhat combative if program staff didn't want unfavourable evaluations to be documented and shared with the Commonwealth Government funding agency.

A New Direction

Some of the evaluation projects are what ultimately helped me decide to move away from consulting. Other reasons included working on reports that would never be published; the growth of our team (we grew the team of colleagues working together and formally operated as a company for a period) and the need to keep work coming in to support those somewhat dependent on the core group for work; the incredibly demanding nature of the work, with its rolling deadlines; and the increasing amount of administration associated with running a small company. I decided to leave the small company that we had established, and returned to being a sole trader for a short period before starting a PhD in 2011, which put me firmly on the path to be an academic.

While the projects listed and discussed in this section have highlighted the successes, in that these projects happened and were taken to fruition, there were many false starts. We spent some time and resources chasing a police training project in Oman, a security-related project in Papua New Guinea and various other projects closer to home. This is an obvious challenge of work of this kind. Time is money in a very literal sense so time spent chasing leads and prospects takes away from time spent doing paid work. The roller coaster of consultancy was thrilling. Winning projects and doing endlessly interesting work was the real high, but investing time and energy in projects that

ultimately led to little or nothing was, even if exciting, not especially rewarding. This is very much the nature of the beast, but it can be a real trap if long periods are spent building connections, reviewing relevant literature, preparing proposals and attending numerous meetings that do not land projects (or income). The precarious nature of consultancy was an ever-present risk that both inspired hard work and contributed to sleepless nights.

Consultancy, especially as a sole trader for part of the period and later in a small company, required the acquisition of skills and knowledge that fall a long way outside what might be considered standard criminological work (whatever that might be). Deciding what insurance coverage was required, how much to charge per hour or per project, how to position yourself, how to promote your work, how to set parameters for the work to be undertaken, stretching oneself but being conscious of not being everything to everyone, running projects, managing finances, organising standard business documents, developing a website (which proved very challenging because I managed to break the unbreakable site developed for us by some wonderful, creative web designers), developing resources for use in training and other projects, and myriad other considerations demanded attention periodically and consistently. These were not all things I was immediately well suited to, but were parts of the journey I mostly enjoyed.

The bits that I enjoyed less were the difficult conversations around scope of work. Often the completion of a report or project would be the basis for some argy-bargy. Getting sign-off and clear closure of a project was not always easy. You might be pressed to complete a project in a short timeframe and then have an extended period elapse before getting feedback. The private nature of some reports was a source of frustration because work could be buried, especially if findings were not ideal from the perspective of the client. Moreover, it takes a lot of energy to keep on the hamster wheel. Larger organisations might be somewhat protected by virtue of their size and their obscene hourly/daily rates (many thousands for senior staff per day), but even still a fundamental reality remains – work brings money in that pays the wages bill. This relatively constant pressure took its toll on me. Consequently, I started to explore my options.

In 2010 I enrolled in the Master of Urban Development at the University of Sydney. I only finished a small number of units before deciding it wasn't really for me. I had previously contemplated doing a PhD and had conversations with prospective supervisors which were very sobering, especially as I was working for myself at the time and the general take-out message was that I would need to dedicate myself almost exclusively to the PhD – not something I could afford to do.

The pull of the PhD returned and, in 2011, I started one at the University of Sydney Law School. I flirted with the idea of studying corruption in a neighbouring country; that would have been fascinating, but also taken an enormous amount of additional work due to my lack of familiarity with the topic. Ultimately I settled on studying crime prevention. The pragmatic option worked better with my circumstances and my need to also earn a living.

More than a Decade of Being an Academic

I have effectively been an academic for just over a decade having got my first non-sessional contract in 2012. I had been teaching as a sessional academic for over a decade prior to that and had undertaken a consultancy project for the Sydney Institute of Criminology (University of Sydney) which helped pave my way to becoming a tenured academic. It meant that my transition to academic life was in many respects a long time in the making. Knowing people within the academy helped a great deal.

As stated in Part 1, a standard academic contract is based on the 40:40:20 principle – 40 per cent of the job involves teaching, 40 per cent research and 20 per cent service.

Teaching

I've taught for 25 years (and counting). This encompasses numerous courses across six universities including Charles Sturt University (CSU) (thanks to Elizabeth Moore), Western Sydney University (WSU) (thanks to Don Robertson), University of New England (UNE) (thanks to Elaine Barclay), University of New South Wales (thanks to David Brown), University of Western Australia (UWA) (thanks to David Indermaur) and the University of Sydney (thanks to Julie Stubbs and later to Murray Lee and Gail Mason). Some of these contracts were just for a semester (UWA) and some largely involved drafting online content (CSU, UNE). Over these years I have taught across policing, security, environmental criminology, youth crime, crime prevention, criminal justice policy, public policy, crime research methods, and a criminal justice internship.

I generally thoroughly enjoy teaching. I especially enjoy trying to connect theory with practical application. To do this I have taken students to a police station, to prisons, to community agencies and to a former youth detention centre, amongst other sites. Doing so can be time consuming but is always rewarding. I also try to scatter practical exercises that require students to grapple with real-world challenges throughout many of my units. Doing so is a far cry from my very first guest lectures to students at the University of Western Sydney and various TAFEs. I would turn up armed with a bundle of overhead transparencies and belly full of nerves. I would flip transparencies endlessly and spew forth information at a rapid rate, avoiding much chatter or difficult questions. I was what I detested as a student – a fast-talking, transparency-flipping, information-dispensing machine. Becoming confident down the front of the room would take a very long time, and crushing nerves still visit – often at times that I least expect them. For example, a mid-week Criminology class with 30 students can cause unexpected nerves. Teaching is a curious beast.

In any case, if you harbour a desire to be an academic, this will likely require you to teach and to spend considerable time speaking to people. Research-only academics

might mostly avoid this aspect of the work, but for the bulk of academics, teaching will be the way a significant portion, if not the majority, of their time is spent.

Research

While I have been involved in various research projects, I do not profess to be an expert at research. I have worked with people very adept at statistical analysis, research design and management of research projects. I still regard myself as somewhat of a novice. If research is an area you might seek to pursue a career in, what I have to say will only be partially helpful. The large criminal justice research agencies, such as the Australian Institute of Criminology, BOCSAR and Crime Statistics Victoria, will require more sophisticated research abilities than I have yet to muster.

Since becoming a more traditional academic (as opposed to a sessional academic paid only to teach) I have sought to undertake research which centres on hearing from practitioners. My PhD research included interviews with workers and key community members in the Glebe area to understand their views about crime and crime prevention in the area. I (and colleagues) have conducted focus groups with local government crime prevention officers and police crime prevention officers. I (and colleagues) have interviewed local government planning staff to understand their views on crime prevention through environmental design, and crime prevention consultants covering similar issues. I (and colleagues) have undertaken various commissioned research projects which have invariably involved interviewing or conducting focus groups with staff from various organisations to understand particular aspects of their work. These voices, in my opinion, are often neglected in the literature or given only brief mention in passing. I believe that this leaves a significant gap in our understanding of how various criminal justice and crime prevention entities operate, how various policies are implemented, and the nature of the obstacles and barriers to particular work being performed. Without these insights we are at risk of repeating various mistakes or developing theories that give little consideration to implementation – which I believe is a significant limitation of some research.

That said, I appreciate that this is only one aspect amongst many that can be studied. There is a rich and diverse literature looking at many aspects of criminological, criminal justice and crime prevention work, which helpfully critiques certain practices and policies, and challenges accepted wisdom. This is critical to holding agencies and practitioners to account.

I have listed my publications arising from various research projects in [Appendix C](#). The majority of these publications are publicly available, so you can access and read them if you are interested (I won't be offended if you don't). Publishing research can be an interesting experience. The absolute excitement of being published for the first time is quite a joy. Navigating peer review and other aspects of the often-lengthy process of getting something published can be less so. Seeing something you have written being cited is a joy; seeing it being criticised, less so. Presenting research

findings to an interested audience is wonderful; finding that you've been allocated a small room with a few people in attendance at the back of a sterile conference centre is less so. But seeing something you've worked on have some form of material positive impact makes up for the often lengthy, quiet work behind the scenes (others have experienced this far more than I).

Service

International Opportunities

For many academics, an attractive part of the work relates to international opportunities. There is considerable scope for international work in criminology and for criminologists. Initially my international experiences were limited to attending conferences overseas (predating my time as an academic). Some of the international conferences I've attended are Crime Science conferences in London, England (2007, 2008), the World Congress of Criminology in Barcelona, Spain (2008), an International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) conference in Montreal, Canada (2009), the World Urban Forum in Naples, Italy (2012), the World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety in Wellington, New Zealand (2012) and the British Society of Criminology Conference in Liverpool, England (2014). It was with incredible excitement that I got to travel to interesting locations and be exposed to an incredible diversity of issues, speakers and ideas. Attendance at such events is somewhat a staple and benefit of academic life. What an incredible privilege and the most amazing experience to meet people working to make the markets safer for women in Port Moresby, reducing fires and injuries arising from unstable cooking devices in Bangladesh, involved in slum clearance and replacement programs in Africa, and working with First Nations people in various parts of the world to promote safety and prevent crime. Inspiring.

These experiences and some of the networks formed, with a healthy dose of good fortune (thanks to Peter Homel who referred me for this opportunity), ultimately resulted in my invitation to attend an Expert Working Group on Urban Crime and Safety held at the United Nations in New York in 2017. Having only been to New York once before and being in awe of the UN building and what it stood for, I could barely contain my excitement at arriving, collecting my identification and moving through security into the plaza on the edge of the UN building. Jet lag helped keep my emotions in check.

For a couple of days, I participated in a meeting with representatives of various international NGOs and representatives from diverse countries including Malawi, Mauritius, Sweden, Canada, United States, etc. Jet lag made it challenging to stay awake in a room with no natural light, but the excitement of being there and the interesting circumstances and issues being described by the particular representatives made this trip a career highlight.

Connections made at such events can lead to wonderful things (at least in the sense of professional experiences). At the UN event in New York, it was my very great fortune to meet Rachel who was working with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) at that time but was moving to work with Professor [David Kennedy](#) and his team at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (including the [National Network for Safe Communities](#)). This connection ultimately resulted in my hosting Rachel and David in Australia for a week in 2019. Spending this time with them both was so very rewarding. David spoke at a number of events. Watching and listening to David demonstrated to me the importance of staying the distance. David had been working in the area for a couple of decades, conducting important research, publishing and speaking at events in many countries. He was still doing this years on. His commitment to reinforcing key messages and educating new audiences left an impression on me. Stamina is clearly needed to get your message out and to keep it out there in the face of new fads and numerous new approaches evolving over time. I see this stamina and determination in others in various settings.

Amongst many amazing people that I met through these opportunities was Wendy O'Brien. Wendy had been an academic at Deakin University prior to working with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). I had the incredible pleasure of briefly working with Wendy on an [Education for Justice](#) project in 2018–19. This initiative was a bold plan to develop educational resources covering topics such as crime prevention (hence my limited involvement), prisons, restorative justice, family and domestic violence and corruption. Academics, researchers and consultants were contracted to develop educational content on these various topics which would ultimately be translated into various languages and released for use across the world. The work involved a number of remote meetings, and an in-person meeting in Vienna, Austria in 2019. This meeting brought together all the consultants who had worked on modules giving us opportunities to provide feedback and refine content. It was both daunting and motivating to be in the presence of experts on various issues from numerous countries and regions. Given the very wide potential audience for these resources, it was very useful getting feedback on the different terminology employed in different parts of the world, or in fact that certain terms had no real meaning in particular jurisdictions. So too was learning about the different forms of state and civil society engagement with particular issues and the challenges that this might present in covering particular content. Moreover, balancing the perspectives of more conservative regimes and what content could be included without offending different parties proved to be an intriguing aspect of this work.

I am very confident that my contribution was incredibly marginal at best and that legions of people could have more successfully completed this work. That said, it provides just a hint of what is available in the context of international NGOs and the important work being undertaken by these organisations, and the possibilities afforded to academic criminologists. Criminologists have opportunities to work within these organisations, but it is likely to often be the case that few of the roles will be labelled 'criminologist'. This is why it is important to work on the diverse skills needed in

various contexts and settings, and not expect that a criminology degree on its own will be a ticket to a job or provide you with the necessary knowledge and skills to do the work in practice.

Engaging with international and interstate colleagues is a real benefit of being an academic. I have enjoyed hosting a number of visiting academics from different parts of the world (like David and Rachel, as mentioned above). A highlight amongst many was hosting a visit from Rachel Armitage and Leanne Monchuk from the University of Huddersfield, followed by a trip to visit them. Both of these trips were marked by fascinating side-trips to various sites and locations. While in Australia we were hosted at a number of public housing and urban design sites in Sydney and Melbourne. While in England, Leanne generously organised meetings with police and designers involved in aspects of the London Olympics and a site visit to the main precinct; and meetings with crime prevention partnerships, council staff, neighbourhood policing teams, and counter-terrorism and restorative justice staff in northern England. Trips of this kind are incredibly stimulating and an amazing privilege. Being able to move through particular sites, speak to staff and thereby better understand the application of different theories and approaches in various settings is enormously beneficial and a great benefit of being an academic criminologist.

I've also enjoyed and learnt a great deal from colleagues throughout Australia. Highlights include spending time with Ross Homel and hearing about his approach to research and the time needed to fully understand an area of work; a day spent with Rick Sarre talking about the politics of crime prevention and criminal justice policy; a few days spent with Marietta Martinovic visiting prisons in Victoria and watching the incredible work of the Think Tanks that she has created there. There have been many, many other similar experiences with colleagues over many years.

A number of NGOs at various international events, highlighting the global interest in criminal justice, crime prevention and related issues, can become the employers of criminologists. The UNODC, UN Habitat, UN Women, the ICPC, the Red Cross, Save the Children, Transparency International, and numerous other international NGOs have an interest and play a role in issues relevant to criminologists. There is probably no set formula for pursuing a career in international aid, governance or similar work. Developing networks at university with relevant clubs and organisations is likely to be beneficial. UN Clubs or similar provide an opportunity to learn about organisational structures, remit, project work and the like. Being connected with civil society groups of various kinds will similarly open up an understanding of possible future opportunities that a criminology degree might assist with. Learning multiple languages will of course be an advantage, especially key languages like French, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish. Being familiar with relevant documents and programs related to various criminological issues, be it human trafficking, organised crime, cybercrime, wildlife crime, corruption, firearms, counter-terrorism and criminal justice administration, will be beneficial. Similarly, understanding the role and contribution of some of the many potential organisations involved will be advantageous. The [UN Careers](#) website might be a useful place to check out relevant possible roles.

Media

Those with a public criminology bent might see engaging with the media as a responsibility they should take on. The media is clearly influential in shaping what counts as news and how people think about crime and criminal justice. Thus participating in interviews and media opportunities seems like a good way to get messages out, to dispel myths, to challenge inaccurate narratives and to calm some aspects of public and media commentary.

On this basis, I have participated in numerous media interviews. Breakfast TV, radio, newspaper interviews and various other media outputs. They can be exciting and anxiety provoking. Trying not to look or sound like a complete fool on live TV or radio comes with a rush and a little notoriety (even if it is just amongst friends and family, though noting that the attention can also be unwanted).

I remember doing a live TV interview one morning. I tried to say at least a few things that might be contrary to the assumed narrative. The interview was over in a few minutes, the microphone was removed and I was shown the exit. What felt like seconds after finishing the interview, conducted on live TV with all of the bright lights, large cameras, tele-prompters for the hosts, and studio staff busily performing their various roles, I was standing in Martin Place. I was full of adrenaline and a sense of achievement and notoriety. No one else seemed to share my sense of energy and joy at 7:12am on a Tuesday morning as they headed to their offices (this was pre-Covid-19 and people went to offices). I felt so pumped that I wanted to celebrate. Rather than seek out an early opener to buy a celebratory ale, probably not wise given my work day hadn't really commenced, I went and bought an expensive winter coat at an early opening shop. An odd way to celebrate, but at least I still have the coat.

An interview of this kind, in my limited experience, often starts with an initial conversation with a producer. There has often been some sort of trigger – a crime committed that has attracted publicity, a report released, a policy announced, etc. The producer for the show will be trying to work a segment related to the trigger event into the following day's show (if for breakfast TV or radio). The producer will generally provide some context and then ask a few questions to test what you might say. There might then be a delay before a call or email to confirm if the story will proceed and if they need you. If the segment is for TV, there might be some to-ing and fro-ing regarding a venue as there might be a desire to film the segment in a particular location (not always connected to the trigger incident or issue but perhaps for colour and movement). They will then inform you of arrangements, which in my case generally only extended to a taxi being organised to pick me up.

Once plans are locked in, I've found that I start to slowly panic. Doubts and fears creep in, which has often resulted in doing lots of preparation – reading relevant reports, reviewing media commentary about the trigger incident or issue, and practising what I might say in response to likely or suggested questions. It has been my experience that producers are averse to being too prescriptive in advance, so as to not have you learn

lines, like a script, which then sounds rehearsed. In any case, I have often found myself preparing answers and practising them, often for some hours.

After a sleepless night, a taxi arrives to collect you. Dressing suitably has often added to my doubts. Is a suit too formal? Do checks on shirts or ties look distorted on camera? Attire dealt with, you take the taxi to the studio (or location). If it is the studio, after passing security or reception, you are then taken to a waiting area or green room. In some cases, this is a partial corridor or room area through which numerous interesting people pass. As you sit reading your notes you might see famous musicians wearily wandering into the studio to muster sufficient energy to perform their latest song, or sporting identities waiting to discuss the latest scores or results. Hard not to get a little excited under such circumstances. Make-up is next, which I've discovered tends to discolour white shirts, so, not only is there no payment for such interviews, there is a risk that you'll need to purchase a new shirt afterwards. The price of fleeting fame! After make-up is applied, the next stop is to get a lapel microphone fitted – the cable goes down the back of my coat and the transmitter is anchored to the back of my pants. Then into the studio, keeping very quiet while the live show is being recorded, and wait in the wings. When they cut to an advertisement break, you are quickly ushered onto the set and positioned. Quick introductions are made with the relevant host or hosts, who are reading notes, listening and responding to queries coming through their ear-pieces, and trying to be polite to you simultaneously – quite the skill. Then it is on – the host reads a small introduction and greets you on air before posing some questions. You try to respond coherently and do the things you've been instructed to do – don't swivel on the seat or slouch in the sofa, look at the host when answering, keep breathing and say something sensible, etc. The host(s) covers any mistakes or pregnant pauses and footage is played to break up the discussion. In a few minutes it is all over. The segment has concluded; you are thanked and ushered off set; your microphone is hastily removed; and you are shown the door to the studio – which is often very close to the door of the building. From the set or couch of a breakfast program watched by hundreds of thousands of people to the street, in next to no time. On to the next segment of the show, and off to buy a coat for me (this only happened once – I did a number of segments of this kind and really only own one good coat).

Having done a small number of these interviews over the years (a number in a period of a year or two and then long periods where the phone didn't ring and the lights didn't shine for me), I came to see that filling time and selling advertising is what matters (for commercial operators). I was often surprised that the angle presented for a story quickly changed as I offered an alternative perspective. It seemed to me that the objective was less about having an agenda than having a talking head to fill air time. I found this to be both pleasing and depressing at the same time. Pleasing in that there is scope to shape the narrative or story, and depressing in that expertise is perhaps not a particular characteristic required – an ability to speak and to be available seemed the more relevant qualifications. Others will no doubt have had very different and likely more extensive experiences.

While the cut and thrust of live interviews is both terrifying and gratifying because you can actually say what you believe without it being edited (or taken completely out of context as has often happened for interviews for newspaper articles), being involved in a program developed for TV is quite a different experience. In 2017 I received a call about a program that was being considered involving use of footage from various news and current affairs programs over many years and adding some contemporary commentary and reflections. This was going to be attempted across different topics and genres, crime being one. I received a call from the producer. We chatted a little and then he said that he'd like to do a screen test. He came to the university within a day or so of our call. We met and found a room for us to chat and for him to take some footage on a small handheld camera. This didn't take long and we parted company. Things moved quickly and I was invited to participate in the program which would involve a day of filming. I would discuss particular crimes with a well-known TV news anchor.

Once plans started to take shape, which happened swiftly, a date was agreed for filming (a little over a week after the screen test) and I was emailed footage of the cases that were to be discussed. I found it somewhat distressing watching hours of footage about various violent crimes, many resulting in the loss of life. I tried to devise an angle on these violent crimes that would fit with my expertise and perspectives, which was at times not especially easy. For example, I tried to develop some potential answers to questions about criminal justice processes, and the like. This I felt matched, at least tangentially, some of my experience.

A taxi arrived early on the day of filming. As directed, I took a number of suits and coats so that I could change for each of the four planned episodes. I arrived at a court building in the Sydney CBD and was met by a member of the production team. We went to a court located high in the building, which had been set up for the purpose of filming discussions between the host and myself. A brief dab of make-up, some sticking of my hair and discussion of how the day would unfold preceded the filming. This mostly involved responding to various questions and trying to keep talking even when I'd made mistakes or sounded daft. I really appreciated the possibility of pushing back a little during the filming. For example, I was asked questions about motivations for particular crimes. I generally felt uncomfortable answering such questions and was supported when I expressed this anxiety. There was no particular pressure to respond to questions that made me uncomfortable and I could propose alternative questions or angles which would allow me to speak to more generic insights rather than the specifics of individual cases. It was an enjoyable filming experience. People in the production team were really friendly and shared tales of crime-related programs they had worked on previously (many involving interviewing some notorious crime figures over the years). The day ended and I went home.

I heard very little after that for an extended period. I was invited to look at some edited footage and then provided with updates periodically, but there was little certainty about whether the program would be shown in Australia, or at all. I then received a call some 12–13 months later saying that the four episodes would go to air in September of 2018 and that I was invited to participate in interviews on a breakfast show and the

show that followed. It was suggested that the four episodes would be aired on the back of a successful crime show, meaning a 9:30pm start time and each episode running for 90 mins. I studiously avoided watching the first (and subsequent) episode(s) (and to this day have not watched them), but couldn't avoid an email I received from someone close to one of the victims depicted in the show. The person was concerned about the ethics of recycling footage and commentary about an horrific crime without providing warning to families and relatives of victims depicted in the show. I felt completely devastated. My response felt inadequate in so many ways and I was incredibly saddened that I had contributed to someone's pain and suffering. A very sobering experience and one I hope to not repeat. It has generally resulted in a more discerning approach to media requests since.

Official Visitor

The Covid-19 pandemic had incredible impacts around the world – death, illness, constant pressure on health care systems, unemployment, financial loss and the like. For those of us teaching at universities, classes were quickly shifted online. This meant teaching via various online platforms often to lots of black boxes. The joy of teaching quickly plummeted in these circumstances. Coupled with these negative impacts on teaching, research opportunities stalled or evaporated as it became impossible to do fieldwork. With a sense of diminishing relevance and connection to the world and my work, I saw an advertisement to become an Official Visitor.

Official Visitors visit, amongst other facilities, prisons and youth justice centres to observe what is happening in them and ultimately to report these views to the relevant Minister (for more information read about the NSW government's [Official Visitor Program](#)). Custodial facilities have been and continue to be sites of controversy due to riots, deaths in custody, isolation and segregation practices, and many other issues. In an attempt to independently monitor custodial facilities and to independently receive complaints from inmates or detainees, various oversight agencies have been established in Australian states and territories. These often include Ombudsman-like complaint-handling agencies and inspectors of custodial services who have responsibility for Official Visitors and for conducting periodic audits of all custodial facilities in a particular jurisdictions. Official Visitors are part of this network of oversight.

In a fit of frustration with being disconnected from the criminal justice world, I applied to become an Official Visitor in 2020. I was successful and appointed to be an Official Visitor from 1 April 2021 (an inauspicious day to commence – April Fool's Day). I was allocated to an adult remand correctional centre (not named here), provided with a day of training and then given some items that I would need – a name badge, a see-through plastic bag to take into the prison, a notepad, a pen and some other miscellaneous items.

I was helpfully shown around the prison by an experienced Official Visitor (David) on my first visit. We visited many areas in the prison and spoke to some of the key staff. I was then largely on my own to organise visits, to provide reports to relevant

management of the prison after each visit, and to submit six-monthly reports to the Inspector of Custodial Services (which then go to the Minister).

My time as an Official Visitor was greatly hampered by Covid. The prison allocated to me had at various times incredibly high numbers of inmates with Covid and staff were calling in sick in unprecedented numbers. I was particularly cautious about which areas I visited, both for my own safety and for family members. Rapid antigen tests were administered each time I visited, but still I opted to be cautious through this time.

Various units within the prison accommodated inmates with Covid. Strict personal protective equipment protocols had to be followed in these units and inmates were confined to their rooms. This meant that initial visits were conducted under very difficult circumstances with inmates frustrated by the lengthy periods locked in cells and staff working extra shifts to cover the shortfall created by staff contracting Covid or needing to isolate due to being a close contact. This was an incredibly challenging period for all parties involved – inmates spent long periods in cells and had limited contact with family and friends, and staff were burning out and stressed by working under difficult and rapidly changing circumstances. A really tough time.

Entering a large prison is daunting. Iris and body scans are required on entry. A duress alarm is carried at all times. Movement is somewhat unrestricted (without the relevant swipe card) but moving between areas results in passing groups of inmates in corridors, and entering units can mean interacting with a large number of inmates in a confined space. While an Official Visitor should be viewed favourably by inmates, there is a degree of anxiety that arises by being in an unpredictable environment with inmates often of considerable size and physical stature with histories of violence. Walking into a unit with 70 to 80 incarcerated men takes a level of confidence which I found at times was not forthcoming. Staff can also be intimidating. They are not always predisposed to welcome Official Visitors or to be generally warm and soft humans in the course of their difficult and dangerous duties. That said, many I've met are intelligent, compassionate and professional, even after decades of working in prisons.

Perhaps unsurprisingly I found being an Official Visitor challenging. Inmates often reported particular issues which spoke of some systemic challenges facing the corrections system. I found myself empathising with all parties. I could appreciate the frustration of the inmates but also could see little prospect of speedy resolution due to the nature of the system, especially during the worst of the Covid pandemic. I shared this concern with various staff in the prison and often got told that we each played minor roles in the larger production and that there was merit in each of these roles. It made sense but did little to ease the frustration.

One experience as an Official Visitor that surprised me occurred after a number of visits which had involved interacting with very serious offenders. Due to their remand status, they had yet to be sentenced but they anticipated many years behind bars. Organised criminal activity often involving violence was the basis for their likely long terms of imprisonment. Hearing their concerns about an aspect of the routines in the prison did not generate the empathy that I had expected to feel going into the role. This felt a long way from my experiences in the youth justice system, where the young

people's victimisation was always a prominent part of the experience. This might have been equally true for those men, but I found it harder to access empathy for them. This was one of the reasons I did not complete my full term as an Official Visitor.

I was able to perform the role of Official Visitor, albeit for a short period, as part of my service as an academic. There is generally considerable freedom in how this time can be spent, and often no shortage of good causes or roles to be performed. I would probably rate my performance as an Official Visitor as average, but I came to know some who were definitely superior – they were energetic, meticulous, dedicated, compassionate advocates doing important work for small financial compensation under trying circumstances.

Boards and Management Committees

Service as an academic criminologist can also involve contributing to boards and management committees. This is something that I've been fortunate to do for over 25 years (predating my time as an academic). Some of these activities were as part of my roles within the public service and are not considered separately here. Rather, I want to reflect on these activities as they relate to NGOs. I do this because I encourage students to consider volunteering their time for organisations and groups relevant to their areas of study. There are many organisations that are in great need of support and assistance which can also benefit students looking to develop their professional networks and build insights into various systems in which they might work in years to come.

A list of Boards and Management Committees on which I've had the pleasure of serving include:

- Australian Centre for Security Research;
- Australian Crime Prevention Council;
- Australian Safer Communities Foundation;
- Community Restorative Centre Subcommittee on Policy and Research;
- Glebe House;
- Glebe Youth Services;
- Juvenile Justice Advisory Council;
- National Children's and Youth Law Centre;
- North Sydney PCYC;
- NSW Law Society Criminal Law Committee;
- Sydney Institute of Criminology; and
- Youth Justice Advisory Committee.

A brief overview of some is provided here to give a flavour of some of what this entailed.

- As [mentioned earlier](#), I was invited (by Michelle) to facilitate a planning session for the North Sydney PCYC when I was working with the NSW Police Service. Having been born in the area, and with some memories of going to the Club as a child, I was compelled to say yes. I took the assembled members of the

Committee through some processes to help them think about the role and purpose of the Club and what might be priorities into the future. At the end of the process, I was asked if I'd like to join the Management Committee and I accepted.

The Committee at the time was made up of various locals from different backgrounds. It was a wonderful group to be part of, especially when there was pressure to close the Club. In essence, PCYC NSW had decided to sell some assets, particularly in areas that had undergone significant demographic change resulting in fewer young people at risk living locally. Clubs in Paddington and Newtown were sold as part of this effort (along with Camp Mackay) and resources were then directed to areas of greater need. While I sympathised with this logic, I was also taken by the arguments of the Committee who, having researched the history of the Club, noted that the premises had been bequeathed to the local community and that fundraising over many years had contributed to the survival of the Club. There were also areas of public housing and areas of disadvantage in the Club's catchment, despite the overall gentrification of many of the surrounding suburbs. The Committee ultimately succeeded and the Club remains open.

- The [Australian Crime Prevention Council](#) has a long history. For many decades it provided an advocacy voice supporting the expansion of crime prevention and actually delivered programs and services for a period. It predates many organisations established in more recent times to do this type of work and has long had involvement from senior judicial figures and criminal justice personnel committed to finding alternatives to criminal justice sanctions as ways to prevent crime.

My involvement began after attending a crime prevention conference in Townsville in 2007. The Crime Prevention Council facilitated a workshop as part of this event and I was invited (by Peter Norman) to meet the Committee and ultimately invited to join them. I stayed involved until 2020 and have fond memories of events, campaigning, meetings, student projects and the like aimed at lifting the profile of the Council and championing crime prevention efforts in Australia. As with many NGOs, particularly those largely operating to lobby and advocate, the Council has struggled to attract resources and to maintain volunteers. It has also gone from being a somewhat sole voice to operating in a much more congested space as other organisations and entities have emerged with broadly similar agendas.

- Not unlike the Crime Prevention Council, the Australian Safer Communities Foundation was a small not-for-profit organisation striving to improve community safety and promote injury prevention in Australia. I joined the Board and stayed for a few years and again thoroughly enjoyed working with the diverse group of Board members. A number had injury prevention or work health and safety backgrounds which meant they often applied a different lens

to problems for which I would traditionally adopt a crime prevention approach. This experience helped consolidate connections between different approaches including injury prevention, crime prevention, emergency management, public health and work, and health and safety, which was a valuable personal experience. Having limited resources and equally facing various contested spaces, the Foundation had a particular point of difference afforded by its connections to the global [Safe Communities movement](#) and its accrediting capabilities. Being endorsed as a Safe Community was seen as desirable by various communities and local governments in Australia, although the level of engagement has historically been much higher in other countries such as New Zealand. Accreditation as a Safe Community requires meeting particular criteria which inevitably means data analysis, interagency partnerships and cooperation, and strategic priority setting.

- Having completed my PhD looking at crime and its prevention in Glebe, I felt a duty to give back something to the area. I didn't want to harvest data and information from people in the area and for that to serve my interests only. I joined the Board/Management Committees of Glebe Youth Service and Glebe House, serving on both for a few years. [Glebe Youth Service](#) provides important services to local young people while [Glebe House](#) is a residential rehabilitation service largely operating on the 12-step model of treatment. The passionate and smart people serving and working with these organisations were an inspiration. Often toiling despite the challenges and setbacks, the people linked to these organisations always focused on the clients and community needs. There were differences of opinions on various issues, but also a healthy respect for disagreeing well.

In addition to these experiences, I have been involved with a number of other service activities. I had two stints on the Board of the National Children's and Youth Law Centre (now [Youth Law Australia](#)) and I was a mentor for The Smith Family's Mentoring Scheme for a short period. As a mentor, I worked with one young person in south-western Sydney, who I saw many years later as a sworn police officer working close to where he had grown up. It was tremendously gratifying to speak with him and to learn about his development and career.

I also served on the NSW Law Society's [Criminal Law Committee](#) for a year. I had been encouraged to apply on the basis that a criminologist would be beneficial to the Committee. I largely learnt that this was not absolutely true, at least in my case. It was one of the few committees that I served on in which I said almost nothing in a year of studiously attending meetings. The senior lawyers from various public and private entities addressed numerous complex legal issues, which mostly were foreign to me, and every so often I made a comment about some criminal justice rehabilitation program when it arose and when I felt that I had something of value to contribute. The remainder of the time I spent quietly listening as fine points of law and legal practice were discussed, admiring the knowledge, articulate commentary and diplomacy of the

group. Submitting my resignation was probably as much a relief for the chairperson who received it as for me.

I've also contributed in various ways to the [Sydney Institute of Criminology](#), the James Martin Institute (briefly), the Australian Centre for Security Research and the [Community Restorative Centre](#) through its Board's Subcommittee on Policy and Research. Over the years I've also done various activities for charities connected with the criminal justice system, including attending a small number of gala balls hosted by the [Homicide Victims' Support Group](#), an organisation doing critical support work for those who have had family members murdered. These events were a celebration of life, remembrance and connecting to help those suffering from the impacts of homicide.

While some of these activities can now be included as part of my academic work, many were not. I have always found these experiences to be grounding, providing strong connections to the work of various organisations which has helped me stay tethered to the experiences of people working in and impacted by crime and criminal justice systems. These experiences and opportunities have been intensely gratifying and rewarding while also very educative, providing lessons in humility, governance, financial management, lobbying, advocacy and diplomacy. I'm very grateful for the opportunities to have contributed in some small way.

I believe there are many benefits to being involved with organisations of this kind. Some are listed here:

- Many good organisations need support, especially with matters related to management, promotion, policy development and strategic analysis.
- Being connected with organisations working in human services can be very beneficial in connecting you to issues facing these organisations and their clients.
- NGOs and related organisations often play important roles in policy development and accountability of government organisations. Activity of this kind can provide opportunities to participate in policy development processes that you might be otherwise locked out of or unaware of.
- You get to meet fantastic people from diverse backgrounds. I have learnt tremendous amounts from befriending and/or working with people working in diverse areas, from diverse backgrounds, with diverse perspectives.
- It provides an opportunity to contribute for good and to build skills and knowledge.

Service roles might also include joining various university committees, supervising and mentoring staff, contributing to reviews of university research centres and teaching programs, and various other tasks and responsibilities. There is no shortage of ways to make up 20 per cent of a working week!

Life in the academy can be a great mix of teaching, research and service. You meet amazing people, often have freedom to explore topics of your choosing, often get some international travel, get some free books (something that still brings me an unusual

sense of joy), and get to be part of some of the exciting things happening in a university at any one time (of which there are always many). The road to an academic criminology job can be long and challenging, but if this is of interest, doing an honours year and a PhD and getting as many relevant experiences – through any available research assistant roles and casual teaching opportunities – will all help.

CONCLUSION

So, how do I pull all of this together? In part, the purpose of listing and describing the various roles, tasks and projects that I've enjoyed over my career is to highlight the very many places you might find yourself as a criminology graduate and the diverse skills needed in these various contexts. In one way or another, what I have listed and described touches on the following skills:

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| Writing for different audiences (including report writing) | Policy development | Consultation and facilitation |
| Media skills (including social media) | Teaching and training | Communication |
| Assessment and evaluation | Individual and group counselling | Data entry and analysis |
| Cross-cultural skills | Rapport building | Lobbying and coalition building |
| Inter-agency liaison | Research and literature reviews | Community building |
| Presenting and delivering speeches | Managing meetings and completing administration | Providing governance and project management |
| Financial management | Mentoring and leadership | Analysis and problem-solving |
| Contracting and procurement systems | Audits | Horizon scanning |
| Program development and resource development | Understanding human resources and work health and safety systems | Understanding human service systems: housing, mental health, welfare, education, etc |

I do not profess to have mastered any of these, or the many other, skills required and knowledge needed to work in the many criminal justice contexts open to you as a criminology graduate. Nor did I acquire all of these skills at university. My studies absolutely assisted in many ways, but short courses, learning from more experienced colleagues, and being thrown in the deep end are some of the ways in which additional skills were acquired.

I know that some people will likely say that this is some form of vanity project (which I hope it isn't, but acknowledge that it might appear so) and/or condemn my work for criminal justice agencies which they argue need to be abolished. Issues of crime and justice are invariably contested and many would prefer not to support systems that police and incarcerate. I respect these (perceived) criticisms and have encountered many more over the decades.

Nonetheless, I hope that telling part of my career story is helpful to you. There is so much more that could have been said. I've struggled with knowing if some stories are mine to tell; with recounting episodes that might identify people in ways they wouldn't approve of; with telling stories that might misrepresent the nuances and complexities of various contexts and settings; with shining a light on the positive aspects and leaving some of the tensions out; and with how to provide an insider's perspective without having permission to do so from organisations or colleagues.

Thus, what I have captured is very much a partial rendering of my approximately 8250 days of work (with a few more to go). I offer it in the hope that it provides a little insight into the nature of the work undertaken by criminologists and criminal justice practitioners. While some things have changed considerably over the course of my career (eg, the integration of technology into many aspects of work), many things haven't – many of the roles I have held still exist in one form or another and do much the same as I did many years ago. Moreover, at the heart of much of the work are people – victims of crime, people in various parts of the criminal justice system, the various agencies and staff contributing to the daily running of the criminal justice system, etc. So while technology, including artificial intelligence, threatens to disrupt aspects of this work, people will always be at the heart of the criminal justice system (and related systems), and many current practices and procedures will continue with little change for many years to come. Hopefully this means what I have included here remains relevant and of value to you.

It is now your time to decide what you'll do with your career and the significant portion of your life you will spend at work. The many jobs, consultancy projects and publications collated in the appendices – just some of the markers of a career – reveal, if nothing else, that a career over decades provides an enormous opportunity to do a great deal. You, unlike I who have largely stumbled forward to various roles and opportunities, might seriously plan what your career will look like and what your contribution will be. Not an easy task from your current vantage point, but a worthwhile thought experiment.

I wish you well with your studies, with your career choices and with your impact on the criminological/criminal justice world. And please do send me feedback on what you got out of this and what you think needs to be added: garner.clancey@sydney.edu.au.

All the best,
Garner Clancey

Appendix A: Public Service Roles

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| 1992 | Senior Youth Worker, Yasmar Juvenile Justice Centre (Yasmar) |
| 1992–93 | Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Counsellor, Yasmar |
| 1993–94 | AOD Counsellor, Liverpool Community Youth Centre |
| 1994–97 | Manager, Programs and Staff Development, Yasmar |
| Nov 1995 – Feb 1997 (England) | Supervising a young offender for Newham Borough AOD assessor for Camden Borough Research officer for Barleywood Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre Manager for North-West London Housing Association |
| 1997 | Manager, Programs and Staff Development, Cobham Juvenile Justice Centre |
| 1997–99 | Youth Justice Conference Administrator, Fairfield |
| 1999–2002 | Senior Programs Officer, Youth and Child Protection Team, Operational Programs Unit, NSW Police Service |

Appendix B: Consultancy Projects

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| Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA) (now Youth Action) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping Centre Security Guards and Young People [Resource manual and self-paced learning package] (2004) • Shopping Centres and the Youth Sector: Hanging out Together [Report] (2006) • Commissioned to write a series of articles for YAPA on youth crime (2005–06) • Considering Youth Issues in Shopping Centre Development Applications [Report] (2007) • Where People and Places Meet: Approaches to Public Space Management [Report] (2007) • Young People and Libraries [Self-paced learning kit] (2007) • Young People and Pools [Self-paced learning kit] (2008) • Young People and Rangers [Self-paced learning kit] (2008) |
| Shopping centre management companies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penrith Plaza Youth Protocol (2003) • Macarthur Square Youth Protocol (2004) • Rouse Hill Town Centre Youth Engagement Plan (2009) |
| Ted Noffs Foundation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various consultancy projects • Understanding and Managing Challenging Behaviours [Self-directed learning package] (2003) |
| Research for proposed documentary | Worked on a documentary treatment with Jacqueline Cosgrove (2004–05) |
| Youth Affairs Council of South Australia (YACSA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource for young people as victims of crime • Preventing Conflict with Young People in Public Space [Train-the-trainer package] (2008) – built on work in training multiple organisations around young people’s use of public space |
| Training of security personnel working in shopping centres | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing Conflict with Young People in Public Space [Train-the-trainer package] (2005) • Training delivered to multiple sites and organisations – Fairfield Council pools; rangers in Wyong; shopping centres in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory |
| Security reviews | Macarthur Square (2005), Rouse Hill (2008), Uni of Newcastle (2008) amongst others |
| School security assessments | Worked with an insurer to encourage assessments to be done when getting insured/renewing (mostly private schools) |
| Crime risk assessments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royal at Newcastle • Seventh Day Adventist Aged Care Cooranbong (2007) • Toronto RSL (2007) |
| PCYC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted Programming Manual (2005) • Mobile PCYC Youth Crime Hot Spot Programme Evaluation in Walgett and Newcastle/Lake Macquarie (2008) |
| Dept of Sport and Recreation | Youth in Sport training (2007) |

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| NSW Police Force | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juvenile Crime: Are We on the Right Track? [Training] Parramatta IMPACT project (2003) • Policing Young People in NSW (July 2008) • Youth Liaison Officer Induction training (2006–09) • Review of Integrated Case Management Initiative at three local area commands (2007) |
| National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre | Young People and Cannabis [Self-directed learning package for youth sector workers to assist young people experiencing cannabis-related difficulties] (2008) |
| Crime survey | Campbelltown City Council (2008) |
| Midnight Basketball | Workshop manual (2007) |
| Refuge provider | Erskineville Youth Housing Review (2009) |
| Evaluations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the Out of the Blue Project (Northern region) (2009) • Vietnamese Transition Project Evaluation (2009) • Safe Party Squad Initiative (2007) • Safer Suburbs CCTV Funding Springwood Site Review (2009) • Safer Suburbs CCTV Funding Gosford Site Review (2009) |
| Crime profiles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Profile for Airds/Bradbury for Department of Housing (NSW) (2009) • Comprehensive Crime Profile for Fairfield City Council (2008) • Bonnyrigg Crime Profile (2009) |
| Benevolent Society | Worked with Sydney Leadership Centre on a Future Development of Dubbo whole-of-government strategy (2008) |
| Local government crime prevention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellington Crime Prevention Plan 2004–07 • Parramatta Local Government Area Crime Profile (2007) • CCTV report for Parramatta Council (2007) • Parramatta City Centre Crime Prevention Plan 2008–13 • Narrabri Crime Prevention Plan 2007–10 • Burwood Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan 2007–10 • Canada Bay Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan 2007–10 • Camden Community Safety Strategic Plan 2007–11 • Process and outcome evaluation of the Redfern Waterloo Community Safety Plan (2008) • Graffiti management review for Leichhardt Council (2008) <p>Developed various resources from this work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Integrated Approach to Crime Prevention (2009) • Induction Package for Crime Prevention Committees (2007) • Community Safety Audit Methodology (2009) |

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| Presentations (some) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Prevention Plans to UTS Centre for Local Government courses • Taree Chamber of Commerce (2009) • Community Safety Network (2009) • An Integrated Approach to Crime Prevention for Redland City Council (2009) • Mount St Benedict College (2005) • Briefing (Places for People and the Prevention of Crime) to Councillors Frankston Council (2010) |
| Australian Institute of Criminology | CCTV Guidelines (2009) |
| NSW Government | Better Futures Practice Guide: Working with Young People at Risk of Offending (2008) |
| Housing provider | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Prevention Plan for Newleaf (Bonnyrigg housing estate redevelopment) (2009) • Newleaf Communities Safety Audit (2009) |
| Training | Bonnyrigg Creative Solutions to Local Crime Training (2009) Safety audit training, various locations, especially in Fairfield LGA (2009) |
| Safety audits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetherill Park (2009) • Smithfield (2009) |
| Parliamentary Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment | Final report (2006) |
| Australian Centre for Security Research (UWS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor contribution to a report for National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council (2007) • City of Sydney Crime Profile (2006) • NSW Shopping Centre Protocol and Report (2003) |
| City of Sydney | Training Package for Security guards report (2008) |
| Conference presentations (some) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Data and Local Crime Prevention Planning, ANZSOC Conference, Adelaide (2007) • Observations on Young People and Urban Space. Conference, Canberra (2006) • Engaging Security to Improve Young People's Access to Public Space. International Centre for the Prevention of Crime Colloquium, Canberra (2006) • A Model for Prioritising Local Crime Problems. International Society for Criminology, XV World Congress of Criminology, Barcelona (2008) • Shopping for a Good Time: Drug Use in Semi-Private/Quasi-Public Spaces. Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and Other Drugs (APSAD) Conference, Melbourne (2005) • Building Crime Prevention Capacity through Education. International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) Conference, Montreal (2009) • Programming for Young Offenders. Department of Juvenile Justice (NSW), Aboriginal Staff Conference, Sydney (2009) |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Prevention Planning through Partnerships. Local Community Services Association Conference, Sydney (2007) • Changes in an Inter-Connected World: Crime Prevention and Road Safety. Professional Association of Road Safety Officers Conference, Sydney (2006) • Targeted Programming: Evidence and Expectations. PCYC Annual Conference, Newcastle (2005) • Preventing Conflict with Young People. Diploma of Shopping Centre Management, Property Council of Australia (2005) • CPTED Theory Must Meet Practice More Often: NSW Safer by Design program. Sixth Australasian Security Research Symposium, Brisbane, 2006. • Trying to Make the Evidence Fit: Local Crime Prevention Planning. Australian Institute of Criminology Crime Prevention Conference, Sydney (2005) • Crime Prevention in NSW: ‘New Moral Hygiene’ or ‘Transformative Potential’? UNSW Critical Criminology Conference, Sydney (2008) • Policing Young People in NSW. YAPA Conference, Sydney (2007) • What Is the Issue? A Crime Prevention Perspective. Youthsafe Forum, Sydney (2009) |
| Facilitated planning and consultation sessions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coolangatta Tweed Community Safety Planning Day (2004) • Planning day for a Community Drug Action Team in Western Sydney • Police–community event in south-western Sydney for local police and with African community leaders |

Appendix C: Publications

2025

Clancey, G., Lin, B. (2025). Crime Prevention and Reduction. In B. Livings, K. McLachlan, N. Chazal, R. Sarre (Eds.), *Crime and justice: A guide to criminology* (7th ed., pp. 559–583). Thomson Reuters.

Hosseini, H., Ho, N., Huntley, S., Piper, S., Crosland, P., Skinner, A., Vacher, C., Tran, K., Nguyen, K., Song, C., Loblay, V., Iannelli, O., Clancey, G., Hickie, I., Occhipinti, J. (2025). Examining the impact of youth mental health services capacity growth trajectories and digital interventions on youth mental health outcomes: A system dynamics modelling analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 27, Article e71256. <https://doi.org/10.2196/71256>

Metcalf, L., Clancey, G., Simpson, M., Little, C., Evans, D. (2025). Reflections from an industry and university youth justice partnership. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2025.2485986>

2024

Clancey, G., Drumore, C., Metcalfe, L. (2024). A whole-of-university response to youth justice: Reflections on a university–youth justice partnership. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 691. <https://doi.org/10.52922/ti77376>

Clancey, G., Lulham, R. (2024). Introduction. In G. Clancey, R. Lulham (Eds.), *Youth crime, youth justice and children's courts in NSW* (pp. 1–25). LexisNexis.

Clancey, G., Lulham, R. (2024). Conclusion. In G. Clancey, R. Lulham (Eds.), *Youth crime, youth justice and children's courts in NSW* (pp. 283–290). LexisNexis.

Clancey, G., Lulham, R. (2024). *Youth crime, youth justice and children's courts in NSW*. LexisNexis.

Metcalf, L., Little, C., Clancey, G., Evans, D. (2024). The changing nature of education in youth justice centres in New South Wales (Australia). *Journal of Prison Education Research*, 8(1), Article 5. <https://doi.org/10.25771/2st1-rn87>

2023

Clancey, G., Evans, J., Friedlander, L. (2023). Some long-term positive trends in youth detention in New South Wales (Australia). *Safer Communities*, 22(1), 15–27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/SC-06-2022-0023>

2022

Clancey, G. (2022). Rehabilitation of young adult offenders [Paper presentation]. United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatments of Offenders, Tokyo, Japan.

Clancey, G., Metcalfe, L. (2022). Inspections, reviews, inquiries and recommendations pertaining to youth justice centres in New South Wales between 2015 and 2021. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 34(3), 255–274.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2022.2091207>

2021

Clancey, G., Evans, D., Little, C. (2021). *Review of the extended school year model and literature review: Final report prepared for the NSW Department of Education*. The University of Sydney.

Lin, B., Clancey, G., Metcalfe, L. (2021). The role of Legal Aid NSW in addressing the civil legal needs of participants in High Intensity Units (HIPUs) in prisons. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 33(4), 417–437. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2021.1951988>

Monchuk, L., Clancey, G. (2021). What police say about crime prevention through environmental design training in two jurisdictions (England/Wales and New South Wales, Australia). *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 15(1), 528–539.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/police/paz020>

Sutton, A., Cherney, A., White, R., Clancey, G. (2021). *Crime Prevention: Principles, Perspectives and Practice* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

2020

Clancey, G. (2020). Teaching Crime Prevention and Community Safety. In D. Palmer (Ed.), *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Criminology* (pp. 59–85). Palgrave Macmillan.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35158-8_4

Clancey, G., Lin, B. (2020). Crime Prevention and Reduction. In D. Dalton, de Lint, W., Palmer, D. (Eds.), *Crime and justice: A guide to criminology* (6th ed.). Thomson Reuters.

Clancey, G., Metcalfe, L. (2020). A review of crime prevention activities in an Australian local government area since the late 1980s. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 22(1), 49–67. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/s41300-019-00081-7>

Clancey, G., Wang, S., Lin, B. (2020). Youth justice in Australia: Themes from recent inquiries. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 605, 1–18.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.52922/ti04725>

Gainsbury, S., Black, N., Blaszczynski, A., Callaghan, S., Clancey, G., Starcevic, V., Tymula, A. (2020). Reducing internet gambling harms using behavioural science: A stakeholder framework. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 11:598589. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.598589>

Metcalfe, L., Morgan, A., Clancey, G. (2020). Local government public space CCTV systems in Australia. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 22(3), 210–222.
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