



NDARC Crime Research Network: capitalising on 150 years of criminal justice research experience



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Key points

- Problem.** Drug problems and crime frequently co-occur. Their relationships are central issues for recidivism and harm-reduction strategies. To understand these relationships, researchers need specialist knowledge of both phenomena, as well as sensitivity to the unique needs of users and justice agencies.
- Solution.** Review NDARC's involvement in criminal justice research and establish an open, informal network to facilitate exchange of this accumulated knowledge.
- Outcome.** NDARC's output reflects enduring and increasing attention to this complex area. The network brings together 20 staff with more than 150 years' total experience in health and criminal justice research, and provides a means of improving linkages to practice, research and evaluation.



Overview

Drug and alcohol research frequently intersects with criminal justice issues.
This interplay is complex, and increases health, economic and social costs both of drug use and offending.



Offenders tend to commence drug use earlier than the general population, and those who use regularly are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime. Risks associated with regular use by offenders include psychiatric comorbidity, victimization, unsafe injecting, and offending whilst intoxicated and/or to support use. This demands attention from researchers with sound knowledge of both phenomena, and of the unique demands of researching with offenders in forensic and community settings.

Aims and method

Project aim: establish an informal network to improve internal linkages between staff with criminal justice research experience, and external linkages with justice agencies, and to increase NDARC's capacity to undertake research with these agencies and their clients.

Poster aim: describe the network's rationale, establishment & characteristics

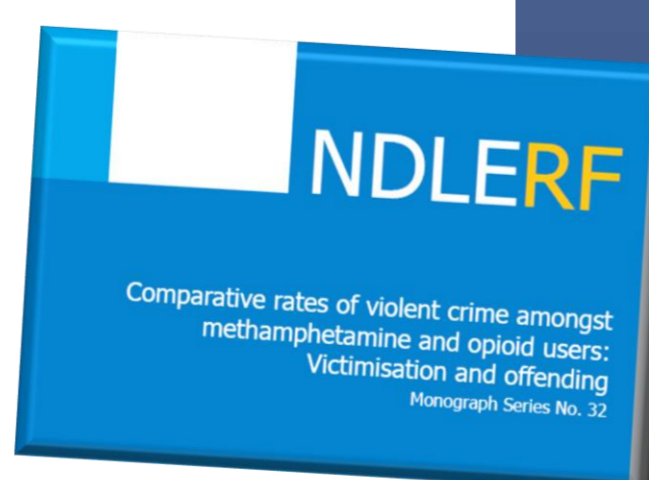
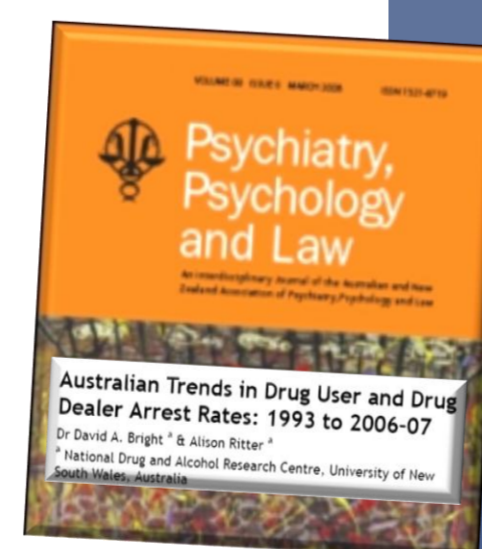
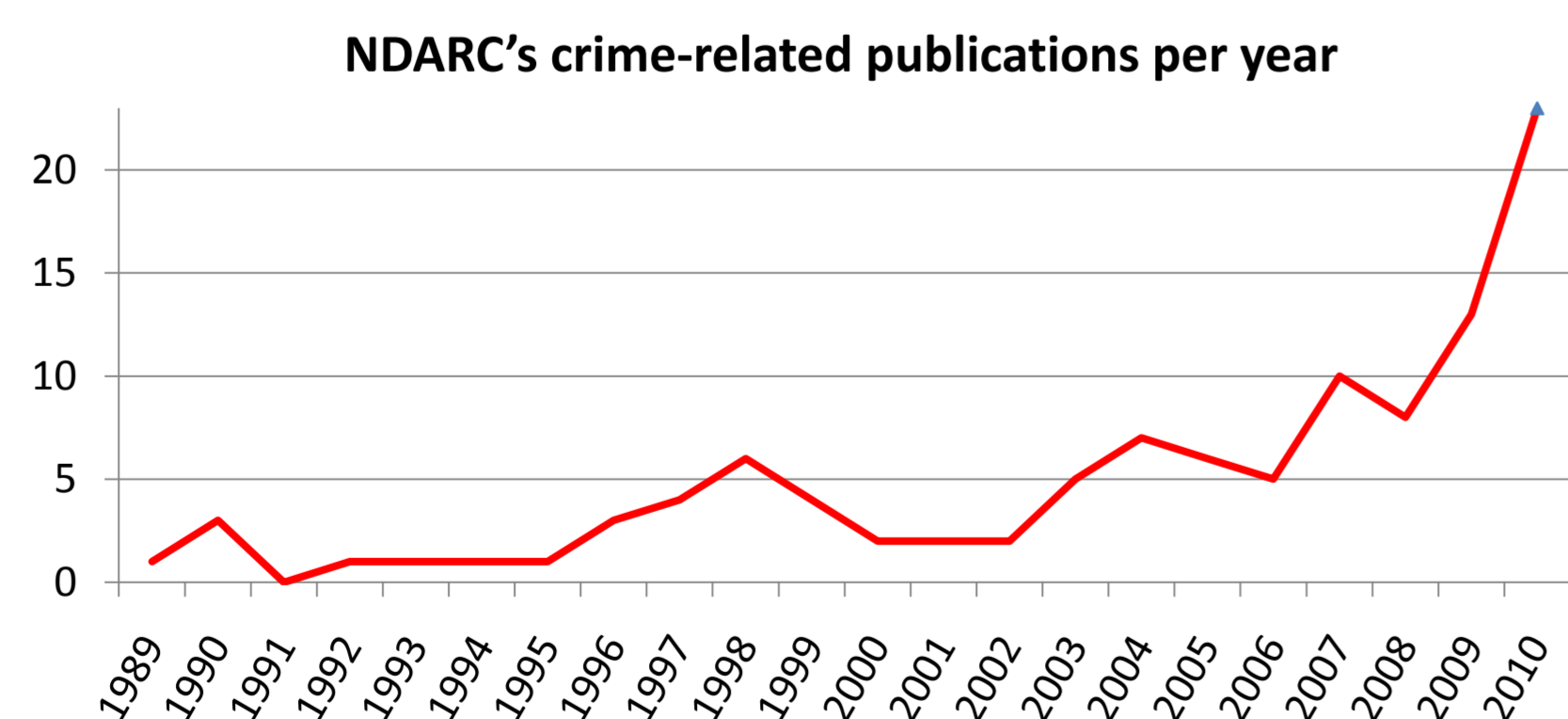
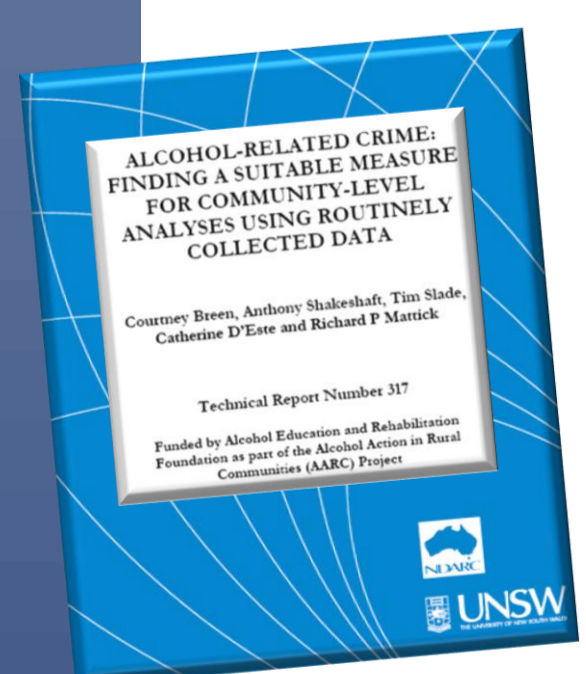
Method: Internal consultation, workplace census, brief literature review, citation database (Scopus; Web of Science) and NDARC catalogue search, meet with agency representatives, and interview senior addiction and criminal justice researchers.

"We're very keen to develop the interface between health and criminal justice research. We recognise the importance of improving linkages in practice, research and evaluation."
- Prof Michael Farrell, Director, NDARC

Publication and project review

We identified **45 crime-related projects** completed by NDARC since its inception in 1989, with 11 more (including 4 PhDs) underway (see opp.)

The database/catalogue review identified **120 peer-reviewed publications** by our staff that focus on crime, offenders or the justice system (see figure below). The rate has increased substantially in recent years.



Policy makers from both the drugs and criminal justice field rely heavily on **grey literature** for their information, including reports to government agencies and funding bodies.



Several NDARC Technical Reports and DPMP monographs focus on criminal justice issues. The National Cannabis Prevention & Information Centre (NCPIC) has produced 16 bulletins since 2008 including its Research to Practice collaboration with the AIC.

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Photos: B Phillips, NCPIC, NDARC, NDLERF, Taylor&Francis, CartoonStock

Select references. Johnson (2001) Age of illicit drug initiation, Canberra: AIC. Makkai & Payne (2003) Key findings from the DUCO Study, Canberra: AIC. Ritter (2009) How do drug policy makers access research evidence? *IJDP* 20: 70-75. Ruiz et al (2011) Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Problems in Offenders. *Psych. Assess.* (adv. pub). Smith (2009) Where is the evidence base? *ALJ*, Feb: 28-38.



Feedback and enquiries welcomed to

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Meeting 2nd Weds of each month at 11:30am

Examples of current projects

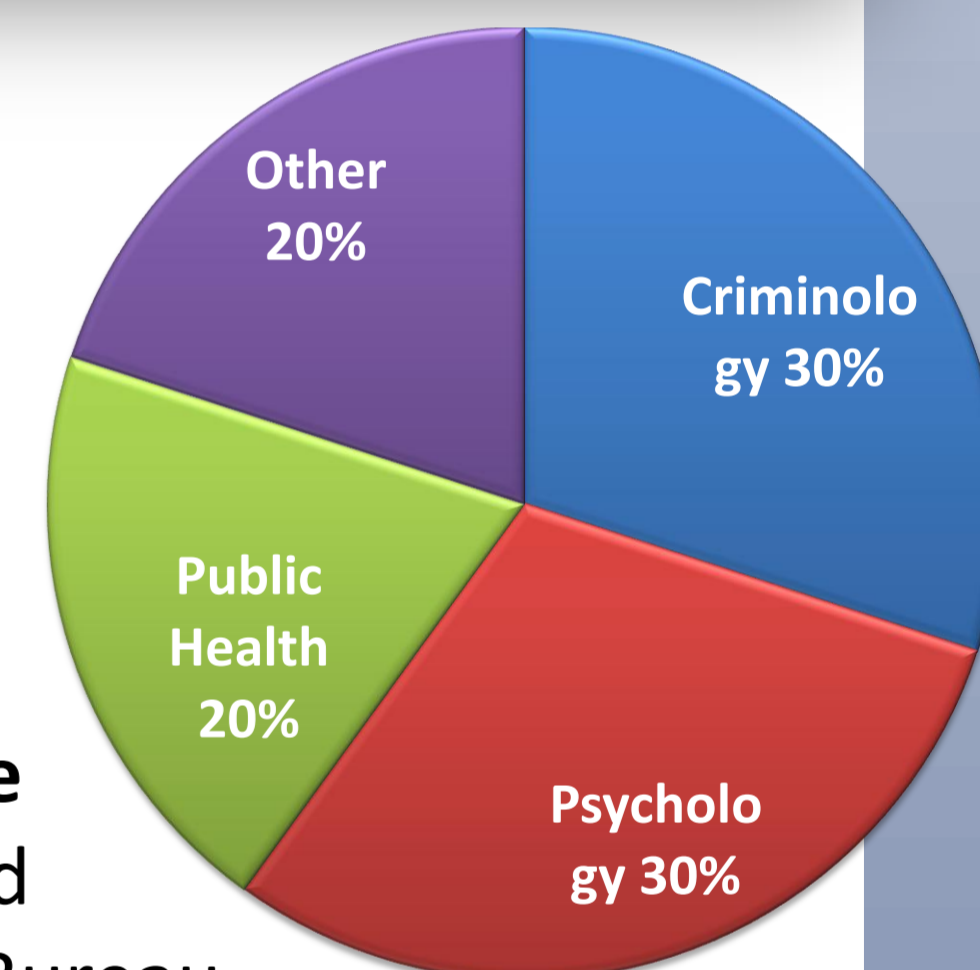
- Treating comorbid substance use disorder and PTSD** (post traumatic stress disorder) among prisoners (Barrett, with Justice Health)
- Impact of drug use on juvenile recidivism** outcomes for non-incarcerated young offenders (Nelson, data linkage through BOCSAR)
- 10 year follow-up of a heroin dependent prisoner cohort** (Dolan/Larney) linking methadone treatment, court, imprisonment, mortality records
- Promoting compliance, 'recovery' and 'desistance': Comparative case studies of **pre-sentence diversion schemes for drug misusing arrestees** in Australia and England (McSweeney, Hughes, Ritter & Turnbull).

Member profiles and criminal justice experience

Internal support for the network was strong.

Membership includes 20 executive, academic, clinical and technical staff, from NDARC, NCPIC, and the Drug Policy Modelling Program (DPMP).

Professional backgrounds are diverse, also including psychiatry, economics and statistics (Figure at right)



Between us, we have over **150 years of justice specific experience** in policy, treatment, and research involving Corrective Services, the Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research (BOCSAR), Juvenile Justice, the AIC, Justice Health, Police, the Home Office, Mission Australia... Members are familiar with specialist literature and current treatment and risk assessment methods, and are sensitive to protocols for engaging with offenders and managing justice data.

Consultation, dissemination

We have established **mutual representation** with the UNSW Crime & Justice Research Network, and Forensic Psychology and Criminology programs.

We are proactively engaging with justice agencies. To date, we have met representatives of BOCSAR, the Centre for Health Research in Criminal Justice (CHCRJ), and the Australian Institute of Criminology to facilitate collaboration and data sharing, and troubleshoot issues in research design.

We present our research widely at conferences attended by criminal justice policy makers, clinicians and academics (e.g. ANZSOC, the International Association for Forensic Mental Health Services).

Conclusions and next steps

The review process has illuminated a **valuable reservoir of skill and diverse experience** in conducting research with offenders and justice agencies.

The establishment of an informal network facilitates **greater access to this collective knowledge** and improves our capacity to **meet the research and evaluation needs of agencies, policy makers and service providers.**

We look forward to discussing with you today or at our monthly meetings.