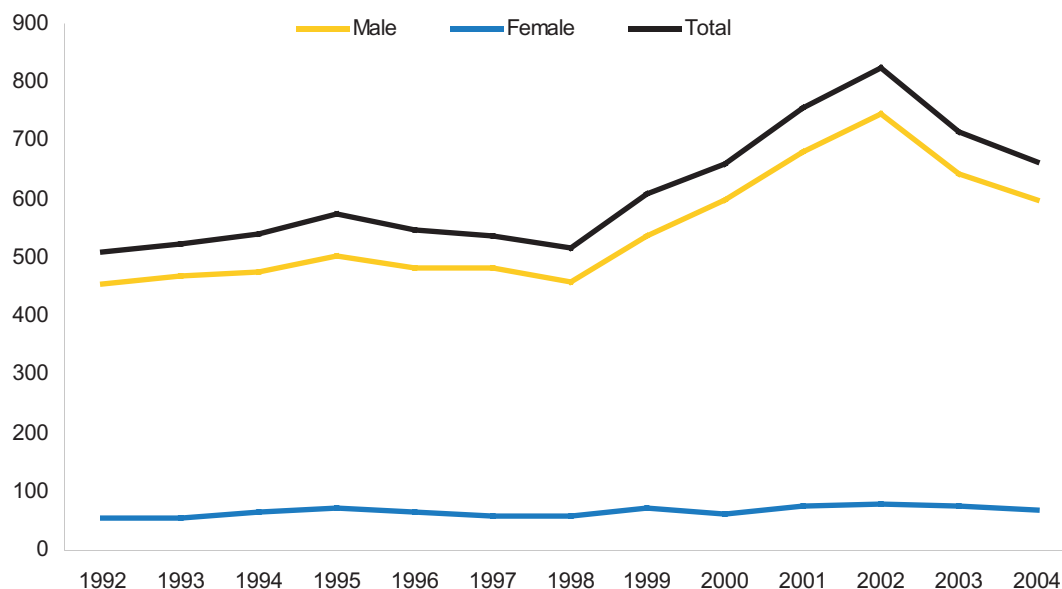


Sentencing and administration of federal offenders

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) has released an Issues paper raising a series of questions about the sentencing and management of offenders convicted of federal criminal offences. The Issues paper analyses the limited data available regarding federal offenders. More than 4,000 persons are convicted of federal offences each year, the bulk of these being summary social security offences. There are no available data on the sentencing outcomes for all federal offenders, but as at 1 January 2005 there were 687 federal offenders in state and territory prisons. Over time the number of federal prisoners has generally increased at a rate that has kept pace with the growth in the total sentenced prison population. The geographic distribution of federal prisoners is uneven, with 54 per cent housed in New South Wales, 14 per cent in Queensland, 13 per cent in Western Australia, and 12 per cent in Victoria. There is wide variation in the number of federal prisoners by type of offence. The bulk of current federal prisoners (69%) have been convicted of drug offences. Of the remainder, 12 per cent were serving prison terms for offences under the Commonwealth *Crimes Act* (including offences such as damaging Commonwealth property and child sex tourism); financial offences (7%); illegal fishing (5%); and social security offences (4%).

Number of federal prisoners in Australia 1992–2004



Note: The data relate to prisoners as at 1 January in each year

SOURCE: Australian Law Reform Commission 2005. *Sentencing of federal offenders* IP 29. Based on data from Australian Government Attorney-General's Department

Full Issues paper available on the ALRC web site: www.alrc.gov.au