

RECIDIVISM MONITORING PROGRAMME

REPORT — STUDY PERIOD II

Western Australian
Department of Community Welfare
INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE



13/19



Vertical File

The Recidivism Monitoring Programme was implemented by the Department for Community Welfare in Western Australia as a standardised system of evaluating its major training Centres which deal with juvenile delinquents — Hillston, Riverbank and Nyandi. Whilst these Centres have various objectives with children, it was considered that offence reduction was clearly the most important goal and therefore the main criterion to be applied in evaluating effectiveness.

The Recidivism Monitoring Programme was introduced on January 1, 1979. This is the second in what is proposed to be an ongoing series of reports based on six-monthly "Study Periods". Each period corresponds with either the first or second half of a calendar year and it is during these periods that the cases for the study are collected. The cases comprise all those children admitted to the Centre for training purposes at some time during a particular study period, in this instance between July and December 1979.

The first admission by each child during a "Study Period" is when intervention is said to have occurred. Offence related data for each person is then collected for 180 days before and 180 days after "Intervention" and compared. In determining these 180 day periods only days when the individual is in the community and therefore has an opportunity to commit offences are counted.

The term "recidivism" is used comparatively in the programme in that an earlier rate of offending is compared with subsequent performance. In this sense it is a measure of improvement (or deterioration), improvement occurring when there has been a reduction in the rate of offending.

Originally it was thought that two years would be sufficient time to collect the data. However, in the case of this study period 30 months were required for at least 90% of the cases at all Centres to complete their 180 post-intervention days in the community. Cases which were unable to complete this requirement due to various factors such as gaol terms have been excluded from the data analysis.

Twelve cases were excluded from the second study period because they were unable to complete the post-intervention period in the community. This left a sample of 168 cases. Similar to the preceding study period nearly all the children were aged between 13 and 18 with 87% being boys.

The overall results obtained by the three Centres were again very pleasing and consistent with the previous study period. Offences were reduced from 2236 in the pre-intervention period to 1182 in the post-intervention period, a reduction of 47%.

Offence patterns were almost identical to the first study period with 81% of the total of all offences in both pre and post intervention periods being property offences. Again offences against the person accounted for only 2% of the total. The remaining offences were against good order. Similar to the previous study period the greatest reduc-

tion was achieved in property offences, followed by good order and then person.

As with the first study period a significant reduction in recidivism was achieved irrespective of age although again better than average results were achieved with the oldest group, 17 year olds.

The institutionally-based programmes again achieved a good level of success with Aboriginal children resulting in an offence reduction rate of 44% for this group. Similarly they again achieved a good level of success with country children who accounted for just under one third of the admissions. It should be noted however, that there is a significant correlation between Aboriginal and country children and any discussion of the results needs to take this into account.

In general the findings of the first study period that overall there was no consistent trend to indicate that the prospects of success are affected by the number of previous admissions, was again supported by this study period.

If offence patterns prior to intervention are examined the conclusion of the first study period is supported in that frequent offenders who are commonly regarded as the least likely to respond are able to improve significantly. In examining individual cases it was found that 73% improved in that they committed less offences in the post-intervention period, 4% remained the same and 23% deteriorated.

The report on the first study period noted that every type of offender for each Centre achieved reductions in the identified problem areas. For example assailants showed a reduction in person offences. This trend, while still apparent in this study period did not appear with the same consistency, with not all offender-type categories showing a reduced offence rate. There is also still no clear evidence to suggest that certain types of offenders improve more than others.

The majority of offenders again offended in company. However, as with the first period there was no consistent trend to differentiate company and alone offenders in terms of offence reduction.

The distribution of cases over the various lifestyle after intervention categories was similar to the first study period. In the first study period a clear trend emerged at all Centres showing that as changes in lifestyle reduced the degree of offence reduction improved. This trend was again strongly supported by this study period with all Centres showing a distinct and progressive improvement in offence reduction in relation to the relative stability of the group. While this is simply a correlation from which cause and effect cannot be determined it is possible that efforts to increase lifestyle stability could result in an improvement in offence reduction.

In conclusion this second study period generally supports the findings of the first in that most of the trends initially identified were supported. The data again quite clearly indicates that the Department's three main training Centres for juvenile delinquents are effective in reducing the crime among the populations for which they cater.