Australian Government

Australian Government
Australian Institute of Criminology

CORPORATE PLAN
2023–24

Contents

Director's foreword

As the accountable authority of the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), I am pleased to present the 2023–24 corporate plan, as required under 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The plan is prepared in accordance with the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014.

This corporate plan reflects the functions of the AIC, as set out in the *Criminology Research Act 1971*, and the AIC's objectives and performance measurement framework.

The plan has been prepared for the 2023–24 reporting year and covers the four-year period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2027.

Matthew Rippon
Acting Director
Australian Institute of Criminology

Mission statement

To promote evidence-informed crime and justice policy and practice in Australia.

Purpose

The purpose of the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) is to inform crime and justice policy and practice in Australia by undertaking, funding and disseminating policy-relevant research of national significance.

Role

The AIC is Australia's national research and knowledge centre on crime and justice. We undertake and disseminate crime and justice research and provide policy advice.

Outcome

The AIC's outcome for 2023–24 to 2026–27, as stated in the Portfolio Budget Statement, is achieved by:

- undertaking impartial, policy-relevant research to inform policy and practice in the crime and criminal justice sectors;
- working cooperatively with the Attorney-General's Department, portfolio and other federal agencies, and state and territory government agencies, as the Australian Government's national research centre on crime and justice;
- administering an effective and efficient annual Criminology Research Grants program that results in policy-relevant research of value to the nation; and
- actively disseminating research findings to policymakers, practitioners and the general public, across Australia and internationally, in a timely manner.

Functions

To perform its role and achieve its objectives, the AIC undertakes the functions set out in section 6 of the *Criminology Research Act 1971*:

    a) to promote justice and reduce crime by:

        i) conducting criminological research; and

        ii) communicating the results of that research to the Commonwealth, the States, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and the community;

    b) to assist the Director in performing the Director's functions;

    c) to administer programs for awarding grants, and engaging specialists, for:

        i) criminological research that is relevant to the public policy of the States, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory; and

        ii) activities related to that research (including the publication of that research, for example).

The functions of the Director include:

- conducting criminological research, including the collection of information and statistics on crime and justice matters;
- communicating the results of that research, including through the publication of research material and seminars and courses of training or instruction;
- providing information and advice on the administration of criminal justice to the Commonwealth Government and state and territory governments; and
- collaborating both within and outside Australia with governments, institutions and authorities, and with bodies and persons, on research and training in connection with the administration of criminal justice.

Operating context

Supporting the Commonwealth

The work of the AIC is designed primarily to support the requirements of the Commonwealth in addressing crime and justice issues of national concern. The research priorities reflect this by focusing on Commonwealth offences and significant crime issues that are of concern to the Australian Government.

Crime and justice environment

The AIC conducts and disseminates crime and justice research characterised by:

- *evolving crime problems*—some traditional forms of volume crime are declining while new and emerging crime problems become issues for the future. The AIC continues to shape its research program to address these emerging problems;

- *multiple criminal justice systems*—while many crime and justice issues are important from a national perspective, the information available on such issues is often collected by state and territory agencies operating within their own criminal justice systems and subject to their own legal systems. The AIC therefore addresses research questions by negotiating access to relevant information from each criminal justice system. This creates opportunities for innovation at the state/territory level that can be examined through AIC research;

- *access to data*—access to crime and justice data is often restricted and these data are only released on limited terms. As an independent Australian Government research agency, the AIC has negotiated access to data not otherwise available to researchers; and

- *an expanding academic criminology sector*—criminology as an academic discipline has grown considerably in recent years, offering opportunities for the AIC to identify, fund and disseminate high-quality applied criminological research through its grant programs and publication series.

Cooperation

Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission

The AIC works closely with the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC). The Chief Executive Officer of the ACIC is also the Director of the AIC. Although the AIC remains an independent entity, AIC staff were transferred to the ACIC under a machinery-of-government process in 2015.

The AIC's corporate services are provided by the ACIC.

Stakeholders

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 Australian Government and state and territory governments in order to undertake much of its research. 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; and
- the private sector—academia, non-government organisations, and the general public.

Governance

The AIC is accountable to the Attorney-General as part of the Attorney-General's portfolio.

The Criminology Research Advisory Council, representing Commonwealth and state and territory justice agencies, is responsible for providing advice to the Director of the AIC on strategic priorities for research and priorities for communicating research results.

AIC research is also subject to ethical standards and overseen by an ethics committee, in accordance with National Health and Medical Research Council requirements.

Activities, capability and performance

The AIC is Australia's national research and knowledge centre on crime and justice, compiling trend data and disseminating research and policy advice. Our activities are grouped as follows:

- research services;
- grants and awards; and
- communications and information services.

The contribution of these activities to achieving our purpose, the investments we are making in maintaining our capability and the means by which we will measure our performance are outlined below.

Research services

Undertaking research is the core function of the AIC. The AIC conducts timely and policy-relevant research on crime and justice issues for the Australian Government and other key stakeholders. The Deputy Director manages the research functions of the AIC. The work involves a mix of statistical monitoring of crime and justice trends, research on the priority themes and consultancy research for stakeholders.

The AIC's research priorities are set by the Director in consultation with the Criminology Research Advisory Council.

The AIC's research priorities for 2023–24 are:

- Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system;
- transnational serious and organised crime;
- cybercrime;
- economic crime;
- family, domestic and sexual violence;
- online sexual exploitation of children; and
- human trafficking and modern slavery.

These priorities will be reviewed by the Advisory Council prior to 2024–25.

Statistical monitoring

In addition to undertaking projects on each of the research priorities, the AIC also administers five statistical collections on crime and justice—the Fraud Against the Commonwealth census, the Australian Cybercrime Survey, the National Homicide Monitoring Program, the National Deaths in Custody Program and the Australian Sexual Offences Statistical Collection.

Grants and awards

The Criminology Research Grants program provides funding for criminological research relevant to crime and justice policy at both the national and state or territory level. The program also promotes funded research by publishing and disseminating the findings.

The AIC also administers the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards. These awards recognise good practice in delivering local crime prevention projects. Awards are available for both local community projects and police projects. They provide another means of promoting approaches that reduce crime.

Communications and information services

Communications

The AIC produces high-quality publications, including the peer-reviewed Research Reports and *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* papers, as well as Statistical Bulletins and Statistical Reports based on the Institute's data holdings. The AIC's work is disseminated in a range of ways, including via the website, email subscriber lists, social media, conferences and occasional seminars.

Information services

The AIC hosts a substantial collection of criminal justice and related materials. The collection is housed in the AIC's JV Barry Library and is made available online, through the AIC website and via the CINCH database, to inform and assist in the development of evidence-based policy and programs.

Seminars and conferences

The AIC hosts a series of seminars, roundtables, workshops and other forums to promote and disseminate crime and justice research of national importance. Many of these events are recorded and made available on the AIC's YouTube channel, CriminologyTV.

Capability management

To deliver these activities, the AIC seeks to manage its workforce, infrastructure and information and communication technology capabilities in an efficient and effective way. The AIC continues to work closely with the ACIC, which provides the corporate services that allow for the AIC's requirements to be met.

Workforce requirements

The AIC employs specialists in research, library services and grant management to ensure its core activities are delivered. Researchers are typically recruited into early career positions and are then given in-house training and development to build their capabilities. In 2023, a successful online student forum engaged students and recent graduates from across Australia, giving them insight into the work of the Institute and potential employment opportunities. This forum will be repeated in 2023−24.

Retention rates are relatively high in the AIC, with 48 percent of staff having worked for the Institute for five years or more. This is supported by flexible work conditions and ongoing staff development. Corporate services provided by the ACIC include a range of support services aimed at ensuring employee welfare.

Infrastructure requirements

The AIC provides a positive working environment through its office space in Barton, Canberra, which also houses the AIC's JV Barry Library collection. The library has adopted greater use of e-books, which will allow the collection to grow without requiring greater physical space while at the same time improving the ability of the library to respond rapidly to new requests.

Information and communication technology requirements

Technological requirements are continually monitored and systems are updated on an ongoing basis. All staff in the AIC use laptops that allow for flexible working arrangements.

The website was refreshed in 2022−23 and is subject to continuing improvement to make the AIC's research and statistical collections available in a user-friendly manner.

Performance management

The AIC's achievement against its purpose will be measured against the performance criteria described in the Portfolio Budget Statement. It is anticipated these will apply for the duration of this plan. Performance against these criteria will be reported in the Annual Performance Statement contained in the AIC's annual report.

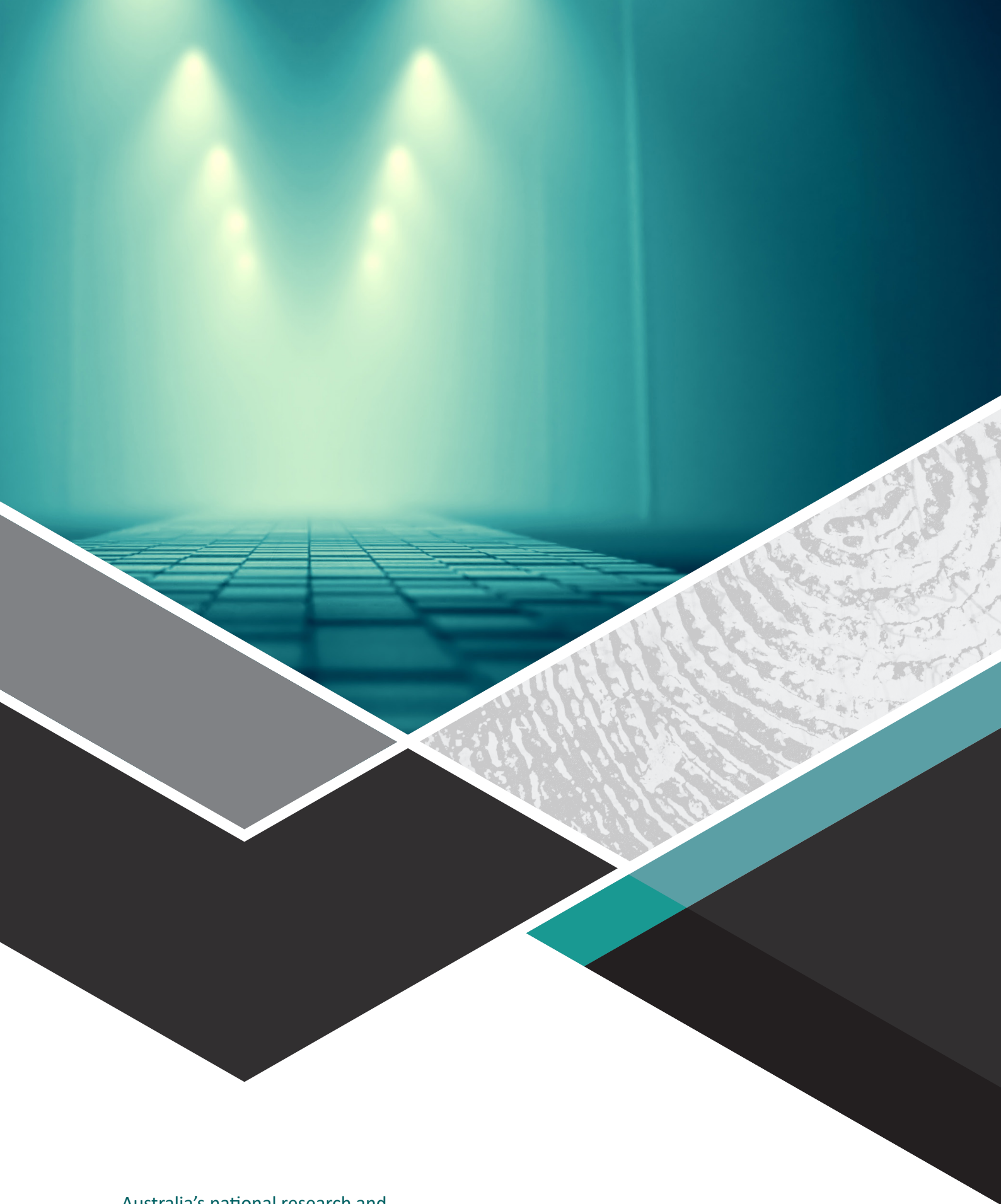| Performance criteria	Target	23–24	24–25	25–26	26–27
Trends & issues papers and Research Reports are peer reviewed to ensure the quality of the AIC's research outputs	100%	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reports produced for each of the monitoring programs are issued according to schedule, annually or biennially	On schedule	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peer-reviewed T&Is and Research Reports to be published each year	25	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other publications—including Statistical Reports, Statistical Bulletins, briefs, journal articles, consultancy reports—to be published each year	25	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evidence that AIC research has contributed to Australian Government policymaking	Qualitative case studies	✓	✓	✓	✓
Roundtables, workshops, seminars and other forums to be held annually	At least 10	✓	✓	✓	✓
Satisfaction with events attended by more than 100 people	90%	✓	✓	✓	✓

Risk

The AIC's operating environment is not inherently high risk. However, key risks for the AIC relate to the safety and welfare of researchers undertaking their duties, the integrity and quality of the research produced, and ensuring that the agency is operating within the Commonwealth, state and territory legislation that impacts its national program of work.

The Institute is vigilant in identifying and treating risks—the AIC has sound processes that protect staff, and its work is monitored by committees (see below) as well as through peer review. The Institute's activities are subject to internal audits. As the ACIC provides the AIC's corporate functions, AIC risk and audit issues are managed by ACIC functional managers in consultation with the AIC executive and the AIC Audit Committee. The AIC also complies with the ACIC Risk Management Policy and Procedures, which are based on adherence to the revised Commonwealth Risk Management Policy of January 2023.

The Director of the AIC has overall responsibility for risk management in the AIC and is supported in his oversight and management role by the Deputy Director.

- The AIC executive considers strategic advice on research directions from the Criminology Research Advisory Council and oversees the management of the agency's budget and risk management activities. The Director also receives reports from other subordinate management committees. The AIC Human Research Ethics Committee has been operating since 1992. Its eight members have backgrounds in law, religion, social work and research, as stipulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines for ethics committees. The ethics committee's role is to advise the Director whether approval to proceed should be granted for proposed research involving human subjects. It regularly reviews proposed projects to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure the research is consistent with ethical standards.

- The AIC's Research Managers Committee considers both strategic and operational aspects of the AIC research program and provides advice to the Senior Executive Committee on research priorities and risks.

- The AIC Audit Committee is established in accordance with section 45 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth). The committee's objective is to provide independent advice to the Director on the Institute's financial and performance reporting, risk management and internal controls.