Introducing the AJR Project

The Australian Justice Reinvestment Project (AJR Project) is a two year ARC Discovery project. The AJR Project will examine the characteristics of Justice Reinvestment (JR) programs used in the US and elsewhere which reduce spending on prisons and reinvest the savings in high crime communities, to reduce crime and build community services, and analyse whether such programs can be developed in the Australian context.

The research team are optimistic about the promise of JR for reducing the numbers of people in prison. However, we also consider that there is a danger that JR might be adopted in Australia without the kind of firm foundations that will maximise its chance of success. Because of this, the Project has two primary areas of focus:

1. A thorough examination of the theoretical foundations of JR.
2. The suitability of JR to the Australian penal context.

The research will draw on a mixed methods approach including theoretical and policy analysis, legal research, workshops and interviews. This approach is designed to simultaneously facilitate a conceptual unpacking of the theoretical underpinnings of JR via documentary analysis, and a practical investigation of the applicability of JR to the Australian corrections context through the gathering of qualitative data from relevant international and domestic stakeholders. Meeting the Project’s aims will involve consideration of key issues necessary for an informed adoption of the JR approach in Australia and culminate in a final report that will provide an assessment of the potential for JR in Australia.
Meet the Team

Chief Investigators:
- Emeritus Professor David Brown (UNSW)
- Professor Chris Cunneen (JCU/UNSW)
- Melanie Schwartz (UNSW)
- Professor Julie Stubbs (UNSW)

Research Associate:
- Courtney Young (UNSW)

Research Assistant:
- Scarlet Wilcox (PhD candidate, UNSW)
- Cathy Mitchell

Project News

- The AJR Project’s website is now live: [www.justicereinvestment.unsw.edu.au](http://www.justicereinvestment.unsw.edu.au)

We intend this website to be the ‘go to’ place for researchers and others in the community interested in JR in Australia. The site will house a bibliographic database with all of the key JR documents in Australia and around the world, as well as serving as a repository of in-progress and completed AJR Project research. There will also be a dedicated section to links to a variety of sites and materials useful to other researchers.

- The AJR Project contributed a submission (available via our website) to the current senate inquiry on JR: *Value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia* and gave evidence to the senate hearing in Sydney. The inquiry has received over 100 submissions and its report is due to be released on 20 June 2013.

- Ethics approval is currently being obtained to undertake interviews with key academics and personnel from the various organisations involved with coordinating the
implementation of JR in the United States. It is anticipated that CIs will travel to conduct this first round of interviews in the US in late 2013.

- An initial review of the development and progress of JR across 28 states in America has been completed. This research is currently being used to inform the selection of a small number of states for sites visits, which will focus on learning about the implementation of different versions of JR. At this stage it is anticipated that CIs will travel to conduct this second round of interviews in the US in 2014.

**Recent Presentations**

CI David Brown presented “Justice Reinvestment: Promise and Pitfalls” at the Justice Horizons Seminar, New Zealand Ministry of Justice, Wellington, New Zealand, on Friday 22nd March. His presentation discussed the promise and pitfalls of Justice Reinvestment strategies and considered the translation of such strategies into the Australian and New Zealand context.

RA Courtney Young presented “Justice Reinvestment in Australia: more for your dollar in dealing with crime?” at the Costing Justice Workshop, TILES, University of Tasmania, on 15 February 2013. Her presentation discussed the JR framework, its operation in the USA, considered issues around generation and investment of ‘JR savings’ from penal moderation and reflected on the need to consider critically the Australiasiation of JR.

**Overseas Connections**

In June, CIs Melanie Schwartz and Chris Cunneen will travel to Bali to present “Justice Reinvestment in Australia: Reasons for Caution” at the Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory.

In July, CIs Julie Stubbs and Chris Cunneen will travel to Canada to present on JR at *Law on the Edge*, jointly presented by the Canadian Law and Society Association and the Law and Society Association of Australia and New Zealand at the University of British Columbia.

The AJR Project newsletter is designed to update stakeholders and interested parties in the progress of the project’s research.

For further information, please contact:
Courtney Young,
Research Associate,
AJR Project, UNSW, Sydney.
Email: courtney.young@unsw.edu.au