

Milan, 21 October 2016

Ms Toni Matulick
Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia
Email – legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Matulick,

I am Professor of Criminology and Director of Transcrime, the Research Centre on Transnational Crime of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan. In 2003-04, I was President of the *European Society of Criminology* and I have been a consultant to the United Nations, Council of Europe, the European Union and various national governments over many years.

I have regular contact with Australian criminologists and through discussions with these colleagues I have been made aware of the proposed legislation that seeks to repeal the Australian Institute of Criminology's legislation and the government's proposal to merge the functions of the Institute with the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission.

Although there are benefits to be had in enabling a police intelligence agency to have access to criminological research and criminologists, I believe that it is unnecessary for an independent research agency, such as the Institute, to be integrated formally into an intelligence agency, simply to make its research available. From a European perspective, it is clear that academic, social scientific research that can assist in policy formulation is best kept as independent as possible of government and criminal justice agencies. It can then conduct research and present the results of research in an objective way – even if the research findings may not be supportive of criminal justice agencies' or government policy. Criminologists can always work as consultants to government agencies and I believe that this is a more effective approach than actually employing the researchers within law enforcement bodies. This consultancy approach has been used by Transcrime for many years and proved to be cost-effective and efficient in creating independent research evidence for the relevant organisations.

Over the years, the Australian Institute of Criminology's research has been of great significance and used by organisations in Europe regularly. It has also played an important role as one of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime research bodies. The Institute's research has been broad in scope and not confined to policing and organized crime, and I have concern that should the proposed merger proceed, its focus may become more narrow. This would reduce greatly its international impact and relevance for topics that might not deal directly with organized crime and law enforcement.

Since the Australian Institute of Criminology was established, it has provided important, rigorous criminological research that has assisted organisations throughout the world. Its administrative model has, I believe, worked extremely well, and I personally believe that it should be permitted to operate as it was originally established - as a separate, independent research organization, rather than being aligned with a government intelligence agency that would inevitably change its focus, make data collection difficult and potentially unethical, and restrict the public dissemination of its research.

I hope that my personal views will assist the Committee in dealing with this proposed legislation.

Yours sincerely,

Ernesto U. Savona

Director and Professor of Criminology