

Editorial

As this edition of South African Crime Quarterly was about to go to print the Child Justice Bill was entering the final stages before being passed into law. On 5 September the National Council of Provinces passed the Bill after the Select Committee on Justice and Security Affairs had made minor technical changes to it. It will now be returned to the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Affairs for approval before being sent to President Mbeki for signature. In recognition of several years of research, advocacy and hard work put into the Bill both by civil society and civil servants, we have dedicated two articles in this edition of SACQ to the Child Justice Bill.

Veterans of the Child Justice Bill process, Ann Skelton and Jacqui Gallinetti, provide an overview of the process and commentary on the role of civil society in determining the content and philosophy of the Bill. According to them, civil society action around the Child Justice Bill has achieved positive results. In its current form the Bill reflects the views of the children's rights lobby in that (amongst other things) it provides the legal basis for children in conflict with the law to be diverted out of the criminal justice system so as to reduce long-term harm. Meanwhile, Thulane Gxubane takes a sobering look at some of the real problems of implementation from the point of view of probation officers and laments the fact that social workers have not played an active role in policy formation.

Perhaps fittingly, given the similarities in the role played by civil society in the drafting of the Firearms Control Act and the Child Justice Bill, Noel Stott and Ben Coetzee contribute an article to this edition that reports on the implementation of firearms control policies by the SAPS, in particular the destruction of confiscated firearms. Few pieces of legislation, aside from the Child Justice Bill, have attracted the concerted and sustained attention of civil society, or have benefited from targeted research by the research community, as did the Firearms Control Act. By the time it was passed in 2000 (and entered into force in 2004) the Gun Control Alliance, representing over 180 national, regional and local organisations and 4 000 individuals had spent several years engaged in active lobbying and research. The success of their campaign was evident in the stringent control that the Act places on civilian firearm ownership.

Since the Jali Commission there has been enormous concern about the high level of corruption in South African prisons. Lukas Muntingh reports on the actions taken by DCS to reduce corruption throughout the prison system, particularly the service agreement that was entered into with the Special Investigation Unit, and points to the structural difficulties associated with putting an end to corruption in a system that lends itself to the practice.

I hope you enjoy the new design of SACQ and I welcome your feedback about any aspect of Crime Quarterly.

Chandré Gould