

Guest editor's introduction to Volume 5, Issue 1

Alistair Harkness
School of Arts
Federation University Australia
Churchill, Victoria
AUSTRALIA

Contact author – Alistair Harkness; alistair.harkness@federation.edu.au; +61 3 5122 6760

The study of rural crime – and contributions to the rapidly growing field of rural criminology – is proceeding in leaps and bounds.

Since November 2018, there has been three critical developments in the rural criminology field. First was the launch of the *American Society of Criminology's Division of Rural Criminology* at the 2018 annual meeting in Atlanta, and the Division has successfully held its first elections and may we wish those elected as office bearers every good wish for their term. Second was the creation in mid-2019 of the *International Society for the Study of Rural Crime Inc* (www.issrc.net) which serves to provide its membership with opportunities to share, collaborate and learn. Third was the launch in Armidale, New South Wales, in September 2019 of the revitalised *Centre for Rural Criminology* hosted by the University of New England.

Much conference related activity has been occurring in this space, too, over the same time. A 'Rural Crime and the Law' conference was held in Armidale, New South Wales, in November 2018; and the *European Society of Criminology* held in Ghent, Brussels, in September 2019 had a series of rural crime-themed papers and a dedicated rural criminology panel. The 2019 *American Society of Criminology* conference in San Francisco will feature up to 14 rural-focused panels and roundtable events, and in 2020, the 13th biennial conference of *Criminal Justice and Security in Central and Eastern Europe* will be themed around 'Perspectives of Rural Safety, Security and Rural Criminology'.

However, it is not just the sharing of research and insights at meetings and conferences that is burgeoning – so, too, is the publication of research in monograph form. In 2020, the new Routledge Monograph Series in Rural Criminology (edited by this Journal's regular editor Joe Donnermeyer) will launch with a bang with the publication of the first two in the series: a sole-authored publication from Donnermeyer on 'The Criminology of Food and Agriculture' and a collection edited by me on 'Rural Crime Prevention'. Two further works in the pipeline for this series will be on rural policing, and another providing an international view of violence against rural women.

Understanding crime and rural communities workshop, February 2019

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (www.assa.edu.au) provides an opportunity for social scientists to, indeed, coalesce various voices on a theme through its annual workshop



Guest editor's Introduction to Volume 5, Issue 1 – Harkness

program. The Academy challenges conveners and participants in these funded workshops to exchange ideas intellectually, explore connections between research and policy, support early career researchers and establish and develop ongoing collaborations for research. I, along with Naomi Smith (Federation University), Bec Strating (Latrobe University) and Rob White (University of Tasmania), convened a workshop program to unpack an array of issues around rural crime and communities in an Australian context. We were assisted in many practical ways by Melina Stewart-North.

Held on 7 and 8 February 2019 at Federation University Australia's Gippsland Campus in Churchill, Victoria with 21 scholars from 12 different universities and from four Australian states and with one international rural criminologist participating, the objectives of the Workshop were four-fold:

- develop a stronger understanding of conceptualisations of rurality in a contemporary Australian context;
- expand present understandings of dimensions of rural, regional and remote crime;
- facilitate an interdisciplinary dialogue which fosters collaborative and creative understandings of rurality and rural crime; and
- disseminate scholarly outputs that contribute to expanding awareness, knowledge, discourse and debate regarding rural crime.

In both paper presentations and in discussions, participants drew upon a diversity of cross-disciplinary perspectives, from criminology and criminal justice; sociology; politics and political science; journalism; communications and writing; anthropology; Indigenous studies and Indigenous health; and history. This Workshop, I believe, serves as an exemplar of the unity of purpose of cross-disciplinary, cross-jurisdictional colleagues with an interest in improving circumstances and outcomes for rural communities, and perhaps might be a model that could be replicated in various other jurisdictions.

About Volume 5, Issue 1

Volume 5, Issue 1 of the *International Journal of Rural Criminology* presents the work of seven of the 21 Workshop participants. The Workshop's one invited international guest was Joe Donnermeyer, referred to by a television reporter who covered the event, quite rightly, as a "rural crime expert", whose paper presented at the Workshop has formed the basis for the first article in this issue. Donnermeyer appropriately canvasses the emergence of rural criminology, and with so much occurring in this space now, it is without doubt an opportune time to reflect on developments in the study of rural crime. Donnermeyer charts key milestones and, importantly, too, reflects upon the hitherto traditional dichotomies adopted when considering rural crime, arguing that new frameworks can be developed and applied. He provides a challenge for future rural criminological research: Go local! Go nominal!

Two empirical, data-based articles follow: from Kyle Mulrooney and Jenny Wise; and from myself and my colleague Jo-ann Larkins. Mulrooney and Wise consider punitive attitudes *across* geographical areas – a largely untapped area of research focus – and drawing upon original research of such attitudes in Canada utilising data from the Canadian Elections Study. They

emphasise the importance of appreciating the urban-rural divide on penal populism, and introduce us to the notion of ‘rurban’ – the mix of the rural and the urban brought about by both urban expansion and population growth. Harkness and Larkins present findings from a survey of farmers in Victoria, Australia, which sought their attitudes to police and policing. They observe that, whilst farmers’ attitudes to rural policing are generally positive, a perception exists that there is a misalignment between the policing focus and farming communities’ priorities, and that the police are under-resourced.

The next two articles have adopted case study-based approaches. David Baker explores the dynamics of police-community relations in the context of industrial and environmental disputes in rural, regional and remote places, reflecting on key issues associated with maintaining public order. He highlights that in the past ‘escalated force’ was a go-to policing strategy, but this was replaced first by a strategy of ‘negotiated management’ and more recently to ‘strategic incapacitation’. Drawing upon two particular Australian case studies – an industrial dispute in Tasmania in 1992 and an environmental protest regarding the ongoing operation of a power station in Victoria in 2009 – Baker unpacks the intricacies of public order policing in non-urban settings. Marg Camilleri’s article considers the significant challenges faced by victims in the criminal justice system generally, but provides a particular focus on the challenges that individuals with a disability in rural communities experience when accessing justice. Her article deftly assesses the intersectionality of victimisation, disability and rurality, and utilises a particular case study (drawn from a larger project) to illustrate the challenges for one individual whose circumstances are indicative of many others. She notes that the challenges of disability are quite exacerbated by rurality, where distances are greater and a paucity of services can present additional barriers.

Situating his article on circumstances in South Australia, Andrew Groves explores the usage of alcohol and other drugs in rural areas. Poorer health outcomes, poorer service provision and some social elements of rural life are inhibiting factors when addressing alcohol and other drug use in rural places, and he observes that a law and order response is insufficient in tackling this issue and that any interventions ought to take factor in rural contexts. The final article in this issue, from Rob White, argues that green criminology requires a sense of primacy in our considerations of rural offending, particularly so in the current era of enormous environmental change. He focusses on water theft in rural contexts and argues that issues such as scarcity of water, climate disruption, economic bottom lines, quality and quantity of water and ecology often come a significantly down the list in criminological considerations. Indeed, the theft of water can become a ‘folk crime’, one that is not necessarily seen as bad, and thus rationalisation of deviance and denial of harm, therefore, occurs.

Donnermeyer’s appeal to go local and nominal, I am sure you will agree, has been met by the articles contained in this special edition – and I hope you enjoy absorbing their content. I am very grateful for being handed the reins of the journal for this issue – I have most certainly enjoyed curating these quite fascinating contributions to scholarship in our field. Some readers might well be curious as to what has or will become of other contributions to the February 2019 Workshop – I can provide assurance that they will enter the public domain at some stage before too long.

Guest editor's Introduction to Volume 5, Issue 1 – Harkness

Whilst I have this opportunity, I would highly recommend all readers, regardless of geographic location or disciplinary home, to become actively involved (or indeed even more involved) in rural criminology and to share research, findings and musings. A perfect starting point and opportunity to do so is presented in the aforementioned form of *The International Society for the Study of Rural Crime*.

A note regarding submissions for future issues of the *International Journal of Rural Criminology*

There are three key requirements for the submission of manuscripts:

1. They should be submitted in Microsoft Word format
2. Endnotes (and not footnotes) are essential – to do so, click on the superscript command to indicate an additional comment (and give it a number), and then insert the comment between the end of the manuscript's narrative and the references
3. Please conform to APA style on reference format and citations within the narrative itself by either referring to https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html, or by using manuscripts from recent issues as a guide