



# The Greening of Criminology in Oceania

**Rob White**

University of Tasmania, Australia

## Abstract

This article examines the history of green criminology in the Oceania region and identifies the wide set of local and global challenges that will shape its future development. While there are undoubtedly crime and criminal justice issues throughout Oceania, most of the distinctly criminological work has taken place in the regional metropolises of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. The article demonstrates that the history of green criminology in Australasia is simultaneously a global history. It begins with a short reflection on the nature and context of intellectual production and a description of the initial forays into green criminology. This is followed by exposition of the development of green criminology in Australasia, first by discussing the international dimensions of the emerging field, and second by tracing its evolution at the regional level. The article concludes with a few observations on present environmental developments and political forces that are and will continue to affect the status, sustainability and vitality of green criminology across Oceania.

**Keywords:** Australasia, Oceania, environmental crime; green criminology; history.

## Introduction

This article examines the history of green criminology in the Oceania region and identifies the wide set of local and global challenges that will shape its future development.

Oceania is the collective name for the islands found in the Pacific Ocean. For the purposes of this article, these usually include those identified ethno-geographically as Australasia (Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand), Melanesia (East Timor, Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu), Micronesia (Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Wake Island) and Polynesia (Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Niue, Pitcairn, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna Islands, American Samoa).

Key sources of work and revenue for the Pacific Islands are agriculture, fishing and tourism. Natural resources such as lead, zinc, nickel and gold are also mined across parts of the region. A number of countries rely on foreign aid for economic infrastructure projects. Likewise, some countries welcome foreign assistance for the training of police (in most of the small island countries, there are no standing armies) and the establishment and maintenance of maritime patrols (especially in relation to policing of illegal fishing). For instance, the Australian Government has the Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP), which involves commitments to provide 24 new Guardian-class Patrol Boats, three landing craft and other maritime assets as well as region-wide contracted aerial surveillance to enable targeted, intelligence-driven patrols to respond to transnational crime (Australian Government, 2025). In March 2015, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Fiji Police Force (FPF) signed a new agreement to enhance cross-border operations. As part of the Memorandum of Understanding, the AFP will support the FPF delivery of projects to boost operational coordination across transnational and priority crime types, as well as improve leadership, professional development and corporate support (Australian Federal Police, 2025).



Except where otherwise noted, content in this journal is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). As an open access journal, articles are free to use with proper attribution. ISSN: 2202-8005 (Online)

While there are undoubtedly crime and criminal justice issues throughout Oceania, most of the distinctly *criminological* work has taken place in the regional metropolises of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. In a similar vein, while environmental and climate-related issues loom large for the Pacific Islands, there has been little research and scholarly activity specifically identified as “green criminology” in the region. Further comment on this will be provided later in the article.

For now, given the relative dearth of commentary outside Australasia, I will concentrate on what I know best and those regions doing the most in the green criminology area. The history of green criminology in Australasia is simultaneously a global history. The intention of this overview is to explain why and how this is so.

Given my specific place and influence in this history, the article also necessarily reflects my own personal observations and interactions along the way. Our views of events and trends – and, indeed, of each other – are always partial. They can never be complete. What we personally know is an approximate truth, not the whole story. This especially applies to historical narrative that is largely autoethnographic in nature. Yet, somewhere, somehow, there are truths that emerge and sentiments that resonate. Events do happen in real time; developments do occur over diverse spaces. This is the truth that I have tried to convey below.

With these caveats in mind, the discussion begins with a short reflection on the nature and context of intellectual production, and initial forays into the green criminology area. This is followed by a two-pronged description and analysis of the development of green criminology in Australasia: one aspect focuses on the international dimensions of the emerging field; the other on its evolution at the regional level. The intervention concludes with a few observations regarding present environmental developments and political forces that affect, and will continue to affect, the status, sustainability and vitality of green criminology across Oceania.

### **Social Contexts of Intellectual Production**

The process of knowledge production is shaped by material and ideological shifts in the working lives of criminological researchers and teachers, as well as by the wider social, economic and political climate. It is also marked by the initiatives of specific individuals, the idiosyncrasies of the chance encounter and moments of unexpected interest.

To understand the greening of criminology in Australasia, it is useful to first consider the intellectual field within which it emerged. For example, intellectual histories of criminology and sociology point to the ways in which the institutional base of specific disciplines or fields shapes the general character of academic work (Carson & O’Malley, 1989; Cohen, 1981). In this part of the world, the criminology field was initially constructed first and foremost as a service discipline for state agencies (such as courts, police and corrections), especially given the importance of crime control as a key strategic interest (Carson & O’Malley, 1989).

The emergence of a critical criminology that challenged the generally conservative nature of administrative criminology was associated with the political struggles in the 1970s. This emergence stemmed from action around such issues as prison abolition, police misconduct, Indigenous rights, racism and women’s liberation (Brown & Hogg, 1992). At a theoretical level, the impact of these social movements is perhaps most evident in feminist scholarship and research, and the analytical and political challenges of feminism continue to be highly influential throughout the field in Australasia today. The establishment of criminology within the tertiary education sector also spurred the development of academic criminology as a bona fide program of study and research, and further opened the door to progressive, critical work (Pratt & Priestly, 1999).

Redefining what crimes are deemed to be important and promoting alternative crime-control responses are part and parcel of a larger political process involving many different players and diverse ideological crosscurrents. To some extent, these efforts also describe the trajectory of green criminology in Australasia. That is, green criminology began as a niche and boutique area of interest and research in the academy. It was located on the periphery of mainstream criminology and was largely associated with critical criminology. This is mainly due to its identification of and concerns about harms rarely considered within conventional criminological discourses and its questioning of power structures that allow environmental crimes and harms to occur and proliferate. The critiques may have been increasingly compelling, but for many years their influence was hardly felt within criminological circles. Its origins were humble, and for lengthy periods its prospects looked rather bleak, as explained below.

## Initial Stirrings

Prior to the 1990s, there was a scarcity of criminological writings and research on environmental crime in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. My own first step into this domain was an article I wrote in 1994, in which I perused literature on “deep ecology” and “social ecology” (White, 1994). This interest stemmed from anti-racist work in which I was involved at the time, part of which included responding to a section of the environment movement that was against immigration and that called for population control in ways that dovetailed with the racist right. My attempts to understand the basis of this (regressive) position, and the philosophical and political debates surrounding it, was to later provide the initial foundations of an eco-justice framework used to analyse and interpret environmental harm.

Aside from several early pieces by Mark Halsey (1997a, 1997b), who later shifted away from this initial interest and was to further express opposition to the very idea of a “green” criminology (Halsey, 2004), the next intervention of note came in the form of two articles published in 1998. The timing is important. The Sydney Olympics had just been announced, yet millions of Sydney residents were being told to boil their water as there was an outbreak of cryptosporidium and giardia in the city water supply. I was outraged by this and wrote a critical piece (White, 1998). That same year, Halsey and I offered an analysis that tried to put these issues into an eco-philosophy context, building on previous work by each of us (Halsey & White, 1998).

This initial foray into the area was followed a few years later by an edited book (White, 2004), which included a chapter on criminology, social regulation and environmental harm. After this, I published numerous journal articles and book chapters, as well as a series of interrelated books that laid the foundations and continuing evolution of green criminological conceptualizations and practical applications.

For example, important theoretical building blocks were initially provided in the book *Crimes Against Nature: Environmental Criminology and Ecological Justice* (White, 2008), which provided an elaboration of environmental harms (incorporating wider definitions of crime than provided in strictly legal definitions), environmental laws (including enforcement, prosecution and sentencing) and environmental regulation (systems of civil and criminal law designed to manage, protect and preserve specified environments and species, and to manage the negative consequences of specific industrial processes). The book focused on providing an overarching criminological perspective within which to study environmental crime.

Subsequent years have seen a wide range of authored books dealing with topics such as transnational environmental crime (White, 2011), an eco-justice approach to environmental harm (White, 2013), climate change (White, 2012, 2018), green criminological theory (White, 2022) and applied green criminology (White, 2023). With co-author Diane Heckenberg, the first comprehensive textbook in the area, *Green Criminology: An Introduction to the Study of Environmental Harm*, was published (White & Heckenberg, 2014). Written from an international perspective, this book set out a template for further analyses in the three broad areas of conceptual and methodological foundations, transgressions and victimization, and intervention and prevention. Interspersed with these titles were books by initially overseas-based Australians, such as Reece Walters (2011), and other books by locally based authors.

Over the years, I have been privileged to edit and co-edit numerous collections relevant to green criminology. These have been published by Willan Publishing (White, 2009, 2010), Routledge (White, 2014), Edward Elgar (White, 2020), Ashgate (Spapens et al., 2014, 2016, 2018; Brisman et al., 2015) and Palgrave Macmillan (Pink & White, 2016). The most recent collection, the *Elgar Encyclopedia of Environmental Crime*, was published by Edward Elgar in 2025 (White, 2025). These varied publications provided opportunities for international collaboration as well as the elaboration of specific topics, from environmental regulation and law enforcement to the nature and dynamics of environmental harms and crimes.

This all sounds very productive and robust in retrospect. But getting to where we are today was difficult, and entirely due to the development of green criminology as an international project. Let me explain.

## Branching Outwards

For a start, green criminology as we know it today emerged at around the same time in various locations, including the United States, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and the United Kingdom. Similar observations have been made by others who have been an integral part of these developments (South, 2014). Later commentaries and histories also acknowledged the importance of such matters to the non-English speaking world, and for those countries and regions not considered part of the global metropole (e.g. Arroyo-Quiroz & Wyatt, 2018; Cao, 2017; Chan-Quijano et al., 2025; Eman et al., 2009; Goyes, 2019, 2023; Goyes & South, 2019; Goyes et al., 2017; Wong, 2019).

It seems that the increasing urgency and saliency of environmental issues inspired the simultaneous emergence of green criminology across the globe – something that now provides our field with a modicum of reputational and professional legitimacy. The question is how the Australasia story connects with these developments elsewhere.

It does so in several ways. To take just one example, it was Brian Willan (founder of Willan Publishing) who encouraged me in those early days of rather singular efforts. It was Brian who accepted *Crimes Against Nature* for publication. It was also Brian who, out of the blue, commissioned me to produce the edited work *Environmental Crime: A Reader* (White, 2009) and later published the edited book *Global Environmental Harm: Criminological Perspectives* (White, 2010). Brian later sold the business to Routledge, where his daughter and skilful editor and environmental activist Jules Willan oversaw the publication of *Transnational Environmental Crime* (White, 2011). The kind of encouragement and support provided by Brian can be pivotal in a person's life. For me, feeling rather alone and isolated at the time, it was crucial. And it gave me the confidence to keep following my passion. This is exactly the sort of unpredictable encounter and opportunistic opening, stemming from contacts outside of Australia/Oceania, that motivated me to push on regardless of the relative dearth of research and scholarship in the region at the time. What publishers do can have a major impact on individual and group trajectories.

Strong international connections have indeed been vital to developments of green criminology Down Under, and vice versa. For example, I initiated and chaired what became the first annual meeting of the International Green Criminology Working Group in San Francisco in 2009. In the lead-up to the ASC conference, Avi Brisman had kindly volunteered to book space for the meeting, but so many people turned up, from numerous countries, that we had to move to a much larger area to accommodate the 20+ participants. In a similar vein, work in co-organizing conferences with Toine Spapens from the Netherlands (Delft, Tilburg, Cardiff, Sarajevo) helped to pave the way for the annual European Green Criminology conference.

International collaboration gave me warmth, company and inspiration. From being relatively on my own in Oceania, I became part of a distinct community of scholars and researchers. These various international links made it easier to undertake green criminology during periods when relatively little was happening around environmental crime and/or green criminology in Australia (and Aotearoa New Zealand). The picture here is very different today. There are lots of people doing green criminology, as well as excellent crossover of green criminology writers with Earth Laws advocates, environmental activists, environmental regulation specialists and conservation biologists.

Being virtually the only person doing green criminology in the country/region for many years, it is hard to describe just how morally, intellectually and spiritually isolating and difficult this was – and how my colleagues worldwide provided the boost I needed to keep ploughing onwards and upwards. In particular, the generosity of people such as Ragnhild Sollund, Toine Spapens, Nigel South, Tanya Wyatt, Avi Brisman, Ron Kramer, Angus Nurse, Noriyoshi Takemura and Melissa Jarrell (and many more) were instrumental to my own and the field's development, and led the way for the next generation of scholars such as David Goyes, Daan van Uhm, Lisselott Bisshop, Rebecca Wong and Lorenzo Natali. Now we have another "generation" of researchers and scholars, especially in Spain, Mexico and Oceania, but also emerging in Iran, Brazil, Portugal and Indonesia, which is very heartening.

As in any field of academic inquiry, there are differences in opinions, personalities and approaches across the green criminology field. There has been a wide range of influential writers in green criminology over the years, but those who stand out for me have been supportive, cooperative and collaborative, as opposed to competitive, reclusive and/or exclusionary. What particularly distinguishes the international cohort of green criminologists is that they are overwhelmingly friendly and generous, with considerable free exchange of ideas and materials. I am also aware that many of us found comfort in being members of a growing, passionate group of intellectuals during those periods when the study of environmental harm was still marginalized in our own countries.

International connections take different forms, and this too is important to understand for green criminology's development. For instance, I was fortunate to have presented a keynote speech at the 2010 INTERPOL conference on International Environmental Crime in Lyon, and in 2012 was co-organizer of a conference on Environmental Crime hosted by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Institute in Rome. With regard to the first conference, I became aware that INTERPOL had an environmental crime section and so decided to email the head of that section. I was sitting in my office in Hobart the next day when the return email arrived. Imagine my surprise when I found out that not only was the head of this unit an Australian, but David Higgins was from Tasmania and had graduated from the very same university where I now worked. We later collaborated on several projects relating to environmental law enforcement at the international level.

In 2013, I was invited to be a member of the Science and Policy Advisory Board for the European Union's research project "European Union Action to Fight Environmental Crime" [EFFACE] and in 2016, I was invited to deliver the keynote address

at the concluding EFFACE conference in Brussels. In late 2013, I was one of several keynote speakers as part of the first American Society of Criminology (ASC) Presidential Panel on Green Criminology (along with Ragnhild Sollund from Norway and Nigel South from the United Kingdom). This happened when Robert Agnew was president of the ASC. He had recently become interested in green criminology (Agnew, 2011, 2013) and in addition to the impact of his own work (especially on climate change and crime), he was an important figure in fostering the public recognition of green criminology as an emergent sub-field of criminology. It was Agnew who added “green criminology” to the themes covered by the ASC, and who asked Nigel South to curate that first year, including the Presidential Panel. Having influential people stepping in to publicly support our endeavours is a powerful way to gain recognition and generate a sense of critical mass. Through events such as this, green criminology was exposed to a wider, more mainstream academic audience.

The international sweep of green criminology was also reflected in invitations to speak as a keynote speaker at the European Union Environmental Enforcement Network conference at Oxford in 2017 and at the British Society of Criminology Conference in 2019. The first ever conference of the Canadian Environmental Crime Research Network was held in Oshawa, Canada in 2025, a welcome sign of the times. These events have been vital connection points and important networking forums for green criminologists generally, helping to join up academics and practitioners, critics and official agencies. Much has been learned through such initiatives.

The appointment of green criminologist Tanya Wyatt as Lead Researcher – Crimes that Affect the Environment at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been an important development. General reports are being produced on environmental crimes worldwide, along with specific reports on deforestation, wildlife trafficking, climate change and policing, and illegal mining of critical minerals. These are adding depth to our knowledge of these crimes (UNODC, 2024a, 2024b, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). Importantly, members of the international green criminology community, including from Australia, are contributing to the production of these reports as writers and reviewers, further entrenching our expertise and experience in formal, official documentation of environmental harms. Contributions are being made via informal and formal connections by a passionate and growing community of scholars united in doing what they can to collectively advance green criminological work.

The globalization of green criminology has also been fostered by publications in English explicitly incorporating contributions from outside the metropolitan countries (for example, *Global Environmental Harms* in 2010), and later by volumes specifically written in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Indonesian, Persian and French. The field has also benefited from close collaborations of scholars and researchers worldwide in attending and setting up international/regional forums and conferences, and from public appreciation of the history and importance of engagement in green criminology themes and activism outside the metropolises of the United Kingdom and United States. The internationalization of green criminology has also been facilitated by various book series (particularly from Palgrave Macmillan, Ashgate and Routledge) and the growth of interest from many publishers (for example, Bristol University Press, Emerald and Edward Elgar). A lot has happened over the last 20 years!

Over time, there has also been greater crossover between green criminology and rights of nature advocates and human rights activists, as well as between green criminology and conservation criminology, not to mention the conservation biology and climate change researchers. The cross-disciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of the eco-justice project has never been more apparent or urgent. Green criminology is a “field” rather than a “discipline” – that is, it comprises several key disciplines, such as sociology, law, history, cultural studies, forensics and politics, although there is a distinctive “criminology” flavour, given its focus on offenders, victims and criminal justice institutions and processes. To address complex “real-world” problems, however, demands flexible research and practical approaches to problems in ways that somehow combine different disciplinary expertise. Fundamentally, interdisciplinary research and practice are context driven involve varying degrees of collaboration, integration and interaction between different disciplines, the substantive nature of which will vary based on needs, interests and circumstances. Ecology is central to this project.

## Developments Back Home

In Australasia, there has been a slow, initially uneven but steady incorporation of green criminology into the mainstream. However, green criminology did not really exist (except for my own work) until around 2010, and even then, only a couple of people were involved (for example, Di Heckenberg, one of my PhD students). I remember being in the United States at a conference and being asked about my research “team” and research “lab”. This was when I was literally the only one writing in the area from Australia (Reece Walters was based in the United Kingdom at the time). No resources, no funding, no colleagues. I booked a green criminology and environmental crime session at the ANZSOC Conference in Hobart (which I was co-convening) in the early 2000s and the only people who attended were me and the other presenter. It was a rather awkward and trying time.

Interestingly, some of the first noteworthy research on environmental crime was carried out by government-funded agencies, in particular the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC). In part reflecting the interests of industry (in this case, the fishing industry) and industry regulators (in this case, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority), the AIC undertook a series of interrelated studies examining crime in the fisheries sector (e.g. Anderson & McCusker, 2005; Putt & Anderson, 2007; Tailby & Gant, 2002). This work was clearly tied to specific business and government interests, with an orientation towards practical intervention and policy development. The emphasis was on combatting legislatively defined crimes rather than addressing environmental harms more generally, as per the normal work of official agencies such as the Australian Federal Police (AFP), federal regulatory agencies with coercive powers (e.g. AFMA), customs and border security and domestic police services. But it was important work, nonetheless.

Evidence of a further shift in general acceptance of green criminology topics was the publication of the AIC report on *Environmental Crime* in 2010, written by Samantha Bricknell (2010). This was not a commissioned report but stemmed from nascent interest within the AIC itself. The report helped to put green criminology on the local criminal justice and criminology map, albeit temporarily. It would be another decade before it really took off as a bona fide research area. There were exceptions to this general rule. For example, in 2011, I received a large Australian Research Council (ARC) grant on “Policing Hazardous Waste Disposal”; later in 2024, a Deakin-led ARC grant of which I am part, coordinated by Reece Walters, was successful in gaining funding for a project on “Water Theft in the Murray-Darling Basin”. A few wins have been achieved along the way to green criminology’s growth and expansion.

About 15 years ago (from 2010), green criminology basically existed in pockets of expertise. Units or courses on environmental crime were taught in places such as the University of Tasmania and Queensland University of Technology in Australia, and Victoria University of Wellington in Aotearoa New Zealand. Sarah Wright Monod (later writing as Sarah Monod de Froideville – e.g. Monod de Froideville & Bowling, 2022) from Wellington co-authored a chapter with me for the *Palgrave Handbook of Australian and New Zealand Criminology, Crime and Justice* (White & Wright Monod, 2017) and green criminology started to feature occasionally in mainstream criminology textbooks. Researchers such as Reece Walters, who returned to Australia around 2010, were part of international author teams writing on significant topics such as water-related crimes, harms and security (Brisman et al., 2018), as well as publishing regularly on green criminology topics such as wildfires, air pollution, resource-related human rights and environmental activism in international journals. Located in different parts of the country, Reece and I each taught courses in green criminology, supervised postgraduate students and published on relevant eco-justice topics (including joint articles). But the field was basically thin on the ground.

Things really took off from about 2020 onwards. In addition to increased publication rates of articles and book chapters by a growing list of contributors (that included postgraduate and early career researchers), a major catalyst for this was the Palgrave Studies in Green Criminology book series, which provided a ready outlet for those writing in the area. Early titles specifically from Australia included *Radical Environmentalism* by John Cianchi (2015) and an edited collection about collaborative state intervention on environmental crime (Pink & White, 2016). There was also a general collection, *Emerging Issues in Green Criminology*, edited by Australians Reece Walters and Diane Westerhuis, along with Tanya Wyatt from the United Kingdom, in 2013. However, it was later releases that really brought green criminological analyses to greater local and world attention. For example, in Australia the series published a major work by Mark Hamilton (2021) on environmental restorative justice, while across the “Ditch”, it featured books by Mark Wright on environmental regulation and protection in Aotearoa New Zealand (2021) and Russil Durrant’s thought-provoking *Invertebrate Justice* (2024). These publications served to give local authors a higher profile and hopefully greater confidence about working in the area. And, as with my experience with Brian Willan, I am sure a supportive publisher can make a massive difference in terms of legitimacy, presence and reputation.

The weight of numbers and the urgency of environmental issues is now translating into enhanced mainstream attention and incorporation. For example, I delivered a keynote address on climate challenges for criminal justice at the 50th Anniversary Conference of the Australian Institute of Criminology in 2023. This was after a period in which the previous right-wing government had expressly prohibited federal agencies such as the AIC from public discussion of “climate change” or the use of such terminology. In 2024, I was a keynote speaker at the Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology in Christchurch on climate change issues. We are not only being seen and included, but becoming more prominent. Today, green criminology is very much a growing concern, with new leaders and key players emerging. One feature of its development in Australasia has been the links across cognate areas (such as rural criminology, law, media studies and environmental regulation), and this is also being reflected in postcolonial work around environmental and species justice issues (e.g. rights of nature and legal personhood for rivers). There is also crossover work around the concept of ecocide, involving a wide variety of fields and disciplines. Increasingly, it is clear that green *criminology* is just once facet of the multiple struggles for social and ecological justice.

Another characteristic of green criminology in this region is the intrinsically international perspective that underpins many of the contributions from Oceania. This is partly due to our geographical location, which some perceive as the “outer reaches” of the planet. The postcolonial experience is one of always looking from the “periphery” to the “metropolises” of the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe for insight and recognition. But, as this article has outlined, the interaction has been reciprocal and mutually influential.

The character of green criminology in Australasia (and Oceania) also rests on appreciation of the impact of the European colonial experience, and the ongoing political struggles of Indigenous peoples across the region. For Indigenous peoples, the struggles for self-determination and land rights merge into wider ecological concerns revolving around reverence for and protection of Mother Earth (Graham, 1999; see also Goyes et al., 2021). Across the Pacific, greater efforts are being made to consolidate specific interests around island governance (and, in Australia, “Country”), and to assert both national and pan-Pacific Indigenous presence and forms of governance. Greater exposure to Southeast Asian scholars and activists, including via joint Australian and Asian criminology conferences, has also heightened awareness of regional issues, differences and opportunities across the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The recent formation of a green criminology “thematic group” within ANZSOC, led by Mark Hamilton, Rachel Killean and Kajsa Lundberg, has energized the sector. Being able to join likeminded people in pursuit of social and ecological justice is uplifting and immediately reduces feelings of isolation and marginalization. It also helps that initiatives taken by these organizers include interventions in the publishing world as well – as witnessed by their soon-to-be-published edited book, *Conceptualising Justice: A Green Criminological Perspective*, which features writers from this region (Killean et al., 2026). The renewed presence of Reece Walters in Australia, first in Queensland and then in his present job at Deakin University in Victoria, where he works alongside Alex Baird, as well as Laura Bedford at the University of Melbourne, is providing further impetus for green criminology teaching and research. Moreover, there is greater awareness of the contributions of green criminology across Oceania as climate change manifests in rising sea levels, cyclone seasons intensify and climate-related migration becomes a reality affecting everyone within the Australasian and Pacific regions. This is translating into more teaching options within higher education, as well as inclusion of green criminology in handbooks, textbooks and monographs.

### **Environmental Harms and Future Tense**

On 9 September 2024, Vanuatu, Samoa and Fiji submitted a formal proposal for recognition of ecocide as a crime under the Rome Statute. Other Pacific nations have long advocated for stronger international action on global warming, including urgent action to reduce carbon emissions, holding countries to account for their climate contributions and failures to curb climate-related emissions, and compensation. Climate-related migration is now a matter of urgency and planning, not foresight and precaution, as island states such as Tuvalu suffer the ravages of rapidly rising seas. The triple planetary crisis of climate change, diminishment of nature and biodiversity, and pollution of air, land and water, is fundamentally altering life in Oceania.

Much of the destruction, damage and harm can be attributed to global phenomena such as global heating. But it can also be particularized in the form of illegal fishing, the environmental impacts of the tourist industry (e.g. the cruise ship industry), contamination resulting from farming practices (witness pollution linked to the dairy industry in Aotearoa New Zealand), wildlife trafficking and denuding of freshwater systems and agricultural lands due to climate disruptions and prolonged drought. The spread of species to new waters and lands threatens endemic species. Meanwhile, deforestation continues to blight the landscape.

On the other hand, innovative conceptualizations and interventions are emerging from the region. These pertain to the increasing interest in the rights of nature, the provision of legal personhood for specific rivers, species (such as dolphins) and ecosystems, and greater recognition of and contestation over Indigenous worldviews that privilege holistic understandings of and relationships with nature. In Australia, Indigenous knowledge and techniques are now legitimated as bona fide preventive responses for climate-related phenomena such as wildfires. Local traditions are reinforcing the notion that humans are part of, not apart from, nature, with responsibilities and obligations arising.

Recent themes for present and future development of Oceania green criminology include conceptual, empirical and practical work around topics such as ecocide, the rights of nature, legal personhood for certain non-human species, Indigenous sovereignty, epistemology and cosmology, and the ramifications of global warming and climate change. Many of these issues are not unique to Oceania, although they manifest here in very specific ways. There are vulnerabilities related to island and coastal living. There are financial and organizational deficiencies stemming from lack of human and material resources. There are geopolitical forces at play as China, Australia and other regional hegemonic nation-states intrude into and try to influence future development and policy directions.

For green criminology, solidarity across the region is needed as we collectively face that which imperils us all. This must be an enterprise guided by those most affected by environmental harms and climate-related emergencies. Social research and co-designed projects are needed now more than ever. The urgent need for action means a multitude of projects need to happen simultaneously, with practical outcomes for communities in the here-and-now.

Yet the foundations of green criminology research, teaching and community engagement are also under threat institutionally. The higher education sector in Australia, for instance, is shedding labour everywhere, with the humanities and social sciences among the most prominent targets. Funding is tight, jobs are scarce and career opportunities are few. And this is in the most affluent of the region's countries. A different kind of solidarity is therefore needed here as well.

The combination of evident need and collective commitment will ensure that green criminology in Oceania will continue to flourish, although the specific conditions under which it does so are still to be fully determined. One thing is clear, however: time is against us. Climate change is accelerating, and the consequences are already disastrous for many in Oceania. Green criminological insight and intervention have therefore never been more important. For those living in Oceania it is, literally, a matter of life and death.

*Correspondence:* Rob White, Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Criminology, University of Tasmania, Australia. [r.d.white@utas.edu.au](mailto:r.d.white@utas.edu.au)

## References

- Agnew, R. (2011). Dire forecast: A theoretical model of the impact of climate change on crime. *Theoretical Criminology* 16(1): 21–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480611416843>
- Agnew, R. (2013). The ordinary acts that contribute to ecocide: A criminological analysis. In N. South, & A. Brisman (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of green criminology* (pp. 58–72). Routledge.
- Anderson, K. M. & McCusker, R. (2005). *Crime in the Australian fishing industry: Key issues*. AIC.
- Arroyo-Quiroz, A. & Wyatt, T. (Eds.). (2018). *Green crime in Mexico: A collection of case studies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Australian Federal Police. (2025, March 14). New agreement strengthens AFP partnership with Fiji Police Force. Media release.
- Australian Government (2025). Pacific Maritime Security Program. Australian Government – Defence, <https://www.defence.gov.au/defence-activities/programs-initiatives/pacific-engagement/maritime-capability>
- Bricknell, S. (2010). *Environmental crime in Australia*. AIC.
- Brisman, A., McClanahan, B., South, N., & Walters, R. (2018). *Water, crime and security in the twenty-first century: Too dirty, too little, too much*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brisman, A., South, N. & White, R. (Eds.) (2015). *Environmental crime and social conflict*. Ashgate.
- Brown, D. & Hogg, R. (1992). Essentialism, radical criminology and left realism. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 25(2): 195–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000486589202500302>
- Cao, N. (2017) *Timber trafficking in Vietnam*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chan-Quijano, J. G., Valdez-Hernández, M., González-Salvatierra C., Ceccon, E., & Cach-Pérez, M. J. (2023). Physiological performance of two tree species in oil-contaminated soil. *Botanical Sciences*, 101(1), 197–216. <https://doi.org/10.17129/botsci.3060>
- Cianchi, J. (2015). *Radical environmentalism: Nature, identity and more-than-human agency*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Carson, K., & O'Malley, P. (1989). The institutional foundations of contemporary Australian criminology. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 25(3), 333–355. <https://doi.org/10.1177/144078338902500301>
- Cohen, S. (1981). Footprints in the sand: A further report on criminology and the sociology of deviance in Britain. In M. Fitzgerald, G. McLennan, & J. Pawson (Eds.), *Crime & society: Readings in history and theory* (pp. 193–205). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Durrant, R. (2024). *Invertebrate justice: Extending the boundaries of non-speciesist green criminology*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Eman, K., Mesko, G., & Fields, G. (2009). Crimes against the environment: Green criminology and research challenges in Slovenia. *Varstvoslovje, Journal of Criminal Justice and Security*, 11(4), 574–592. <https://dk.um.si/IzpisGradiva.php?id=30163>
- Goyes, D. (2019). *Southern green criminology: A science to end ecological discrimination*. Emerald.
- Goyes, D. (Ed.). (2023). *Green crime in the Global South: Essays on Southern green criminology*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goyes, D., Abaibira, M., Baicue, P., Cuchimba, A., Nenetofe, D., Sollund, R., South, N. & Wyatt, T. (2021). Southern green cultural criminology and environmental crime prevention: Representations of nature within four Colombian Indigenous communities. *Critical Criminology*, 29, 469–485. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-021-09582-0>
- Goyes, D., Mol, H., Brisman, A., & South, N. (2017). *Environmental crime in Latin America: The theft of nature and the poisoning of the land*. Palgrave.
- Goyes, D., & South, N. (2019). Between “conservation” and “development”: The construction of “protected nature” and the environmental disenfranchisement of Indigenous communities. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 8(3). 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcjsd.v8i3.1247>
- Graham, M. (1999) Some thought about the philosophical underpinnings of Aboriginal worldview, *World Views Environmental Culture Religion*, 3, 105. <https://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2008/11/01/some-thoughts-about-the-philosophical-underpinnings-of-aboriginal-worldviews>
- Halsey, M. (1997a). Environmental crime: Towards an eco-human rights approach. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 12(2), 166–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.1997.12036742>
- Halsey, M. (1997b). The wood for the paper: Old-growth forest, hemp and environmental harm. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 30(2), 121–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000486589703000202>
- Halsey, M. (2004). Against “green” criminology. *British Journal of Criminology*, 44(4): 833–853. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azh068>
- Halsey, M. & White, R. (1998). Crime, ecophilosophy and environmental harm. *Theoretical Criminology*, 2(3): 345–372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480698002003003>
- Hamilton, M. (2021). *Environmental crime and restorative justice: Justice as meaningful involvement*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Killean, R., Hamilton, M. & Lundberg, L. (Eds.). (2026). *Conceptualising justice: A green criminology perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Monod de Froideville, S., & Bowling, R. (2022). Te Awa Tupua: An exemplary environmental law? In J. Gacek & R. Jochelson (Eds.), *Green criminology and the law*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Pink, G., & White, R. (Eds.) (2016). *Environmental crime and collaborative state intervention*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pratt, J., & Priestley, Z. (1999). The *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* thirty years on. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 32(3): 315–324. <https://doi.org/10.1375/acri.35.1.79>
- Putt, J., & Anderson, K. (2007). A national study of crime in the Australian fishing industry. AIC.
- South, N. (2014). Green criminology: Reflections, connections, horizons. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 3(2), 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcjsd.v3i2.172>
- Spapens, T., White, R., & Huisman, W. (Eds.). (2016). *Environmental crime in transnational context: Global issues in green enforcement and criminology*. Routledge.
- Spapens, T., White, R. & Kluin, M (Eds.). (2014). *Environmental crime and its victims: Perspectives within green criminology*. Ashgate.
- Spapens, T., White, R., van Uhm, D., & Huisman, W. (Eds.). (2018). *Green crimes and dirty money*. Routledge.
- Tailby, R., & Gant, F. (2002). *The illegal market in Australian abalone*. AIC.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2024a). *World wildlife crime report 2024: Trafficking in protected species*. UNODC.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2024b). *Global law enforcement in the harm landscapes of climate change*. UNODC.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2025a). *Global analysis on crimes that affect the environment – part 2a: Forest crimes. Illegal deforestation and logging*. UNODC.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2025b). *Global analysis on crimes that affect the environment – part 2b: Minerals Crime. Illegal gold mining*. UNODC.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2025c). *Minerals crime: Crimes in the supply chains of critical energy transition minerals*. UNODC.
- Walters, R. (2011). *Eco crime and genetically modified food*. Routledge.
- White, R. (1994). Green politics and the question of population. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 40, 27–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443059409387164>
- White, R. (1998). Environmental criminology and Sydney Water. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 10(2), 214–219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.1998.12036130>
- White, R. (Ed.). (2004). *Controversies in environmental sociology*. Cambridge University Press.
- White, R. (2008). *Crimes against nature: Environmental criminology and ecological justice*. Willan Publishing.
- White, R. (Ed.). (2009). *Environmental crime: A reader*. Willan Publishing.
- White, R. (Ed.). (2010). *Global environmental harm: Criminological perspectives*. Willan Publishing.
- White, R. (2011). *Transnational environmental crime: Towards an eco-global criminology*. Routledge.
- White, R. (Ed.). (2012). *Climate change from a criminological perspective*. Springer.
- White, R. (2013). *Environmental harm: An eco-justice perspective*. Policy Press.
- White, R. (Ed.). (2014). *Green criminology*. Routledge.
- White, R. (2018). *Climate change criminology*. Bristol University Press.
- White, R. (Ed.). (2020). *Environmental crime, vols 1 & 2*. Edward Elgar.
- White, R. (2022). *Theorising green criminology: Selected essays*. Routledge.
- White, R. (2023). *Advanced introduction to applied green criminology*. Edward Elgar.
- White, R. (ed) (2025). *Elgar encyclopedia of environmental crime*. Edward Elgar.
- White, R. & Heckenberg, D. (2014). *Green criminology: An introduction to the study of environmental harm*. Routledge.
- White, R., & Wright Monod, S. (2017). Green criminology: Environmental crime in Australia and New Zealand. In A. Deckert & R. Sarre (Eds.), *The Australian and New Zealand handbook of criminology, crime and justice* (pp. 571–582). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wong, R. W. Y. (2019). *The illegal wildlife trade in China: Understanding the distribution networks*. Springer.