



D10/0049278

Hon Alannah MacTiernan MLA
Chair
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee
Western Australian Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Ms MacTiernan

I refer to your letter dated 1 December 2009 regarding the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee Inquiry 'Making our prisons work', (the Inquiry), into the efficiency and effectiveness of prisoner education, training and employment strategies.

Background and context of education and training in prisons

In Western Australia, training for adults is offered by publicly funded training providers, other community-based registered training organisations and some private "for profit" organisations. Like other Western Australians, prisoners have access to a wide range of different training services including external studies, traineeships, apprenticeships and training within education centres and workplaces. Prisoners can access school subjects through the School of Isolated Distance Education and tertiary education from a range of universities across Australia.

The Department of Training and Workforce Development provides funding and other forms of support to prison education and training through:

- recurrent funding allocations to publicly funded registered training organisations (includes Aboriginal specific funding and apprenticeships/traineeships);
- Equity Development and Innovation grants (project based funding);
- Competitively Allocated Tenders (for training by private providers); and
- Employment Directions Networks providing post-release support (including Outcare as a specialist service for prisoners).

The Department also provides an educational expert for all Office of Inspectorate of Custodial Services (OICS) inspections and supported the Australasian Correctional Education Association conference held in Perth in 2009.

Within the Department of Corrective Services (DCS), the Education and Vocational Training Unit (EVTU) coordinates education and training services for prisons across the State. The EVTU:

- operates a specialist registered training organisation, Auswest Specialist Education and Training Services (ASETS) which provides accredited training through DCS budget allocation (much of this delivery is focused on adult and basic education);
- applies for funding to allow private and community-based delivery of training (such as building courses); and
- coordinates training delivery through publicly funded organisations such as schools, universities and registered training organisations.

The EVTU offers specialist expertise in working in corrections. As part of DCS, the team is able to negotiate security and containment issues, ensure compliance with specialist recruitment needs for internal and external staff, and identify new initiatives or strategies that local or internal research suggests as valuable.

The majority of delivery in prisons is nationally recognised: largely nationally accredited training plus some school and university level study. A small number of non-accredited courses are offered: some of the art and music courses and recreational programs delivered as summer schools.

Scale of education and training in prisons

Since 2005, enrolment and completion data on vocational education and training delivered by DCS has been submitted to the Department as part of national data collection. The following information is based on enrolment data and is described in student curriculum hours (SCH).

The Department provides significant resources and support to adult prisoner education, training and employment. Under the existing funding model, the Department shares responsibility for funding these services for prisoners with DCS. In 2008, a total of 611,509 SCH was reported as training effort within prisons. Large publicly funded training providers reported 271,266 SCH as prison delivery from their recurrent funding (44% of the total), and the Department funded other smaller providers for another 16,749 SCH (3%). DCS reported 323,494 SCH against their internal training budget for prisoners (53% of total training in prisons). External delivery from universities and schools are additional to these enrolments.

All large publicly funded registered training organisations in the State enrolled prisoners in 2008 across a broad range of the possible training areas. Training within prisons was reported in 29 of the 41 industry areas.

Training delivered to prisoners is a small component of overall training delivery in Western Australia (0.59%). However, prisoners comprise a

significant segment of total Aboriginal¹ training in the State (11.52%). 38% of all SCH in prisons was by people identified as Aboriginal. Forty six percent of Aboriginal SCH are in enabling courses². For comparison, 30% of all prison enrolments by SCH are in enabling courses. This focus on training for Aboriginal people, particularly a high level of enrolment in enabling courses, recognises their over-representation in the prison system and the small numbers completing Year 12. In 2006 in this State, Aboriginal people were 18.4 times more likely to be imprisoned³ and 26% completed Year 12 (compared to 77% of non-Aboriginal students)⁴.

Participation rates are historically strong in the State's prisons. In the five years from 2001 to 2005, 52% of prisoners were enrolled in training in Western Australia compared to a national average of 45%⁵.

In 2008 prisoners in Western Australia achieved a completion rate of 68.1%, compared to an average of 77.6% for all vocational students in the State. This is a strong result in view of the barriers to completion, however, further improvement may be possible. Queensland prisons report completion rates of 80% or more⁶ using similar strategies to those implemented in Western Australia (module by module delivery in short timeframes to reduce loss of students due to release or transfers and negotiation with prison workplaces to reduce disruption to prison work).

Evidence of a strong training program in Western Australia

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) published a research report in 2007 titled *Vocational education and training for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia*. This report shows prison education and training in a positive light in Western Australia, and included the following findings.

- Western Australia has led the way in overcoming common problems that block provision of employment based training in prisons. In 2006, there were 246 prisoners undertaking traineeships in Western Australia. Only two other states (New South Wales with 65 and Tasmania with 52) had trainees at this time but both had considerably lower numbers of participants⁷. Since 2004 there has been an average of 220 trainees each year in Western Australian prisons achieving a completion rate of 45%, compared to the State average of 56% (internal Department figures). This is commendable considering the majority of prisoners are on sentences shorter than 12 months⁸.
- Western Australia was one of three states that implemented all 12 features identified as improving participation and attainment in training for custodial

¹ The term Aboriginal in this report includes Torres Strait Islanders though in this State, the majority are Aboriginal people.

² Adult literacy, numeracy or other access programs

³ 3.126, SCRGSP, 2007

⁴ 3.27, SCRGSP, 2007

⁵ Page 119, Dawe, 2007

⁶ Page 39, Dawe, 2007

⁷ Page 98, Dawe, 2007

⁸ Page 99, Dawe, 2007

offenders (the others were New South Wales and the Northern Territory)⁹. These features include small class sizes, a comprehensive program of training delivery and professional development for staff¹⁰.

- Western Australia has a higher than average percentage of prisoner population in training programs (52% compared to an average of about 45% nationally)¹¹. Seventy percent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prison population was enrolled in training in Western Australia in 2005.
- The EVTU draws on international research to plan new programs in prisons for all providers. For example, construction training was nominated as a priority based on international research showing this industry as one of the most successful types of training for prisoners¹². This was also linked to skills shortages in this sector in Western Australia¹³.

This strong history in training delivery resulted in DCS winning National Training Awards in 2004 and 2009 in the category Australian Training Initiative. The Australian Government website for the awards states: "In 2008, more than 4100 adult prisoners successfully earned around 17 000 units of competency in state and nationally recognised qualifications".

The Department of Training and Workforce Development is committed to providing information and advice to the Committee to assist with the inquiry. The attached table provides responses to the Inquiry's terms of reference.

If you require any further information, please contact Ms Margaret Jack on 9238 2453.

Yours sincerely



DR RUTH SHEAN
DIRECTOR GENERAL

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⁹ Page 108, Dawe, 2007

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¹¹ Page 119, Dawe, 2007

¹² Page 164, Dawe, 2007

¹³ Page 131, Dawe, 2007

ATTACHMENT 1

Response to Terms of Reference for 'Making our prisons work': An Inquiry into the efficiency and effectiveness of prisoner education, training and employment strategies Community Development and Justice Standing Committee.

Inquiry terms of reference	Department comment
<p>i) Opportunities for work and the development of a workplace culture within WA prisons;</p>	<p>Most prisoners in Western Australia are offered meaningful work within prison workplaces. Prison workplaces are often quite different to other workplaces but they offer useful opportunities for development of specific skills as well as generic employability skills. Many access training relevant to this employment and some complete apprenticeships/traineeships in prison (140 prisoners were under a training contract while in prison in October 2009).</p> <p>Rapidly increasing prison populations reduce work opportunities until budgets and facilities are adjusted and new community projects are negotiated.</p>
<p>ii) current rehabilitative programs and strategies in Western Australian prisons;</p>	<p>The wide range of training courses provided in prisons is an important component of rehabilitation services. In particular, there continues to be a high level of enrolment in numeracy and literacy programs. Specific examples of initiatives with Department of Training and Workforce Development input include the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding of three bricklaying pre-apprenticeship programs in Wooroloo Prison was linked to an initiative within DCS where the offenders were involved in honing their skills in the community with supportive employers in Northam and surrounding areas. ▪ Services provided through the Employment Directions Network (EDN) program – Outcare is the main provider of services to offenders; several other EDNs also service this client group. ▪ Group Training Organisations such as Hospitality Group Training have worked closely with DCS and agencies to improve the employment of offenders by obtaining an apprenticeship upon release. <p>Western Australia has a good reputation nationally for providing education and training as an integral part of rehabilitative strategies¹⁴. However, increasing prison populations need careful budget management to ensure this positive situation is maintained.</p>

¹⁴ Page 108, Dawe, 2007

<p>iii) the impact of prison education and training programs on post-release outcomes and the data collection capacity within government to evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs;</p>	<p>Since 2005, data on all education and training delivery within Western Australian prisons is collected and included in national returns. This data is reviewed by auditors under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), the Office of Inspectorate of Custodial Services (OICS) and by EVTU staff.</p> <p>Data on post-release outcomes is more difficult to collect. DCS has data about the number of prisoners who return to prison so this measure can be resorted to as a proxy for success or otherwise of an approach. However, little data is available for other post-release outcomes or for the many prisoners who do not return to prison. Evaluation of individual programs and their impact on post-release outcomes requires specialist research.</p> <p>For example, after five years of operation, Outcare reports that their Re-entry Link Programme produces highly favourable recidivism rates of 17.5% compared to an average of 42% in the State.</p>
<p>iv) The gaps in post-release outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders;</p>	<p>Access to data about post-release outcomes is too limited to quantify this gap. However, the high numbers of Aboriginal people in Western Australian prisons can be considered a measure of poor post-release outcomes. For example, in 2004 74% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners in Western Australia were repeat offenders compared to 44% of non-Aboriginal prisoners¹⁵. This extremely high recidivism rate maintains the high proportion of Aboriginal people in the prison population.</p> <p>To address these gaps, areas for particular attention include driver and vehicle licences and fines. Prisons do excellent work in preparing inmates to get a driver's licence but this often is not converted into an actual licence after release. This is a critical issue for employment prospects as well as for prevention of re-offending.</p> <p>It is particularly important that high quality delivery¹⁶ of education and training continues to be available to every Aboriginal inmate, despite the pressures created by growing prison populations. In remote areas, Aboriginal people participate at lower rates and in lower levels compared with those from more accessible areas. Among other factors, this is due to a lack of information, available courses and employment opportunities¹⁷. Prison education and training offers a unique opportunity to address this gap.</p>
<p>v) the legislative and community incentives and impediments to prisoner employment, education and training;</p>	<p>Incentives: Prisoners often use education and training participation to support applications for parole. Many choose to study regardless of extrinsic benefits, as a way of making a new start or to take advantage of the chance to study without the usual distractions and responsibilities</p>

¹⁵ Page 176, DIA, 2005

¹⁶ Page 24, Miller, 2005

¹⁷ Page 19, Miller, 2005

	<p>of life in the community.</p> <p>Impediments: Demand exceeds supply in many possible training areas within prisons due to limited space, work roles and supervision. At times of rapid increase/decrease of prisoner populations it is difficult to provide the correct level of resourcing (space, materials, staff and budget). Rapid response to individual needs is highly valued by stakeholders but is difficult to routinely offer.</p> <p>Work camps are popular with prisoners and the community and provide valuable work opportunities. However, education and training is difficult to deliver to small groups in remote locations and so inmates of work camps often receive less access to training than prisoners in the main prison.</p> <p>Community attitudes towards offenders is a critical limiting factor, both in what can be provided to prisoners as education and training and as a barrier to employment post-release.</p>
<p>vi) the integration of behaviour management, education and training strategies with real work opportunities;</p>	<p>Examples of integration include the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Department and DCS work together to identify relevant areas of skill shortages for example in the construction industry. ▪ The Prisoner Employment Program provides an innovative model of intensive preparation and support leading to prisoners being able to leave prison on day release to work or study. ▪ A number of agencies co-operate to provide the Live Works program that involves the delivery of training linked to skills required for projects that help the community. For example young juvenile offenders are renovating houses for Homes West. This program is based on a through care model where adequate support in regards to training, employment and support services are provided pre and post release. Results show that the recidivism rate over a two year period has been reduced significantly. ▪ Work camps offer useful work opportunities in areas that might be difficult to staff with non-prison labour eg the Bibbulmun track construction. <p>These strategies are particularly demanding of resources and are usually offered to small numbers of prisoners. In work camps, prisoners may miss out on most of the education and training available to other prisoners if sufficient resources are not provided to allow for small class sizes, some basic training space, and support for distance education as necessary.</p>

<p>vii) the success of alternative strategies, nationally and internationally in reducing recidivism; and</p>	<p>DCS has identified the 'normalisation principle' as a key concept from the management of prisons in Scandinavia. This principle underpins the decision by EVTU to become a registered training organisation and to provide community-based work experience and traineeships¹⁸.</p> <p>Outcare's Second Chance Business Register was based upon a successful South Australian initiative. It aims to break down the barriers to employment faced by people with a criminal record. Through high profile publicity and community education the project hopes to develop public understanding of the issues surrounding ex-offenders and employment.</p> <p>The Second Chance project hopes to make a positive impact on employment practices by assisting employers to develop guidelines and to make informed judgements when assessing people with criminal records.</p> <p>Overseas research shows strategies focused on through care models are successful in affecting recidivism¹⁹. These models address all the factors that affect a successful transition to life outside prison (including income, housing, social and community support and health as well as education, training and employment). This research suggests that a move from the traditional primary focus on security and containment in prisons to one that includes appropriately supported rehabilitation can offer savings to the community in the long-term.</p>
<p>viii) any major issues that the committee considers should be included in the Inquiry.</p>	<p>The committee may wish to investigate a secure funding model for prison education and training responsive to changes in prisoner numbers. Both the core funding for education and training and the enrolment based funds that result from access to publicly funded training provider delivery need consideration.</p> <p>Another issue to consider is the need to plan training provision as part of work camp setup.</p>

¹⁸ Page 129, Dawe, 2007

¹⁹ Page 128, Dawe, 2007

ATTACHMENT 2

REFERENCES

Dawe, Susan, 2007, *Vocational education and training for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

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Miller C, 2005, *Aspects of training that meet Indigenous Australians aspirations: a systematic review of research*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)