

Education and Training in the Tasmanian Prison System

What Works in a Small Jurisdiction?

Presenter: Sally Dabner

The paper outlines the philosophy and practices, giving details about the program, special projects and reasons for feeling successful in assisting prisoners become more socially responsible.

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PURPOSE

This paper will:

- give some information about our philosophies and practices.
- provide information about the current program.
- share reasons why we feel successful
- outline the pathways we could take in the years 2000 - 2001

PROFILE

The number of prisoners has increased from a daily average in July 1998 of 250 to July 1999 average of 345. This includes those incarcerated at two remand centres [a purpose-built one in Hobart and a through-centre in Launceston], the Risdon Prison Complex [which houses maximum security, a medium security unit and a womens unit] and Hayes [the prison's farm].

The client profile is similar to other states, mainly young individuals whose dysfunctional family backgrounds and lack of expectations have assisted in developing their negative attitudes to learning, they have had limited successes in life, an inability to see any relationship between actions and consequences, and the usual low literacy levels. The system has relatively small numbers of both women and Aboriginals, and those with disabilities [other than intellectual], and acknowledges that these equity groups need special assistance.

OVERVIEW

The Program is overseen by the Prison Education and Training Steering Committee [PETSC], the membership of which includes TAFE Tasmania staff, a representative from an ITB, Justice staff [management], and a representative from DETYA. The recent restructure of TAFE has increased their staff membership. Like other states, Education and Training opportunities is one of the tools with which the Service assists offenders to develop skills to increase the possibility of employment on release. Our Mission Statement and Objectives follow with examples of current strategies and actions [these are included because it shows what we actually do]. The Mission Statement and Objectives were developed by a Working Party comprising Corrective Services and TAFE Tasmania staff.

MISSION STATEMENT

To empower offenders to reach their potential as responsible citizens by promoting a culture which encourages learning, and providing appropriate vocational education and training programs

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
<p>1 To encourage offenders to participate in the Education and Training Program, to assess their training needs and ensure that appropriate recognition of educational needs is incorporated in sentence planning and case management processes.</p>	<p>1.1 provide educational input into Classification and Sentence Planning processes.</p> <p>1.2 assess competencies and educational needs with specific reference to literacy.</p> <p>1.3 create an awareness of educational opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement Sentence Planning outcomes eg Section 42's; new courses • conduct assessment interviews/complete Learning Plans. • arrange participation in Adult Literacy Basic Education • contribute to the Induction Program • participate in meetings, forums and other training by contacting relevant managers / facilitators • participate in Classification A and B
<p>2 To develop educational programs which reflect the assessed training needs of inmates in ways which overcome the disadvantage of the secure prison environment and take into account variations in sentence length, security classification and prisoner location.</p>	<p>2.1 analyse demographic profiles of the changing prisoner population</p> <p>2.2 establish and maintain awareness of the prison environment with respect to specific needs e.g. security, public perceptions and prison.</p> <p>2.3 establish and maintain awareness of prisoner throughput and irregularities with respect to sentence and sentence length</p> <p>2.4 link information to the educational program and assessed need of prisoners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey prisoners and staff with respect to training needs and/or support • obtain anecdotal and statistical information which assist with individual prisoner profile • obtain monthly statistics from Policy Officer / data with respect to schooling levels and employment • interview prisoners and complete Learning Plans • liaise with appropriate training providers • maintain current network arrangements especially with prison management • organise appropriate data collection and keep records on program and individual's participation and achievements • identify and develop opportunities for informal learning

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
<p>3 To promote education and training to inmates as an important lifelong process and in so doing maximise the opportunities to access employment and further training on release.</p>	<p>3.1 increase awareness about future opportunities in the VET program</p> <p>3.2 increase staff awareness of the advantages of a VET program in prisoner management</p> <p>3.3 promote the value of education to the prison community and give information about specific courses</p> <p>3.4 promote the value of education to prisoners through Induction, Classification and Sentence Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure Centerlink personnel are involved and have relevant information • develop and implement the portfolio concept • furnish regular reports and maintain contact with Parole Board members and Community Corrections staff • develop informal and formal networks requesting involvement where appropriate
<p>4 To deliver educational programs and support services which make maximum use of the best available resources, learning techniques, and technology and which promote innovation.</p>	<p>4.1 establish and maintain national and international networks</p> <p>4.2 establish and maintain networks with state authorities and local training providers</p> <p>4.3 contribute to the development of national strategies and programs in correctional education</p> <p>4.4 develop and maintain currency of learning techniques and technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor use of the Internet • implement opportunities for the use of computer in all prisons or units. • organise relevant Section 42's. • participate in national VET / Corrections Education meetings • participate in relevant external forums e.g. IFEPS

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
<p>5 To develop and implement a vocational education and training program which leads to a recognised qualification in partnership with prison workplace supervisors.</p>	<p>5.1 analyse the potential of prison workplaces with respect to the provision of education and training opportunities</p> <p>5.2 establish and maintain liaison with workplace staff and prison industries managers</p> <p>5.3 establish and liaise with appropriate training providers to develop and deliver programs and undertake competency assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet regularly with relevant personnel • maintain managers' membership of PETSC • monitor implementation of meeting outcomes • implement and monitor the project and promote outcomes
<p>6 To provide learning support services which accommodate the needs of disadvantaged inmates.</p>	<p>6.1 develop and maintain currency of understanding of prisoners' needs by training deliverers</p> <p>6.2 demonstrate awareness of the educational disadvantages of prisoners</p> <p>6.3 develop and maintain linkages with relevant support services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct induction and inservice training for program delivery personnel • maintain regular personal contact with all tutors and visitors
<p>7 To explore and develop arrangements which promote community involvement and participation and which assist with the resourcing of the program.</p>	<p>7.1 promote community awareness about the program</p> <p>7.2 identify and develop appropriate pathways into the community</p> <p>7.3 maintain the function and membership of the PETSC and IWG</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult with relevant personnel • organise regular quarterly meetings of representatives of educational organisations • be a guest speaker at functions e.g. Rotary, College and High School students • provide mentoring and professional development opportunities

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
	7.4 promote and increase the level of external involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote achievements and celebrate the program outside the prison (Art Exhibitions, Adult Learners Week) • organise Section 42's through discussions with Industry and work experience contacts • continue to work with BAVE student teachers at the University of Tasmania

We believe in the value of the education process and the importance of assisting adult prisoners in the development of a learning pathway. To this end, we have introduced the concept of a “Learning Plan”, a process which results in prisoners acknowledging their current skill levels and matching what we can provide with their perceived needs and interests. This encourages prisoners to ‘look forward’ and plan ahead. Those involved in a more involved holistic ‘sentence plan’ in which the learning pathway concept can be explored further. The plan’s implementation is the joint responsibility of prisoners and staff. The process is linked closely to security ratings and consequent privileges as Education staff are members of the Classification Committee.

THE PROGRAM

1 Vocational:

[a] Short Courses:

Computer studies, Employment Skills, Workplace Safety, Tractor Driving, Forklift, Chainsaw, Basic Landscaping, Food Handling, Bricklaying, Carpentry and other industry-related modules have also been delivered.

[b] Traineeships / Apprenticeships:

Wherever possible we offer these opportunities and industry staff fulfil the role of the workplace trainer. [Difficulties have been experienced with this training as it has been a challenge to coordinate the needs of staff and prisoners to the provider’s requirements].

2 Arts Program

In the past year this has included Music, Woodwork, Theatresports, Art, Printing, Crafts, Card Making, Ceramics, and the Inside Art/Out Project. It culminated in a recent exhibition “Brake-Out!” for Adult Learners Week.

3 Adult Literacy Basic Education

Funded .6FTE by TAFE Tasmania, the ALBE Program is well patronised. A recent new direction is to actually implement the CGEA, [as previously accreditation was with the Tasmania GSA [General Studies for Adults]].

4 TCE [Tasmanian Certificate of Education]

Prisoners are encouraged to undertake study at this level, the choices dependent on which of the 7 state’s senior secondary colleges provide the learning materials through their Open Learning Program. However, Maths and Communication Skills are the favoured. Pre-tertiary courses are limited.

5 University

Distance Learning [through the University of Tasmania and Deakin University] has provided the staff with a new focus on tertiary study. Access to computers / on line study groups etc. open a new world of learning [and security complications!].

6 Specialist Programs

Recently, Seafood Training Tasmania funded a 10 day course in Limited Coxwain, Radio Operators Certificate and Shipboard Safety. [We had to pay for the relevant licences].

7 Aboriginal Education

Special funding has been available for Aboriginal prisoners involved in two highly successful learning projects. One was the “Inside / Art Out Project” where students worked with Aboriginal tutors and artists, this culminating in an Exhibition at Salamanca Place, Hobart, and followed up in Launceston. The second, a ‘Multi Media Production Course’ highlighted the impact of specialist technology. Aboriginal tutors visit regularly to assist students with TCE and University students through the ATAS Scheme.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Much of the training delivery is through projects, both inside and outside the prison. Examples have included the construction of a barbecue [TAFE bricklaying]; designing, and working with Tasmania Fire Service volunteers on the landscaping of two new fire stations [various horticulture modules], and establishing the Chinese Garden at the Royal Tasmania Botanical Gardens [horticulture]. An exciting Arts project was the construction of huge bricks made out of steel pickets and placed in the new Hobart Remand Centre [Engineering Traineeship]. Prisoners were also involved in the building of a shed in which we now deliver the Vehicle Painting / Detailing Traineeship. Work groups are also involved in a Landcare project [but this currently does not have an 'educational' perspective/accreditation.] The project method is an ideal way of matching the practical and theory components necessary in VET.

WORK EXPERIENCE / PAID EMPLOYMENT

The networks developed with government department personnel and private employers have resulted in suitably selected prisoners [already involved in some type of vocational training], to work on the outside. This compliments their formal study either through TAFE or University.

WHO TEACHES IN OUR PROGRAM?

TAFE Tasmania sessional teachers visit the Prison's Education Centres regularly. Private providers deliver specialist vocational training and in 1999, Seafood Training Tasmania and 40° Yachting delivered courses for which they received funding to deliver on site [ie in the prison].

An exciting development has been the practical placement opportunity given to adult students in the University of Tasmania's Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education degree. After induction, they deliver short courses matching their own skills level and interests with our needs. Teaching is voluntary but normal procedures [ie class lists, security etc] are adhered to. My teaching background enables me to participate in the assessment processes. One of the students has recently completed an action research project entitled "The Impact of Lifelong Learning on Prisoners in Tasmania." in which she has made recommendations, some of which we hope to implement in 2000.

Tutors from Prison Fellowship are the first group of regular volunteers involved in the program. Our peer education / peer tutor scheme is currently [due to the number of prisoners who have these skills] a saviour to the ALBE and TCE programs. Two of the tutors were awarded certificates for Adult Learners Week and plaques for our internal "Lindsay Duggan Awards". Peer expertise certainly gives 'learning' more credibility.

We have a number of students attending TAFE and University on-campus and their teachers / counsellors act as support personnel [custodians]. We believe this is the ultimate in training delivery, acknowledging the difficulties experienced when returning to prison after a day 'out' in the normal learning environment.

WHY WE THINK WE'RE SUCCESSFUL?

How do you measure educational success in a culture in which learning is not the core business? We all know the answer is “with great difficulty”. We keep the usual weekly / monthly / annual statistics. We have records of participation for teachers and learners. In 1998/99, the status of participation ranged from 137 to 69. [June '99 reflects our 'lockdown'].

Statistical Summary July 1998 - June 1999

Year	No. of inmates serving over two months	No. of course enrolments	Numbers involved in PET	% involved in PET
July 98	322	207	137	42.5
Aug 98	343	248	151	44.0
Sep 98	324	235	129	39.8
Oct 98	339	177	120	35.4
Nov 98	345	233	105	30.4
Dec 98	334	169	103	30.8
Jan 99	316	120	84	26.5
Feb 99	313	183	122	38.9
Mar 99	314	169	128	40.7
Apr 99	321	186	139	42.6
May 99	345	168	119	34.5
Jun 99	338	96	69	20.4

We do not have difficulty encouraging prisoners to attend Education. We value the prisoner peer support as helping others keep 'on track' as this is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of prisoner education. We do have some sense or knowledge of those returning to study or gaining employment. We do 'see' prisoners trying [desperately for some] to get their lives together. Our system has two dedicated Education staff whose commitment and their own ongoing professional development models 'good practice' We have an incredible statewide network, [established over a seven year period], extending to the many and varied support systems. Of particular significance is the human and financial resource support from TAFE Tasmania. We are involved in Induction, Classification and Sentence Planning, all of which contribute to the holistic management of a prisoner's sentence.

Our system funds 2 FTE's for Education [and one position has only been full-time since July 1998]. I am a trained teacher Our support worker was [until recently] a custodial officer. We both are committed to our roles and enjoy the continued challenge by undertaking our own professional development. In addition, I am a member of two educational committees - TASTA [Access & Equity], and the Department of Education's New Apprenticeship Access Program.

We recently were awarded the “Outstanding Program” Award for Adult Learners Week 1999. The number of visitors to our recent Arts Exhibition “Brake-Out!” was the highest the Arts Centre [where we held it] had had in the past 2 years.

WHERE TO IN THE YEAR 2000 AND BEYOND

- ◆ We need to continually reflect on our mission statement and the ethos of this conference “learning culture” and “lifelong learning” as this is our core business.
- ◆ We need to continually look at ways of increasing the percentage of prisoners involved.
- ◆ We need to be fully conversant with the CGEA and its implementation.
- ◆ We need to have a database developed which enables statistics to be kept more easily so that each prisoner’s record of involvement is accurate.
- ◆ We need to continue projects which allow the community to ‘see’ what good can be done. [One of these ideas is to work on heritage buildings with, for example, the National Trust].
- ◆ We would like to see some provision made to follow through after release to freedom or parole.
- ◆ We will be able to implement a different direction in computer training once new computers are located at Risdon and more are provided at our prison farm.
- ◆ We need to utilise any opportunity to ‘educate’ our Tasmanian public. [We currently are known for our escape record [including those from Juvenile Justice - Ashley and suicides].
- ◆ We need to make a really concerted effort to continue to develop and implement traineeships linked to all prison work areas and industries.
- ◆ Further work to be done with respect to Employment Skills, portfolios and resumes.
- ◆ We need to introduce learning / discussion groups to fully develop interpersonal, social and communication skills.