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Centre Victoria and Junee Correctional Centre
NSW.**

**Title: Integrating Accredited Training in a
Corrections Industry Environment**

East Gippsland Institute of TAFE (EGIT) was contracted by Australasian Correctional Management (ACM) to deliver nationally accredited Vocational Education Training (VET) programs to prisoners at Fulham Correctional Centre in Sale Victoria in 1997 and Junee Correctional Centre in NSW in 1998. Both prisons accommodate in excess of 650 prisoners in these privately managed facilities.

Each centre operates internal construction and processing industries for specific individual contracts with external production companies.

Maximising opportunities for the delivery of accredited and relevant training within industries in correctional facilities has always been a challenge for training providers. My knowledge and experience of correctional facilities in Victoria substantiates the following scenarios prevalent in most prison industry settings.

- The majority of industries are supervised and operated by correctional staff who are responsible for security, production and supervision and training of the workforce.
- All prisoners employed in these industries acquire a range of skills relevant to the specific industry. This level of skill

acquisition varies according to the type of industry, structure of the workforce and the length of their employment.

- In the majority of corrections industries some semblance of training is happening, but often incidentally and often from other inmates.
- Prisoners can spend long periods of employment in these industries with no formal recognition or accreditation for skill acquisition. They may not even be aware of the viability or transferability of these skills for post release employment.

From my experience the main frustration for training providers is the lack of access to this equipment and workforce for any workplace training and assessment. I have visited locations where equipment is duplicated in the Education centres specifically for training purposes while identical machinery is used in an adjacent building to complete the production contract.

Another common hindrance is restricted access to Education programs for prisoners employed in industry because of disruption to production

Prior to 1999 the delivery of any relevant training in Fulham Correctional Centre's industry workshop was the responsibility of EGIT trade teachers and was plagued by a plethora of adversities. ACM employees who were responsible for operation, security and production, supervised the prisoners employed in the industries. Under the conditions of our training contract this industry equipment was to be used for VET training. But opportunity to access this equipment was restricted and controlled by correctional staff according to the demands of production thus training was second priority.

In 1999 at Fulham Correctional Centre, ACM adopted a proposal by EGIT to totally integrate accredited training and production within the construction industries. The proposal was to employ qualified trade teachers to operate the main industries and have the two functions of training and production closely inter-related rather than two isolated operations.

The incentive of an increase in training quality and quantity for EGIT and immediate salary savings for ACM made it an attractive proposition for both organisations.

Key Principles of the Proposal

- New staffing positions created entitled Industry Training Coordinators (to replace Industry Supervisors)
- Staff to be employed by TAFE and ACM buy back hours in accordance with the industry production needs
- All prisoners employed in industry to be enrolled in relevant nationally accredited curriculum modules
- Training to be driven by needs of industry –all prisoners to receive initial training in basic generic skills, equipment handling and OH&S prior to production work.
- Correctional Officer stationed in Industry to control prisoner movement and security
- Industry Training Coordinators not responsible for security thus separating the role of trainer and custodian.
- Newly appointed staff members would become the key personnel as providers of training and production for the respective stakeholders and jointly managed by myself as Education and Training Manager and ACM's Industry Production Manager.

When ACM accepted this proposal in February 1999 they requested the concept be extended to include the horticulture industry so that

all work carried out on the prison's internal grounds be undertaken by prisoners employed in an integrated training program. With approximately 50 acres inside the wire at Fulham this has provided enormous scope for curriculum development and workplace training and assessment in Horticulture and Outdoor Works.

Implementation at Junee Correctional Centre

Due to the success of this model ACM requested the concept be introduced into the current East Gippsland TAFE training profile at Junee Correctional Centre to commence early in 2001. This involved establishing accredited training within their existing industries. The principle of shared staffing was adopted with ACM being the host employer and EGIT sub-contracting hours for training. The same seamless approach caters for on job training while meeting contractual demands.

The plan implemented as of April 1 2001 basically mirrors the Fulham model with some modifications introduced as a direct result of the learning experience at Fulham.

Principles of Junee 2001 Project

- Industry Production Manager – employed by ACM and responsible for maintenance of all industry external contracts and related production targets and deadlines.
- Industry Training Manager – employed by EGIT and responsible for coordinating training, management and supervision of Industry Training coordinators specifically for these industries. This involves curriculum selection and design, overseeing workplace training and assessment and assisting with the design and development of assessment tasks. This is separate from the management and coordination of the general VET profile as is the case at Fulham.
- Industry Training Coordinators – employed by ACM and training hours invoiced by EGIT. These four persons are responsible for immediate supervision of prisoner employees within the relevant contract industries and for the deliver of workplace training.
- Employment Manager – employed by ACM and responsible for employment and termination of all prisoner employees across the prison.

Differences between the Fulham and Junee models include the appointment of the ACM Employment Manager and the position of

the EGIT Industry Training Manager at Junee. The Employment Manager will alleviate the responsibility from the Industry Training Co-ordinators for the recruitment of appropriate inmates and allow for increased time and focus on training.

Another significant factor is the Training Coordinators in Junee are Correctional Officers all having been previously employed as Industry Supervisors. So although their new role requires a focus on training and production it may import an unwanted custodial expectation.

Main Advantages of the Partnership

- A seamless transition between training and production – apart from the initial basic skill instruction, all training is incorporated into the daily production routine
- Formal recognition of employment hours and subsequent skill development for employees. All skill acquisition is directed towards accredited training and recognisable qualifications.
- All levels of employment within industry are incorporated into current nationally accredited curriculum with opportunities for task oriented skill development

- Prisoners have access to their own individual training records and the curriculum learning outcomes - so wherever possible they can drive their own training
- More realistic employment opportunities in the community upon release
- Greater job satisfaction for prisoner employees. Development of work ethic among prisoners provides a more stable workforce
- Prisoners generally respond better to TAFE staff than custodial staff. It can present a conflict of roles for prisoners to be employed and trained by those who are ultimately responsible for their containment and discipline
- Development of an appropriately trained workforce leads to improved quality. This is a win/win situation for employee (prisoner), employer (prison), training provider (TAFE) and customer (external contractor)
- Reduction of (age old) conflict between Education and Industry Supervisors. Prisoners generally are content with program and tend not to look for opportunities to get out of work. Attendance at other Education and Personal Development programs is negotiated and facilitated where appropriate
- Integration of literacy and numeracy with relevant staff attending the workplace for tuition

- Provides a more efficient way of managing our training resources with greater control of tools and equipment. Training costs for consumables are reduced as initial modules in basic skill instruction can be delivered using recycled materials from maintenance or contract work
- The elimination of conflict between the two competing agendas ie training and production has resolved a range of issues for staff and students

Challenges for the Future

- The integrated training approach is now firmly entrenched in the Corrections training profile at Fulham Correctional Centre and is progressing healthily at June. Across the two campuses there are now ten shared staffing positions delivering accredited training within the prisons' contract and service industries. However the program is not without its challenges.
- Security staff based in the buildings are responsible for screening all employees and supervising movement within the buildings. This position is subject to roster changes, which can be disruptive. The attitude of this person is extremely important to the tone of

the building and a negative over zealous custodial officer can disrupt the harmonious training atmosphere.

- Although ownership of this integrated approach rests with both organisations the host employer bears the brunt of all employee disgruntlement. This can create excessive management problems in ensuring staff do not play one organisation off against another.
- Production demands can easily dominate training needs especially when contractors are forcing deadlines. As the training arm we have to carefully monitor this to ensure an equilibrium is maintained.

ACM is to be congratulated on their progressiveness in adopting such a radical change in an arena enshrined in custom and archaic discipline. Communication between both parties at each level is paramount to the success of this project. We need to ensure shared staff are not caught in the middle and that one partner's needs does not become dominant. We are constantly revising our communication mechanisms to counteract this.

This training partnership is the subject of my current studies for Masters of Education in Action Research. The research is based on the principles of Action Learning and will focus on those actively

involved in and responsible for the program. A series of surveys and group interviews with these key stakeholders over the next twelve months will hopefully provide some solutions and strategies to ensure the continued survival and success of the program.

Through this research project I intend to consolidate East Gippsland Institute of TAFE's progress in corrections education by developing a set of guidelines which will establish sound policies and practices for improving the management of this training process between the two organisations. These guidelines will hopefully be adaptable to all industries within any correctional setting, especially where training providers are experiencing problems with access to equipment or workforce.

Within these guidelines I aim to establish a communication practice and policy which will be embedded in the operation of both organisations. In doing so I hope to have raised the profile of integrated training within Fulham and Junee Correctional Centres.