

## **Workshop 30: Pre-release program – What works? Jobs For The Boys**

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### **Introduction**

John Morony Correctional Complex comprises of two Correctional Centres and is situated near Windsor in New South Wales, Australia. These Centres are purpose-built to house medium to minimum security male inmates. The Correctional Complex also contains a Wildlife Centre that is open to the public and a Drug Detector Dog training facility. A Works Release Unit known as the Honour House is located near the main Complex and it is from here the lower classification offenders attend external study leave or employment.

John Morony I is a medium security Centre and conducts Stage Two of the specialised male program. The Centre receives all male Young Adult Offenders who have been identified and assessed as eligible to participate in this program. The objective of the five-day Raising Awareness for Change program is to help inmates become aware of the need to change, and the changes they need to make.

John Morony II houses predominately Young Adult Offenders in the 18 to 25 age group, along with an adult nucleus of older offenders, some of whom are coming to the end of long sentences. The normal Jobs for the Boys attendance mix includes young to mature adult males with a variety of dependency issues (alcohol and other drugs) and psychiatric disorders.

Construction of the new women's Correctional facility, Dillwynia, will be completed on this site in early 2004.

### **Background**

A need was perceived to provide employment planning and advice for Young Adult Offenders as well as other Adult inmates at John Morony II. Development of a program, initially targeting Young Adult Offenders, to reduce the risk of re-offending, began. It was also important to include modules that would improve offenders' pre-release and community-ready skills.

The Salvation Army has been helping unemployed Australians for over 100 years. In 1889 the first free labour bureau opened in Melbourne. The history of The Salvation Army in Australia indeed started with a Major James Barker who instigated a program named "*The Prison Brigade*". Members of the Brigade waited outside prisons to greet ex-prisoners upon their release whereby they were offered accommodation and support service through the Prison Gate Home at Carlton, in Melbourne. In 1983 Employment 2000 commenced in some States of Australia and The Salvation Army Joblink started in New South Wales in 1985. These organisations won an employment services contract that opened in May 1998. By 1999 The Salvation Army Employment Plus became the largest job network

provider for intensive assistance candidates. They currently have 93 sites and hold 14% of the national contract in the provision of employment services to those who are disadvantaged by being long-term unemployed.

As the main focus of the organization is the long-term unemployed, a program evolved which addressed the candidate's career development needs. Through the philosophy of a book entitled "No One is Unemployable", written by Debra Angel and Lisa Harney, and their WorkNet ten step process to overcoming barriers through a series of written journals, The Salvation Army Employment Plus implemented the Career Development Program (CDP).

In November 2001, The Salvation Army Employment Plus Career Development Program was piloted. This program was facilitated by The Salvation Army Employment Plus State Training Facilitator and was conducted at John Morony II, over a period of three weeks. Participants in this pilot program included long-term offenders and an Education Officer.

Following the success of the pilot program, a plan was implemented to commence delivery of this program, on a four weekly basis, to coincide with the Young Adult Offenders returning from Oberon. This started in July 2002 under the working title of "Jobs for the Boys". It was intended that the program name would be changed to a permanent title, however, it is now known throughout the system by that name!

### **Program aims**

The program provides an opportunity to increase offenders' employment and career development skills and equips participants with the tools necessary to achieve their career goals and provides support for a group of offenders who might otherwise return to crime shortly after release.

The Jobs for the Boys program aims to improve employment prospects, increase job-seeking skills, work motivation, communication and teamwork and reduce re-offending through placement in employment, education or further training upon release.

Levels of self-esteem and confidence are increased and this confidence enables them to feel like they can cold call and ask for a job. It is recognised in Australia that 85% of jobs available are not advertised.

The program is effective in assisting young and more mature offenders into employment or further education, or at least provides them with skills to improve their outlook on life.

### **Program content**

Stages one to three of the Specialised Young Adult Offender program progressively prepares the young adult for release. Jobs for the Boys, which is part of stage four and conducted at John Morony II, consolidates this preparation by building on the offender's recent Oberon experiences and provides continuity of service and program delivery. The objective of Jobs for the Boys is to prepare the offender for release.

On completing the Gurnang Life Challenge (Oberon – Stage Three), Young Adult Offenders are classified to Stage Four, where all Oberon graduates participate in the four week Jobs for the Boys program. On successful completion of the program, those

classified to C3 External Programs will be allocated a place in the Honour House external leave programs building.

Through a series of workshops and job search seminars, individuals are given help to identify their employment goals and map out their job search strategy. Participants learn about the world of work and how to plan their individual path to the job they want.

The major elements of the program comprise:

- *Work motivation* explores the fears about work, childhood dreams and what happened to them. It deals with those fears and moves forward to identify the dreams held today
- *Career planner* is a fun, easy to use career testing tool to identify a “Dream Job” and an entry job which matches interests, skills, motivational style, work preferences and barriers.
- *Planning your career path* identifies job-seeking strategies aimed at gaining enjoyable, paid employment. This includes designing a path to move from the present situation to a dream job.
- *Overcoming barriers to employment* teaches candidates to think like the employer, to identify barriers to employment and advancement, and encourages the development of good answers to questions feared most from employers.
- *Understanding Australian business culture* introduces the culture of the business world, including the rules and expectations required to give the power needed to succeed.
- *Job search strategies* helps design a job search strategy for marketing each individual to prospective employers. It also helps participants to choose the best marketing tools and approaches given their particular barriers and strengths and to determine the salary they need.
- *Marketing yourself on paper* reviews the traditional and new innovative “paper” marketing tools that are most relevant to the individual.
- *Marketing yourself over the phone* teaches use of the phone to locate hundreds of potential employers, explore the ‘hidden’ job market and set-up meetings without first submitting an application. It shows how to neutralise bad employment references.
- *Marketing yourself in person* is designed to promote confidence when meeting prospective employers. It shows how to present the company’s image, answer questions so the employer is impressed and determine if the company matches the candidate’s needs, preferences and career path.

The program involves the participants working through a series of ‘journals’ that are designed to assist individuals to achieve their goals.

The *Overcoming Barriers* module highlights both the strengths and the potential barriers of the participants. It encourages them to focus on how they can more effectively use the skills of Presentation, Attitude, Dependability, Motivation, Ability and Network (PADMAN). Using a computer program, written specifically for this module, the participants are asked a variety of questions to which they answer ‘true’, ‘not true’ or ‘not applicable’. The program then prints out a list of strengths and barriers. Using the following five strategies, participants discover new ways to minimise or remove the impact that the barriers could have on finding employment:

- Find a resource
- Learn a new skill
- Develop a good answer
- Change where you look
- Change your attitude

A Welfare component is included in the program as this is, for some offenders, a last opportunity to gather information on issues relating to:

- *Housing* – supported accommodation services, emergency housing, Department of Housing, community housing, private rentals and owning your own home
- *Community Services*, including brainstorming activity of services available, an explanation of what services are provided, obtaining Birth Certificates and other identification papers
- *Taxation* – an exercise is conducted to assist in understanding the income tax system and how to obtain a tax file number
- *Legal issues* detailing new laws, support services and complaints procedures, Community Legal Centres, Community Justice Centres, Ombudsman and Department of Fair Trading
- *Budgeting and Debt Management* – fines, bankruptcy and alternatives, State Debt Recovery and financial counselling.

The Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) program consists of looking at the positives and negatives of any alcohol, drug or gambling use or criminality and alternative activities are explored. Case studies form a significant part of this program as this takes the focus off the individual and brings about a connected group activity. The final part of the presentation is role plays. Staff and inmates are involved in the role plays which have been found to be extremely successful and rewarding for all who take part in them.

As part of the collaborative effort between the Offender Services and Programs staff and the custodial officers who work together to facilitate Jobs for the Boys, a Case Manager leads a session with the group on the C3 program. The lowest classification an offender can gain before release is known as C3. The officer explains the process involved in applying for C3 including the criteria an offender must meet and the benefits of this program, such as day leave, weekend leave, being able to gain employment with an outside organization and attending external study at a College, University or other educational institution.

A further element of the program comprises the Activities Officer instructing the group on nutrition and fitness. It is important that offenders using the gym do so in a safe manner, using the appropriate techniques to ensure no injuries occur. In addition, theory classes are held on what constitutes a balanced diet including all the different food groups. A practical cooking lesson is presented where the offenders themselves produce a low-fat dinner that they are allowed to eat – and enjoy!

### **Program outcomes**

Taking into account the elements this program contains, it is believed that participants will gain sufficient skills and confidence to leave the prison environment and re-enter the community with a plan for at least the immediate future. Statistical evidence collected to date shows that within a six-month period of being released, only 10% of offenders who

completed the Jobs for the Boys program have returned to custody, compared to a general recidivism rate that is much higher. Recent statistics and evaluations from the current program note that 90% of participants indicate their self-esteem, confidence and motivation to achieve are improved as a result of the program.

Upon release, Jobs for the Boys graduates, who qualify, are fast-tracked to Intensive Assistance through Centrelink because they have gained The Salvation Army Employment Plus certificate upon completion of the Jobs for the Boys program whilst in custody. The Salvation Army Employment Plus services are accessed through Centrelink.

Centrelink is a government agency delivering a range of Commonwealth services to the Australian community. Centrelink is set up so people can get more of the help they need in one place. Centrelink offers a range of services delivered on behalf of Departments such as Family and Community Services, state and territory housing authorities, Education, Science and Training, Health and Ageing, Employment and Workplace Relations and many other government agencies. Specifically, this agency provides a service to offenders upon release to redress a perception of disadvantage in the community. The participants are guided to Job Network agencies.

Participants meet an Employment Plus consultant who identifies their needs through a vocational profile. A job search plan is then constructed which points the candidate towards small groups who address their immediate needs such as personal presentation, work motivation and overcoming specific barriers to employment. In many instances support is given in the form of fares and appropriate clothing for interviews and, in some cases, even dentures and glasses to improve the candidate's appearance.

One positive part of this initiative is that strong links have been established with community and other outside organizations such as Rotary, The Salvation Army, Centrelink and many private businesses who work with the offenders to help them achieve immediate and long term goals. Many of these organizations will also provide support to the offenders upon release by assisting them with work experience or employment.

There are approximately fifteen participants in each group. Priority is given to Young Adult Offenders who have completed the Oberon element of the Specialised Young Adult Offenders Program. Offenders applying for a reduction in classification to participate in Works Release or external study may then supplement this group. Currently, it is a prerequisite at John Morony that offenders applying for a reduction in classification to C3 must have completed the Jobs for the Boys program.

Other Correctional Centres in New South Wales have shown interest in running this program. Currently the program is facilitated at Tamworth in New South Wales that is a medium to minimum-security facility for male offenders. Emu Plains Correctional Centre, which is a minimum-security facility for women, is interested in a "Jobs for the Girls" type program. Berrima Correctional Centre for women in the Southern Highlands has conducted a pilot program facilitated by the Salvation Army Employment Plus. The pre-release program at this Centre will be known as 'Compass'. In early 2004 a new women's facility, Dillwynia, will be opening on the John Morony site and forward planning has already commenced to introduce the program into this Centre.

## Future directions

- A training manual is currently in the process of being written for Jobs for the Boys. This program is to be one of the NSW Department of Corrective Services approved programs and will be the pre-release program delivered throughout the State, in appropriate Centres, customised by each Centre to meet the needs of their offender population
- Components of this program have accredited Vocational Education and Training Advisory Board (VETAB) outcomes, for example, modules from Cert I Communications and the new Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA)
- Increase the number of offenders being classified specifically to John Morony II to participate in Jobs for the Boys as part of their Case Management Plan.
- Links are being strengthened with the local business community in terms of establishing a system that will allow Jobs for the Boys participants, at the appropriate level of C3 classification, to participate in work experience programs. The purpose of this is for offenders to build a bank of hard skills and to demonstrate their skills and abilities to employers to enable them to obtain a reference that can be included in their resume.
- To facilitate Jobs for the Boys at John Morony I, where the release rate per quarter is approximately fifteen offenders.
- Introduce guest speakers from NSW TAFE or Universities to give advice on career development and training pathways.
- Discuss with the Pre-Release Programs Unit (PRPU) how the existing policy may be interpreted and/or changed to allow participants to cold call random employer groups to investigate job vacancies.