

Workshop 12:
**Integrating training and production
in corrections industries**

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East Gippsland Institute of TAFE (EGIT) is contracted by Australasian Correctional Management (ACM) to deliver nationally accredited Vocational Education Training (VET) programs to prisoners at Fulham Correctional Centre in Sale Victoria and Junee Correctional Centre in NSW. Both privately operated centres accommodate in excess of 700 prisoners and manage industry contracts for external companies, as well as providing minor internal construction and maintenance services.

Historically, prison industries have been operated by correctional staff and training opportunities for the prisoner workforce have been restricted. In many prison industries, equipment is owned by the external customer so access to training staff is denied. In many situations education and training are in competition with industries for access to this workforce and these prisoners receive no recognition for skill acquisition while employed in industry. When Fulham Correctional Centre opened in 1997 all trade training equipment was housed in the industry building so training had to be structured outside industry hours to avoid clashing with production needs. Training access became increasingly problematic as a range of petty issues emerged from sharing this equipment and so the historical rift between industries and education was quickly establishing itself in this new environment. The fact that ACM had a vested interest in training, and there were contractual obligations for both parties, ACM were receptive to a proposal from EGIT to integrate training and production.

The principles of this approach as presented in Nov 1998 were:

- New positions created - Industry Training Coordinators (ITC's) must be qualified trade/trainers
- ITC's to run the production component of the Industries - not correctional officers
- ITC's to be employed by EGIT - removing the custodial role from this position
- ACM to share salaries based on production/training demands
- All training to be integrated with and driven by production

At Fulham the concept was initially applied to the metal and timber construction industries plus the horticulture program which incorporated internal grounds development.

In 2001 ACM requested we introduce the same concept into our training program at Junee that reinforced their belief in the model. The approach here was to be somewhat different, with ACM being the host employer. However the project still revealed a very similar range of challenges with some common themes between the two operations.

Information on the concept and implementation of our integrated training model was presented at the last IFECSA Conference, Bathurst 2001 and the paper is available on the conference proceedings CD. This presentation continues on from the implementation and is aimed at addressing the ongoing management issues that confront the integration concept.

When evaluating these programs we are cognisant of the new directions of corrections education currently supported by Corrections Victoria. We believe the model sits well with recommendations from all recent research suggesting the benefits of integrating education and training into a prisoner's rehabilitation process. The holistic approach to sentence management referred to in many components of the Victorian Corrections Long Term Management Plan is strongly reflected in this model and provides an excellent platform from which future reforms can be launched. At the recent Victorian Corrections Education Association conference, the Corrective Services Commissioner, Mr Kelvin Anderson, referred to this model as an example of best practice and one that embodies many of the initiatives that Corrections Victoria would like to see implemented across the state in the future.

The integrated training approach is now firmly entrenched in the education and training profile at Fulham Correctional Centre and is currently under revision at Junee after major changes with their contracted industries.

While these programs have been quite innovative and successful, they have not been without challenges. It is clear the Fulham and Junee models share the same concept, although they differ operationally. Some areas of operation and management are obviously similar, while others are totally unique to each centre. While the new integrated approach successfully resolved the previously identified problems a new range of issues slowly emerged during the ensuing months. The majority of these issues were associated with management of the programs and the sharing of this between the two organisations.

One of the identified dangers of a shared staffing arrangement such as this is the potential for staff to be torn between two employers. Unfortunately as it prevailed ITC's were often unknowingly given conflicting directions by their managers that indicated poor management communication processes. While the ITC's worked hard to accomplish these tasks, it was leading to enormous frustrations for all. At times they were being asked to produce goods without knowledge of targets or quality expectations, plus deliver and record training hours all within unrealistic timelines.

As a result of recent research, "Exploring a dual management approach to integrating training with production in industries within correctional settings" (Clifford 2003), a set of guidelines were developed establishing sound policies and practices for improving the management of the integrated program between the two organisations. A forum conducted in 2002 between the management of each organisation to thoroughly analyse the program highlighted the need for more formal communication processes. This forum also sanctioned a number of initiatives that were put in place to alleviate many of the emerging challenges of the program.

Two new positions were created in 2002, East Gippsland TAFE's Industry Training Manager and ACM's Industry Production Supervisor. These two positions meet on a daily basis and manage the immediate production and training requirements of the industry. Both positions are primarily based within the industry building and maintain a holistic

approach to production, training and human resource management. Issues such as machine maintenance, product specifications, quality control and raw material quality and availability are the direct responsibility of the Production Supervisor. Integrating the appropriate training curriculum, developing learning material and assessment tools and monitoring training delivery progress is the direct responsibility of the Training Manager. Both managers are responsible for building networks with Unit and support staff and communicating the role of ITC's and Industry as a whole. The success of the entire program is heavily reliant on the collaboration and integrity of these two managers.

At a Senior Management level the formation of an Industry Management Committee (IMC) provides a forum for addressing such issues as contract management and viability, industry infra-structure requirements and OH&S concerns. General discussion is generated on future directions, new contract proposals, production and training initiatives. The forum also provides a platform to build the partnership, strengthen our comprehension and appreciation of each other's priorities and promote confidence in our ability to achieve a united goal.

Competing demands within the industry also requires constant monitoring as production can easily dominate the training program especially when customers are forcing deadlines. As the training arm we have to continually and carefully monitor this to ensure equilibrium is maintained so all targets can be met. Adding to this frustration for the ITC's is the fluid nature of corrections industries which often leads to a perceived change to the production goal posts to comply with the needs and whims of the external customers.

To suggest the integration of training and production on the pretext that all training can be conducted within the production program, in hindsight, was short-sighted and somewhat naive in its conception. It was quickly established that the tasks provided by a mundane repetitive production line do not necessarily give the breadth of experience required to meet the needs of a nationally accredited training program. As a resolution, skills have been identified within each industry and an up-front training program devised to meet these needs. This initial training is then followed up with further, more advanced training after the worker has been in the industry for a period of time. This supports the on-going integrated production and training concept.

The potential for prisoners to do one-off projects, ordered by staff or outside community groups, was explored and a process developed. The cost of materials then passed on the customer. ITC's have also strengthened relationships with outside industries and now many companies provide donations of off-cuts and second-rate material specifically for training purposes.

Many operational and administrative staff did not understand the industry partnership arrangement and some still believe that EGIT "run" or "own" the industries. This misunderstanding creates confusion and resentment and sometimes leads to a lack of assistance and cooperation from unit and support staff. As the majority of correctional staff are not totally 'au fait' with the training system they often fail to see the benefits gained from related activities.

Poor change management education processes contributed directly to this confusion with resultant stress and exasperation. An extensive, repetitive information forum outlining clearly the roles and responsibilities and the jurisdiction of this concept could have accelerated the progress of this concept and reflected earlier developmental

improvements. A full appreciation of an integrated system and how it can complement and add value to an industry, needs to be continually reinforced.

New correctional staff are now addressed by the Training Manager during their initial training program to introduce them to the concept and begin building rapport. The "prison grapevine" has also worked its magic here and the principles and philosophy of the concept is gradually filtering through the employment levels and is reinforced through the weekly prisoner induction program.

The experience gained during this venture has enabled us to identify the range of experiences and personal qualities that a trainer requires to be successful in these positions. Underpinning this is the requirement to possess qualifications and experience in the field in which they are training in order to meet Australian Quality Training Framework regulations. Experience also tells us that it is advantageous for an ITC to have either, an in-depth understanding and experience within the training sector and/or experience and qualifications in Corrections or related field. A successful ITC has qualifications and experience in training and assessment, qualifications in the area of their expertise, and experience within a correctional, or related, environment.

During the advertising and selection process EGIT target people with the relevant qualifications. Regularly we encounter appropriate people with qualifications within their area of expertise and with Correctional experience. In these cases the successful applicants are provided with the opportunity to gain a training qualification by EGIT as part of their professional development program.

Security staff based within the industry building are responsible for screening all employees and supervising movement within the buildings. This position is subject to roster changes, which can be disruptive and does not provide continuity or consistency for the prisoners. The attitude of the officer in this position is extremely important to the tone of the building and a negative over zealous custodial officer can disrupt the harmonious training and production atmosphere.

Negotiations lead to ACM dedicating this post to a single officer. It was considered advantageous if this officer had a business or industry background and could assist the ITC's with such tasks as ordering material and consumables, checking consignment notes etc. This Officer is considered an integral member of the industry training team.

While the ITC's are not directly responsible for security, their presence in the building has them performing components of this role and providing a form of dynamic security. This is of tremendous benefit to the operation as a whole, but it must be acknowledged that ITC's are not recognised as security staff and consequently may not have the skills or knowledge to detect covert schemes within the Industry.

All new ITC's are subject to a thorough induction process to inform them of their responsibilities to the security of the centre and when dealing with prisoners. This is backed up by a three-month induction and probation period where all ITC's are teamed with a mentor and their managers monitor their progress and attitude continuously.

ITC's wear an EGIT uniform to reduce any barriers to learning when interacting with prisoners. Many prisoners do not realise that ITC's actually have a responsibility to the safety and security of the centre. This provides a far more relaxed production and learning environment. This aspect of trainer and work supervisor minus the custodial element we

see as one of the major advantages of the program. Prisoners are generally more responsive to staff whom they perceive to be aligned with their learning and therapeutic needs rather than those responsible for their discipline and containment.

Managing and developing the Horticulture industry has been an extremely arduous and protracted task. Horticulture was included in the integrated program to provide accredited training to the large workforce in recognition of the hours of employment required to cultivate the expanse of barren land within the perimeter of this new correctional facility. Throughout the life of the integrated program issues affecting and causing greatest concern within the construction industries did not always apply to horticulture which was afflicted with a set of frustrations and dilemmas all of its own.

During the life of the project a number of significant changes have augured well for the Horticulture Program. Redirecting this program to an entirely different management and budgetary regime has created a more accessible and direct line of communication for the ITC, which in turn has eliminated many of the associated program development issues. Time and persistence has also helped remove many of the nuances created by the general lack of understanding by the prison population regarding the role and associated responsibilities of the horticulture training coordinator.

The horticulture industry is linked to the cycling seasons and therefore experiences periods of intense, nursery production activity, and periods of relative indolence. When the industry is combined with the centres internal grounds beautification program, the times of relative inactivity are utilised around the grounds to maximise the efficiency of the workforce. It is our experience that this must be managed very carefully as times of intense nursery production activity, followed by an extensive grounds beautification schedule can impede the training program.

Originally the Horticulture ITC was an amalgamation of a training position with a Correctional Officers position, responsible for tools, equipment, the workforce, and security. Unfortunately these two positions did not merge seamlessly and the expectations of the position were beyond the capacity of one person. On reflection, from a management perspective, the demands of this position during start-up phase were too onerous to facilitate an even balance to training and production. Coping with the expanse of the industry and the work ethic of an inherited workforce constituted a fulltime load. To expect the employee to comprehend curriculum and source appropriate resources was, in hindsight an excessive demand.

Workforce enthusiasm and the initiative of the ITC helped to foster the introduction of a nursery production scheme, which complements the grounds maintenance program. It was the unpredicted success of this venture that drew the attention of ACM management at Fulham and instigated the severance of this program from the combined industries umbrella to formally establish it as an independent enterprise. Dual management still applies but the reporting structure is drastically simplified thus eliminating many of the communication issues and frustrations for this ITC.

The additional staffing resource allocation of a correctional officer (2003) to monitor and issue tools and equipment, plus the assistance of a training curriculum adviser (2002) added to the efficiency of this program by reducing the ITC's workload. Prisoners tend to take ownership and responsibility for production and consequently there are few prisoner management issues and much scope for advanced training.

Central to the success of this program was the allocation of appropriate land and location for the nursery. Access to land is less of an issue with many of the newer, open plan centres but could be as significant problem within some of the older, walled facilities. The systems and infrastructure associated with this industry provides an excellent platform for the introduction of new initiatives, such as Traineeships, currently being researched and considered by Corrections Victoria.

EGIT identified the potential for extending this integrated approach to incorporate our automotive training program with vehicle maintenance and servicing. As automotive training is always high on the prisoner's agenda, EGIT had made a considerable commitment to this training area. Barriers to effective delivery were similar to many other prisons - primarily access to an appropriate training area and sufficient tools and equipment. Parallel to our training requirements was a need for a maintenance schedule for the fleet of vehicles and grounds equipment that is owned by ACM and primarily operated by prisoners.

This venture has created an effective simulated workplace training environment that provides realistic and stimulating automotive training experiences. While this area is not formally categorised as a production industry, it is conducted under the same integrated training format with all stakeholders benefiting from the outcomes.

Integrating accredited training within any contract and service industries in correctional settings can complement what has historically been a mundane, laborious routine. Sharing the employment of staff appears to be the most practical way of affecting this, specifically at these privately operated facilities. The positive consistent theme, which has emerged from the process, is the belief in the philosophy of integrating training with production and providing relevant practical workplace training and assessment with the acknowledgment of the benefits to prisoner, trainer, security staff, and external customer.