

# **CORRECTIONS EDUCATION IN VICTORIA**

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## **Corrections Education in Victoria**

The intention of this paper is to describe the history and the role of the Corrections Education Association of Victoria (CEAV) and to address some of the challenges that confront the Victorian Corrections Education system now and into the future. We would like to illustrate from our experiences in the areas of Juvenile Justice and Vocational Training and open the dialogue for us to be able to share and learn from each others' experiences in the future.

## **Overview of Corrections Education in Victoria**

The provision of education and training across the adult and juvenile sectors is laid down in legislation in Victoria.

The Corrections Act 1986, version No.045, section 47 states that prisoners have:“... the right to take part in educational programs in the prison.” and as such education and training forms part of the systems ‘structured day” that enables prisoners to participate in a minimum of four hours accredited education/training each week.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1989 states that its philosophy is “to minimise interruption to clients’ lives and promote their development”. When sentencing clients into the Juvenile Justice system, the court allows for “the education, training or employment of the child to continue without interruption or disturbance”.

The numbers that we are dealing with across the various adult and juvenile justice sectors as at 30th June 2005 are:

Category	Total Number	Male	Female	Source/ Extra Comments
Adult Prisons	3698	3441	257	Number in Police Cells = 125 Imprisonment rate per 100,000 Adults =95 Source: Corrections Victoria (unpublished)
Juvenile Justice	151	137	14	Source: Department of Human Services (unpublished)
Adult Forensic (Thomas Embling Hospital)	120	110	10	Source: Department of Human Services (unpublished)
Adult Forensic (Statewide Forensic Services)	20	20	0	Source: Department of Human Services (unpublished)

In Victoria six TAFE Institutes are responsible for the delivery of Corrections Education, namely Bendigo Regional Institute TAFE, East Gippsland TAFE, Gordon Institute, Goulburn Ovens TAFE, Kangan Batman TAFE and University of Ballarat TAFE Division. In total they deliver in excess of 772000 SCHs within corrections. They employ approx 200 staff across the state and deliver on a roll-on, roll-off basis from January through to December, with some centres having students for up to 50 weeks per year. These TAFE Institutes deliver across the adult corrections (both public and private prisons), juvenile justice and forensic areas (Bearing Point Review, 2003).

TAFE Institute	Correctional	Juvenile Justice	Adult Forensic
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	Centre / Prison Locations		
Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE	Bendigo Loddon Tarrengower	Malmsbury	
East Gippsland Institute of TAFE	Fulham Junee (NSW)		
Gordon Institute of TAFE	Barwon		
Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE	Beechworth Dhurringile		
Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE	Port Phillip Dame Phyllis Frost	Melbourne JJC Parkville PYRC Acheron	Thomas Embling Hospital Fairfield
University of Ballarat TAFE Division	Ararat Langi Kal Kal		

Each of these Institutes are regionally based and have the responsibility for those corrections locations in that area. This notion has recently been challenged with the education provision for the soon to open new prisons in Victoria being tendered out by the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Justice. We recognise that TAFE Institutes can at times be seen as being in competition with each other, however these six TAFE Institutes or more specifically their corrections education departments work in collaboration to provide a system wide approach to the planning and delivery of education to offenders.

In the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system, courses are based on the relevant national competency standards and, in other non-vocational areas, must meet the required learning outcomes documented under the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). All TAFE Institutes are in compliance with the Framework which is a set of nationally agreed quality assurance arrangements for training and assessment services delivered by training organisations. These arrangements are designed to ensure the outcomes, whether they be course modules or full qualifications, are portable, recognised by other Registered Training Organisations and have standing in industry.

The Victorian model brings the experience and expertise of six TAFE Institutes to the corrections education table. There is a sense of working

together to achieve common goals; essentially it is this quality that underpins the Corrections Education Association of Victoria.

The Corrections Education Association of Victoria (CEAV) was formed in 1989 after the responsibility for education moved from the primary school division to the newly formed TAFE sector when it was felt that a common interest group was required to look after the needs of TAFE teachers in Corrections' settings in Victoria. The CEAV was established and continues today as a representative body of teachers and other related personnel.

Some of the key responsibilities of the CEAV are:

- Representative body for the planning and delivery of education programs within the Victorian Corrections system.
- Common interest group
- Organising corrections specific professional development activities
- Corrections staff and management support network,
- Cohesive body for corrections educators in Victoria,
- Focused training provision across all prisons
- Interaction between private and public prison education providers
- Moderation of nationally accredited curriculum,
- Organising of annual CEAV Conference
- Promoting corrections education at a national and international level
- Supporting communications across corrections locations including the publishing of a quarterly newsletter,

The following is a showcase of what happens in our Juvenile Justice Centres followed by the Vocational Education and Training System operating within all our Correctional Education Centres across Victoria.

### **Juvenile Justice**

Victoria is recognised as having one of the most successful juvenile justice systems in Australia. This is underpinned by a commitment to the diversion of young offenders from intensive penalties, whenever appropriate. Incarceration is the most serious of criminal sanction and is used as a last resort for young people considered unsuitable for community supervision. When a young person is sentenced to custody, legislation and policy guides the juvenile justice system to provide an environment that encourages positive development, with a focus on meaningful community reintegration. This reduces the risk of further involvement in the juvenile justice system. Positive reintegration into the community is achieved by helping each young person to develop meaningful social networks and relationships.

All programs in juvenile justice centres are informed by the case planning process in conjunction with Department of Human Services and TAFE. The

educational programs offered by TAFE within the juvenile justice sector are tailored to meet clients' individual and collective needs, considering their gender, developmental stage, ethnicity, cultural and social background and their religion. The review process is undertaken annually of all educational programs. Parameters that are considered during the process are clients' needs, literacy and numeracy integration, industry trends, employment opportunities, further educational opportunities, and other factors include staffing, facilities, support and resources for educational delivery.

The juvenile justice centres together with the educational providers – Kangan Batman TAFE and Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE will help clients start or continue education, pre-employment programs or assist with obtaining employment and encourage them to maximise their educational and training opportunities. Many clients in the juvenile justice system have experienced periods of school exclusion and are ill equipped in basic numeracy, oral, literacy and social skills. This can contribute to significant disadvantages in accessing educational and employment opportunities. Juvenile justice centre education providers allow young offenders to undertake accredited training, acquire vocational skills, meet their literacy, numeracy and educational needs, and improve their options to gain employment or further education on their release from custody.

The range of accredited educational and vocational provision includes the following subject areas:

CGEA (Introductory – Certificate III), VET, Art & Design, Automotive, Information Technology, Multimedia, Music, Koori Programs, Fashion Studies, Horticulture, Cabinet-making, Performing Arts, Construction, Welding, Recreation, Hospitality, Employment/Life Skills, Motor Mechanics, Outdoor Ed, Small Business, VCE, Distance Education (as a support role), Library Provision, Ceramics and Small Business.

What works for our clients and customers is the development of short, sharp programs. It is important educational and vocational assessments are performed and precede attendance in all educational programs, to determine the most appropriate course of study for the individual, based on their literacy and skills level. Via the integration of programs, we have the ability to deliver short, precise “chunks” of information to our client group, by fusing the General Education component with vocational areas of study, and incorporating other providers into the educational delivery of our programs.

Recent successful innovative educational programs within the Victorian juvenile justice sector are outlined below:

#### Lost for Words

A collaborative project between Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre, Kangan Batman TAFE, National Gallery of Victoria (Youth Access Project), and White Lion (Youth Mentor Program), the aim of the partnership program was to provide young men in custody, positive personal, social, educational and vocational experiences, by

introducing young men to the Gallery as an accessible public resource for their use and enjoyment, to provide avenues for community education through challenging negative stereotypes of disadvantaged young people, and to enable the high quality art work of young men in custody to reach a wide and varied audience, including other at-risk young people. Participants and their families attended the opening exhibition in a major gallery in Fitzroy, Melbourne along with many people from the general public. The exhibition then moved to the Morwell Regional Gallery, where again, it was well received by the general public.

#### Communication Through Cuisine

An integrated CGEA and Hospitality program, enabling clients to achieve competence in 8 weeks, by condensing both subject areas, virtually in a “Fast->Track” context. Communication modules are delivered from the CGEA, and the cuisine component comes from the Certificate I in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations). The course requires the client group to be highly committed & dedicated to achieving a successful outcome, the course culminates in a “Dinner” which is planned, prepared and served to the entire Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre population.

#### Skilled Up

A program designed to skill clients in readiness for job placement and general life skills, under the CGEA umbrella, topics covered include basic IT skills, CV's, Interview Skills, Workplace Communication, Budgeting and Life Skills.

#### Learner's

Delivering Learner's License to applicable clients, via VicRoads CD Rom and classroom interaction, the actual licensing component is undertaken when the client is eligible for leaves or release, this course is undertaken closer to the clients' release date, the course is built into the CGEA, an example of delivering literacy and numeracy flexibly.

#### Cafe

Clients who have completed the majority of the Certificate I in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations) are offered a place within the Café program. The café offers the clients the opportunity to learn coffee making skills, food service, customer service, cash handling, as well as other module completions from the Cert I in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations).

#### Work Out

A program developed for delivery to clients on remand, a short course on OH&S, preparatory for re-entry into the workforce and a prerequisite for entry into the JJ tooled programs. “Work Out” will be delivered via CD Rom in the near future.

#### Thinking TAFE

An induction program designed for remandees who have not attended juvenile justice educational programs. The program is designed to give clients a general overview of TAFE, and what it can offer the disengaged youth. An educational and vocational assessment is undertaken in this process, to clearly identify the clients' educational and vocational skills levels and areas of interest in regards to study and future employment.

#### Koori Healing Garden

This was recently opened in the Parkville Youth Residential Centre, the "Koori Healing Garden", will be establishing an Open Air Learning Centre, the garden was designed for all clients within the confines of the PYRC, to utilise as a place for healing, Koori focused educational programs will be undertaken once the Open Air Learning Facility is constructed.

To "capture" the juvenile justice audience it is imperative teachers are adaptive, creative and flexible in their promotion and delivery of programs, hence the renaming of General Education/ Hospitality/ Induction/ OH&S/ Art/ Koori Programs/ English /Maths, etc.

The business of TAFE is to ensure the clients' participation in, and experience with, educational and vocational programs during custody is fundamental to the individuals' rehabilitation. Unlike the adult correction sector, juvenile justice has no industry; consequently TAFE is the daily option for clients, four to five hours per day, five days a week.

We operate in a Campus style setting at each juvenile justice facility and the philosophy of fostering decision-making, self-discipline and independent living skills prevails. TAFE provides achievable, meaningful and tangible programs that render a sense of purpose by turning the clients' pessimistic perceptions of education into optimistic ambition, giving them the incentive to continue education and/or gain skills for employment, thus, encouraging young men and women to review their own lives with regard to education, training and employment, health and lifestyle and offending behaviour.

#### **Vocational Education and Training**

In Victoria, TAFE provides vocational education and training in a variety of industry areas, generally via the provision of nationally accredited competencies and qualifications. Often this is accomplished through working partnerships with education and the Prison's Industries Centre. This integrated approach taps into the opportunity to deliver on the job training when prisoners are producing work for real life contracts.

#### Advantages of this type of partnership include:

- Corrections contracts the work and oversees the contract
- The contract provides for raw materials, equipment, maintenance, infrastructure and other resources
- TAFE provides the on and off the job delivery of accredited training and assessment in the specific trades area

- TAFE provides the complimentary Information Technology, Literacy, Numeracy, Occupational Health and Safety, Team Work and other generic employability skills
- TAFE and Corrections staffing resources are shared
- TAFE issues the relevant nationally accredited qualification

TAFE and Prisons have also established integrated approaches to VET delivery through working partnerships in various prison services areas. Prisoners are trained and assessed on the job whilst working in various prison essential services. Accredited competencies are often gained in areas such as –

- Hospitality and Food hygiene with the prison's kitchen operations
- Horticulture Amenities, Landscaping, Outdoor Works, Grounds Maintenance in line with grounds maintenance and gardening requirements
- Asset Maintenance in partnership with prison cleaning services
- Stores, Warehousing & Distribution, Forklift Truck operation in conjunction with prison stores works
- Rural studies, primary industries, tractor and small farm machinery in some areas of open prison work requirements
- General maintenance in tandem with prison's building maintenance operations

Vocational Education and Training is also delivered in partnership with various prison programs. This may be offered in conjunction with other Program Providers who deliver a range of Therapeutic and Rehabilitative courses or in conjunction with the prison's required provision of various sport and recreational options. Examples include:

- Outdoor Education and Sport and Recreation accredited curriculum in partnership with prison provision of sport and gym options.
- Music Industry Skills, Art and Design and Performing Arts in line with the prison's regular provision of these services
- Community Integration, Drug & Alcohol programs, Problem Solving, Anger Management, Life Skills/ Independent Living Skills that VET may complement and deliver in partnership. TAFE components commonly include Parenting Skills, Drama & Art Therapy, Employment and Living Skills, Negotiation and Communication Skills in the Workplace and other areas that involve the softer, employability skills.

Partnerships can be cost-effective and often allow for the delivery of units that would otherwise not be able to be offered. Costs saved can include those associated with plant and equipment, consumables and resources, raw materials, maintenance and repairs, personnel and security. Other benefits include the opportunity for students to study in an environment where they are producing for real life contracts under constraints of real life industry expectations, including quality control, productivity rates, Occupational Health and Safety requirements, workplace communication, team work, record keeping and other industrial requirements.

The future challenges may include:

- Trade practices requirements and the types of industries available for prison contracts

- The notion of full employment for all in line with skills shortages and the aging workforce. We can expect that employment opportunities will be available for all ex-prisoners. Certain attitude-based barriers to employment previously experienced may become less significant. Our challenge may be to ensure that education equips ex-offenders to take advantage of these opportunities. For the younger cohort, employers may be more willing to provide the industry training if employability skills such as knowledge of work culture and basic literacy/numeracy and IT skills are in place. Employers may be willing to invest more readily in the longevity of their employees, which may mean corrections educators assisting to build a different base level of skills to equip our students to compete. For the older cohort, it is suggested that workers with enhanced skills will be in high demand, and employers are being encouraged to adopt dual strategies to attract both these types of employees. (AACI, 2004).

- Getting the job may be the easy part, keeping the job may be harder. Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle and Hardcastle (2004), also suggests that educators still need to give priority to the skills that can maintain the job, as well as gain it. They suggest that often the comprehensive and very basic skills, such as introducing the culture of work, can make or break this maintenance and therefore the ability to keep the job. This same study has found that ex-prisoners with re-release training were “significantly more likely to obtain and retain employment than people with other forensic histories” (p.65) and suggests the establishment of broader partnerships with corrections and industry. This invites a further challenge for TAFE providers, where possibly to form some of these partnerships themselves and begin to provide the on-the-job training outside during pre-release programs would make sense. This model of on-site training, successfully implemented in Australia with other groups in similarly disadvantaged situations, also allows for the development of social competence needed to succeed in the workplace, integration and other very important employability skills in a supportive, on-the job situation.

- Ever changing industry practices. The need for flexible learning opportunities, virtual delivery and secure links to specified sites poses challenges to corrections education facilities, infrastructure and resources together with the even greater challenge of establishing a political climate ready to accept that prisoners will need to be studying “on-line” in a number of important areas.

- CEAV's ability to establish pathways for students transferred between various prison locations in an ever-changing knowledge economy. Answers may again lay within flexible delivery options and a press for pre-release programs which include on-site delivery in mainstream industry settings.

The CEAV offers an effective means of sharing ideas, experiences, practices and problems in the VET partnerships and many other areas. It provides us with a forum to forward plan and establish contingencies, examine policies and trends together and strive for proactive approaches to corrections education state-wide. Importantly the CEAV means a strengthening of meaningful representation at government levels and a stronger base from which to influence policy-makers, which is especially important in our attempts to form VET partnerships conducive to training in those skills which will be most sought after by employers.

## **Conclusion**

What we would like to do now is to give you an insight into the future directions of Corrections Education in Victoria – a kind of a look into our crystal ball and chain!

Over the past 3 years corrections education has been subject to a Review. The Bearing Point Review of Education and Training Provision in Victorian Prisons – The Way Forward 2003 has taken an exhaustive look at the way in which we deliver vocational education and training across our adult prisons system. It provided a list of 29 recommendations that are currently being worked through by an implementation committee at which CEAV has representation.

Some of the key findings of this review are:

- The primary focus of education and training in prison must be to assist prisoners to gain employment, and thereby reduce the likelihood of re-offending.
- That education and training should be integrated into other areas of the prisons operation, recognising the skill development in prisons industries.
- That all prisoners should undergo an assessment of their educational needs at the beginning of their sentence.
- And, that priority access to education and training should be based on assessed needs, with greatest priority given to prisoners with basic skills needs.

Some of these recommendations will challenge our current operational methodologies and delivery strategies.

As an organisation the Corrections Education Association of Victoria is aware that statewide, nationally and internationally the corrections education agenda is continually moving along. When our association was formed in 1989 it reflected the needs of our members at that time. The Corrections Education Association of Victoria is continually developing; currently it is examining itself in an attempt to transform the organisation for the future and to establish a solid foundation for the next evolution of corrections education in Victoria.

We are striving to achieve a confident contemporary approach to Corrections Education ensuring the best possible education for offenders in partnership

with all stakeholders in the corrections system. Our aims are to ensure that Corrections Education is actively represented and promoted locally, state-wide and nationally, to foster an environment in which innovative teaching is encouraged and developed, and to provide ongoing evaluation of appropriate educational philosophies, procedures, teaching methods, policies and administration. Obviously this will present our organisation with a huge task in the near future.

In conclusion, we recognise that the wealth of experience and expertise in corrections education both nationally and internationally. We believe that there are many benefits to our organisation and to others in working in partnerships with individuals and other corrections education associations. We would like to open up this dialogue and look forward to the prospects the future holds for us to be able to share and learn from each others experiences.

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