



Women 4 Work

An initiative delivered under *Better Pathways: an integrated response to women's offending and re-offending*



Melbourne Citymission

Women In Transition

- Supporting Women Exiting Prison (SWEP)
- Women Integrated Support Service (WISP)
- Family Support
- Women 4 Work (W4W)



Women 4 Work

- DPFC and Tarrengower
- Employment Expo
- Community Corrections
- Structured Post Placement Support
- Pathways to Financial independence



Labour Market Shortages

“Labour shortages are real and need to be urgently addressed. With economic growth continuing apace, inflation and interest rates low and unemployment at a thirty year low, there is a genuine need for business to attract an increased number of workers from overseas.”



How are different to Job Network

- Specialised
- Intensive
- Holistic
- Flexible
- Extensive



Employer Perceptions

How do we break down the perception if you have a criminal record you are untrustworthy?

How do we convince employers and employer groups that there are many benefits to the community in employing an ex-offender?



Myths about Hiring Ex-Offenders

- **Ex-offenders are a high risk.** All the statistics indicate that ex-offenders are not a high risk. Only 2.5% of women assisted by Melbourne Citymission in a similar employment program re-offended. And none of these offended against her employer.
- **Ex-offenders are only capable of doing manual or repetitive work.** People with criminal records come from all areas of our society. They represent a cross section of the workforce. Many of them have useful skills and qualifications.
- **Ex-offenders are unreliable** - they arrive late or not at all. In general they are as reliable as other workers.



Myths about Hiring Ex-Offenders

- **Someone will always have to be watching over them.** Ex-offenders are people who have committed a crime and who have worked through their punishment. Most of them want to make a fresh start.
- **Other employees will not want to work with them.** There is no need for employees other than line managers to know of the employee's past. You'll be surprised how quickly the ex-offender will fit in, given the opportunity of a fresh start.
- **The existence of criminal convictions is an indication of being untrustworthy.** Many people assume that ex-offenders have a basic character flaw that is not found in the "normal" population. In the vast majority of cases, these are "normal" people who have made a mistake and are keen to put it behind them.



Myths about Hiring Ex-Offenders

- **An ex-offender would not be a conscientious worker and would only be working for the money.** Not true. Most ex-offenders feel they have something to prove and will be loyal and conscientious workers.
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- **Our Company policy excludes ex-offenders because of the type of work involved or legal restrictions.** It is a common misunderstanding that certain professions and trade licenses bar people with criminal records. In fact, refusal is determined by type of offence not by the existence of an offence.
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- **Why should I go out of my way to employ an ex-offender when there are so many other unemployed people available?** This implies that you are employing a person because of their criminal record - doing them a favour. In fact, with correct recruitment procedures, you will have employed them on their merit and skills as with any other unemployed applicant.



Engaging Employers

- Employment Expo
- Public Speaking
- Building on Networks



Client Perception

- “When I am asked if I have a criminal record I just walk out of the interview. No use I will be judged as soon as I say yes. No one really cares that you want to get a job cause that would help you start a new life”
- “Women 4 Work Client 2007”



Engaging Employers

- TOLL
- KR Castlemaine Bacon
- Hudson Drycleaning



Benefits of Employing

- Community
- Business
- Women



Social Inclusion

