Throughcare and VET for adult prisoners and offenders within the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services

Karen Banfield, Steve Barlow and David Gould

‘Throughcare’ is a coordinated and integrated approach to reducing re-offending by people who are the responsibility of the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services. Central to the concept of Throughcare is the assessment of offenders’ risks and needs and the concomitant provision of appropriate programs that target needs and account for various levels of risk. Throughcare also involves the establishment of links between the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services and other government and non-government agencies that support the successful return of ex-offenders to the community. Education programs support Throughcare by providing offenders with opportunities to develop basic education and the employability and vocational skills needed to gain and maintain employment. The work experience and vocational training provided within Corrective Services Industries further enhance the likelihood that offenders will successfully re-integrate into the community post-release.

The New South Wales Department of Corrective Services also implements a range of pre-release transitional support strategies. Education programs and education staff are integral components of many of these strategies. In addition, community-based programs, such as the New South Wales Corrective Services’ Community Offenders Services and the TAFE NSW initiative, the Pathways to Employment, Education and Training Program, enhance Throughcare by supporting offenders to re-engage with training and develop the skills to enter employment and/or vocational training.

Throughcare approach to offender management

The New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, subsequently referred to as the department, is responsible for managing offenders serving their sentences in both custody and the community. In both these settings, the department aims to reduce re-offending by these offenders in the
community. This process, called ‘Throughcare’, is the department’s primary approach to offender management.

Throughcare is the co-ordinated and integrated approach to reducing re-offending by people who are the responsibility of Corrective Services, from their point of contact with the department to their completion of their legal orders and their transition to law-abiding community living.

(New South Wales Department of Corrective Services 2003a, p.3)

Throughcare enshrines five principles of offender management. These principles aim to:

- provide assistance and support to offenders in custody or under supervision in the community
- provide a seamless service to avoid duplication and/or isolated work practices
- share information between the department and other relevant agencies
- promote community linkages
- provide consistent interventions across community and custody which have proved to be effective in reducing recidivism.

Case management

Throughcare involves the gathering, recording and sharing of information on offenders in a timely and effective manner. It involves all staff working at all levels and across all divisions of the department and is assisted by the implementation of electronic case management (e-case management) and offenders’ risk and needs assessment. Central to this information is the introduction of an international risk/needs assessment tool, the Level of Service Inventory (Revised). Factors that increase the risk of re-offending, including education deficits, psychological issues, a history of violence, and alcohol and drug addiction, are assessed. This assessment informs decisions about the placement of offenders in programs and the allocation of resources to programs.

Identifying criminogenic needs

According to the risk-needs model, there are static risk factors (for example, an inmate’s criminal history) which cannot be altered. However, it is through changing the dynamic risk factors (for example, low education attainment level, poor employment history and substance misuse) that future offending can be reduced (Bonta 1996). There is some evidence to suggest a direct association between some dynamic risk factors and criminal behaviour. Offenders often have multiple problems, and those offenders with many problems are most likely to re-offend (McGuire 2002 cited in Harper & Chitty 2005). As a result, programs or interventions that seek to reduce offending directly target dynamic risk factors or criminogenic needs (Andrews & Bonta 1998). The Level of Service Inventory (Revised) indicates not only an individual’s criminogenic needs, but also the type and level of service they require while in the department’s care. Interventions are
targeted to the breadth and depth of the individual offender’s needs, depending on their risk assessment. Offender management programs target a range of offender issues, including:

- alcohol and other drugs
- domestic violence
- anger management
- drink driving
- education deficits.

Throughcare and vocational education and training

In an educational context, Throughcare is implemented by targeting education-specific risk factors (such as low educational attainment and low-level literacy and numeracy skills). It does this by providing pathways facilitating access to in-prison and post-release employment and training, and by establishing links and facilitating the sharing of information with a variety of agencies. In this way an offender’s re-integration into the community will be facilitated.

On 30 June 2006, there were 9051 sentenced and remandee offenders in full-time custody in New South Wales correctional centres, including 651 women (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services 2006c). However, 14 760 offenders spent some time in full-time custody throughout the year (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services 2006b, p.16). In 2005–06, 35% of the offenders in full-time custody participated in education and training (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services 2006a).

The education profile interview and education plan

The education profile interview provides the point of entry for each offender’s educational pathway while in custody. The interview provides information about the offender’s education history, previous training and employment outcomes, learning needs and difficulties, and vocational aspirations and related interests. The data collected through the education profile interview provide the basis for an individual needs analysis. This information also feeds into the course provision requirements of the correction centre and statewide education. The data will also provide baseline information for ongoing research and evaluation of correctional education programs, in terms of their impact on post-release employment and recidivism rates.

An education plan for the inmate is based on the learning needs and vocational aspirations, which are identified in the education profile interview. The education plan lists the recommended courses agreed to by the student and it is placed on the inmate’s case file and education file.

Offenders who have low-level literacy and numeracy skills, or who left school before achieving the Year 10 School Certificate, are referred to literacy teachers for placement in the Certificate of General Education for Adults, using a placement tool devised by the New South Wales Department of Corrective
Service’s Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute. Inmates from a non-English speaking background are referred to English as a Second Language teachers for placement in the Certificate of Spoken and Written English using the English Language and Literacy Placement Assessment Kit.

An education plan review is conducted at least every six months and prior to the offender’s case management team review. The education plan review is an important record as it monitors progress towards course completion and recommends further enrolments where appropriate.

**Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute**

The department’s registered training organisation, the Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute, ensures that basic education, employability skills and vocational training programs are integrated into the offender’s sentence plan in support of the department’s mission to reduce the risk of re-offending. For example, participation in education programs may provide an offender with the literacy skills needed to successfully complete an offence-related program, provide an opportunity for an offender to develop and consolidate employability skills while working in a Corrective Services Industry, or improve an offender’s confidence and ability to manage their day-to-day finances. Education staff also play a key role in ensuring that information about an offender’s achievements, such as completion of vocational training, is available to those individuals and agencies providing support to offenders after serving their custodial sentence.

The Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute’s capacity to support the implementation of Throughcare was strengthened in 2002 when the department moved from a contract to a permanent teaching workforce. Under the teaching award negotiated at that time, teachers could undertake duties other than face-to-face teaching for 15 hours of a full-time teacher’s 35-hour week (pro rata for part-time teachers). This enabled education staff in correctional centres to have a greater involvement in case management and to support various Throughcare initiatives.

Located in the head office of the Department of Corrective Services, the Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute has a professional support and assurance team of seven staff members: Principal, Deputy Principal, State Manager Adult Basic Education, State Manager Vocational Education and Training, Quality Assurance Officer and two clerical support officers. This team manages the statewide delivery of education programs in correctional centres and works with other New South Wales Department of Corrective Services staff, particularly in Corrective Services Industries and Offender Services and Programs areas, to initiate and support the implementation of Throughcare projects and initiatives. This team also provides professional support and quality assurance to staff in education units located in 30 correctional centres (excluding the privately operated Junee Correctional Centre) in New South Wales.
The education staff in each correctional centre education unit are led by a senior correctional education officer who is responsible for identifying offender training needs and planning and implementing education programs to meet these needs within the context of an offender’s whole-of-sentence case plan. These officers primarily source training to meet offenders’ needs from the on-site education staff or through TAFE NSW institutes under the memorandum of understanding arrangements. This training is supplemented by accessing distance education through the NSW Open Training and Education Network and other registered training organisations and higher education providers, and through other Australian Government- and state government-funded programs.

Education programs delivered by Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute teachers
The Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute has approximately 200 part-time and full-time teaching positions and 41 correctional education officers. These staff deliver 80% of basic education and VET courses to offenders in custody. All courses are nationally recognised and accredited, and mostly at Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) certificate levels I, II and III.

The Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute has recently reviewed the basic education and employability skills qualifications in terms of its scope of delivery. This review led to a decision to replace many of these qualifications with a single comprehensive qualification framework developed by TAFE NSW called Access to Employment Education and Training (AEET Certificates 9071, 9072 and 9073 [in table 1]). The framework contains units of competency organised in ‘skills clusters’. Units of competency can be selected and packaged into courses to meet the needs of learners with varying skills development requirements and from different target groups (for example, Aboriginal people, women and people with an intellectual disability). All target groups can be enrolled in units which meet their particular needs but, on successful course completion, receive the same generic qualifications at certificate I, II or II level.

Delivery of qualifications by TAFE NSW strengthens pathways to the continuation and completion of nationally recognised qualifications for offenders after their release from custody. It also provides offenders with the opportunity to gain qualifications which are widely recognised by New South Wales employers.

In addition to basic education and employability skills courses, the Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute teachers also deliver vocational courses in a limited number of industry areas, namely, information technology, construction, horticulture, small business management, visual arts and contemporary craft and music, as shown in table 1.
### Table 1: Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute’s scope of qualification delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of qualification</th>
<th>Qualification code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate I in Access to Work and Training</td>
<td>9071NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate II in Skills for Work and Training</td>
<td>9072NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III in Employment and Training</td>
<td>9073NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Certificates I, II &amp; III in Spoken and Written English</td>
<td>90989NSW, 90992NSW, 90993NSW, 90994NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificate I in Food Skills for Living</td>
<td>90729NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate I, II &amp; III in Learning Pathways for Australian</td>
<td>21361VIC, 21362VIC, 21363VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Peoples</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificate I in Transition Education</td>
<td>2161VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates I, II &amp; III in Visual Arts &amp; Contemporary Craft</td>
<td>CUV10103, CUV20101 &amp; CUV30103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate I in Horticulture</td>
<td>RTF10103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate II in Horticulture (Parks &amp; Gardens)</td>
<td>RTF20703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate II in Horticulture (Wholesale Nursery)</td>
<td>RTF20603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates I &amp; II in General Construction</td>
<td>BCG10103, BCG20103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate IV in Business (Small Business Management)</td>
<td>BSB40401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates I &amp; II in Music Industry (Foundation)</td>
<td>CUS10101 &amp; CUS20101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate I, II &amp; III in Information Technology</td>
<td>ICA10101, ICA20199, ICA30299</td>
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#### Memorandum of understanding with TAFE NSW

A memorandum of understanding between the Commissioner of the Department of Corrective Services and the Managing Director of TAFE NSW provides the framework for the provision of vocational education and training by TAFE NSW institutes. Under the memorandum the department allocated $1.7 million in 2005–06 towards the cost of TAFE NSW vocational education and training provision in correctional centres. This funding includes an allocation to cover travel and security training required to support program delivery.

In addition, the Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate of the Department of Education and Training contributed $200 000 for the delivery of technical and further education (TAFE) courses to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders. The Department of Corrective Services earmarks an equivalent amount from its total allocation to TAFE NSW for these courses.

TAFE NSW institutes are responsible for the delivery of courses in a range of industry areas, including agriculture, horticulture, business services, general construction, hospitality operations, furniture production, engineering production, hairdressing, small motor maintenance, cleaning operations and food processing, as well as courses in occupational health and safety and first aid.
Courses in Aboriginal arts and cultural practices are also provided to address the culturally specific learning needs of Indigenous inmates.

The memorandum of understanding supports the implementation of the department’s Throughcare strategy and ensures that the standard of service provided to offenders in correctional centres is equal to that provided in TAFE institutes. It ensures that VET offerings within correctional centres are consistent with national VET policy, that the VET pathways are accessible, equitable, flexible and relevant, and that appropriate information is shared between the two departments. It aims to support the development of learners, through a variety of pathways—from the pre-vocational and vocational skills they need to enhance their employment prospects, to successful re-integration into the wider community. The department and TAFE NSW recognise that inmates, due to their incarceration, are disadvantaged learners but that they have education rights equal to those of students who enrol from the community at large, subject to the conditions of the correctional environment.

In 2005–06, TAFE NSW teachers provided approximately 20 000 hours of delivery in New South Wales correctional centres under the memorandum funding arrangements. In addition, TAFE NSW institutes deliver the majority of training accessed by the Department of Corrective Services through the Traineeship Program and the Strategic Skills Program (see below).

Corrective Services Industries Work Readiness Program

The department provides work opportunities for 74% of the total inmate population through Corrective Services Industries (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services 2006b).

The Corrective Services Industries’ Work Readiness Program is an intensive workplace program which aims to develop and measure offenders’ skills, behaviours and attitudes in the workplace. The program contributes directly to the case management of offenders by allowing the identification of existing work skills, and by referring offenders to specific education programs where areas of skill or knowledge deficiency have been identified. It focuses on foundation work skills. The program provides employment opportunities in primary industries, building services, engineering, food services, clerical, printing, upholstery industries and furniture making.

As offenders approach release, the program focus turns toward the transition from custody to community by introducing inmates to employment support services during pre-release planning sessions. A key strategy of the program is the provision of a work referral, which details work history, vocational training and extracts from skill assessments carried out by overseers and supervisors. This referral is accompanied by a photo-identity, which will assist offenders with proof of identity on re-entry into the community.
The John Morony Intensive Learning Centre for Young Adult Offenders

The Intensive Learning Centre was established in July 2004. The centre provides a positive learning environment and a program customised to the needs, interests, skill levels and preferred learning styles of young male offenders. The program is full-time, five hours per day and five days per week, and lasts approximately six months. Groups run concurrently and there are up to 12 students in each group. The program balances classroom-based instruction with practical work-based training in a number of correctional industries. Whole-of-centre support ensures that the program is not disrupted by the lock-downs and changes to routine which occur elsewhere in the gaol.

The program recognises the importance to re-integration of fostering supportive family relations. For this reason family members are invited to discuss the progress of students in the program and special invitations are extended to all family members to attend graduation ceremonies.

Criteria for selection include age (18–24 years), a high to moderately high risk of re-offending (measured by the department’s risk assessment tool), at least 12 months sentence left to serve, low literacy and numeracy skills (at AQF certificate I level), poor work skills, and a history of un- or under-employment. Students complete a certificate II basic education course, plus TAFE NSW modules in courses such as horticulture, small business management, small motor maintenance, and occupational health and safety induction. They also rotate through industry workshops, where their workplace communication skills and work ethic are monitored. Students receive a weekly pay commensurate with correctional industry pay rates that incrementally rewards effort and achievement.

In 2005–06, 51 students graduated from programs—an 85% completion rate. (For more information see Halliday Wynes’ chapter titled ‘Improving VET for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia’.)

Vocational training for inmate library clerks

In 2005, the Department of Corrective Services undertook to provide access to training for selected inmate library clerks who support the operation of many of the 42 libraries in correctional centres across New South Wales. This training not only provides an opportunity to improve the quality of library services available, but also provides inmates with the opportunity to obtain recognised library training and work experience.

A private registered training organisation, the Australian Institute of Workplace Learning, has been engaged to deliver courses from the Museum and Library/Information Services Training Package flexibly which, when completed, can lead to employment as a library assistant. Over 2005–06, 13 inmate library clerks enrolled in Certificate III in Library/Information Services (CUL30104), successfully completing a total of 64 modules; one inmate completed the full Certificate III in Library Services.
Traineeships

A traineeship program has been established by the Department of Corrective Services under a pilot arrangement with the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Directorate of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training. Traineeships as part of Throughcare provide industry-specific VET and work experiences to better re-integrate offenders into the broader employment market at the pre- and post-release stages. Traineeships benefit both the department, as the designated ‘employer’, and the individual offender, as the designated ‘trainee’. The benefits to the department include better trained and hence more interested, skilled, efficient and productive workers. The benefits for inmates include an industry-specific and industry-recognised nationally accredited qualification, formal acknowledgement of the work experiences gained while under the department’s care, and the development of a VET Throughcare pathway leading to increased pre- and post-release employment and further education and training opportunities.

Traineeships are currently available in: general construction, horticulture, transport and distribution, hospitality, food processing, engineering production and furniture. Traineeships require trainees to undertake real and paid work. Therefore, trainees in correctional centres must be employed within a Corrective Service Industries business unit, in a service industry or be working on a community project relevant to the vocational area of the traineeship. Completion of a traineeship does not represent the attainment of a full trade qualification, but it represents the attainment of an industry-based entry-level qualification. In 2005–06, 65 inmates undertook traineeships across six correctional centres while working with Corrective Service Industries. Of this group, 80% successfully completed certificate II or III level traineeships. Approximately 100 offenders are expected to participate in traineeships at 11 correctional centres across New South Wales in 2007. (More information on the traineeships program is provided in Halliday Wynes’ chapter titled ‘Improving VET for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia’.)

The Strategic Skills Program

The Strategic Skills Program is an initiative of the New South Wales Board of Vocational Education and Training with funding allocated by the Australian Government for the development of the New South Wales training system. The program aims to support skill formation in New South Wales in line with priorities for economic development and social policies. Under the program the Department of Education and Training purchases vocational training from an ‘approved provider list’ of registered training organisations. The registered training organisations deliver training to increase labour force participation for those groups that face barriers entering training and the workforce. Indigenous offenders in custody are identified as a specific target group for Strategic Skills Program-funded training.

The department has accessed training through the program primarily to meet the needs of Aboriginal offenders not being met through Adult Education
and Vocational Training Institute provision or under the hours allocated to TAFE through the TAFE NSW–Department of Corrective Services memorandum of understanding.

The Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute and the department’s Aboriginal Support and Planning Unit collaborate in identifying priority areas of need across correctional centres to ensure a coordinated, well-targeted and well-supported implementation of this training.

Over 2006, 25 vocational programs, mainly targeting Aboriginal offenders, were delivered at Broken Hill, Ivanhoe, Mannus and Glen Innes Correctional Centres. For 2007–08 eleven correctional centres have been identified as locations where vocational training can be delivered under this program. Training targets the development of employability skills, occupational health and safety-related knowledge and skills and rural skills. Successful completion of programs leads to the attainment of workcover licences and statements of attainment from training packages, including Certificates I and II in Conservation and Land Management, Certificate II in Building and Construction, Certificate II in Agriculture, and Certificate II in Horticulture.

Transitional support

An important part of Throughcare is support for offenders in their transition from custody into the community. Practical resources and strategies are being produced to assist with this. A pre-release preparation and planning and resource booklet, entitled ‘Planning your release’, has been developed for use by offenders and staff. This booklet contains a checklist which sets out a sequence of tasks to be undertaken in the six months prior to release from custody. It also contains contact details for key services. Nexus, a pre-release planning program, has been developed to support successful completion of these preparatory tasks.

A program protocol agreement signed between Centrelink and the department in November 2006 has established measures for debt and fraud prevention, as well as streamlined processes to assist inmates with access to monetary benefits on their release, and their re-integration to the community. Similar developments are well underway with housing service providers.

Many transitional support strategies are implemented within correctional centres through educational programs or with education staff playing a key role. A sample of these strategies is detailed below.

‘Jobs for the Boys’ (Boswell 2003) is a program run in the John Morony Correctional Complex. The program assists students to acquire an understanding of their interests, personal traits, and abilities, and how these might relate to the type of employment that suits them best. It deals with the knowledge

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1 Centrelink is an agency of the Australian Government Department of Human Services and delivers a range of services to the community. Further information is available from <http://www.centrelink.gov.au>.
and skills needed for sourcing and gaining employment, including letter- and resume-writing, where to find jobs, interview skills, and overcoming barriers. The program also helps with the knowledge and skills that are needed in the workplace, including conflict resolution, problem-solving, and motivation.

Dillwynia Correctional Centre, a purpose-built women’s correctional centre in Western Sydney, has entered into a partnership with Gloria Jean’s Coffee to establish a café in the visitors’ area of the centre. Training offenders in customer service and drink preparation gives the women a better chance of integrating into the community, as well as improving their self-esteem. By undergoing a formal selection process before employing them in the café, they are also equipped with work-readiness skills.

Inmates can be assessed and accredited in the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority driver knowledge test at seven correctional centres. This opportunity may open up appropriate employment opportunities and therefore assists ex-offenders to more readily access workplaces. Inmates are able to take the knowledge test at a number of centres, using a computer specially provided by the authority, and education staff are able to provide the licence photograph and identity confirmation required by the authority.

Occupational health and safety training is provided at all correctional centres where Corrective Services Industries are located, and most centres support inmates to acquire a range of workcover-issued licences, including the Construction Industry Induction Certificate. These courses provide general and industry-specific occupational health and safety training for inmates, equipping them to work within Corrective Services Industries workplaces while in custody, and providing opportunities to acquire workcover-required skills and knowledge for use in the construction industry. This supports safe work practices while in custody, and facilitates employment acquisition upon release.

At Broken Hill and Ivanhoe correctional centres, which have approximately 80% Indigenous inmates, TAFE NSW’s Western Institute has provided a fully equipped welding truck to cater for a wide variety of welding projects, thus enabling welding modules to be completed through TAFE NSW. Inmates also have the opportunity to participate in vocational training in shearing, wool classing, fire fighting, construction earthworks, and chemical applications (applying sprays in orchards), so preparing them to access employment opportunities in the remote areas to which many may return on release from custody.

Brewarrina (Yetta Dhinnakkal) Correctional Centre is situated on a 10 553-hectare property at Brewarrina in north-western New South Wales, 800 km from Sydney. Yetta Dhinnakkal is a minimum-security institution which accommodates approximately 45 young Aboriginal male offenders.

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2 WorkCover refers to the Workcover Authority of New South Wales, which promotes workplace health and safety, and provides a workers’ compensation system for the employers and workers of New South Wales. More information available from the website <http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/>.
Offenders are involved in the management of the property, including activities such as goat grazing, wool and lamb production, vegetation management, land rehabilitation and river care. Offenders are organised into work crews, and an Aboriginal support officer works closely with the senior correctional education officer to identify training needs and source appropriate training to meet the centre’s employment needs and provide skills needed for employment in the communities where inmates will return upon release.

At Yetta Dhinnakkal recognition and restoration of the cultural links of young adult offenders with the land and their history is a priority. The cultural-awareness aspects of the program are provided with direct input from Aboriginal Elders and members of the local Indigenous community. While participating in the program, offenders have more access to their families than if they were detained in traditional correctional centres.

Inmates in the Yetta Dhinnakkal Program must agree to be contacted for a period of up to 12 months post-release. This allows the Aboriginal support officer to provide ongoing mentoring to ex-inmates upon release to support their return to the community. In 2005, the Yetta Dhinnakkal Program won the gold award at the New South Wales Premier’s Public Sector Awards in the Social Justice category.

Throughcare education and employment ‘expos’

Inmates in the last six months of sentence are invited to attend education and employment ‘expos’ of representatives from key government and community support agencies, such as housing, Medicare, employment agencies, local businesses and banks. Representatives provide information and advice, enabling inmates to establish links prior to release. Expos are conducted at Emu Plains, Berrima, Dillwynia, John Morony, Lithgow, Goulburn and Cessnock Correctional Centres.

At Cessnock staff present a large information expo twice a year, which attracts representatives from 21 community organisations, as well as representatives from Centrelink. Feedback from inmates and community participants concludes that this forum is extremely effective in disseminating information and resolving inmate issues prior to release.

Dillwynia Correctional Centre schedules ‘Into Life Expos’ twice a year to link offenders to community agencies, volunteer groups and employment networks, thereby facilitating their re-entry into the community and the workforce. Students enrolled in communication skills modules coordinate the Into Life Expos to fulfil requirements for their course.

Since the introduction of Into Life Expos in 2004, staff at Dillwynia have established successful and ongoing relationships with many local employers and community agencies. Several organisations work with education staff on the delivery of job-seeking skills courses and others have offered students full- or part-time work or voluntary work on release from custody.
The ‘Make it on the Outside’ Program

‘Make it on the Outside’ is a re-integration program funded by the federal Attorney General’s Department through the National Community Crime Prevention Program for Western Sydney. Under the funding arrangement the Department of Corrective Services makes a contribution towards the program of $15 000 in cash and a contribution in kind by way of assessment and case consultation by Offender Services and Programs staff.

The program, which commences three months prior to release and continues nine months post-release, targets women offenders who have had a diagnosis of a disability, mainly mental health and/or drug and alcohol addictions. It involves the development of a pre- and post-release support plan, provision of individualised assistance to address complex multiple needs, preparation-for-work training and a mentoring program. It also establishes referral links with other community programs.

It is available to women at Dillwynia Correctional Centre and will be extended to women at Berrima and Emu Plains Correctional Centres.

The Wesley Uniting Employment 180 Plan

The Wesley Uniting Employment and the department undertook a pilot project in the second half of 2006 aimed at supporting the transition of inmates from custody to post-release employment.

Three correctional centres with different profiles were selected as pilot sites: Emu Plains Correctional Centre (a medium-size, minimum-security women’s gaol in Western Sydney), Cessnock Correctional Centre (a large, mainly minimum-security gaol in the Hunter Valley Region of New South Wales) and Goulburn Correctional Centre (a large, maximum-security men’s gaol in the southern tablelands of New South Wales).

Wesley Uniting Employment provided a single agency contact and support strategy, whereby this organisation engaged with inmates at the three correctional centres 90 days before release and 90 days post-release (hence the name ‘180 Plan’). The pilot focused on delivering employment assistance to inmates and facilitating their access to the Job Network Program post-release.

Local departmental probation and parole staff, Offenders Services and Programs (including the Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute) and Corrective Services Industries staff worked with Wesley Uniting Employment project officers to implement the project. The project officers liaised with correctional centre staff to identify participants, review employment strategies, provide information, give support at release and integrate participants into the Job Network and other services.
Wesley Uniting Employment project officers provided support to over 130 inmates across the three participating correctional centres. Outcomes from the project evaluation will inform decisions by the department about how best to meet the pre- to post-release employment-related transitional needs of offenders across correctional centres in New South Wales.

Employment assistance for work release inmates
In 2005–06 the federal government committed funding over a four-year period to assist offenders on work release programs in all jurisdictions to find employment by making them eligible for Intensive Support Customised Assistance through the Job Network. The initiative is being implemented by the federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

In New South Wales there are currently approximately 80 inmates on a work release program. The majority of these offenders are located at the John Morony Correctional Centre and Silverwater Correctional Centre. Again, departmental staff are working collaboratively with the Department of Employment and Work Relations staff to establish protocols to support pre-release access to Job Network services and employment opportunities. Staff at John Morony and Silverwater correctional centres are developing partnerships with Job Network providers interested in providing services to offenders.

Pathways to Employment, Education and Training Program
The New South Wales Department of Corrective Services’ Community and Offender Services and NSW TAFE jointly deliver the Pathways to Employment, Education and Training Program which is funded by the New South Wales Drug Summit. This program is designed to support Community Offender Services clients with a history of drug and/or alcohol issues to develop the skills necessary to gain employment or undertake further training.

The program attempts to assist these offenders to re-engage with training and develop the skills necessary to enter employment and/or further vocational training. Offenders with a history of alcohol and/or drug issues often have literacy and/or numeracy deficits and may have experienced past alienation from educational environments. The program provides a non-threatening learning environment at the local TAFE institute and aims to link them to further appropriate TAFE courses at the institute. Clients assessed as medium-to-high risk of re-offending are targeted for the program. The program assists participants to identify realistic vocational training and employment options and appropriate educational pathways. (For further information on this program see Halliday Wynes’ chapter titled ‘Improving VET for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia’.)
In summary

The Throughcare approach to offender management in the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services is ‘a co-ordinated and integrated approach to reducing reoffending’. It has two central tenets.

- All information about an offender’s management is recorded and is accessible at all stages of their contact with the department, enabling a whole-of-sentence approach to the offender’s case management.
- Offenders access appropriate community services while under the supervision of the department and transitional support on completing their sentences in relation to income, employment, housing, health care and family connections (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services 2005a).

Whole-of-sentence planning and case management based on standard risk and needs assessments were established by the department in 2003–04. Offender management is based on the premise that interventions targeting those at higher risk of re-offending have a greater impact, and that programs motivating offenders to participate are more effective. In 2004–05 the department extended its programs and services across community and custodial operations and established joint operational support structures in the regions in line with the Throughcare philosophy (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services 2005b).

The department’s registered training organisation, the Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute, contributes to reducing re-offending by ensuring that basic education, employability skills and vocational training programs delivered by its staff, TAFE NSW institutes and other registered training organisations are an integral part of the department’s Throughcare strategy.

References


