VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS WITHIN JUVENILE DETENTION CENTRES

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SCHOOL PROFILE:
Cavan Education Centre is a Department of Education & Children Services school within the Cavan Training Centre, a secure (ie lock-up) Detention Centre for juvenile male offenders aged 16-18 years. The Centre’s 36 residents are under the care of the Department for Family and Community Services (DFACS) and are supervised by youth workers at all times, including whilst attending school. They reside in 3 on-site units from where they are escorted to school for programmed lesson times. The school program operates for 50 weeks of the year and is staffed by DECS accordingly. The resident profile is in a constant state of change. However at any one time up to 30% of the residents are Aboriginal and a growing proportion are of Asian descent.

Cavan residents have educational backgrounds characterised by truancy, failure to achieve, poor socialisation and early exit. They have poor or non-existent employment records. Few, if any, are currently enrolled in school or further training at the time of incarceration.

Cavan Education Centre is committed to providing quality teaching and learning in a secure care environment to enable residents to lead fulfilling, non-offending lifestyles after release.

As a result, the school program focuses on socialization skills, vocational training and basic skill development in a success-oriented learning environment.

We achieve this through
• providing a broad general education for all residents
• providing specialised programs for individual residents.
• remedial or extension work in areas of special need, including Numeracy, Literacy, Life Skills, Victim Awareness, Drug Education, Control Training, Anger Management, Sex Education, First Aid and others.
• pursuit of recreational interests.
• gaining of licenses (Learners, Provisional, Ridersafe (Motor Bike Learners), Boat)
• providing a unified approach to encouraging the residents to be responsible for their own choices in life.

NEW PROGRAMS:
Prior to the inclusion of vocational training programs in Cavan, the programs that were being offered in the Centre were enthusiastically embraced by the students while they were locked up but were not being pursued once they were released into the community. The Cavan Education Centre decided to try to break the barriers between programs offered in secure care and life styles in the community.

It was decided that any changes to programs should address the residents’ view of the world.

The residents were of one accord in their view, which was “If I had a job I would not offend”. While this is a simplistic view of things it was thought that this would be a good focus for our direction.
The courses that we developed therefore had a vocational bias, and had the following features:

- industry recognition and accreditation
- TAFE and South Australian Certificate of Education recognition
- course content based on Traineeship modules
- work experience relevant to Industry
- gaining relevant industry licenses e.g. Skid steer, forklift, backhoe licenses
- making residents work ready
- adapting conditions within the Centre to create a work culture (e.g. work hours consistent with work place).

The VET areas on which we decided to concentrate were:

- Automotive - Traineeship core modules
- Hospitality - Introductory, Hospitality modules
- Horticulture - Amenity Horticulture and skilled farm worker nodules
- Retail Trades - Retail Operations - Certificate ONE
- Sport & Recreation - Fitness Leaders modules

This gave us a reasonable cross section of industries as identified by South Australia’s State Training Profile as likely to undergo significant growth while being compatible with residents interests and experience.

This change in direction had a large impact upon the organisational detail of the school. This in turn had implications for the Centre as a whole.

**IMPLICATIONS OF NEW PROGRAMS**

Any new program will produce change but a change in focus of this proportion will have repercussions throughout the institution. Changes that took place required:

- management committee
- staff support for changes
- timetabling review and change
- staff skills audit to determine areas that could be addressed
- Train the Trainer programs
- upskilling and accreditation of staff
- use of industry personnel as resources
- development of adult delivery style
- adoption of modules that were self paced, competency based, and able to cope with multiple entry points.

For the residents the introduction of VET curricula meant they needed to make significant commitments. These were to:

- focus on their long term goals and develop a plan for the future
- make a long term commitment to a program
- address their needs and accept help offered (literacy, numeracy, handwriting, spelling)
- make career choices
- meet the guidelines set down by the program.
The commitment that residents were prepared to make resulted in significant cultural changes within the Centre. This cultural change has been largely driven by FACS administration who have seen the positive implications of VET curriculums and have changed procedural aspects to allow this change to evolve.

- The development of a detention plan for all new residents (resident to set realistic goals)
- The allocation of a key worker for each resident to monitor the detention plan.
- The instigation of a case conference to streamline the pre and post release programs
- The establishment of day releases for relevant VET training/work experience/interviews.
- Granting of conditional release related more closely to achievement of residents’ stated goals and is no longer a formality.
- Refocusing of philosophy on rehabilitation rather than emphasis solely on security.
- The focus of post release now on work placement/further training in a supportive environment.

For these changes to be implemented there has been a cultural change within both FACS/DECS administrations and staff. This has been achieved by

- a skills audit
- ownership of the evolving projects
- willingness to participate, review and change their roles.
- re-training of youth workers/teachers
- flexibility in operating procedures
- being prepared to adopt a different mind set/philosophy
- DECS/FACS - Senior Management have been prepared to develop Joint Strategic plans - and support each other’s efforts to achieve the common goals.
- With enlarging of the DECS curriculum, FACS has been prepared to take over and run some of the programs that were previously the domain of the Education Centre.

These changes have resulted in a more cooperative working relationship between youth worker and teaching staff.
To ensure success of the project within industry it was necessary for some employers to accept that the rehabilitation of young offenders involves community involvement and responsibility, that incarceration is merely the starting point for the change process, and that employers must play a role in assisting with the breaking of the offending cycle. Some suggestions we make to employers are:

- Allocate the trainee a mentor
- Stress the open door policy
- Be understanding and responsive to both work and personal problems
- Make it clear to the trainee who will give work instructions
- Attempt to involve trainees into the social fabric of the work place
- When major problems arise involve the program manager
- Always attempt to be positive
- Give very clear guidelines as to company policy
- Confidentiality in regard to trainee background

**ROLE OF PROGRAM MANAGER:**
For there to be successful links to industry there must be a full time coordinator who acts as the liaison person between the Detention Centre/school and the community.

This person needs to have numerous skills, including:

- ability to case manage clients
- the need to have good communications with both the Detention Centre and employers.
- the ability to sell the social justice aspect of employing a juvenile offender
- understanding of how industry operates
- empathy with the education department and familiarity with how schools operate
- a rapport with young offenders and youth at risk from varying cultures
- the ability to work with inter government agencies
- familiarity with the changing nature of employment strategies
- knowledge of prevailing juvenile justice parameters and the ability to work within them
- the ability to act as counselor and give guidance where necessary
- the ability to negotiate with numerous agencies on complex issues - at various levels
- broker companies for employment opportunities
- conduct interviews and facilitate between employee/employer.

To ensure the viability of Vocational Education it is necessary to establish a strong working relationship with host industries. Some avenues for establishing such links are:

- the relevant Industry Training Board e.g. Auto Industry Training Board
- The association for the industry body e.g. Motor Trades Association
- The Industry Group Training Scheme e.g. Hospitality Group Training Scheme
- Major industry employers e.g. General Motors Holden etc.
- Appropriate state and federal government bodies
A good working relationship with such agencies will give the project status when approaching potential employers and be valuable when establishing avenues for training and work experience.

**FUNDING:**
Funding of the project came from the Department for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (Federal) and Kickstart for Youth (State Government).

In kind funding from the Department of Education and Children’s Services, Family and Community Services and Industry provided training, teaching staff, equipment, facilities, materials and delivery of VET modules.

With the demise of the CES (late 1997 - early 1998) there will be opportunity for Employment Placement Enterprises (EPEs) to support juvenile offenders in a way that has not previously been seen. Should Detention Centers or Education Centers (schools) be able to tender for registration as EPEs whilst still providing VET curriculum, it is possible that the whole process could be self funding.

It may be possible to engage sponsorship from industry to assist with some of the costs of post release support e.g. vehicle, office, phone, etc.

**CRITICAL ISSUES:**
There are a number of critical issues that have arisen since this program’s inception that determine the success or failure of placement.

- time between release and start of training/employment. The resident needs time to adapt to freedom and lack of structure, but not so much that he loses momentum.
- help must be given to enable residents to successfully access government agencies for assistance
- communication channels must always remain open -24 hours
- resident must be familiar with workplace issues (policies, sick days, line manager)
- accommodation - distance from workplace, transport options need to be explored
- Service Delivery Agency (CES) must give the clients priority in accessing assistance and subsidies, preferably arranged prior to release and case managed from day one of that release
- regular contact must be made with resident for the first 6 weeks of employment to assist with small issues before they create major problems.
- assistance must be offered to residents despite their conditional release date expiry or their reaching the age of 18. (FACS responsibility ceases once a client is no longer under an order or reach the age of 18).
- residents must be of an age which is acceptable to industry and mature enough to cope with the work environment.
- where possible the structured life style of residents must be maintained sufficiently to assist them with their progress in the community.
- as residents perform and make positive progress with their pre release training and detention plans they must be rewarded with opportunities to get more involved in external programs and overnight visits to care givers. This allows the resident to develop an understanding of roles, responsibility and accountability within a community setting prior to release. Since these are privileges that can only be
earned by appropriate behaviour within the Centre, they are also an incentive to encourage positive effort in Centre programs.
- day to day living issues such as budgeting, laundry, food preparation and purchase, getting up on time, visiting friends, drug and alcohol consumption need constant monitoring.

SUCCESS:
How does one gauge or measure success within a dysfunctional group?
- number of certificates or accreditation?
- number gaining full time employment? - paying taxes?
- number who worked continually for 2, 10, 24 weeks?
- number who dropped out of work but not reoffended?
- number who have gone on to further training?

Within the Centre there have been success indicators:
- Changing the culture to a point where residents feel confident and proud to be involved in programs.
- Residents wanting to be assessed and achieve accreditation.
- Residents taking work back to their units (living quarters) to complete in their own time.
- Residents within the different vocational areas being supportive of each other and working as teams.
- Residents having a belief in their future and themselves.
- Residents making decisions in respect to their career paths.
- Residents diligently following the goals they set as part of their detention plan.

The program makes it very clear that residents have full control of their destiny and that they alone decide what path they wish to take. Being young people they are in a developmental stage where it is normal for life options to be sampled and tried. This age group has high mobility in the areas of employment, courses and life style and this small group still reflects the trends of society at large.

Residents’ needs are given a high priority in matching their work employment training or work experience. All outcomes must be positive and no resident must be set up for failure.

Prior to the inception of this project very few residents from the two Detention Centers ever achieved further training or work placements on release and this resulted in a high level of recidivism

The success of this program will produce benefits right across the community:

- reduced recidivism, as employed people tend not to offend
- reduced reliance on social security
- fewer pay outs by insurance companies
- fewer vehicle offences, and safer roads
- policing of young offenders less necessary
- improved community confidence
These young people have something legitimate to offer now in terms of accreditation, licenses, experience, and in a social justice sense have been empowered. They are no longer as vulnerable and have more choices available to them.

Most of all, the enhanced esteem and self confidence of these disadvantaged young Australians is reason alone to continue. When added to its significant social benefits, the program has the potential to become a powerful force for good in the fabric of our society.

### Statistics - Period June 1995 - June 1997

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of participants</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants gaining full time employment</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants doing further training</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants moved interstate on release</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants reoffended prior to starting work</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants reoffended after starting work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants on home detention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants back to mainstream school</td>
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<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants known to be currently employed or in further training #</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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# Due to the mobility of some members of the client group and the expiry of formal supervision orders, it was not possible to maintain contact with the entire cohort. The real figure could well be significantly higher.

The above statistics show some interesting trends:

- 73% of participants were successfully placed in full time employment or further training.
- of the 8 participants who did re-offend 7 did so prior to commencing work.
- of the 60 who undertook full time employment or training 36 (60%) are still employed or in training.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The development of infrastructure within Detention Centres needs to be reliant on its personnel and not dependent on hardware consolidation. Teaching staff need to remain flexible in delivery, organisation and content.

If that premise is retained then the Detention Centre can respond and change to adapt to a developing employment possibility for its clientele. Thus, if, for example, significant employment opportunities seemed likely in underwater welding, then appropriate courses need to be written, delivered and evaluated to meet the opportunity.
If however a Detention Centre tries to establish high cost equipment hardware then it will be locked into particular pathways and will have difficulty adapting to new employment opportunities.

Detention Centres will need to develop a partnership of mutual benefit within industry and the community at large. This will assist with future funding, work placements and an acceptance by the community of rehabilitation programs in place.

The Detention Centres need to develop multi purpose workshop facilities aiming towards imparting vocational work skills for residents who will be entry level participants in the work force. There are a number of these areas common to a range of industries, and these can form the cornerstone of the VET courses in detention.

The program aim should be to educate residents as to

- the work place requirements
- basic occupational health and safety knowledge
- work ready attitudes
- how to survive in the community / workplace without reoffending
- how to address the issues that led to their incarceration.
- how to seek help when it is needed
- how to find their place in the community

Program deliverers need to be constantly reviewing the results they are obtaining to determine where residents can be effectively placed into work placements in the community. The results of this review should direct the next round of development so that the training is responsive to industry needs.

There should also be flexibility built into the programming side so that if industry perceives a need that our residents could fulfill, then the course could be brokered and delivered within a very short time.

I would see that within two years this Centre will be an Employment Placement Enterprise in its own right or alternatively have close liaisons with another EPE which will have an empathy with our residents, so that there can be a seamless transition from secure care into a job placement. This will only develop if the appropriate links are made and appropriate training venues are established.

This link with an EPE could provide a great deal more flexibility in the method of delivery than is presently available.

At present because of staffing restrictions, we are tied to 5 trade areas and have difficulty expanding the general program any further. Therefore, if a resident comes into the Centre with a special request for a particular trade training that we do not offer, it is difficult to provide that training for him. It is anticipated that once the EPE is fully functioning that there will be a broader network of delivery agencies tied together with a common theme and that we may be able to access trade areas via distance education methods as is presently done for mainstream education in this state via the Open Access College network.
Another aim of this program is to open up the opportunities that are presently accessed by the older males in secure care to the female population and young males who are at another institution. Magill Training Centre has funding to set up accredited vocational courses in Horticulture and Automotive. The horticulture was selected because of the wishes of young female offenders to be involved in this form of work. Thought is also being given to including offenders with non-custodial orders.

Juvenile Justice is highly politically sensitive. In particular, programs which focus on transition from detention to society are especially susceptible to community attitudes and media reporting. For example, the absconding of even one offender on temporary release and its attendant media prominence can result in withdrawal or termination of programs and diametric shifts in government policy.

By broadening the base of the program and generating financial independence through becoming an EPE, it is to be hoped that this approach to reducing repeat offending through a structured training and employment pathway can be stable enough to weather the storms of public and political opinion and remain focused on the enormous benefits it can deliver.

Finally, we believe that this program underlines the need not only to provide the skills and knowledge with which to enter the workforce, but also to provide structure which assists young offenders to gain meaningful employment and live a productive, non offending lifestyle.

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