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**A BRIEF OUTLINE OF
SOME INTERNATIONAL EMPLOYMENT
AND TRAINING PROGRAMS/IDEAS
FOR OFFENDERS AND EX-OFFENDERS**

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INTRODUCTION

The intention of this paper is to inform you of some of the findings gained from a 5 week tour of international programs located in the U.S.A., England and Europe that aim to address the employment and training needs of offenders and ex-offenders. Outlined in the paper is the given rationale, aims and proposed outcomes to the trip along with general observations made and details on some of the key ideas, programs and principles identified.

RATIONALE

Within WA and generally within Australia there are few initiatives established or being developed to address the employment and training needs of both offenders and ex-offenders. It is a widely recognised and proven fact that if an offender is assisted into employment he/she is 3 to 4 times less likely to re-offend. Currently the re-offending rate within WA is 63% for males and 52% for females.

Knowledge of overseas initiatives is of paramount importance if the Department of Employment and Training is to effectively work with other government departments and the private sector to increase the employment rate of this target group and therefore in the longer term to reduce re-offending rates and the cost to the community. It is estimated that unemployment rates among ex-offenders is approximately 70%.

AIMS

- . To gain a working knowledge of international programs which address the employment and training needs of both juvenile and adult offenders and ex-offenders.
- . To broaden both WA Government and community awareness of these programs.
- . To encourage the involvement and commitment of government/private sector/community in developing and implementing new strategies.

OUTCOMES

1. A report outlining the findings of the overseas visit, with recommendations as to how this Department, in conjunction with other Government Departments and the community, can increase the rate of employment for ex-offenders.

This report would be directed to the Executive Director, Department of Employment and Training and the Hon. Minister for consideration and discussion.

2. Conduct a National Conference based in WA in mid-1990 focussed on the issues of crime prevention and recidivism through the identification and implementation of programs/strategies that address the employment, education and training needs of offenders and ex-offenders.
3. In the long term increased employment leading to reduced recidivism and thus a reduction in the costs to the community.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Some general observations made from the trip are as follows:

- 1. The majority of the individuals entering the judicial system are low educated, low skilled and from a minority group(s).
- 2. Difficulty in placing people into employment mainly due to the following two factors:
 - a) Employer and community attitudes, and
 - b) Skills level of offender
- 3. Limited knowledge of and working relationship between government departments and community groups who work with the target group.
- 4. Extensive efforts are made in Europe to prevent people from entering the prison system and that alternative sanctions have limited, if any, employment and training focus.

KEY IDEAS, PROGRAMS AND PRINCIPLES IDENTIFIED

In many cases, prisons, probation services and community organisations visited who provided an employment and training service to offenders and ex-offenders incorporated many of the same components which are already offered here in Western Australia. Outlined below therefore are some of the more interesting and innovative ideas, programs and principles.

WORK IN PRISON

Free Venture Program (California USA)

The Free Venture Program is a partnership between the California Youth Authority and private industry to train offenders for meaningful jobs while assisting victims of crime and reducing institutional costs.

Two models -

1. **Employer Model**

Which is where a company owns and operates a business inside prison. The company has direct control over hiring, firing and supervision of the prison-based workforce. Individuals are paid award wages.

An example of this is the TWA Project, which is a telephone computer based service taking reservations for the airlines. It employs up to 68 young inmates on a part-time basis.

2. **Customer Model**

Which is where the company contracts with the prison for the provision of goods or services for a fee. The prison has the direct control over the hiring, firing and supervision of its prison-based workforce.

An interesting example of this is a dog grooming business. Alongside this business model is a self-employment skills component, where individuals attend an enterprise skills course. In two cases, students left prison and established their own successful business.

Given the fact that individuals are paid award wages, they have to pay taxes. After taxes are paid the wages are divided into 4 major categories:

- Firstly - 25% goes to the State to offset room and board costs;
- Secondly - 15% goes to restitution for crime victims;
- Thirdly - 40% is set aside in a forced savings account;
- Fourthly - 20% is made available for personal use in the youthful offenders canteen fund.

It is also interesting to note that the customer model has also been undertaken at the work release facilities.

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Key Idea - Industry Development in Prison

Within all countries visited many prisons had the problem of identifying and establishing secondary prison industries due to Union issues etc. An idea that was raised was to look at businesses that send their contracts overseas. There are many such value added products that are sent overseas and then sold back to Australia. In securing these contracts, it would mean an increased return to the company, monies generated would stay in Australia and more offenders would be gainfully employed while learning relevant skills.

TRAINING IN PRISON

Many of the prisons visited provided accredited training courses which meant that individuals could walk out with recognised qualifications. An interesting concept undertaken in the US and West Germany was pre-industrial training prior to the individual actually working in the prison workshop.

In West Germany individuals could, in one year, do an introduction to three different trades. At the end of that year, if the individual decided to continue in one of the three trades he would be credited his 1st year.

Union involvement in providing funding for trade training was also evident in both countries.

Company/Institution partnerships were also being explored where the company is doing direct training with offenders and where appropriate placing them with the company upon release.

PRE RELEASE SERVICES

In many prisons there were pre-release services looking at a broad range of issues which included employment and training. One interesting project was the Computer Based System operating out of the New York State Department of Corrections. This system operated state-wide and contained information on all offenders that are in the prison and on probation, listing their level of skills, what has been achieved both in prison and on parole.

The computer system has a listing of all identified job specifications and prior to release a comparison is done with the individuals skills gained and this information is used to inform the offender of what types of jobs he/she would be able to gain on release. Linkages are made with the Department of Employment to assist with job placement.

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PRISON & PROBATION OFFICER TRAINING PACKAGES

In the UK an interesting package called "Prisoners into Jobs" has been put together to assist prison and probation staff to help individual offenders gain and/or retain their employment on release.

Components of the package include:

- Keeping prisoners jobs open
- Prisoners into jobs
- An action plan for prisoners
- Useful resources and addresses

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POST RELEASE SERVICES/PROGRAMS/IDEAS

Outlined below are some of the more innovative services, programs and ideas that were identified.

(1) Pioneer Human Services (Seattle, Washington)

This is a privately funded non-profit organisation with a \$13 million turnover - 75% of its funding is through commercial operations and 25% through Government contracts.

Services include:

Housing

- a) A special needs housing program provides drug and alcohol free living environments for recovering adult substance abusers. This housing is financially self supporting and staffed by residents.
- b) St Regis Hotel is owned and operated by PHS. It is a dry hotel and its 132 rooms are used in the following way:
 - 45 are used for alcohol and drug free living
 - 50 for itinerant hotel guests
 - 37 are occupied by long term residents who resided at St Regis prior to its requisition by PHS.

The hotel is promoted as a dry hotel and has a 95% occupancy rate year round.

Alcohol and Drug Treatment Program

Provides a 45 bed treatment centre providing involuntary alcohol and drug treatment for up to 7 months in a minimum security environment.

Corrections Programs

Components of this program include:

- a) 3 male and 1 female work release facility; and
- b) An electronic home detection monitoring service.

Pioneer Enterprises

Pioneer Enterprises creates marketable services which provides job training and work experience to individual clients, these include;

- a) Pioneer Industries - light metal fabrication facility contracting with Boeing Commercial Airplane Company and other Seattle area firms.
- b) Pioneer Food Services - is a fully functioning central commissary that prepares and transports meals to all Pioneer residential units and other agencies which cannot maintain a viable food service of their own.
- c) Food Buying Service - is a separate co-operative enterprise co-sponsored by PHS and the Washington Association of Churches. This service provides food to Pioneer clients and approximately 220 organisations.

Some interesting facts about the enterprise area are as follows:

- . Employers are subject to a urine analysis test prior to and during employment.
- . A minimum of 3 hours on-the-job training is done by all employees. Training can be job specific or basic education, personal development type training.
- . 180% staff turnover - majority of turnover happens within 30 - 60 days.
- . Approximately 80% of all employers are ex-offenders mainly alcohol/drug offenders.

Key Principle under which this organisation works is to sell their skills through the provision of services rather than ask the government for a handout to address the needs of ex-offenders. They present a positive role model to the offenders who they assist.

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(2) **Hartlepool Offenders Partnership Endeavour (HOPE) Project**

This project is relatively new, but has to date been very successful. It is basically a mentor scheme for young offenders and youth at risk linking them into areas of employment and training, education, community care and leisure and is having a surprising impact on the incidence of crime and recidivism.

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(3) **CARES Program (Los Angeles)**

The CARES program is run by a non-profit corporation known as 'The Foundation for People Incorporated'. The program involves ex-offenders in attending eight weekly, 3 hour support sessions. The focus of the sessions is getting the offender to accept responsibility for his behaviour. A crucial aspect of the program is an exploration of the thought processes and behaviour patterns behind the criminal act.

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This program is used to identify individuals who are appropriate to place on CSO's. More than 85% of graduates of the CARES program have had no further contact with the law.

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(4) Community Services Speakers Program

The Foundation for People Inc also run a speaker program where individual offenders, where appropriate, are used to talk to schools, community groups, service clubs as to the impact of crime and what we can do to redress the problem. To inform individuals of how being imprisoned has impacted on their lives etc.

(5) Specialised Job Search Package (UK)

A Job Search package has been developed by the Apex Trust specifically targeted at ex-offenders. Two interesting components included on the package are;

- 1) How to disclose your conviction; and
- 2) Fitting in - Starting a new job and keeping it.

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(6) Employers Advisory Committee (UK)

Apex Trust brought together a collection of key employers who over a 12 month period reviewed the current status of prisons and post prison services resulting in a report called "Crime, Employment & Ex-offenders - The Employers Perspective". This report was presented to relevant government departments, party members and employer groups.

As an outcome to this report smaller localised employer advisory groups have been established and are working with local prison and probation services, looking at ways to improve employment and training outcomes to offenders. Examples of projects being worked on are as follows:

1) **Pilot Project**

The establishment of a 2 year research and development pilot project which will develop a range of initiatives introducing employers into prisons to help prepare inmates for work.

2) **Skills Audit**

Research has taken place locally to identify the local labour market skills requirements and comparing that to the identified skills of offenders in the prison. Where possible linkages are made and/or programs are established to provide the necessary skills training.

3) **Holloway Prison**

Following discussion with a local employers' advisory group who visited the prison, a scheme is being developed which will allow prisoners nearing release to leave prison one day a week on work placement.

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(7) **Neighbourhood Work Project (Vera Institute - New York)**

This project undertakes contract work mainly with the city of New York to renovate the city owned buildings. It operates a business and works in close liaison with the parole system.

Individuals are paid on the minimum wage on a daily basis and where possible are linked into the Vocational Development Program who work with the individual to place them into more permanent employment or training.

On-the-job training is provided to ensure that the individual gains relevant work skills. In a sense the key element to the program is that the City of New York is committed to attempting to address the crime issue.

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(8) Fidelity Bonding (USA & UK)

This program offers an insurance policy to an employer to cover the potential dishonesty of an employee. In the USA more than 20,000 people have been bonded to the program since its inception 21 years ago; and surprisingly, the program carries a default rate of less than 2% a year.

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Mr Bill Mather
Apex Trust (As previously mentioned)

(9) Offender Employment Forum (UK)

A collection of key agencies and government departments have recently established a forum with the following mandate.

"To consider all matters relating to the access and suitability of employment and training opportunities for offenders, with a view to achieving a measure of policy co-ordination, and the promotion of good practices and partnerships between all the agencies that have responsibilities for offenders".

Three specific issues which the forum may wish to consider include:

- the provision of information on employment and training opportunities to offenders in custody and in the community.
- the access of offenders in custody and in the community to employment and training advisory services, employment and training programmes, and opportunities for self-employment.
- employment policies and practices regarding the recruitment of unemployed offenders and the treatment of employees who offend.

This forum is proving to be a very effective way to collectively identify and address key issues facing offender and ex-offender employment issues.

For more information contact:

Mr Bill Mather
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KEY IDEAS

(1) Enterprise Development (USA)

Within the United States some of the larger companies prefer to give a percentage of their contract work to community based organisations rather than a straight donation. This concept can be seen in the Pioneer Industries program mentioned earlier.

(2) Funding for Employment and Training Programs

In Washington DC, a program known as the "Liberation of Ex-offenders through Employment Opportunities" (LEEO) received \$419 000 from the courts through fines payments received.

For more information contact:

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CONCLUSION

All that has been attempted in this paper is to present a broad range of interesting ideas, programs and principles that could be explored further regarding their application within WA. Obviously, prior to any of these initiatives being implemented, time would need to be taken to consider the legislative, political and financial implications, along with what government or private body could or should be involved in its implementation and how.

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