A Future Beyond the Wall

A Future Beyond the Wall: Improving post release employment outcomes for people leaving prison (ARC Project ID: LP140100329)

This project surveys, describes and analyses cross jurisdictional prisoner vocational education, training and employment programs in all Australian states and territories, and provides outcomes showing the relative effects of particular programs on reoffending for all sentenced prisoners and for subsets of sentenced prisoners including Indigenous prisoners and prisoners with mental and/or cognitive impairment.

Case studies of employment assistance programs servicing ex prisoners are also being developed and examined.

The provision of vocational education and training and employment pathways which prepare prisoners for post release employment has been identified as a cost-effective element in addressing recidivism, however the relative importance of education and training, and work experience, is not entirely clear. Some research suggests it is prior and in-prison employment rather than education and training that makes a difference. Other studies suggest that transitional employment programs that develop work-related skills reduce recidivism even if sustained employment on release is not achieved. What has not been established is a causal relationship between in-prison vocational education, training and employment, and recidivism. This study addresses this question with national data from Australian correctional systems.

News and Updates

Alanah Griffiths

Alanah Griffiths is our new Indigenous Cadet working as a research assistant on the project. Alanah is in her second year of university studying a bachelor of Social Work/ Arts at UNSW. Her role as a research assistant includes, working alongside Simone Rowe and Jo Wodak on
general duties. She is currently working on the project website and newsletter, recoding of data, creating an endnote for the project and learning many other skills associated with the ‘A Future Beyond the Wall’ project. The future for Alanah on this project involves working on the Indigenous aspect of the research. Alanah can be contacted at: alanah.griffiths@unsw.edu.au

- Donna Faulkner and Work Solutions, Gippsland

We are pleased to advise that Work Solutions, Gippsland has joined the project as a ‘data Partner’. Work Solutions (WS) Gippsland, established in 2002, is a specialist employment service whose prime focus is to assist jobseekers with a disability, injury or health condition to gain and maintain employment in the mainstream workforce.

Work Solutions Gippsland is the largest disability employment service provider in the region with ten offices throughout South, Central and East Gippsland.

As the provider of choice and a leader in our field, Work Solutions Gippsland provides tailored services, advice and resources to assist people with a disability and/or barrier to employment to find long term, sustainable employment in the Gippsland region.

The Executive Director of Work Solutions Gippsland is Donna Faulkner. Donna's entire professional life has been dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with a disability. She graduated as a teacher in special education and has worked in a variety of settings with both children and adults with disability. For the past 16 years she has led a team of people pursuing equal employment opportunities for people with a disability in the mainstream workforce. Donna can be contacted at: donnaf@wsgipps.com.au

- Website

As promised the project’s website is up and running. Over the course of the project the website will continue to grow and develop. Updates will be added to the website, along with a section devoted to ‘community resources’ and ‘project documents’. Any information you think would be useful for the website can be forwarded to Alanah Griffiths alanah.griffiths@unsw.edu.au

The website can be accessed at: https://socialsciences.arts.unsw.edu.au/research/research-initiatives/a-future-beyond-the-wall/

- ACEA Website

One of the project’s partner organisations, the Australian Corrections Education Association (ACEA), has recently updated their website. The website can be accessed at: http://acea.org.au/. Information on ACEAs upcoming conference can be found on their site.
• **Ethics Application**

We have submitted applications to Corrective Services’ departments in all states and territories, requesting de-identified data to be made available with respect to variables relevant to Stage 1 of the project for all sentenced prisoners released in 2010/11. The data requested relate to demographic factors, offence history, participation in programs, education and training, and employment, and recidivism. Formal responses have not yet been received, however preliminary approaches to each jurisdiction have been encouraging.

• **Systematic Literature Review Underway**

As a starting point to understanding the outcomes of Australian employment and vocational training programs, a systematic review will be undertaken to examine the impact of programs on recidivism. The review will consider the findings of the most methodologically rigorous studies conducted worldwide.

• **Student Research**

Adrian Darakai, an Honours student in Psychology at Deakin University, is interested in finding out more about public and professional attitudes towards the employment of ex-offenders. He has developed a brief online survey and would appreciate it if this could be circulated to interested parties when it becomes operational in June. We will circulate information when it becomes available.

**Looking forward**

• **Roundtable Meeting**

All CIs and PIs are meeting to develop a detailed plan of the next two phases of the project.

Where: UNSW

When: Friday 29th of May 2015

• **Reintegration Puzzle Conference**

Where: Brisbane

When: 5th - 7th of August 2015

Is there an employment future beyond the prison wall?
This is the title of a panel discussion to be held during the 2015 Reintegration Puzzle Conference to be held in Brisbane 5-7 August.
The panel, to be chaired by PEOPLE Chief Investigator Prof Eileen Baldry, will discuss education, training and employment for prisoners and ex-prisoners. Panelists will address the variety of approaches taken across jurisdictions both in prison and post-release via programs in prison, assistance during transition, and programs run in the community. Other panelists include Dr. Anna Macklin from Queensland Corrective Services and Ms. Donna Faulkner of Work Solutions Gippsland.

The PEOPLE newsletter is designed to update stakeholders and interested parties in the project’s progress. For further information, please contact: Simone Rowe, Email: s.rowe@unsw.edu.au, or Professor Eileen Baldry, Email: e.baldry@unsw.edu.au