The Prisoner Employment Outcomes Project  
Newsletter • December 2014

**Introducing the Project**
The Prisoner Employment Outcomes Project (PEOP) is a three-year Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project. The full title of the project is a ‘Future Beyond the Wall: Improving Post-release Employment Outcomes for People Leaving Prison’. The PEOP research team is optimistic about the beneficial relationship between ex-prisoners’ engagement in meaningful work; reductions in re-offending; and improvements in well being. However, we are concerned by international and national evidence indicating the limited number of prison releasees who gain employment; the large number of prison releasees who have significant barriers to employment, such as low levels of educational attainment, disability and complex support needs, and returning to communities with low employment opportunities. There is a paucity of research and understanding regarding successful pathways to employment for this group. With this in mind, the PEOP research team aims to:

1. Improve current understandings of the models, practices, performance and outcomes of vocational, education and employment services;
2. Provide insights into the extent to which successful completions of training and/or employment programs is related to positive employment and recidivism outcomes; and
3. Develop a theoretical framework and practice models that are useful and appropriate to the development of future effective services.

To achieve these aims, the PEOP will gather and analyse, for the first time, comparative data from Australian jurisdictions on the relationship between in-prison and post-prison vocational education and employment programs, employment and recidivism. The research will draw on a mixed methods approach that will include: analysis of relevant data on prisoners involved in Corrective Services across a number of jurisdictions; a national survey of all Corrections, in prison vocational education providers, Correctional Industries, and relevant employment agencies regarding the type, size and nature of programs they run; qualitative interviews with staff of
organisations involved in providing employment services to ex-prisoners, as well as interviews with ex-prisoners who are engaged with these organisations; the development of a number of case studies which will explore employment and training, as well as a wide range of contextual issues for ex-prisoners engaged with employment agencies; and analysis of data from two nested studies related to two groups significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system: Indigenous Australians, and those with an identified mental and/or cognitive disability.

The PEOP brings together a group of people with extensive skills, knowledge and expertise, providing a unique partnership amongst key academics in the field, peak national bodies, correctional and employment organisations.

Meet the Team

Lead Chief Investigator (CI)
• Professor Eileen Baldry, UNSW
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UNSW Chief Investigators (CI)
• Dr David Bright
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Deakin Chief Investigators (CI)
• Professor Andrew Day
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• Professor Joseph Graffam
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• Professor Jane McGillivray

Partner Investigators (PI)
• Mark Bartlett
  Senior Manager, Offender Services & Corrections Programs,
Project News

• The PEOP web page is currently under construction and will be live in January 2015. The web page will provide academics, practitioners, ex-prisoners, and other interested members in the community with a broad range of resources relevant to improving education and training in and post prison, as well as employment outcomes for people leaving prison. The web page will house a bibliographic database with key Australian and international documents pertinent to the project’s focal concerns, as well serving as a repository of in-progress and completed PEOP research. In addition, there will be a dedicated section for community resources, with links to a variety of sites and materials.

• University ethics approval is currently being obtained to undertake the first stage of the project: a quantitative analysis of relevant de-identified data on sentenced individuals released in 2011. This study will provide insights into the extent to which successful completion of training and/or employment programs is related to positive employment and recidivism outcomes. Pending the availability of data, in January 2015 research/ethics clearance will be sought from Corrective Services across all Australian jurisdictions.
• PIs from our employment organisations are assisting CIs to develop the conceptual and theoretical foundations for the project’s case studies.

**Related Research Projects**

* Indigenous Australians with Mental Health Disorders and Cognitive Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System (2011-2014)

This is an ARC Linkage Project with lead CI Professor Eileen Baldry, and CIs A/Professor Leanne Dowse, Professor Patrick Dodson, and A/Professor Julian Trollor. The project has moved into new territory by extending Indigenous specific data and gathering qualitative information to develop a comprehensive picture of the coalescence of multiple diagnoses, heightened vulnerabilities, complex support needs and simultaneous interventions for Indigenous persons. Comparative analysis with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peers is identifying points of difference. Experiences and opinions of this group and specialist support and community leaders have been gathered to identify appropriate conceptualisations and interventions.

* Springboard evaluation.

Professor Eileen Baldry is leading the outcomes and costings aspect of an evaluation being conducted by AHURI contracted by Victorian Department of Human Services, into the overall outcomes and performance of a trial program in Victoria to assist young people in out of home care to transition to adult community living. Its focus is on education training and employment as vehicles to lead to successful transition.

The PEOP newsletter is designed to update stakeholders and interested parties in the project’s progress. For further information, please contact:

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