



VET and prisons

Tom Karmel
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Mackenzie Research Institute
E: tom.karmel@hotmail.com
info@mri.edu.au

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Executive Summary

Crime, especially youth crime, has become a hot topic.

The issue we wish to pursue is whether vocational education and training might provide an approach to address the problem; from a policy perspective there has been a long held view that education can prevent individuals from becoming involved with the criminal justice system, and reduce recidivism for those who do end up in a criminal justice facility.

The study draws on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and, for the first time, unpublished data on students in correctional facilities from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). It also draws on an international literature review.

Australia's prison population (adult correctional institutions) was 44,403 (40,967 males and 3,432 females) as at 30 June 2024. The highest imprisonment rates are for 30-34 year old males.

Indigenous persons are over represented dramatically, making up 33% of prisoners (compared to 3.8% of the Australian population as at the 2021 Census)¹.

The overall story is quite clear. In general the educational background of those involved with the justice system is poor, with the majority of persons not finishing school.

The implication of this is that any programs directed toward the educationally disadvantaged will potentially reduce the numbers of people becoming involved in the justice system. This may be particularly pertinent for young people where the challenge is to keep those who are not academically inclined engaged with the education system. Whether the current Vocational Education and Training (VET) arrangements do this is a moot point.

The second point to emerge is general agreement that education and training in prisons is something that is eminently worthwhile. However, what is actually delivered is predominantly at a low level (Certificates I and II), even when prisoners have completed year 12, much of it consists of general education or training for relatively low skilled occupations (such as kitchen operations and cleaning). What is disturbing are the abysmal completion rates (less than 10 per cent for Certificates I-III). It appears that the substance of what is achieved in VET in prisons is very limited.

The third point to emerge from both the statistics and the literature is the task of delivering high quality and effective education and training is very difficult.

The message from previous research is that it takes considerable resources and effort for education and training to be effective in assisting offenders. While VET aimed at offenders is self-evidently worthwhile, it is unlikely to be very effective unless it becomes a central focus of the justice system. The statistics - with most VET programs delivered at a low level and very poor completion rates - suggest that this is not the case at the moment. Good intentions are not sufficient.

If VET is to be part of an approach to address the increase in crime, especially among young people, then it will have to be part of a fundamental rethink.

¹ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/profile-of-indigenous-australians>

Introduction

Crime has become a hot topic in a number of States, particularly Victoria. The Herald Sun (21 March 2025) editorialised with a headline *Shameful fail on crime crisis*, promoting its *Suburbs Under Siege* campaign, and highlighting the apparent increase in crime over the last 10 years or so. It referenced the latest crime statistics which showed that *Victoria has hit its highest level in 20 years, with a record number of home invasions and offences committed by juveniles under 18*. The increase in youth crime and the lack of success in reducing it is highlighted with headlines such as *One kid 388 charges but no convictions*. A recurring theme of the newspaper's campaign is that the current approach to dealing with youth crime is akin to a revolving door.

The issue we wish to address is whether education and training might provide an approach to doing something about the problem; from a policy perspective there has been a long held view that education can prevent individuals from becoming involved with the criminal justice system, and reduce recidivism for those who do end up in a criminal justice facility.

Our focus is on the role that Vocational Education and Training plays in Australia's criminal justice systems, with the intention of assessing whether VET or aspects of it could be the basis for an intervention among the young people who are involved in the justice system. One caveat is that most of the research and statistics deals with adults in prison, with relatively little about young persons, mostly because the current approaches endeavour not to imprison young people. Nevertheless, if VET has had a worthwhile impact on adult prisoners, then we would feel somewhat confident in seeing it as a resource to help young people. On the other hand, if we conclude that VET has offered little to adult prisoners then we are going to need more radical thinking for an approach to assist young people.

The structure of the paper is as follows. We begin by providing some background data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. This is followed by outlining the policy context, beginning with a Senate Committee which examined the topic in 1996. The context is broadened in Section 3 with a short review of the literature relevant to the interaction between education and training and the justice system. In Section 4 we present new data on the extent of delivery of VET in correctional facilities in Australia, including data on completion rates. We conclude with a discussion.

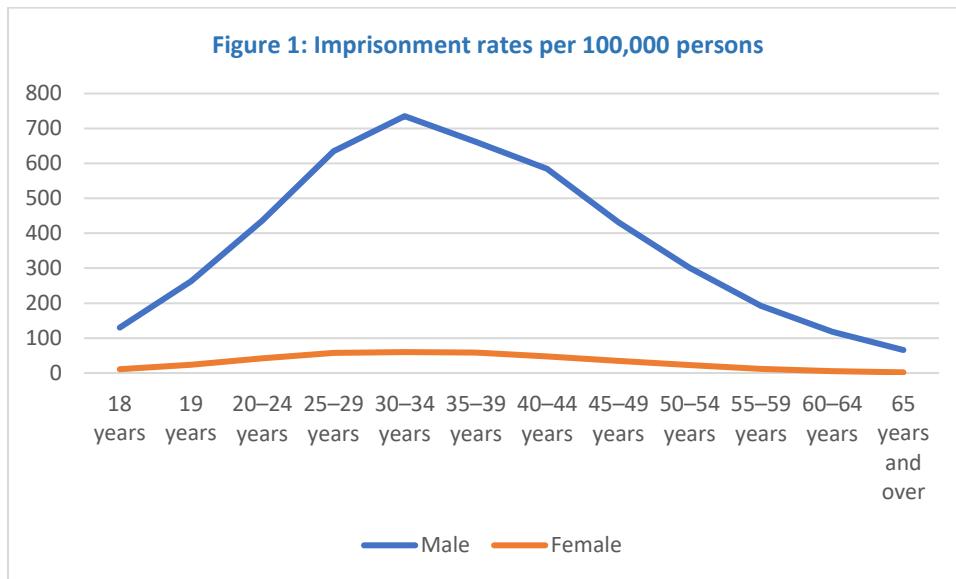
1. Background

Australia's prison population (adult correctional institutions) was around 44,403 (40,967 males and 3,432 females) as at 30 June 2024, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This includes both sentenced and unsentenced prisoners. Individuals are in prison for a range of offences, with the most numerous being *Acts intended to cause injury* (26.9%), *Sexual assault and related offences* (16.3%), *Illicit drug offences* (12.4%), *Unlawful entry with intent* (8.6%) and *Homicide and related offences* (7.9%). 'White collar' is virtually unrepresented in prisons with only 1.4% of prisoners in prison for the offences of *fraud and deception*.

The ABS data are disaggregated by age, sex and Indigeneity. The groups over represented in prison are men (92.4% of prisoners), and Indigenous persons (33.0%, compared to a share of the overall population of 3.8%²). A high proportion of persons had prior experience of prison (61.1%).

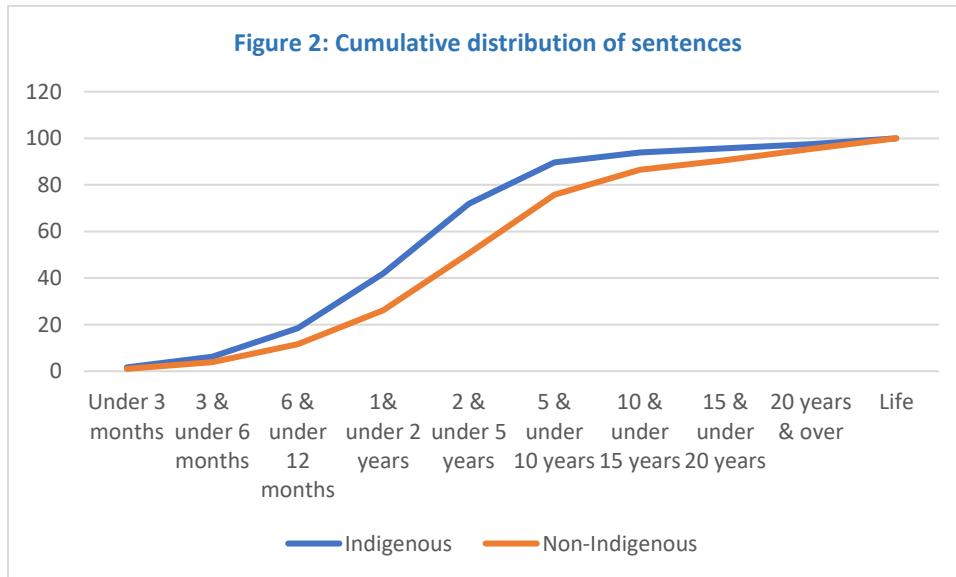
² The 3.8% is estimated by the ABS in respect of the 2021 Census, see <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/profile-of-indigenous-australians>

Imprisonment rates (rate per 100,000 persons) show the dominance of men in prisons and an age profile that peaks at 30-34 years.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 45170DO001_2023 Prisoners in Australia, 2023

The ABS also publishes data on the length of sentences (Figure 2) for sentenced prisoners (who comprise around 62% of prisoners).



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 45170DO001_2023 Prisoners in Australia, 2023

We see that sentences on the whole are substantial with only 6% of Indigenous prisoners and 4% of non-Indigenous with sentences of 6 months or less. For most (sentenced) prisoners there is certainly ample time to undertake further education.

It is well understood that prisoners often come from disadvantaged backgrounds (AIHW 2023). Part of this disadvantage relates to educational attainment. According to AIHW (2023) around 66% of prison entrants had education of level 10 and below compared to 16% in the general population³.

³ These figures come from the National Prisoner Health Data Collection

The 2018 data collection had a question on post-school education and we present the data from this collection.

Table 3: Prison entrants, highest level of schooling completed, by sex, Indigenous status, and age group, 2018 (%)

	Year 12	Year 11	Year 10	Year 9	Year 8 or under	No schooling	Total
Men	20	15	30	17	14	2	100
Women	17	20	26	16	19	0	100
Indigenous	12	13	26	21	24	2	100
non-Indigenous	24	17	32	14	10	1	100
Age group (years)							
18–24	16	22	29	20	11	1	100
25–34	19	15	31	17	14	1	100
35–44	21	15	28	15	18	1	100
45–54	23	10	25	15	18	7	100
55+	18	15	21	18	18	6	100
Total	19	16	29	17	15	2	100

Notes:

1. Totals include unknowns.
2. Excludes New South Wales, which did not provide data for this item.
3. Numbers represent numbers in this data collection only, and not the entire prison population.

Source: Entrants form, 2018 National Prisoner Health Data Collection (NPHDC). Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. *The health of Australia's prisoners 2018*, Table S10.

We see that overall less than 20% of the sample had completed year 12, with the proportion a little higher for the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups. Interestingly, a higher proportion of males had completed year 12 than females, which is not the case in the general population.

In terms of post-school qualifications a sizable proportion had a trade certificate (around 31%). Only small proportions had a diploma (less than 5%) or a degree (2-3%).

Table 4: Prison entrants, highest level of non-school education completed, 2018

	Number	Per cent
Trade certificate	248	31
Diploma	35	4
Bachelor degree	12	1
Postgraduate qualification	4	<1
No non-school qualification	449	56
Total	803	100

Notes:

1. Totals include unknowns.
2. Excludes New South Wales, which did not provide data for this item.
3. Numbers represent numbers in this data collection only, and not the entire prison population.

Source: Entrants form, 2018 NPHDC, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019), *The health of Australia's prisoners 2018*, Table S11

The NPHDC has one indicator relating to education while in prison – the proportion of prisoners reporting that they had completed a qualification while in prison. According to the NPHDC, 2022 (Dischargees Form, self-reported) 17% of dischargees had completed a qualification while in prison.

Table 5: Prison dischargees, completed qualifications while in prison, by sex, Indigenous status, and age group, 2018 (per cent)

	School	Trade certificate	Diploma	Total with qual	Total
Men	2	14	1	18	100
Women	0	11	0	11	100
Indigenous	2	9	2	13	100
non-Indigenous	3	18	0	20	100
Age group (years)				0	
18–24	3	3	0	5	100
25–34	1	17	0	18	100
35–44	4	14	2	21	100
45–54	0	18	3	20	100
55+	0	6	0	6	100
Total	2	14	1	17	100

Notes:

1. Totals include unknowns.
2. Excludes New South Wales, which did not provide data for this item.
3. Numbers represent numbers in this data collection only, and not the entire prison population.
4. Data for bachelor degrees or postgraduate qualifications were not included as all values were zero.

Source: Dischargees form, 2018 NPHDC, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The health of Australia's prisoners 2018*, Table S12

Parallel to the justice system for adults is the youth justice system which deals with people who commit or allegedly commit a crime when aged 10 to 17 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2024 (AIHW)). Youth Justice is the responsibility of States and Territories but AIHW observes that the general processes by which young people are charged, and the types of legal orders available to the courts are similar.⁴

Supervision plays an important role in the youth justice system. Young people may be supervised when they are awaiting the outcome of their court matter or sentencing. Additionally, they may be sentenced to supervision after being found guilty in court. Importantly, supervision can take place in the community or in a detention facility.

The numbers of young people dealt with by the youth justice system is small compared to the adult justice system. According to AIHW 2024 on an average day in 2022-23 4,542 people aged 10 and over were under youth justice supervision, equivalent to a rate of 130 per 100,000 people. Over the

⁴ Some people over 18 may also be supervised in the youth justice system, if for example a crime was (allegedly) committed when they were 17 or younger, or their existing supervision continues once they have turned 18 (instead of being transferred to the adult correctional system, or a court determines that they are vulnerable or immature (AIHW 2024).

whole year the rate was about double that. Of the young people under supervision 82% were under community based supervision and 18% in detention.

The rate of supervision is, not surprisingly, very variable depending on the individuals' characteristics. On an average day in 2022-23 (AIHW 2024):

- Males were almost four times as likely as females to be under supervision.
- Young people from the lowest socioeconomic areas were about 7 times as likely as those from the highest socioeconomic areas to be under supervision.
- Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders were about 23 times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to be under supervision and 28 times as likely to be in detention.

While no data are available on the level of education of young people involved in the youth justice system, the correlation with socio-economic status suggests that on average these young people are educationally disadvantaged.

The AIHW also notes that there is a strong link between youth justice, child protection and alcohol and other drug treatment services:

- Young people aged 10-17 years under youth justice supervision (at some point in 2022-23) were 30 times as likely as the general population to have received alcohol and other drug treatment services (AIHW 2018).
- More than half of young people aged 10 and over under youth justice supervision during 2021 had received a child protection service in the 5 years to 30 June 2021 (AIHW 2022).

Periods of supervision tend to be relatively short compared to sentences in adult prisons. According to AIHW 2024 individual periods of supervision completed during 2022-23 lasted for a median of 90 days. Completed periods of community-based supervision were much longer than completed periods of detention, with a median duration of 85 days compared with 6 days. The median duration of completed periods of sentenced detention was 57 days.

When the total time spent under supervision during 2022-23 is considered (including multiple periods and those not yet completed), young people supervised during the year spent an average of 181 days under supervision.

While the periods of supervision tend to be relatively short compared to periods of incarceration in adult prisons, the periods are longer than 6 months for many young people - long enough for worthwhile education activity.

2. Policy context

We start with a report from a Senate committee in 1996. The Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee was charged to:

Examine the education and training of people in Australian correctional and juvenile justice facilities in the context of the National Training Reform Agenda; and to establish guidelines and principles for the participation of adults and juveniles in custody in education and accredited vocational training, and for their access to the range of lifelong learning opportunities available to the community at large. Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (1996).

The report of the Committee reflected grave disquiet with the delivery of education and training in prisons.

For most of the history of corrections in Australia, and indeed until quite recent times, education and training in prisons could fairly be described as a disgrace. Facilities were often poor or non-existent, curriculum and learning resources scarce and out-dated, with teachers poorly paid and rarely given the professional support they required. Surrounding all this was a pervasive atmosphere of hostility between corrections officers and prisoners which severely militated against successful educational outcomes in all but those rarest of cases where a fortuitous mix of committed teacher and enlightened prison management happened to prevail.

The report went on to make 32 recommendations which the Committee saw as providing a roadmap for the future, and the report offered a hopeful tone for the future.

The Committee is pleased to note that significant moves have been afoot over the last few years to remedy the neglect of the past. The next sentence, however, adds a note of realism: There has been little evidence of significant additional funds flowing to education and training in correctional facilities.

The 32 recommendations are included in an appendix but there are a number worth highlighting.

The Committee recommends that, in each State and Territory corrections system, the education and training of offenders is identified as a key element of corrections services' responsibilities..... and promoted as a right not a privilege.

The Committee recommends that ANTA identify offenders as a discrete target group which is under-represented in vocational education and training that ANTA develop a National Vocational Education and Training Strategy for Offenders.

The system developed should be designed to meet the needs of the corrections environment, but should incorporate the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard and fund the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to develop a database in corrections education. p30 10.

The first of these sets out the policy intent of the Committee but there is little evidence to suggest that the recommendations got much traction.

Development of a national strategy

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), as the body responsible for national coordination of Vocational Education and Training (VET), in partnership with the Commonwealth, States and Territories, developed Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training which was intended to express the commitment of Australian governments and industry. Adult prisoners and offenders were identified as an equity group, and had their own linked strategy (Australian National Training Authority, 2001, National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training for Adult Prisoners and Offenders in Australia). The mission and objectives of the National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training were '.....to provide individuals with opportunities to optimise their potential.' The linked strategy was developed through cooperation between ANTA, the Commonwealth, State and Territory vocational education and training authorities, and corrections authorities in the States and Territories.

The vision of the strategy was *to provide adult prisoners and offenders with educational and vocational pathways which will support their productive contribution to the economic and social life of the community.* The strategy had four objectives:

- *To improve access to vocational education and training for adult prisoners and offenders;*
- *To support successful participation and attainment across a range of fields of study and levels of vocational education and training;*
- *To contribute to the employment and learning pathways which can support the successful reintegration of offenders in the community;*
- *To create an accountable system that provides equitable vocational education and training outcomes for offenders.*

The national strategy and accompanying implementation framework⁵ are at a very high level, replete with good ideas. However, it is not clear that the strategy had any real impact. ANTA was abolished on 1 July 2005 and its functions were transferred to the then Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). In 2011, this became the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). According to <https://www.training.com.au/anta/> since 2011, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has been the regulating body for the training sector, supported by research by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

A search of the ASQA website suggests that VET for prisoners has not received any particular attention (searching for *prisoners* or *corrections* or *correctional services* has a null output). Similarly, NCVER does not publish any data on the delivery of VET in prisons. While NCVER does not publish any data, a flag is set on students and courses database indicating if the place of residence of the student is a correctional facility and we scrutinise this data in some detail later.⁶

With the abolition of ANTA responsibility for VET in prisons sits squarely with the State government departments. To get a flavour of the State government approaches we look at South Australia.

Case study: Government of South Australia: Department for Correctional Services

According to its website, the Department for Correctional Services *provides services that contribute to a safer community by protecting the public and reducing reoffending.*⁷

The website spells out the purpose of the Department and the strategies and services that are used in support of that purpose.

Purpose *The department's objective is to improve the outcomes for offenders. This is done through measures to reduce reoffending and provide for successful reintegration back into the community.*

Further

The use of meaningful and targeted rehabilitation and education and training programs is key to this objective,

⁵ See Australasian Corrections Education Association [2004?], *Rebuilding lives: VET for prisoners and offenders: the implementation framework for the National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training for Adult Prisoners and Offenders in Australia.*

⁶ The reason for this flag is to exclude those students in prisons from being sent a Student Outcome Survey form. The flag is not intended to provide definitive measurement of VET activity and outcomes in prisons.

⁷ Note that Department for Correctional Services only looks after adults, not youth offenders, and generally not those with mental illnesses.

The key goal of rehabilitation is to reduce reoffending. A reduction in reoffending will mean less victims of crime and less social and economic cost to the community.

The website refers to education, vocational training and self-study.

In respect of education, the Department has its own Registered Training Organisation (VTEC-SA) but also engages with other RTOs. A variety of courses are offered including numeracy and literacy, business (up to a Certificate IV) and a range of vocational studies such as horticulture, civil construction, kitchen operations and cooking. Education services are prioritised to those who are assessed as having the greatest need. The subjects taught target rehabilitation and reintegration with a strong focus on employment skills.

The website notes that: *Classes are offered most days of the week and are accessible to most prisoners depending on the prisoner regime. Prisoners attending approved education or training courses are paid an allowance. Many courses are organised with work rosters, to enable prisoners to participate in both education and work opportunities.*

In addition, most sites have staffed educational centres and libraries and computing suites where the certificates in business are taught. Internet facilities are not available.

The website also comments that: *Prisoners are assessed before being accepted on to some courses...Prisoners who need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills are offered courses so that they can take advantage of vocational training and prepare to be an effective part of the community on release from prison.*

In addition to VET and literacy and numeracy courses, short courses are offered so that individuals can acquire 'tickets' which are very useful in obtaining subsequent employment. Examples are:

- Forklift licence
- White card
- Full car licence and class C assessment
- Backhoe licence
- Chainsaw operations
- Fell small trees with advanced techniques training
- Truck MR licence
- Skid steer operations certificate
- Work zone traffic management, and
- Barista training.

The website conveys a very positive view on what VET can achieve in prisons. It comments: *Research has conclusively shown that incarcerated prisoners who engage in education and vocational training have far lower levels of returning to prison. They also integrate into the community better upon release.*

In addition to courses delivered by an RTO, prisoners may apply to study a range of courses by distance education, including university degrees. However, an impediment to this is that prisoners are not allowed access to the Internet, and this is going to rule out most modern distance education. The website also points out that there are a number of reasons an application to study via distance education may not be approved, including:

- the resources are not available at the prison to support the student;

- the requested resources are allocated to support other students at this point in time;
- the chosen field of study is at odds with the offense, for example a prisoner who committed fraud is unlikely to be allowed to study accounting.

Thus it appears that external study/distance education is quite difficult to organise in a prison environment.

While language around education and training is very positive on the department's website, it is not clear how substantive the activity really is. The Department's annual report (2024) includes little detail as to the level of training with the only indicator for educational or vocational programs being *% of education and vocational programs successfully completed.*⁸

Without a solid statistical collection, it is not really possible to make any judgments as to the success of the educational programs delivered in prisons.

3. What the literature says

The policy context discussed above has an underlying assumption that education and training delivered in prisons will have beneficial results. This is consistent with our reading of the literature.⁹ There are three main themes that emerged from our brief review of the literature:

- Individuals with low levels of education are more likely to become involved in the justice system (Macdonald et al 2020, Jha and Polidano 2016, Brazier 2010, Plasman and Passarella 2022). However, the direction of causality is not clear. For example we know that young people who are disengaged from education are more likely to become involved with the youth justice system, but it is not obvious that the disengagement from education occurs because of their brush with the youth justice or whether the disengagement from education leads to involvement in criminal acts. Jha and Polidano (2016) provide plausible evidence that the direction of causality is from more education to lower involvement in crime (through the link between education and job opportunities). The general consensus seems to be that higher levels of education will in general lead to less involvement in criminal activities.
- Education, and VET in particular, has a positive effect on the level of recidivism (Chapman and Dhillon 2021, Lindeman et al 2017, Giles and Whale 2016, Callan and Gardner 2007, Davis et al 2014, Newton et al 2018, Jobs for the Future 2015, Mertanen and Brunila 2017). There is little debate on this topic although clearly the size of the impact is important. On the whole the various studies suggest that the impact of education and training on recidivism is substantial.

⁸ A target of 80% is set for this indicator, with 84% achieved in 2023. We note that this achieved figure is at variance with the NCVER data to be presented later in Section 5. The NCVER data indicate the completion rates of VET programs are less than 10% for Certificates I-III.

⁹ Thanks to Kelly Frazer from NCVER for undertaking a literature search focussing on VET and the justice system, including youth. The search drew on VOCEDplus and Google Scholar, with search terms as follows: "vocational education and training", VET, "technical and vocational education and training", TVET, "tertiary education", "further education", "career and technical training", training; justice OR "justice system"; crime OR criminal OR criminals; prison OR prisoner OR prisoners; correction OR corrections OR correctional; offender OR offenders; youth OR youths OR "young people"; recidivism OR rehabilitation; incarcerated OR incarceration; detention OR "youth detention"; "juvenile system".

- Effective delivery of education and training in the justice system is very difficult (Elwick et al 2013, Chapman and Dhillon 2021, Macdonald et al 2020, Deloitte Access Economics 2018, Rogers et al 2014, Great Britain Office for Standards in Education 2010, Vanderpyl 2015, 19 Mertanen and Brunila). This is for a whole range of reasons including administrative and coordination barriers on one hand and cultural issues on the other. For example, the Senate Committee (1996) in its Foreword refers to *a pervasive atmosphere of hostility between corrections officers and prisoners which severely militated against successful educational outcomes in all but those rarest of cases where a fortuitous mix of committed teacher and enlightened prison management happened to prevail.* (page 1). Evidence provided to the Committee elaborates on this theme eloquently: *One other problem we have, I think in all centres. ..is staff attitudes to the training and education of inmates. We constantly come up against barriers. The staff at times, I believe, are jealous of some of the provisions that are made for inmates to get education and training. They just do not believe they are there for that. A lot of the staff just think they should be locked up and forgotten and let out again when their time is due, and they will not go out of their way to either motivate or encourage any of our inmates to study' There is also that underlying belief that, You're a criminal. What's the use in your having an education? You're not going to change anyway.* (page 78) The Committee also noted that attitudes of prisoners are often not helpful quoting evidence from a prisoner.: *Within prisons the social structure and standards are the reverse of those which exist in the normal Australian community. Violence and rebellion are considered as admirable qualities, conformity or compliance with authority offensive, 'order' is maintained through violence or implied violence. In this environment peer pressure prevents the most needy from participating in anything which may encourage social change, or which may be seen to contribute to a breakdown of the social structure. Participation in education is considered as anti-social behaviour, a reason for ridicule, or a sign of weakness. Young inmates strive to conform to the tough image in which there is no place for self improvement.* (page 78)

4. VET students in correctional facilities

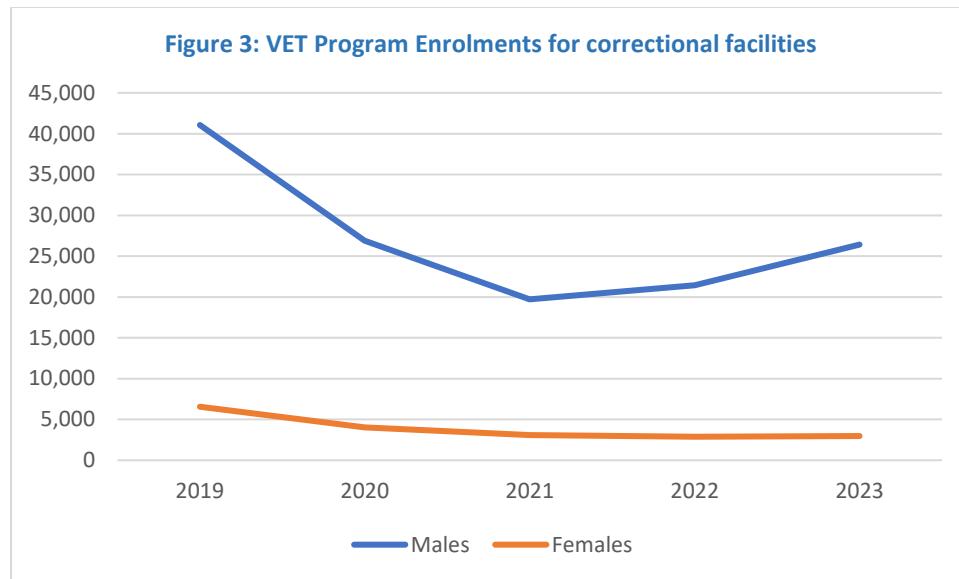
While there has been political interest in the role of VET in prisons, as is evident from work done under ANTA noted earlier, there is no official publication of data relating to VET in prisons, despite the recommendations in the implementation framework for the National Strategy.¹⁰ However, for this paper we have been able to extract data from NCVER's students and courses collection, based on the correctional facility status flag.¹¹ One drawback with this approach is that offenders under supervision in the community (an important group for young offenders) will presumably not be identified through this flag.¹²

¹⁰ For example, the implementation framework included that basic statistical data be collected through the national VET data collection: the number of: - prisoners and offenders from an Indigenous background - female prisoners and offenders - prisoners and offenders with a disability who participate in VET each year and the number of qualifications, competencies and modules they attain. The framework noted that this recommendation was dependent on the approval by the National Training Statistics Committee. Presumably, this approval was not forthcoming.

¹¹ This flag is used to ensure that students in correctional facilities are not contacted in respect of the Student Outcomes Survey.

¹² We note that the correctional facilities covered by the NCVER collection contain very few young persons. Out of the average program enrolments (2019-2023) of around 30,000 only around 360 were aged 17 years and younger.

In Figure 3 we show the number of VET program enrolments for the years 2019 to 2023.



Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

We note that VET program enrolments are relatively high compared to prisoner numbers (around 44,400 as at 30 June 2024). That said, it is not possible to determine from these data the percentage of prisoners undertaking VET – the VET numbers are enrolments over the year while the prisoner numbers are a point in time. Nevertheless, it is clear that a very sizable proportion of prisoners undertake VET. The numbers also indicate the female prisoners are more likely to be studying VET than males.¹³

An additional point to emerge from this figure is the drop off in numbers between 2019 and 2020. This is no doubt associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of male prisoners studying has recovered somewhat but the number of female prisoners undertaking VET has continued to decline although at a slow rate.

In Table 6, we show the distribution of VET enrolments by level of course.

Table 6: Percentage of program enrolments in a correctional facility by level (average 2019-2023)

	Males	Females
Advanced diploma	0.0	0.1
Diploma	0.1	0.7
Certificate IV	1.1	1.9
Certificate III	10.8	12.4
Certificate II	52.0	49.3
Certificate I	31.6	32.4
Non-AQF level	4.4	3.3
	100	100

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

¹³ In 2023 there were 2,960 female prisoners undertaking VET, compared to 3,432 female prisoners (June 30 2024), and 26,415 male prisoners undertaking VET, compared to 40,967 male prisoners (June 30 2024). Crude ratios of VET students to prisoners are 86% for women and 64% for men.

We see that the most common courses are at the Certificate II level, followed by Certificate I level courses. Courses at this level are considered to be at a fairly low level, with Certificate III courses (trade level) a more likely entry level course into the labour market. We see that for males 12% of students are undertaking a course at Certificate III or higher, with the corresponding figure of 15.1% for females.

Table 7 presents enrolments by level and field of education.

Table 7: Average program enrolments in a correctional facility 2019-2023, by level and field of education

	Advanced diplomas and diplomas	Certs III/IV	Certs I/II	Non-AQF	Total
01 - Natural and physical sciences	0	2	0	0	2
02 - Information technology	0	56	1444	0	1500
03 - Engineering and related technologies	1	1679	3880	8	5568
04 - Architecture and building	2	61	1091	0	1154
05 - Agriculture, environmental and related studies	1	95	1136	0	1232
06 - Health	10	186	41	0	237
07 - Education	1	3	1150	59	1213
08 - Management and commerce	28	852	2090	0	2963
09 - Society and culture	10	294	583	0	887
10 - Creative arts	12	19	1463	0	1494
11 - Food, hospitality and personal services	0	467	3979	0	4446
12 - Mixed field programmes	0	63	8995	849	9907
Not known	0	0	0	415	415
Totals	70	3784	25855	1332	31034

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

We see that the largest field is 'mixed field' (that is, general education) followed by Engineering and related technologies, Food, hospitality and personal services and Management and commerce. In each of these fields programs at the Certificate I/II level dominate. To give flavour to the type of courses delivered, we present the 20 largest courses for males and females

Table 8: 20 largest courses for males, average program enrolments in a correctional facility 2019-2023

Rank	Program name	Cumulative percentage
1	SIT20416 - Certificate II in Kitchen Operations	10.5
2	FSK10113 - Certificate I in Access to Vocational Pathways	17.5
3	CPP20617 - Certificate II in Cleaning	23.4
4	FSK20119 - Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways	27.1
5	22476VIC - Certificate I in General Education for Adults (Introductory)	30.7
6	52837WA - Certificate I in Entry to General Education (EGE)	34.1
7	22472VIC - Certificate I in General Education for Adults	37.2
8	MEM20105 - Certificate II in Engineering	40.1
9	AHC20416 - Certificate II in Horticulture	42.6
10	22471VIC - Course in Initial General Education for Adults	44.9
11	FSK10219 - Certificate I in Skills for Vocational Pathways	47.1
12	22473VIC - Certificate II in General Education for Adults	49.1
13	TLI21616 - Certificate II in Warehousing Operations	51.1
14	ICT10115 - Certificate I in Information, Digital Media and Technology	53.0
15	FSK10213 - Certificate I in Skills for Vocational Pathways	54.7
16	FSK20113 - Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways	56.3
17	CPP30316 - Certificate III in Cleaning Operations	57.9
18	CUA20715 - Certificate II in Visual Arts	59.4
19	BSB20115 - Certificate II in Business	60.9
20	ICT20120 - Certificate II in Applied Digital Technologies	62.4

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

We see that the largest courses tend to be training for relatively low skilled jobs (such as certificates in Kitchen Operations or Cleaning) or low level certificates in preparatory education (vocational pathways, general education). We also note that not all the programs are vocational in nature - for example, the 18th ranked course is in the Visual Arts.

Table 8: 20 largest courses for females, average program enrolments in a correctional facility 2019-2023

Rank	Program name	Cumulative percentage
1	SIT20416 - Certificate II in Kitchen Operations	8.0
2	52837WA - Certificate I in Entry to General Education (EGE)	14.3
3	CPP20617 - Certificate II in Cleaning	19.6
4	SIT10216 - Certificate I in Hospitality	23.2
5	22476VIC - Certificate I in General Education for Adults (Introductory)	26.8
6	BSB20115 - Certificate II in Business	30.0
7	22472VIC - Certificate I in General Education for Adults	32.9
8	CPC20211 - Certificate II in Construction Pathways	35.7
9	FSK10113 - Certificate I in Access to Vocational Pathways	38.5
10	CPP30316 - Certificate III in Cleaning Operations	41.1
11	ICT10115 - Certificate I in Information, Digital Media and Technology	43.6
12	CUA20715 - Certificate II in Visual Arts	46.1
13	AHC20416 - Certificate II in Horticulture	48.4
14	CPP30321 - Certificate III in Cleaning Operations	50.3
15	ICT20115 - Certificate II in Information, Digital Media and Technology	52.1
16	22471VIC - Course in Initial General Education for Adults	53.9
17	TLI21616 - Certificate II in Warehousing Operations	55.6
18	22473VIC - Certificate II in General Education for Adults	57.3
19	CUA20415 - Certificate II in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts	59.0
20	FSK20113 - Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways	60.7

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

We see that the largest courses for females are of a similar nature.

We note that almost all the programs are institutionally based rather tied to employment through an apprenticeship or traineeship (Table 9)

Table 9: Program enrolments in a correctional facility (average 2019-2023) by whether an apprentice or trainee

	Diploma and above	Cert IV	Cert III	Cert II	Cert I	Non-AQF level
Apprentice or trainee	0	4	188	403	1	0
Not an apprentice or trainee	72	358	3236	15623	9829	1332
% apprentice or trainee	0.0	1.1	5.8	2.6	0.0	0

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

We now look at two groups of particular interest - Indigenous students and young persons (15-19 years).

Table 10: Indigenous students, program enrolments in a correctional facility, field of education by level, average 2019-2023

	Advanced diplomas and diplomas	Certs III/IV	Certs I/II	Non- AQF	Total
02 - Information technology	0	4	166	0	170
03 - Engineering and related technologies	0	195	482	0	677
04 - Architecture and building	0	11	202	0	213
05 - Agriculture, environmental and related studies	0	13	189	0	202
06 - Health	0	24	10	0	34
07 - Education	0	2	775	47	824
08 - Management and commerce	1	78	362	0	441
09 - Society and culture	1	52	124	0	177
10 - Creative arts	1	5	926	0	932
11 - Food, hospitality and personal services	0	53	534	0	587
12 - Mixed field programmes	0	3	1969	218	2190
Not known	0	0	0	107	107
Totals	5	440	5737	372	6554

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

We see that Certificates I/II in mixed field programs (general education), are very large.¹⁴ We also note that a Certificate I/II in creative arts is quite large. The biggest programs clearly attached to employment are those in Food, hospitality and personal services, and Engineering and related technologies.

¹⁴ We note that there are sizable numbers of persons undertaking Certificates I/II in education. I suspect that these are general education courses rather than qualifications which train individuals to deliver education or training (the basic qualification for this is a Certificate IV).

Table 11: Program enrolments for those aged 15-19 years, average 2019-2023

	Certificate III	Certificate II	Certificate I	Non-AQF level	Total
02 - Information technology	0	5	45	0	50
03 - Engineering and related technologies	21	91	10	0	122
04 - Architecture and building	3	35	25	0	63
05 - Agriculture, environmental and related studies	2	8	10	0	20
06 - Health	2	0	0	0	2
07 - Education	0	0	67	0	67
08 - Management and commerce	8	26	9	0	43
09 - Society and culture	9	8	1	0	18
10 - Creative arts	0	49	19	0	68
11 - Food, hospitality and personal services	8	93	16	0	117
12 - Mixed field programmes	5	82	234	33	354
Not known	0	0	0	6	6
Totals	63	396	439	39	939

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

The table has a number of features. First, the overall number of enrolments is relatively small suggesting that we are generally picking up young persons in adult prisons rather than capturing those involved in the youth justice system. Of those in a correctional facility, however, the largest numbers are undertaking preparatory education. The largest vocational areas are Engineering and related technologies and Food, hospitality and personal services.

We now look at the educational background of those undertaking VET in correctional facilities.

Table 12: Highest level of schooling, average program enrolments 2019-2023 in a correctional facility

	% of prisoners undertaking VET	% undertaking Cert I/II or non-AQF
Year 12	18	83.1
Year 11	14	86.3
Year 10	28	86.9
Year 9 or lower	27	89.7
Did not go to school	4	91.1
Not known	10	91.9
t	100	87.6

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

We see that less than 20% have completed year 12, and large numbers with less than year 10 as their highest level of schooling. We also note that there is a relationship between schooling level and the proportion undertaking a Certificate I/II, such that those with the highest level of schooling are undertaking the smallest number of programs at the Certificate I/II level. That said, over 80% of those with year 12 are undertaking a Certificate I/II.

In Table 13, we present similar data but this time by highest level of education (that is, including post-school qualifications).

Table 13: highest level of schooling, average program enrolments in a correctional facility 2019-2023

	% of prisoners undertaking VET	% Cert I/II or non-AQF
Bachelor degree / Higher degree level	1.8	74.9
Advanced diploma / Associate degree	0.6	80.1
Diploma	1.3	75.7
Certificate IV	2.4	77.8
Certificate III	9.0	81.4
Year 12	13.0	85.9
Year 11	11.4	87.5
Certificate II	4.1	85.8
Year 10	21.2	88.7
Certificate I	0.5	91.7
Miscellaneous education	0.8	84.9
Year 9 or lower	21.4	90.8
Did not go to school	3.5	92.2
Not known	9.0	92.1
Total	100.0	87.6

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

We see that there are around 15% of students who have a post-school qualification of a Certificate III or higher. What stands out, however, is that even those with a degree or diploma at least 75% are undertaking a qualification at the Certificate I/II level (or non-AQF). It is clear that low level study is the norm.

We also observe that data in the above table (representing those prisoners undertaking VET) differ significantly from the AIHW data in Table 4 which represents the educational qualifications of all prison entrants. In Table 13, we have around 15% of students with a Certificate III or higher while according to Table 4 around 36% of all prison entrants have a trade certificate, diploma or degree. This suggests either there are methodological differences between the two data sources or that prisoners with reasonably high post-school qualifications are less likely to undertake VET while in prison.

Completion rates

Up until now we have been looking at the extent of VET in correctional facilities. We now look at the extent to which programs are completed. Ideally, we would calculate completion rates by tracking students from commencement to completion. Unfortunately, we do not have access to these data. However, we can get a pretty good indication of completion rates by comparing completions to commencements. In a steady state (that is, a constant flow of commencements), the ratio of completions to commencements will give us the completion rate. In the absence of a steady state, we apply the methodology to commencements and completions over 5 years (2019-2023). We do this for both students in correctional facilities and those not in correctional facilities. While our point estimate of the completion rate for those in a correctional facility may not be exact, the relationship between the actual completion rate and the imputed rate (the ratio of completions to commencements) should give us a reliable indication of the relative completion success of those in correctional facilities.

Table 14 presents the relevant data.

Table 14: Program commencements and completions, 2019-2023, by level of course and whether in a correctional facility

	Diplomas and above	Cert IV	Cert III	Cert II	Cert I	Non-AQF level
In a correctional facility						
Commencements 2019-2023	225	1,125	14,325	66,775	39,075	5,875
Completions 2019-2023	80	335	1,155	4,650	1,570	1,585
Imputed completion rate	35.6	29.8	8.1	7.0	4.0	27.0
Not in a correctional facility						
Commencements 2019-2023	1,279,710	1,640,670	3,203,055	1,823,130	406,600	996,280
Completions 2019-2023	679,010	793,640	1,339,165	811,145	165,120	513,615
Imputed completion rate	53.1	48.4	41.8	44.5	40.6	51.6

Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag

We note that our imputed completion rates for those not in a correctional facility are broadly in line with the overall completion rates estimated by the NCVER; in Table 15 we show NCVER's overall estimate for those commencing in 2018 and 2019, together with our imputed rates based on the ratio of completions to commencements.

Table 15: Completion rates overall and for students in a correctional facility, by level of education

	NCVER completion rate		Imputed rate for those not in a correctional facility	Imputed rate for those in a correctional facility
	2018	2019	2019-2023	2019-2023
Diploma or higher	56.7	55.9	53.1	35.6
Certificate IV	51.8	52.4	48.4	29.8
Certificate III	47.5	47	41.8	8.1
Certificate II	42.5	41.7	44.5	7
Certificate I	36	35.6	40.6	4
Non-AQF			51.6	27
Total	47.6	47.3		

Source: VET qualifications completion rate 2023 (data slicer), VET commencements and completions (Source: NCVER data hub with correctional facility flag)

The obvious point is that the completion rates for the lower level certificates which dominate VET in prisons are diabolically low. Completion rates for those in a correctional facility are higher for Certificates IV and non-AQF qualifications, but even here are considerably lower than those for students in a non-correctional facility.

5. Discussion

The overall story seems quite clear. The general consensus is that the educational background of those involved with the justice system is relatively poor, with the majority of persons not finishing school. The only point of uncertainty is around the proportion of prisoners with trade qualifications, with the AIHW reporting that 31% of prison entrants in 2018 had a trade qualification while, the NCVER data indicated that 11.4% of persons undertaking a VET program in a correctional facility had a Certificate III or IV, with a further 4.6% having a Certificate I or II. While this is a sizable discrepancy it is clear that as a whole prisoners are an educationally disadvantaged group.

The implication of this is that any programs directed toward the educationally disadvantaged will potentially reduce the numbers of people becoming involved in the justice system. This may be particularly pertinent for young people where the challenge is to keep those not academically inclined engaged with the education system. Whether the current VET arrangements do this is a moot point.

The second point to emerge is general agreement that education and training in prisons is something that is eminently worthwhile. This is reinforced by the 'official' rhetoric that can be found on the websites of Government departments of corrective services (such as the one for South Australia featured as a case study). However, what is actually delivered is predominantly at a low level (Certificates I and II), even when prisoners have completed year 12, and much of it consists of general education or training for relatively low skilled occupations (such as kitchen operations and cleaning). While the percentage of prisoners taking part in VET is relatively high, what is disturbing are the abysmal completion rates (less than 10 per cent for Certificates I-III). It appears that the substance of what is achieved in VET is very limited.

The third point to emerge from both the statistics and research is the task of delivering high quality and effective education and training is very difficult. The research is instructive in this regard. For example, an international literature review (Elwick et al 2013) spells out key features of successful programs for young offenders, including:

- Education is at the heart of an institution's focus;
- Interventions are personalised and targeted;
- Staff are given multi-disciplinary training, often to graduate level;
- Custodial staff are also involved in the education of offenders;
- Institutions are relatively small, and are split into units which are even smaller;
- There are high ratios of staff to offenders;
- Offenders are assigned mentors to work with them up to 12 months after release;
- Activities within the community are a key aspect of provision, and residential facilities are locally distributed.

Achieving these hurdles is indeed a tall order.

Similarly, a report into educational transition from custody in Victoria (Macdonald *et al* 2020) came to three overarching conclusions:

- Successful transition from custody needs to commence early on entry and continue well beyond enrolment in an educational institution;
- Successful transition requires a statewide coordinated system of support and coordination;

- Young people are the fundamental stakeholder throughout the transition process and must be given every opportunity to be involved in planning and implementing their transition to education after custody.

Again, achieving this focus is clearly difficult.

The message is that it takes considerable resources and effort for education and training to be effective in assisting offenders. While VET aimed at offenders is self-evidently worthwhile, it is unlikely to be very effective unless it becomes a central focus of the justice system. The statistics - with most VET programs delivered at a low level and very poor completion rates - suggest that this is not the case at the moment. Good intentions are not sufficient. If VET is to be part of an approach to address the increase in crime especially among young people, then it will have to be part of a fundamental rethink.

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Appendix 1: Terms of reference and recommendations of the Inquiry into Education and Training in Correctional Facilities¹⁵

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following matter is referred to the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee for inquiry and report to the Senate: To examine the education and training of people in Australian correctional and juvenile justice facilities in the context of the National Training Reform Agenda; and To establish guidelines and principles for the participation of adults and juveniles in custody in education and accredited vocational training, and for their access to the range of lifelong learning opportunities available to the community at large

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that all education and training programs designed and delivered within correctional facilities actively and formally involve inmates in defining and describing their own needs. p12 2.

The Committee recommends that all State and Territory corrections services education units adopt a modular approach to education and training, with special emphasis on courses of 10 to 12 week duration so that short term prisoners should not be disadvantaged. p13 3.

The Committee recommends that, in each State and Territory corrections system, the education and training of offenders is identified as a key element of corrections services' responsibilities and made central to their planning and budgeting processes; included in the accountability and performance requirements of prison managers, and promoted as a right not a privilege. vii p17 4.

The Committee recommends that the Australian Institute of Criminology develop a draft set of National Standards for Education and Training for People in Custody for consideration, in 1996, by State and Territory Ministers of Corrections. The American "Standards for Adult and Juvenile Correctional Education Programs" could provide a basis for such a development, which should give proper consideration to the Australian context, including the requirements of the National Vocational Education and Training System. p21 5.

The Committee recommends that ANTA identify offenders as a discrete target group which is under-represented in vocational education and training that ANTA develop a National Vocational Education and Training Strategy for Offenders in collaboration with the National Corrective Services Administrators' Conference and in consultation with representatives of community based prisoner support organisations (including the International Forum for Education in Penal Systems and Education for People in Custody) and that ANTA establish a Secretariat to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the proposed National Strategy for Offenders until the year 2000. p23 6.

The Committee recommends that each State and Territory formally integrate the training programs of correctional facilities into the development of State/Territory training profiles - preferably through the establishment of a local Corrections Industry Training Advisory Board. p24 vi" ix

The Committee recommends, especially in the light of the proposed National Strategy for the Education and Training of Offenders, that the National Corrective Services Administrators'

¹⁵ Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee 1996

Conference agree on a mechanism, to be funded by ANTA, for the independent monitoring of curricula and standards in all correctional facilities, both public and private. The findings should be publicly available, and should include, among other things, an evaluation of the extent to which effective education pathways for offenders have been established between correctional facilities and into community-based education and training programs within the NVETS framework. p25.

The Committee endorses the development, in some States, of education and training pathways for inmates, and recommends that all States and Territories establish clearly defined education and training pathways for people in custody - both between correctional facilities and more broadly into the community - through a cooperative approach involving departments of corrections, public education systems and the relevant Commonwealth agencies. p28.

The Committee recommends that ANTA assist the State and Territory corrections services to develop a nationally consistent standard of information management concerning the education and training of people in custody. The system developed should be designed to meet the needs of the corrections environment, but should incorporate the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard and fund the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to develop a database in corrections education. p30 10.

The Committee recommends that State and Territory correction services, in consultation with the Australian Language and Literacy Council, develop models for English language training appropriate to a corrections environment. This should include a commitment to at least 2 hours of English teaching per prisoner per week for prisoners who have not acquired basic proficiency in the English language. P34 11.

The Committee recommends that the Open Learning Technology Corporation, in consultation with the National Conference of Corrections Services Administrators and the International Forum on Education in Penal Systems, develop a code of practice for the provision of, and access by offenders to, course information and study materials related to the distance education programs of tertiary institutions. p37 12.

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth consider adding a special category to the rules of eligibility for Austudy so that prisoners may be eligible for a book and learning resources allowance which will assist them to cover the cost of undertaking tertiary studies while in prison. p38 13.

The Committee recommends to State and Territory corrections services that texts and other study materials related to prisoners' involvement in accredited courses should be exempt from regulations determining the number of items permissible in a prisoner's cell at any one time. p39 x.

The Committee recommends that State and Territory corrections services demonstrate their commitment to education and training for prisoners by encouraging prison management to assist prisoners and teachers in procuring textbooks and other essential learning materials as quickly as possible and avoiding unnecessary delays. p40.

The Committee recommends that States and Territory corrections services provide prison education centres with personal computers and modems to enable access to the standard range of educational databases and networks available to community-based school and TAFE students and undergraduates. Secure protocols should be installed to prevent system abuse. p42.

The Committee recommends that Aboriginal prisoners have access to education programs conducted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers. p45.

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth, early in the first term of the 38th parliament, convene a meeting of Ministers responsible for corrections in each State and Territory for the purpose of signing the National Memorandum of Agreement on Education and Training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Custody, and to agree on a timetable for the implementation of the Strategy outlined in the Agreement. Progress reports on the Strategy should be tabled annually in each parliament. p47 xi 18.

The Committee recommends that, consistent with gender equity principles, State and Territory corrections services allocate special funds for the education and training of women in prisons in a way which takes into account the small numbers involved and the higher cost per student of providing certain courses. p48 19.

The Committee recommends that, in all correctional jurisdictions, education and training programs for offenders be delivered in a way which preserves their independence within the prison system and ensures their links with education and training systems at large. In particular, there should be a clear distinction between the educational and custodial functions within prisons, with management and operational structures designed accordingly. p59 20.

The Committee recommends that, in the determination of pay rates for prisoners involved in productive activity, whether in prison industries or education, those offenders who choose to participate in education and training should not suffer financial penalty. p64 21.

The Committee recommends that, consistent with the principle of an overarching commitment to rehabilitation, strategic and operational decisions about corrections industries should be made primarily on the basis of what will prove the most beneficial to offenders in terms of improving their vocational skills, social interaction and employability. p65 xii.

The Committee recommends that modifications be made to eligibility criteria for AUSTUDY and other formal training income support allowances to allow access to such income support for offenders engaged in accredited pre-release training programs, when the offender is on temporary leave from the correctional facility for the purposes of such programs. p69.

The Committee recommends that ANTA commission a report on the participation of offenders in apprenticeships and traineeships, and advise the government on best practice and the modification of regulations necessary to encourage and facilitate the completion of apprenticeships and traineeships by offenders following their release from custody. p70.

The Committee recommends that all prisoners who have served a sentence of 12 months or more be eligible, upon release, for classification as long term unemployed (LTU) in order to access labour market programs targeted at the LTU. p71.

The Committee recommends that State and Territory corrections services administrations review the rules under which they allow pre-release prisoners to access labour market programs, including Job Start, with a view to enabling more prisoners to access such programs in the pre-release period. p72 26.

The Committee recommends that each State and Territory, with support from the relevant Commonwealth agencies (CES, DSS etc.), develop a 'through-care' strategy for offender

management which extends into the post-release period, and which is predicated on the cooperation of, and coordination between, the corrections, education, welfare and offender-support agencies beyond the prison gate. p73 27.

The Committee recommends that each State and Territory, with the assistance of the Commonwealth government, immediately establish, in relevant community-based prisoner support organisations, liaison officers for ex-offenders to work in conjunction with parole, education, training, employment and other relevant agencies to achieve a sound transition for exoffenders from prison into the community, in accordance with the requirements of the jurisdiction's 'through-care' strategy. p74 28.

The Committee recommends that the Employment Services Regulatory Authority (ESRA) contract designated case management providers in each State and Territory for the specific purpose of placing ex-offenders in employment or job related training. p75 29.

The Committee recommends that, in conjunction with the CES and relevant job placement agencies, each State and Territory develop a register of employers willing to provide work to exoffenders similar to the 'Second Chance Business Register' which has operated in some jurisdictions. p76 xiv 30.

The Committee recommends that the National Corrective Services Administrators' Conference develop policy principles and guidelines for best practice in the management of prisoners' transition into the community and that each State and Territory corrections service develop its 'through-care' strategy in accordance with those principles and guidelines. p76 31.

The Committee recommends that all State and Territory corrections administrations require and enable corrections officers without relevant formal qualifications to undertake training to the level of at least Associate Diploma, or to complete professional development programs deemed equivalent by the National Corrective Services Administrators' Conference. The Conference should also consider the extent to which the curriculum of the NSW Corrective Services Academy might be developed as a national curriculum for corrections officers. p82 32.

The Committee recommends that ANTA fund the development of a national professional development curriculum for education staff in a corrections environment; that the National Corrective Services Administrators' Conference establish a schedule of annual national conferences of educators in correctional facilities, with each State and Territory taking it in turns to host the conference each year. p83 x.