

Submission to Queensland Productivity Commission Inquiry into Imprisonment and Recidivism

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Introduction

This Submission focusses on the priority area ‘Break the cycle of reoffending’ in the QPC *Draft Report*, and provides information in relation to Draft Recommendation 10 on an effective throughcare model for the adult criminal justice system; and Draft Recommendation 11 dealing with the contribution of in-prison programs to reducing recidivism.

workRestart

WorkRestart is a not-for-profit social enterprise bringing business behind bars at Borallon Training and Correctional Centre to provide real jobs and training for prisoners to reduce their risk of re-offending. We engage enterprises who operate inside the prison, who give their prisoner workforce the chance to learn new skills and to develop self-direction, self-discipline and a commitment to change. Prisoner employees are managed by Supervisors working for each business.

WorkRestart has set up Australia’s first graphic design and coding studio in a prison, and also the country’s first Entrepreneurial Hub inside a jail.

The workRestart model involves:

- Placing business behind bars to develop prisoners’ skills and real-world work experience on the inside;
- Providing employment across three streams: trade, entrepreneurial and digital/technology, unique in Australia;
- Creating enriching experiences for incarcerated people by helping them identify their potential; and
- Working with our partners to provide ‘next day out’ employment opportunities for ex-prisoners.

Draft Recommendation 10

To improve rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners, and to reduce recidivism, the Queensland Government should introduce an effective throughcare model into the adult criminal justice system.

The features of this model should include:

- *clear objectives to rehabilitate and reintegrate prisoners*
- *adequate resourcing to meet these objectives*
- *a focus on individual rehabilitation needs of prisoners*
- *coordinated service delivery*
- *sufficient delegation of authority*
- *transparency and accountability mechanisms that would encourage continuous improvement*
- *incentives to reduce reoffending.*

In developing this model, consideration should be given to ways to foster markets and community involvement in services that support rehabilitation and reintegration.

An Effective Throughcare Model

workRestart proposes that a starting point for improving throughcare in the adult corrections system is the **integration** of pre- and post-release programs and services that prepare prisoners for release, and assist them into stable employment and a positive lifestyle upon release. Rather than a top-down approach, this new model should respect and work alongside adult prisoners, enabling them to develop individual plans for their future, preferably with the help of a Mentor.

Research by Graffam et al (2014) suggests that given the complexity and pervasiveness of disadvantage experienced by many prisoners, a new paradigm focussing on positive lifestyle change should be adopted to reduce recidivism. A good place to start is to establish an integrated local support system of networked providers (social enterprises, community groups, individual mentors, etc) as a means for facilitating a sustainable positive lifestyle change.

Current situation – workRestart at Borallon Training & Correctional Centre

workRestart's existing pre-release employment and training program at Borallon prison is providing the chance for groups of prisoners to undertake employment and training across three streams: trades, entrepreneurial and digital. An effort is made to replicate a real-world work environment, characterised by collaboration and mutual respect. Work issues are addressed openly and individual prisoners are given the chance to learn and develop confidence.

While this enables individuals to gain new skills, to develop effective work habits in preparation for work and life on the outside, the program is not resourced to coordinate the transition of individual prisoners into the community upon release.

Proposed Integration of pre- and post-release services

An end-to-end coordinated approach is required so that from the day of their release, adult prisoners can continue to engage with the transformative experiences that they have been part of, such as at Borallon.

Re-entry Plan

Each prisoner should have a re-entry plan which should firstly address priority needs such as housing and employment in the first instance, along with health, financial, legal and training needs. A prisoner's plan should go beyond that required for parole applications, and include a timetable for engaging with support people and meeting key milestones.

Mentors

Where necessary, a prisoner might be assigned a Mentor to assist with development of their re-entry plan. Ideally the Mentor should then remain connected with the ex-prisoner on the outside. Assisting an ex-offender to implement their integrated plan would be the focus of a Mentor's role.

Technology

The evidence suggests that there is no existing digital platform being used in Australia enabling adult prisoners to coordinate their supports as they re-enter the community. (However, there are health and wellbeing technologies that might be tailored to suit.) It should be possible for ex-prisoners to use a mobile app to access individually tailored services, along with a set of relevant resources and tools personalised for each individual.

Such a technology platform would be scalable and have the capability to send and receive alerts and provide real time data. Of course for formerly incarcerated individuals to feel comfortable with engaging with such a platform, they would require it to be personalised, practical and not just a mechanism for authorities to control their lives.

This integrated approach should work alongside parole supervision (where relevant) allowing individuals to access a range of tailored supports and problem-solving assistance. In essence it is a new way of coordinating supports that places the individual at the centre, and utilising technology to access advice and information to meet the unique reintegration needs of each prisoner.

Preventing recidivism

This integrated approach supported by a technology platform should reduce the risk of recidivism by addressing the key issues faced by adult prisoners re-entering the community:

1. Individual issues

- Enables an adult prisoner to transition from the institutional structure of prison to an open schedule that depends on self-direction and self-discipline.
- Helps the ex-prisoner to coordinate parole commitments and minimize interference with family, work and other responsibilities.
- Mentoring and coaching helps to build confidence and experience in adjusting to a new lifestyle, applying for jobs and putting in place methods of self-management.
- Assists individuals to communicate effectively with their employer, healthcare worker and others in their network.

2. Job search and retention issues

- Connects an ex-prisoner to employment service providers who understand the needs of offenders and who use a tailored approach to connect them with prospective employers.

- Helps to create a network of potential employers who are committed to providing a new start for ex-prisoners.
- Once work is obtained, an ex-prisoner can easily access help from their Mentor in order to keep the job and build a solid work history.
- Supports those seeking to establish their own business by maintaining access to business start-up Mentors.

Draft Recommendation 11

When Queensland Corrective Services develops its capital program for building new corrections centres or modifying existing facilities, it should assess options to make infrastructure more effective for prisoner rehabilitation. Consideration should be given to:

- *the best available international evidence on the effect of infrastructure on rehabilitation*
- *cost-effective options to improve rehabilitation of prisoners.*

workRestart at Borallon Training & Correctional Centre

In January 2017, workRestart brought the first of several business into Borallon Training & Correctional Centre. Since then, close to 400 prisoners have been employed in these enterprises:

Australian Framing Solutions (AFS) – a manufacturer of quality, light weight steel frames and trusses. AFS is skilling prisoners for employment in construction and manufacturing.

Digital Studio – Australia’s first digital studio in a prison providing jobs in Graphic Design, Virtual Reality, Coding & Computer-Aided Drafting. Clients on the outside include businesses, not-for-profits and government agencies.

The Grid Entrepreneurial Hub – Australia’s first entrepreneurial hub inside a jail. Early growth stage businesses wanting to develop new product ideas are employing a prisoner workforce. The businesses include The Golden Bone Bakery making and packing dog treats; and Revive Collective creating tote bags, duffles and other products from upcycled PVC.

Prisoners who are keen to start their own business upon release are also taken through a start-up entrepreneurial program to develop their ideas and skills. The content includes lean start-up business principles, leadership skills and communication skills; along with a mentoring component where participants are supported by experienced start-up facilitators who come onsite.

Challenges for Businesses Behind Bars

The workRestart program at Borallon has had challenges due to the constraints imposed by the prison environment. Any expansion of the real-work program will need to address the following in order to maintain efficiency and profitability for a business operating inside:

1. Appropriate workspaces: the need for suitable space for non-traditional prison industries is a challenge. The Digital Studio at Borallon is housed in a shed with no air-conditioning or heating and an inadequate electrical supply.

2. Logistics: the time it takes to get materials and goods through security and into or out of the prison needs to be factored into business planning. Adequate space must be provided for vehicle access and the storage of materials and finished products.
3. Team stability: frequent prisoner transfers and discharges means staff turnover is high. Businesses receive very short notice of when a prisoner employee is to be transferred or discharged from the prison. This impacts on the number of prisoners employed, work allocations, skill mix and project management. There is a need for frequent recruitment and selection of team members.
4. Information technology: each business needs phone and Internet access for the Supervisor, but systems and networks must exclude access by prisoner employees.
5. Communication: timely communication between a business and its customers on the outside can be affected by unexpected lock-downs and the difficulty of face-to-face contact with employees.
6. Quality assurance: each business needs structured training and supervision to ensure quality is delivered at all times by team members to customers on the outside.

Impact on Rehabilitation of workRestart's Business Behind Bars

It has been our experience that prisoners in Borallon are quick to apply for jobs with the businesses brought inside Borallon by workRestart. We usually have more applicants than there are vacancies.

A fairly standard recruitment process is used by workRestart, with the assistance of staff in the Max Solutions Job Centre in Borallon. Job vacancies in the businesses are advertised, prisoners apply, they are interviewed by each company's in-house Supervisor and the successful applicants are offered positions. Supervisors appoint team leaders from among the prisoner employees and they are given responsibility and authority to coach their fellow team members. Supervisors also reward good performance with recognition and it is celebrated each week.

The prisoner employees receive a small pay for the work they do (as allowed by law). They are gaining valuable skills, knowledge and work experience, which for some has been at best patchy prior to coming to Borallon.

WorkRestart regularly seeks input and ideas from prisoners on how best to carry out tasks and overcome any issues or problems encountered in the various workplaces we manage. Examples of prisoner feedback are outlined below.

Prisoner feedback on what they have gained and how it has prepared them for release:

"I'm positive, I'm adaptable. I can't be beaten by this - no way. I am just so glad this is here. It's developing ways to truly rehabilitate and reform people and I hope the rest of Queensland and the country can do that too."

"It has made me a different person, I have a much clearer state of mind than I had when I was on the outside. I know what I want to do now and I am not coming back."

"My aim is to get the best preparation for when I am released to give me options to look for employment on the outside."

"Strong positive attitude toward work, knowledge of building metal house frames, working as a group leader and working positive in a group."

"Just like to thank S & K [Supervisors] for the opportunity to work with them."

"Team work, getting in a routine for the outside. Being ready for work on time, working with others."

"The ability to work well in a team, motivation to achieve goals and meet targets. It has given me the ability to cooperate well with others and function as part of a team."

"Working with AFS has given me more motivation to join the workforce and the belief that it can be achieved."

"I have motivation to get a job when I'm released preferably with the AFS company. I am in a mind state and routine of working five days a week."

"I have a good routine and positive attitude towards my time in custody. I have gained a good work ethic and team skills. I would do it again if I come back."

"Using the roller and rolling out jobs, working as a team & how metal jobs are put together."

"Helps keep me busy while in prison to cope. I enjoy working for S & K [Supervisors]."

"Team skills, how to oversee my team, how frames work and are built, learnt new tools and machines. Work routine has given me skills that I can use on outside situation. Good work ethic to meet targets. Been fun and good working with the man S. [Supervisor]"

"I have gained the ability to better work in a team and also punctuality and organisation skills. It has given me the chance to get into a routine of working. It has also helped me greatly with my lack of social skills as we always work as a team."

"I have enjoyed the chance to learn new skills and better myself as a person which hopefully will make me more likely to be a positive, contributing member of society as I reintegrate back into the community."

"Being able to do team work. Well I am now able to operate the computer."

"Work preparation, motivation, organisation. Thank you for the opportunity and experience."

"Knowledge of building frames. It has helped by making my mindset prepared for work. Thank you for the opportunity to work for this company."

"I've gained sewing skills and management. I feel great that I got another skill so when I get out I have more chances."

"It's cool. Although I've been in here a month, I've learnt a lot."

“Confidence, self-esteem, motivation, full-time employment, level 4 position. Having support.”

“I hope The Grid continues for the future and M [Supervisor] is very professional.”

“Good skills and understanding. To be organised, what to do first. It’s very nice to be here and working here.”

“I have gained a vast amount of new skills and confidence. I feel like I will be more ready to re-enter the workforce and have new skills.”

“M [Supervisor] is a very supportive & understanding person & is by far not congratulated enough for the position she does.”

“I learned how to sew and be confident at it. It puts me in a stable routine.”

“Flexible experiences where in normal circumstances you don’t have. Many things are possible if you are willing to try. It allows me time to process my actions, past/current/future.”

“Learnt how to sew, how to do stock takes, how to use PowerPoint presentations, how to cook dog biscuits, and even got a course for Entrepreneurs out of it which I passed.”

“It has shown me that I can stay employed and I hope to be employed when I get out and hold a job. It has helped me out in so many ways I can’t thank you enough.”

“To design & manufacture items as a team. To have a constructive input as a team member. A great place to work.”

“Confidence, express myself and be a team player and eventually became a team leader. When I start here I did not believe that I could design something.”

“Gives the opportunity to integrate with other people.”

“I have learned patience and have also learnt how to work as part of a team. It has prepared me to be able to continue with a work routine each day and produce something of quality.”

“Would like to thank M [Supervisor] for seeing our potential and being a decent human being. It can be hard to find people that believe in you and genuinely have your best interests in a prison environment.”

Prisoners’ views on how working with workRestart businesses has been different from other work in jail:

“It is a positive work environment and professional work relationship with K & S [Supervisors].”

“Working here has been good for me cause it’s a very hands-on job and no other jail has anything like this.”

“Working with employees of AFS gives us the ability to develop better working relationships rather than other employment run by QCS”.

"It's a great atmosphere and people enjoy getting the jobs done."

"It's just a decent job here and bosses are cool."

"Use of power tools and working in a happy environment."

"It's been really great cause S & K are always mega supportive and always will to teach us things and new abilities to give us a better chance at gaining employment outside. They don't treat us like criminals or judge us like society does. They treat us with the same respect as anyone else and that means a lot to us, cause that's all we want."

"The AFS workers don't treat us like inmates."

"I have been given the chance to grow and learn at my own speed and feel comfortable confiding with my instructor."

"I'm actually doing something."

"You get the chance to work and think outside the jail mentality, it feels more realistic to how you would feel with work on the outside."

"It has been a positive place to come and work. A team environment."

"Freedom to express my thinking and use it to make something."

"Working at The Grid allows us to contribute ideas and be treated like human beings and not a production line."

"The people here teach and help us more. Clear understanding."

"Always treated right and fairly, I feel comfortable as I suffer from depression and get nervous but working here I don't feel this way as I get treated like a human being."

Prisoner feedback on what workRestart could do to make the work experience more effective:

"Nothing, it works well."

"Have more trust in us to do more jobs."

"Pretty satisfied as is."

"Not much really. Just keeping respect with each other and that's not a problem."

"Have less people on truss machines, rotate workers to different jobs to keep them occupied."

"Bring in TAFE or educators to teach us and train us in how to use forklifts so we get a ticket for it as that would open up more chances of employment once released back into the community."

"Let us do a course for driver's licence, fork lift experience, extra money."

“More shifts. Utilising all parts of the workplace.”

“If we can get more resources and helps that would be great.”

“If we can hire a professional tailor for once a week or two. Looking for some good designers who can inspire us.”

“Team atmosphere building is really important. If we can improve on it that would be good.”

“Fine tune the attitude and responsibility of inmates so that they have more chances of success when working outside.”

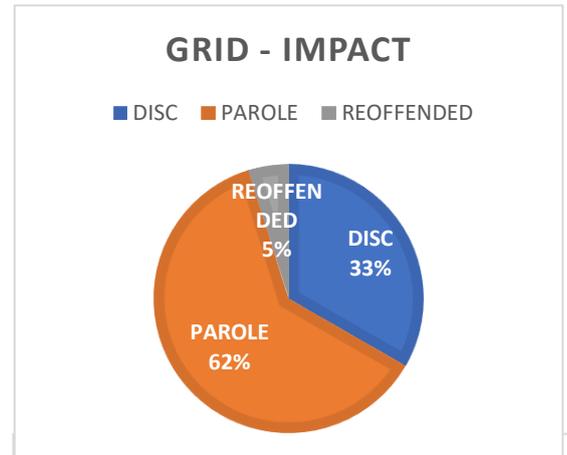
“More materials to work with.”

Impact on Recidivism of workRestart's Business Behind Bars

This data relates to 325 prisoners employed by workRestart enterprises between January and December 2018.

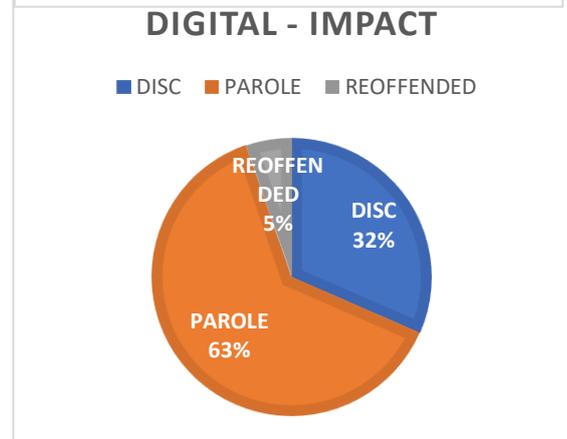
The Grid Entrepreneurial Hub

TOTAL	44	
DISC	7	
PAROLE	13	
REOFFENDED	1	Breach of parole
NOT RELEASED	27	
ROR-V average	10	Group
	10.1	Released
Recidivism	4.76%	



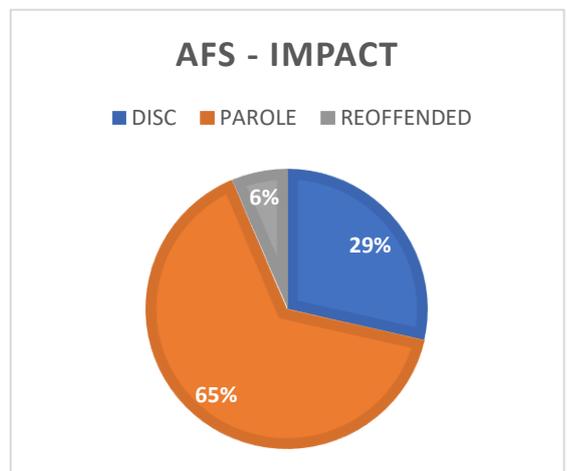
Digital Studio

TOTAL	45	
DISC	6	
PAROLE	12	
REOFFENDED	1	potentially
NOT RELEASED	27	
ROR-V average	8.1	Group
	10.5	Released
Recidivism	5.80%	



AFS

TOTAL	236	
DISC	36	
PAROLE	82	
REOFFENDED	8	
NOT RELEASED		
RELEASED	109	
ROR-V average	12.1	group
	11.6	released
Recidivism	6.8%	



Key:

DISC = discharged from prison

ROR-V = risk of reoffending – 1 is lowest, 20 is highest

Notes:

- Working on length of time with each provider and if they stayed until released
- Not the full two years after release

Impact on Recidivism of workRestart Entrepreneurial Programs

Providing training to those who have a community-positive business idea is a strategy that has worked well overseas. The best examples of effective programs are located in the United States and include:

- The Prison Entrepreneurial Program (PEP) <https://www.pep.org/>
- Defy Ventures <https://defyventures.org/>
- Zero Model (068) <http://www.zeromodel.com/>

PEP has been very effective in reducing recidivism and helping formally incarcerated people to develop a business or gain meaningful and long-term employment. Results include:

- Small business formation - More than 360 businesses have been launched by PEP graduates, including five that generate over \$1M in gross annual revenue.
- Strong employment - 100% of PEP graduates are employed within 90 days of release from prison; in fact, PEP graduates average only 20 days “from prison to paycheck.” PEP have achieved this employment metric every month since May 2010.
- Excellent Job Retention - Nearly 100% of PEP graduates are still employed after 12 months (compared to a nearly 50% national unemployment rate among ex-offenders).
- Low recidivism - PEP graduates have an exceptionally low 7.5% three-year recidivism rate (compared to the national average of nearly 50%).

Defy Ventures and PEP both provide a program that is certified by Baylor University.

The workRestart Entrepreneurial Program is in its infancy, therefore it is too early to report on its impact on recidivism. Participants have provided some feedback on what they have gained from the program and how that has prepared them for release back into the community, as outlined below.

Feedback from prisoners on the workRestart Entrepreneurial Program

“The Entrepreneurial Program has taught me

- * How to present my business
- * How to start to set up my business
- * How to talk to people (eg make my business card)
- * How to sell my idea, and get my idea across
- * How to stock take and order things
- * And start my business idea when I’m released”

“It’s good to give people hope and purpose to start the things they love and get them thinking of the endless possibilities of what they can achieve.”

“I learnt skills in how to start a business. I learnt to speak confidently in front of people who I don’t know. With the new skills I’ve learnt, I can use it to run a business. I’ve learnt the wins and losses of business.”

“It’s realistic. I’m thankful for these skills I’ve gained. I feel hopeful that I have a chance to better my life instead of going back to a life of crime.”

To The General Manager,

Borallon Training and Correctional Centre.

My name is Scott [REDACTED] and I have recently completed the 10 week Business Start-up Entrepreneur program run by Helen Black, Anne-Marie and the crew at WorkRestart. During this time we all developed our own business ideas in which we can hopefully all put into action on our release. The course covered a large amount of priceless information that any new business start up would be lost without. Just some of the things we learnt were:

- Learning personality traits and there values to businesses (DISC test).
- How to identify our strengths and weaknesses.
- Overview of marketing and understanding our market.
- Business startup processes and there terminology's.
- Pitch writing and developing interest.
- Goal setting, Mapping support and trigger points.
- Time management, Budgeting and finances.
- Business names and logo design.
- Development of a business plan and our lean canvas.

They took our ideas seriously and helped us to grow them into something that we were all proud to be a part of. They put together two separate days where they somehow convinced multiple highly respected and influential business people to give up their time to listen to us and our ideas. These mentoring days were incredibly valuable to all. Just to have our ideas listened to and respected is something that some of us have not had much of in a while. These mentoring sessions left us feeling empowered and enthusiastic about our new found potential on release.

I think this letter would be lost if I didn't touch on my own reasons for being incarcerated. Like most I am in jail as a result of my drug habits on the outside. I find that I take drugs mainly out of boredom or emotion. Although this course was not a drug related course I actually feel that it has had more effect on myself than other drug specific programs have. I feel like this course has helped me to develop a purpose on my release. It has given me a goal to achieve and helping hand to get me started. It is not a course where at the end they give you a certificate and that's the last you hear from them. They have provided us with on-going contacts and support for us once we are released.

My main reason for writing this to you is to make sure that Helen and Anne-marie get the credit deserved for delivering an excellent program and to make sure that it continues to run into the future, to give other prisoners the same opportunity we were fortunate enough to be a part of.

Regards

Scott [REDACTED]

References

Graffam, J., Shinkfield, A. J., and Lavelle, B., 'Corrections education and employment assistance "Down Under": Current and emerging practices and paradigms', London Review of Education, Volume 12, Number 2, July 2014

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