

## **Education and Vocational Training Unit of the Western Australian Department of Corrective Services Through-Care Model**

The Education and Vocational Training Unit (EVTU) endeavours to achieve both State and national education and vocational training objectives and outcomes. The capacity to be able to engage in this effort is made possible by the public and private training partnerships it has created over time and the evolving working relationship it has developed with the Department of Training and Workforce Development on the shared responsibility for the educational needs of the States offenders. This shared responsibility is not as readily accepted in all other jurisdictions. It is the increasing success of the program in providing the desired outcomes sought by the State that has helped facilitate the current agreement. One of the keys to the EVTU capacity to achieve the outcomes is the increasing range of flexible training it offers to offenders. As an example, the EVTU has the capacity to register 300 offenders in traineeships and has provided this service across 36 certificate qualifications in 14 different nationally defined industry training areas. This success in vocational training provision would not be possible if not for the EVTU's own Registered Training Organisation, ASETS, providing 43% of all total prison based unit completions. This situation exists due to the decision made by the EVTU to ensure the provision of the basic educational 'gap' training required by offenders who lack the foundation skills required to successfully complete vocational training. In order to ensure appropriate tutorial assistance for its educationally deficient students, EVTU does provide vocational training at the certificate 1 and 2 levels. It is this progressive 'melding' of adult basic and vocational training into a contextual learning model of instruction that increasingly characterises the EVTU program.

### **Excellence and Innovation**

An increasing amount of correctional research which supports the provision of quality educational services, combined with the increasing expense incurred in housing burgeoning prison populations, have served to make governments take more notice that poverty, and a lack of education and labour market skill are major factors that must be addressed if the likelihood of involvement with the criminal justice system is to be reduced. It is this same research that has helped progress the provision of vocational training as a cornerstone of the EVTU's integrated education program. The **Through-care program** strives to increase the likelihood of the individual offender adopting law-abiding financial and social opportunities available to them by working with local employers while adhering to adult education principles. It is the 'dovetailing' of the national goals of addressing social inclusion, the objectives and outcomes of the state and national vocational systems and the aims of correctional transformative education that are providing the environment for the holistic approach required to address one of society's more vexing issues.

With a high percentage of citizens in the State's prisons that are generally classified as long term unemployed, youth at risk or are peoples of Indigenous descent when residing in the community, the EVTU has the responsibility to provide services to an increasing number of individuals that are targeted for assistance under the Governments' social inclusion policy.

## Background

Offenders traditionally come from backgrounds of enormous social and economic disadvantage. Many have low levels of education as well as limited participation in the labour market. Some offenders have never experienced meaningful employment where their skills and contribution have been valued or sought after by industry.

The EVTU **Through-care Program** aims to address this situation in two ways. Firstly, by delivering VET programs to offenders that are relevant to the needs of industry and that allow for offenders to gain the necessary skills and knowledge that are required to enter the labour market. Secondly, by reducing the barriers to employment that offender's face, by linking them directly to employers and providing intensive support services both pre-release and post-release from prison.

Finally, the program aims to seriously begin addressing the problem of recidivism by providing offenders with an opportunity to make positive changes in their lives. The Program progressively provides a process and structure for offenders to be successfully returned to the community, by ensuring they have the capacity to participate in ways that are positive and productive to the offender themselves, their families and the community as a whole.

Correctional education aims and the national agenda 'dovetailing' are demonstrated below:

### **National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development**

The table below links each progress measure with an agreed outcome:

#### **Outcomes**

The working age population have gaps in foundation skills levels reduced to enable effective educational, labour market and social participation.

The working age population has the depth and breadth of skills and capabilities required for the 21st century labour market.

The supply of skills provided by the national training system responds to meet changing labour market demand.

Skills are used effectively to increase labour market efficiency, productivity, innovation, and ensure increased utilisation of human capital.

#### **Progress measure**

Proportion of the working age population at literacy level 1, 2, and 3.

Proportion of 20-64 year olds who do not have qualifications at or above a Certificate III.

Proportion of graduates employed after completing training, by previous employment status.  
The percentage of graduates with improved employment status after training.

The number of hard to fill vacancies  
Proportion of people employed at or above the level of their qualification, by field of study.

Offenders are classic examples of people that have 'fallen through the gaps'; they generally have limited education and lack a sustained employment experience. This is the normal student body of prison based education and with an increasing prisoner population in WA the EVTU becomes an ever larger educational provider. Approximately 70% of offenders require functional literacy assistance and for many Indigenous people from remote and/or regional areas of WA, prison is one of the few places where these adult basic and vocational deficiencies can be successfully addressed, as there are few educational opportunities in their local communities. For all offenders, the learning environment progressively being developed by EVTU within the WA corrections system means it can increasingly provide an opportunity that few offenders could avail themselves of if residing in the community due to the numerous barriers they face when 'back on the streets.'

The EVTU places an increasing emphasis on contextual workplace learning, as this is the preferred mode of learning for both offenders and Indigenous people. With a program that continually expands its network of local employer and industry contacts, the EVTU progressively provides training to meet not only the personal needs of its offender/students but those required by the local community, and its employers (examples are listed below). With 13 prisons and 8 work camps spread across the State, and the correctional facilities providing services that reflect the current needs of their communities, the range of training being facilitated by the EVTU is necessarily diverse and adaptable to the changing requirements of those locations. It is the EVTU's ongoing efforts to include work experience components to its training programs that allow offenders/students to gain real community based employment experience that can assist them with their transition to the community and their introduction to the world of work. When combined, it is these program components that ensure that offenders will have improved educational and employment opportunities post release as discussed in the national agreement.

## **Client Focus**

The following are examples of successful practical workplace based programs in the community being provided to offenders across WA in 2009 which are aimed at addressing both individual student needs and those of local communities, employers and industries:

### **Pilbara Region**

The EVTU and Pilbara TAFE join Rio Tinto in delivering a sustainable employment program for Aboriginal offenders in the Pilbara. The Work Start program has offenders participate in literacy, numeracy, occupational health and safety, time management, personal finance management and other vocational workplace skills. Offenders that are immediately employable when they leave Roebourne Regional Prison are offered appropriate jobs at Rio Tinto's port and mine operations in the Pilbara. In an effort to adopt best practices models of successful community reintegration, the program provides immediate mining industry employment at a regular and reasonable income, and tries to assist the offender in adhering to healthy life styles and the discipline required to do their job. Additionally, there is a strong focus on meeting drug and alcohol requirements.

Rio Tinto's Aboriginal employment strategy manager, Camis Smith, participated in the ACEA-Reintegration Puzzle conference in Perth. He addressed a number of issues related

to Indigenous employment and training, and mentioned Rio Tinto's determination to provide a pathway for the long termed unemployed to enter the mining workforce.

## **Kimberley Region**

EVTU, with its partners Kimberley TAFE and the Derby Tourist Bureau have commenced the Certificate 1 in Tourism Course at Bungarun Workcamp where upon completion of their training, offenders will work as tour guides. The funds from the tickets sold for the tours will go to the Aboriginal Lands Trust for maintenance of historical buildings. Tourism is one of the major ventures Indigenous groups in the Kimberley are steering towards to gain economic independence, particularly in the Dampierland Peninsula area.

## **Great Southern Region**

The EVTU works with Great Southern College of TAFE, local Shires and community groups and the Department of Environment and Conservation to assist local communities address their needs. Offenders are enrolled in a training programs specific to the work they are engaged in including: Cert II in Conservation and Land Management; traineeships in Agriculture and Horticulture and specific units in Civil Construction (Plant Operations). Projects included:

- Refurbishment of Swarbrick Jetty in Walpole
- Renovation and maintenance of both Walpole and Tingle Dale Community Halls
- Construction of the new Nornalup Community Centre
- Continuing maintenance to the Bibbulmun Track
- Construction of the Kwoorabup Walk Trail in partnership with the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) and the approval of the Minang and Bibbulmun Elders from the local Aboriginal community

The officers and offenders were presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by the Nornalup Residents and Ratepayers Association at the recent opening of the new centre. Green Skills and the Denmark Community officially expressed their appreciation for the construction of the new Kwooralup Walk Trail.

## **Impact of the Training Initiatives**

The **Through-care model** was developed as a response to a sometimes non-responsive corrections system that was releasing offenders and "hoping for the best." The financial burden incurred by the taxpayer requires that institutions be accountable for the time offenders spend behind bars. The EVTU, as an independent RTO, strategically decided to forge partnerships with community based organisations, universities and the business sector in an effort to 'open up' the prison to community standards and to make its operations more professional.

The EVTU is widely recognised as the leader of innovation in correctional education in Australia. Its inventive and professional approach to the management of its education and training program and its capacity to positively influence the direction of Australian correctional education is exemplified by the strategy underlying its decision to host the combined Australasian Corrections Education Association – Reintegration Puzzle Conference in Perth which was held from August 28<sup>th</sup> – September 2<sup>nd</sup> this year. The conference was attended by 280 local, national and international participants and was co organised by the EVTU and Deakin University from Melbourne. The decision to co-host a conference with Deakin University, who as the convenor of the annual Reintegration Puzzle Conference provides a forum for the discussion of post release services for ex-offenders, was based on the desire to demonstrate the pre and post release approach being taken by the EVTU's program. It was also to practically demonstrate to Australian correctional educators how their own programs could successfully meet the outcomes of both the criminal justice and national vocational systems without compromising the integrity of their adult basic, Indigenous and correctional education programs.

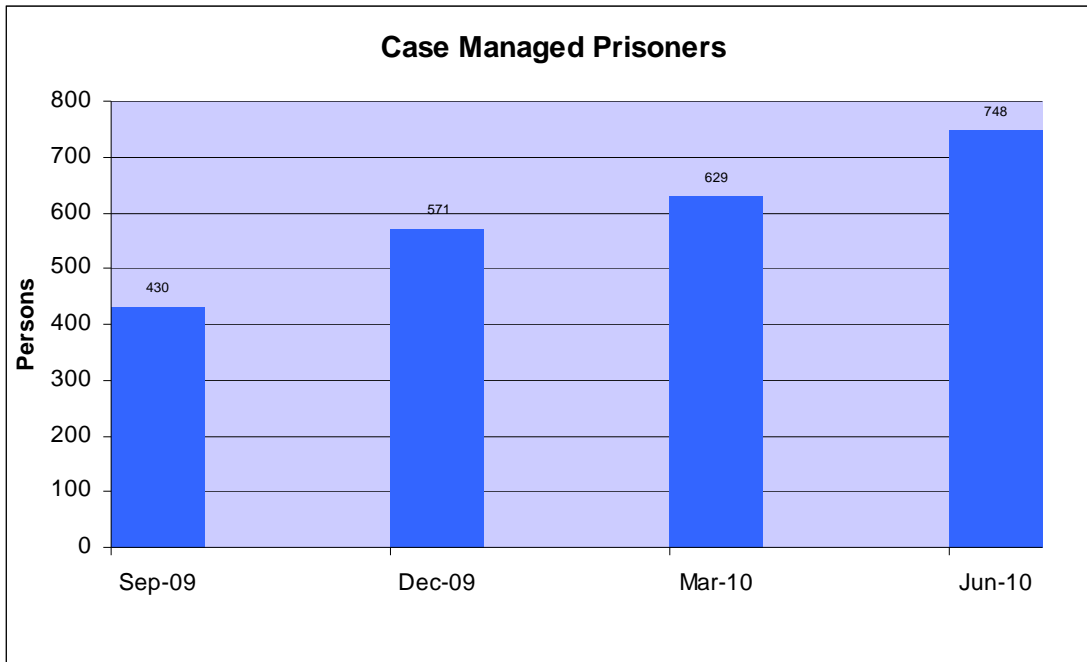
The underlying EVTU objectives were to demonstrate to correctional educators how current national and international research was positively supporting the provision of educational services to offenders; to progress Australian correctional education's support for the implementation of evidence based research programming; to facilitate a strengthening of the ties between universities, researchers and correctional education practitioners and to increase coordination of correctional research so it could better address the needs of correctional program practitioners. As the EVTU considers a major goal of all correctional education programs to be the securing of appropriate resources in a sometimes non-supportive departmental environment, it took the opportunity to demonstrate to conference participants how it combines with the WA Department of Training and Workforce Development, private providers and its network of employers and industry to deliver an innovative yet efficient and effective **Through-care model** of educational services to offenders. The conference successfully met these objectives, as new partnerships were developed between ACEA, the EVTU and researchers and university representatives in Australia and with correctional professionals and educational organisations from Canada, UK and the USA.

- The EVTU and ACEA agreed to further progress their discussions with Deakin University on a plan that would see the University create and house a database for Australian correctional education, training and employment.
- EVTU organised with University of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University and Department of Training and Workforce Development to progress a labour market research project proposal on the post release education and employment outcomes of ex-offenders for 2010.
- The Australasian Corrections Education Association decided to replace their current website which disseminates information on Australian and international correctional education with one to be created and managed by the University of Southern Queensland.

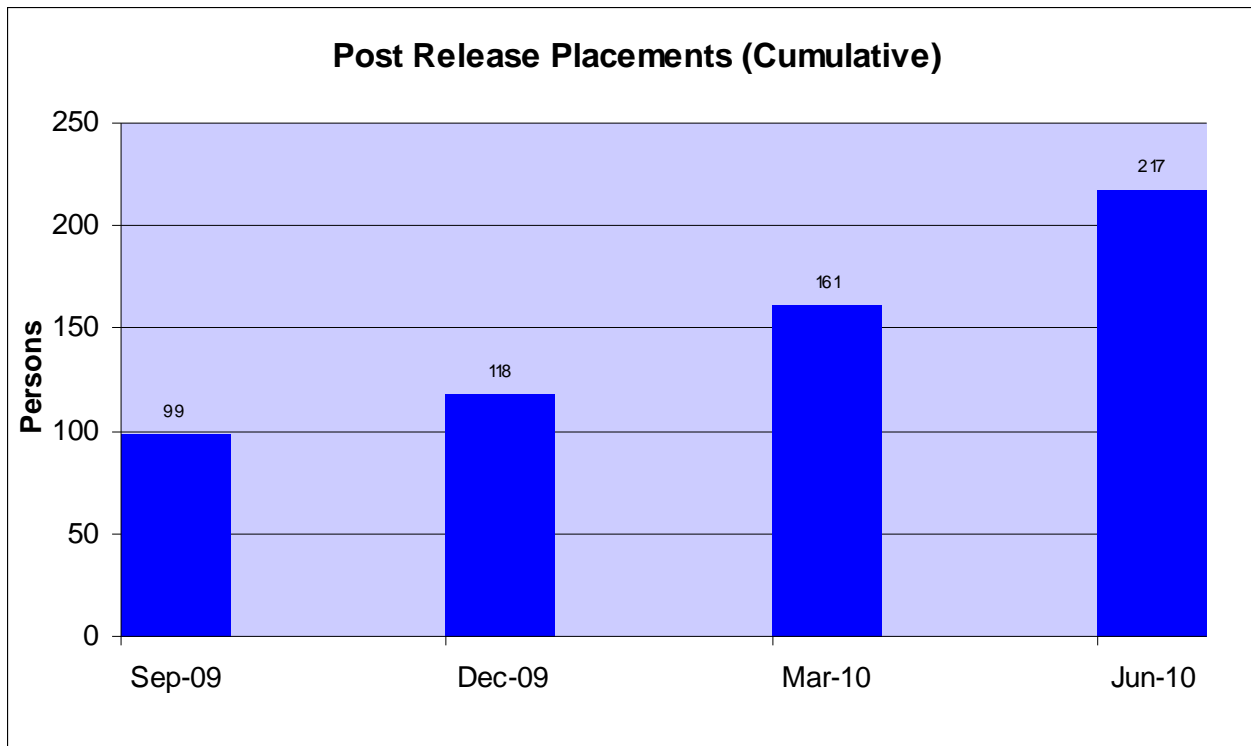
The partnerships forged at the conference and by the EVTU will assist in making correctional education provision more professional, effective and efficient. The EVTU's new working partnerships nationally and internationally benefit the national system, as these networks will be shared with programs in all States and territories. In relation to vocational training, the best examples of this are the increased provision of traineeships in prisons across Australia; State's are progressively introducing traineeships as the example of WA is used by correctional programs to justify their local introduction. The EVTU's working partnership with DTWD, and its associated funding for vocational training based on a

shared responsibility for offenders, is also being used by other correctional programs to support their efforts to secure increased educational financial support.

# Career & Employment Services

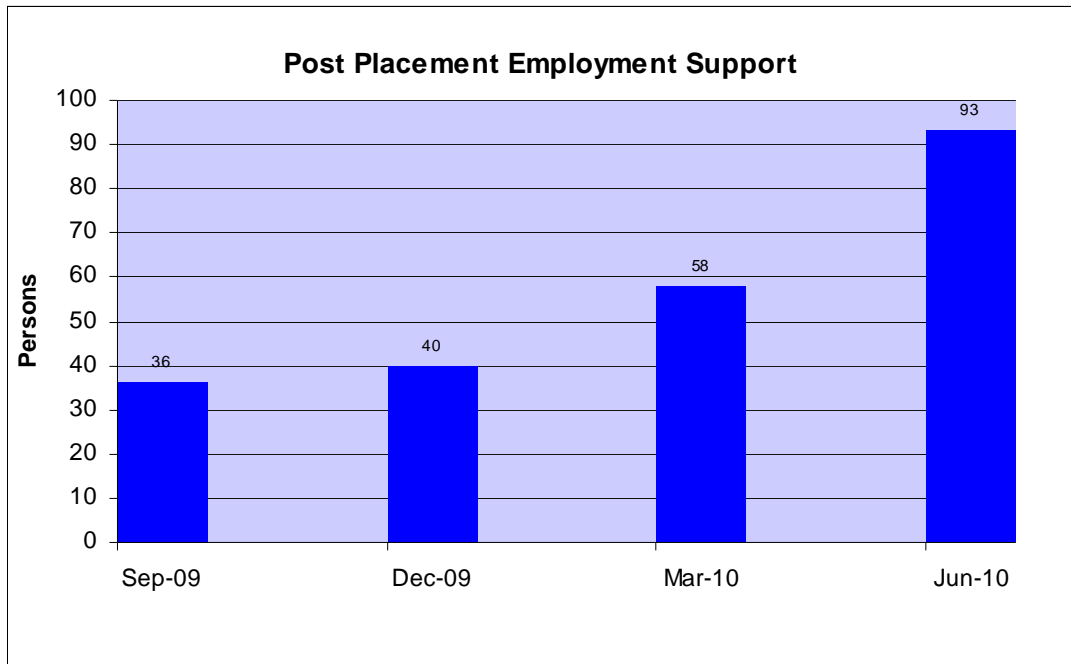


The above graph shows the current prisoners being assisted by the Employment Coordinators. Career and Employment Services includes work preparation, job seeking, linkages to outside agencies, resume preparation, vocational training and employability skills and is offered at all prisons. These figures indicate the continuing increase in demand for CES services and the emphasis being placed on career planning activities.



These placements are those prisoners who are released and have been assisted by the Employment Coordinators into employment. The increase in placements reflects the stronger demand for employment after the seasonally slower December quarter leading up to Christmas.

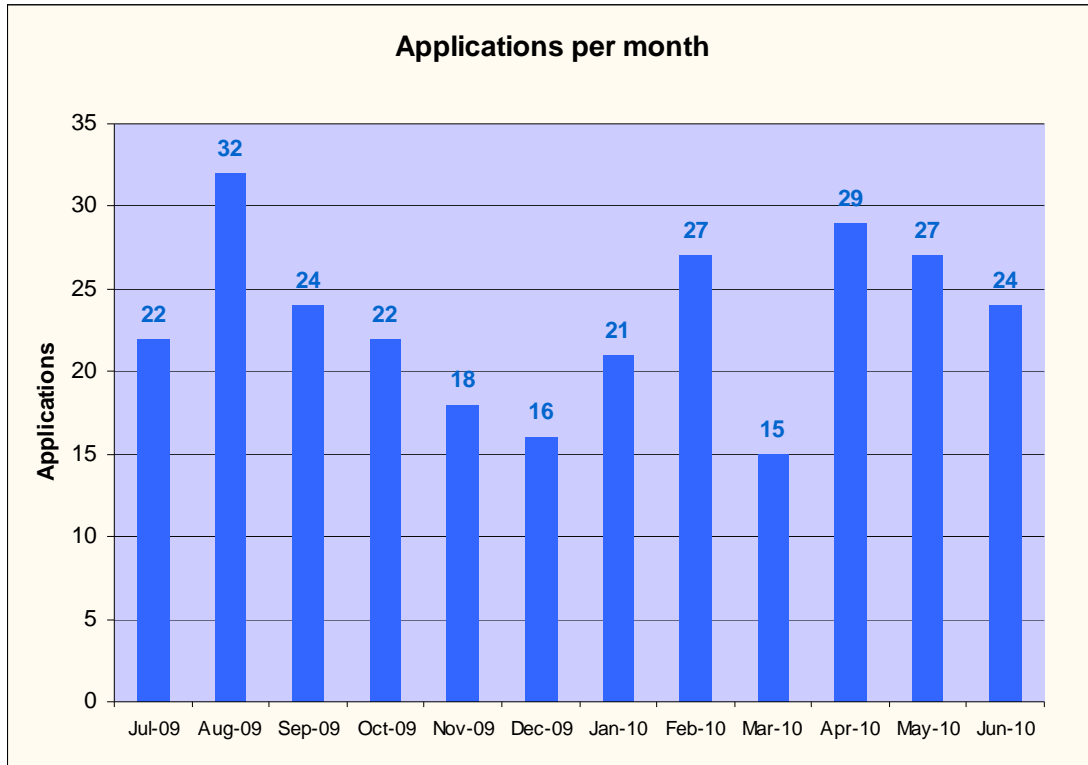




These prisoners are currently being assisted by the Post Placement Support Officer after release. This includes visits to ex prisoners and employers on site, phone contact and making contact with Job Services Australia Providers. These prisoners will generally be assisted 6 months post release, however, may be extended if needed. The increase in post placement support is in line with the increase in placements.

# Prisoner Employment Program

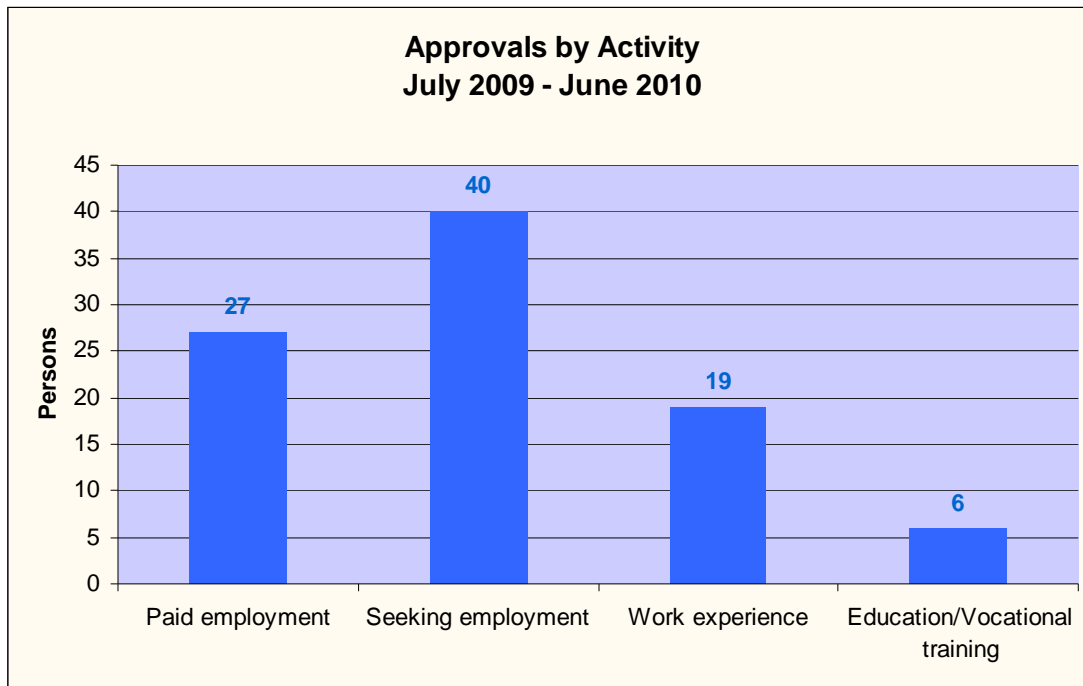
Data on the Prisoner Employment Program reflects the period July 2009 to June 2010.



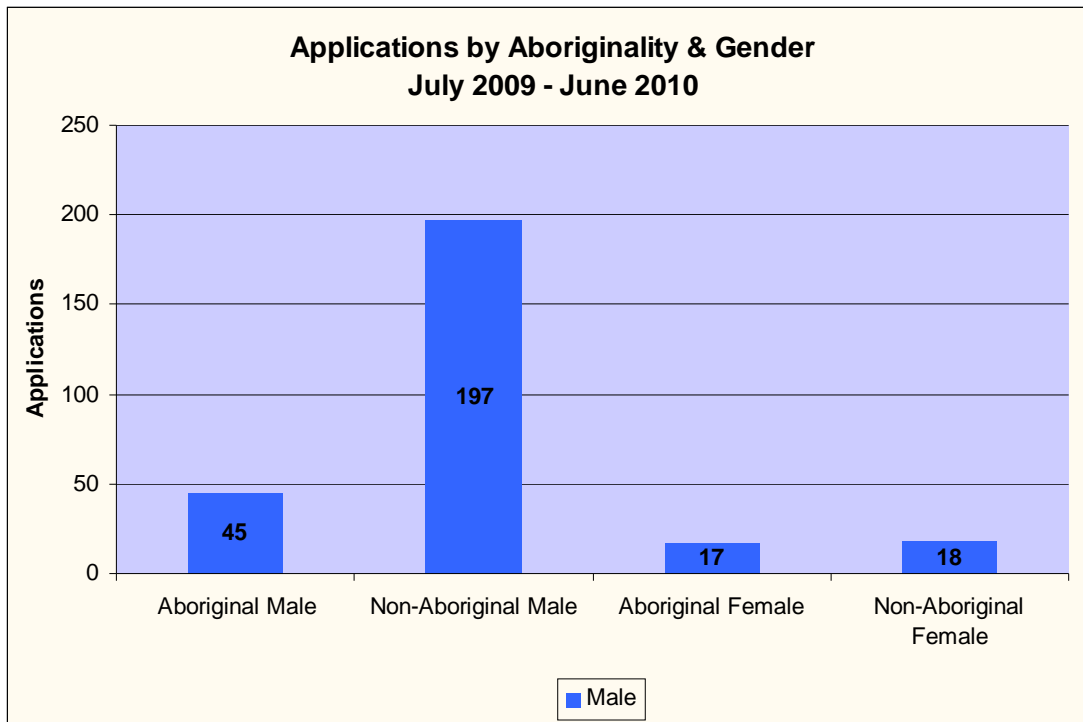
This graph relates to the number of applications lodged for approval under the PEP.

The strict security focused eligibility requirements placed on prisoners to participate in PEP affect the number of applications at any given time. A more flexible approach is now being progressed.

# Prisoner Employment Program




Education/Vocational Training includes courses undertaken external to the prison setting. With the current employment market and the wider promotion of the program more prisoners are requesting assistance in seeking employment. Additional prisoners not participating in PEP also attend external work experience and/or education and training in the community, for instance those enrolled in pre apprenticeships in construction.



From 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010, 16% of PEP applications considered were for Male Aboriginals, 71% were for Male Non-Aboriginals, 6% were for Female Aboriginals and 6% were for Female Non-Aboriginals.

## Australian Training Initiative

 A photograph showing three individuals standing together. On the left, a man in a suit. In the center, a woman in a light-colored dress. On the right, a man in a dark suit holding a framed certificate. The background features a banner with the text 'AUSTRALIAN TRAINING AWARDS'.	<b>Winner: WA Department of Corrective Services (WA)</b>
	<p>The WA Department of Corrective Services is supporting prisoners to make the transition to community-based education and employment.</p>
	<p>The Through-care Program helps prisoners re-enter the community as job-ready, motivated individuals. Participants in the program earn accredited training qualifications while they are in prison and develop relationships with training providers, employers and industry, which can lead to further education and employment opportunities.</p>
	<p>In 2008, more than 4100 adult prisoners successfully earned around 17 000 units of competency in state and nationally recognised qualifications.</p>
	<p>Through this innovative and collaborative program, prisoners are taking the next step towards rehabilitation and developing skills for their future</p>

The Australian Training Awards are the peak, national awards for vocational education and training, recognising innovation and excellence in the training sector. The Australian Training Awards are the culmination of the state and territory awards with winners from each state and territory competing in the national finals. The Education and Vocational Training Unit is the current (2009) national Australian Training Initiative Award winners. We also won this Award in 2004. The EVTU has been recognised as the most progressive correctional education provider in Australia for most of this decade and continues to push the boundaries when it comes to preparing offenders for a successful post release life in the community. The current Award is in recognition of our work in preparing offenders for 'targeted markets' of employment. We provide the soft skills as well as the practical skills required by local employers and industry, and then organising for the provision of a holistic support service for ex-offenders, so as to facilitate their staying on the job and optimising their opportunity for successfully reintegration to the community. Targeted markets are deduced from the areas identified by the WA State Training Profile and the State priority occupation list and then reviewed to identify the areas where criminal records will inhibit employment. We work to educate industries about considering the relevance and nature of the offense committed and not just to focus on the fact that a criminal record does exist. Residential and civil construction, associated mining industries, heavy equipment operation, land reclamation, hairdressing and some kitchen operations (hospitality) occupations are better for offenders at this point in time. Semi-skilled job opportunities will be increasing in WA in the near future. The industries listed are areas that are of interest to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders and which EVTU has connections with (Rio Tinto (in Roebourne and Cape Lambert) BIS Shrapnel (training at Fairbridge south of Perth), BYAC Contractor (Indigenous training for Goldfields area.)

The 2004 Award was presented for creating the training structure for prisoners to engage in VET: to literally create a mechanism for two way traffic to and from the community for

stakeholders, prisoners and organisations engaged in education and training. It secured approval for offenders to attend training and work experience in the community with 'real' employers. It ensured the provision of community standards of training for offenders by TAFE, private providers and our RTO (ASETS) so that there existed an effective pre release preparation for prisoners. The model progressively worked to change the focus of prison industries to accredited training rather than an activity to keep prisoners occupied during the working day. Importantly it dramatically increased Indigenous participation in VET as the integrated model introduced education and training in a practical manner.

The EVTU as a correctional education provider of training to a very difficult cohort- a group that has severe gaps in their education and training (in WA 87% of the total offender population requires some fundamental literacy assistance; 41% are Indigenous) is always faced with resource issues. There always exists discussions concerning the status of prisoners as citizens (as prisoners are they no longer citizens and so no longer the responsibility of State Education Departments; as prisoners are they not citizens and so not counted as unemployed; as prisoners, they are no longer citizens and so cannot vote; as prisoners are they are no longer able to access their Jobs Services Australia support benefits for education, training and employment preparation?) As the EVTU's nationally recognised program is for education, training and employment preparation of offenders there ineligibility to access their government provided funding for this training is extremely problematic to the goal of reducing reoffending.

This situation is extremely expensive to the State, as it costs approximately \$ 90,000 per year to house an offender. Not only is the State paying this high cost but it is also losing potential workers in areas that have identified labour and skill shortages. The opportunity to assist some of the community's most needy members to participate more fully in Australian society should not be missed. There are a number of research studies showing the cost effectiveness of providing VET to offenders if they are supported post release (see Attachment).

### **Prisoner Employment Program**

The PEP program is breaking new ground for correctional education programs here in Australia and internationally, and so we necessarily started slowly. Unlike other programs in other jurisdictions, PEP is administered uniquely by education and training. We believe as we already had the pre existing contacts with industry, employers and social service providers, and that WA being a small State in regards to entities/stakeholders working in these sectors, that we were best placed to progress the throughcare approach here in WA. We think that our growing success is due to this factor and the familiarity with the EVTU within those areas. There is still a lot of work to do in 'branching out' into the regional areas but as we have staff across the State this will continue to progress.

Our capacity to assist Indigenous offenders is well known here in WA, we keep our classes small, we use an integrated literacy and VET approach, we use a growing number of Indigenous organisations to assist in our training and mentoring and we work to increase the number of Indigenous education workers on our staff.