EMPLOYMENT—THE KEY TO KEEPING PEOPLE OUT OF PRISON

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THE APPROACH TAKEN IN THIS PAPER IS THAT KEEPING PEOPLE OUT OF PRISON not only involves stopping them from getting into the prison system in the first place, but also at trying to stop them from re-entering this system.

It is the belief of the Western Australian Department of Employment and Training in Perth that achieving economic independence through employment can play a vital role in reducing crime within our community. In many cases, individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system are there due to a series of factors, the key one being that they lack an economic base from which to operate. The bottom line for many individuals is that they are caught in a poverty trap and do not have enough money to provide for their needs. They, therefore, resort to criminal activities to satisfy these needs.

To enable an individual to achieve economic independence, we need to ensure they have the necessary skills to do so. Therefore, punishment (custodial or non-custodial) given to individuals as a result of them committing an offence needs to address the skills shortages of the person in question so that, upon completion of the punishment, their chances of actively participating in the workforce and the community at large are increased.

Employment is not the only factor determining whether a person commits or re-commits an offence, but it needs to be addressed if we are to achieve the goal of keeping people out of the prison system. The WA Department of Employment and Training has taken up this issue and, to date, has instigated two specific strategies. First, an equity and access officer within the Department has been allocated the portfolio of ex-offenders and unemployment. The responsibilities of this officer are to:

- encourage individuals/organisations/governments to become more aware of and, where possible assist with, the effective employment placement of offenders or ex-offenders;

- provide information/resources/assistance for the development of programs/policies that will assist and improve the employment rate of offenders and ex-offenders;
inform the Minister for Productivity and Labour Relations on the role that this Department can play in addressing the above issues.

In addition, a community organisation known as 'Outcare' recently received departmental funds to place people into employment and training. The objectives of the Outcare employment and training service are to:

- place unemployed ex-offenders into employment;
- increase ex-offenders' employment skills;
- assist ex-offenders to find their own employment;
- encourage employers to utilise Outcare for job placement.

If we are serious about preventing people from entering or re-entering the prison system, we need to take a serious look at the reasons why individuals offend in the first place. The main motivating factor is the perceived personal advantage gained by committing that offence. If we look at the characteristics of offenders in the judicial system, we find the following:

- Individuals have limited social, education and employment skills.

  Of those in prison in Western Australia, 78 per cent had an educational level of less than Year 10 with only 3.7 per cent having completed Year 12 or tertiary studies. Only 22 per cent had professional or trade qualifications. The figures for juvenile institutions in WA are even more revealing. In some institutions, up to 95 per cent of those incarcerated have an educational level of less than Year 10 and some have not even reached secondary school level.

- They have limited support structures and limited access to resources and, in many cases, the resources they have knowledge of or access to are welfare-related;

- they have a low self expectancay, that is they expect that they will fail, they expect that the community will be against them due to the fact that they have a criminal record, and they expect that unless a miracle happens they will continue to remain in an environment where they have little money, few skills and little opportunity to improve that situation;

- in more recent years, it can be seen that they may come from a generation or second generation of individuals who have been placed in the same situation, therefore providing no positive role models to assist in changing the above three factors.

This scenario is even more evident in the Aboriginal population. Although Aborigines make up only 3 per cent of the WA population, they comprise more than 80 per cent of the juvenile and 40 per cent of the adult prison population (Department of Corrective Services 1989; Department of Community Services 1989). Statistically, it has also been shown that they have a recidivism rate of 80 per cent for males and 75 per cent for females (Broadhurst 1986).
To keep people out of prison, we need to ensure that alternatives to incarceration, or activities undertaken while incarcerated, provide individuals with the skills to enable them to achieve an economic base as well as to participate in their community.

There are presently two key approaches to preventing crime.

- Discourage individuals from participating in criminal activity through the implementation of schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch and School Watch.

- In the case of juvenile crime, provide social and/or recreational activities in a bid to offer constructive entertainment for those individuals, thereby ensuring they do not participate in criminal activities due to boredom.

There is a continuing argument as to whether Neighbourhood Watch and similar strategies actually reduce crime or whether they merely divert criminal activity to another location. The provision of constructive entertainment through social or recreational activities addresses part of the problem, but not the whole problem. For young people who continue in crime, such activities provide a form of entertainment but do not address the base problem, which is that they do not have the skills to actively participate in their community and be considered a constructive community member. Juvenile crime prevention strategies need to be linked to other programs addressing issues such as employment, education and training, as well as constructive support networks so these young people can successfully get out of the criminal justice system.

The custodial or non-custodial penalties imposed upon people who have offended have limited or no connection to the learning of skills. Nor do they address why individuals offend in the first place. In many cases, the punishment is driven by political and community agendas in that individuals need to be seen to be punished, and the form of punishment needs to be seen as appropriate. The community often does not understand the reasons why people offend and, therefore, the punishments they believe need to be given are more punitive than rehabilitative.

Even in cases where the community sees that an individual's offences are not serious enough to warrant imprisonment, the community-based alternative(s) in most instances provide little opportunity for that individual to develop marketable skills. The individual is involved in mostly repetitive and low skill based activities such as raking up leaves or cleaning up rubbish. Little time is spent looking at what the individual offender has to offer the organisation and vice versa.

However, within some of the community-based sanctions provided, attempts are being made to ensure that positive skills are imparted to the participating offender. This can be seen, for example, in the 'Station Alternative Custody Program' conducted by the WA Department for Community Services. This program provides the opportunity for youths to live on a pastoral station where they work alongside the station owner and employees, learning a range of skills from fencing to basic mechanics and cooking. This raises the question as to the relevance of the skills being taught. Will they help that individual establish an economic base and become a contributing member of society?

In providing skills development opportunities through custodial or non-custodial sanctions, we must ensure that the skills being imparted are relevant and usable. Many offenders have limited support structures, therefore the provision of skills needs to be complemented by the provision of other services to address problems such as a lack of accommodation or lack of family support. Without this support network, the impact of providing skills to achieve economic independence will be greatly reduced.

The WA Department of Employment and Training believes that unless we develop early intervention strategies, the longer term impact on juvenile crime will be negated. To this end, the Department in Perth has undertaken two specific strategies.
First, an equity and access officer has been allocated the portfolio of 'youth at risk' and unemployment. 'Youth at risk' are young people who cannot or will not access employment, education and training. The responsibilities of this officer are similar to those mentioned earlier for the ex-offender equity and access officer. Extensive work is presently being done to link up with organisations providing social or recreation or welfare services to these young people. Such services include drop-in centres, supported accommodation projects, streetwork programs and schools.

Second, the Department has jointly funded—with the Department for Community Services—a community-based organisation known as Step 1 Inc. This organisation aims to reduce the number of young people ‘at risk’ in the inner city by:

- improving the ability of young people to achieve independence through enhanced skills, linkage with relevant services and provision of information; and

- encouraging government, private sector and community involvement in addressing employment, education, training and other needs of youth at risk, particularly in the inner city.

It is hoped these two strategies will raise the awareness of youth organisations as to the role employment and training can play in addressing young people’s needs.

Community alternatives to incarceration must achieve two things. First, they need to encourage wider community involvement and second, they need to provide the opportunity for individuals to develop relevant employment and life skills so they can become effective and contributing members of the community. One such project is Individual Opportunities Unlimited (IOU), developed by the Comprehensive Offender Employment Resource System (COERS) operating out of Boston, Massachusetts. This program targets probationers who, in most cases, are referred by the courts, providing judges with an effective alternative to incarceration. The training program revolves around the concept of a job finding club. It runs for five evenings, providing about 12.5 to 15 hours of training with eight to twelve people in each group. Once the participants have finished the training, they make a commitment to stay on for eight weeks or until they get a job. More than 85 per cent of its graduates have found employment, with about 65 to 70 per cent maintaining employment over the course of the year.

Extensive efforts need to be made to redevelop the Community Service Order (CSO) scheme within Western Australia. CSOs do not presently achieve a positive outcome for the individual or the community at large. There is limited community involvement in providing relevant community service projects and, in many cases, projects undertaken provide limited skill enhancement for the people involved. In developing the CSO scheme further, the principal aim would be to strengthen the scheme’s links with skills, training and employment placement. This could be achieved by extending the range of options and opportunities for community service orders.

Some examples of these are:

- participation in recognised training programs such as Skillshare projects and TAFE courses;

- offenders could identify and develop community projects following the lead of Western Australia’s Youth Participation Grant scheme. Under this scheme, the individual identifies a community need and designs and implements a project, with support from a youth worker or project worker, to satisfy that need successfully;
to involve a broader range of community-based organisations and agencies in the identification, development and monitoring of community projects. For example, local councils, community groups, service clubs and schools could identify possibly six to twelve projects a year that could be completed through community service orders.

The identification of skills required to undertake these projects would also be necessary. Much could be achieved in this way. For example, a project involving the construction of a playground in a kindergarten would involve individuals learning carpentry, planning and erection/construction skills. By combining with local skills providers such as Skillshare and TAFE, the necessary skills could be taught to individuals before they participated in the program. Having gained these skills, they could then link in with community-based organisations or service clubs to build the playground.

The outcome of such an approach would be threefold. First, the people in the community would have had some involvement with the offenders. Second, the offender would have gained marketable skills and, finally, the community has gained a service or product which would not otherwise have been gained.

The projects developed and utilised in the scheme need to provide the opportunity for offenders to develop both personal and vocational skills that will assist future placement into employment, education and training and positive participation in community activities.

An interesting program that runs parallel to the CSO program in Los Angeles, USA is conducted by the Foundation for People Incorporated. Under the CARES Program, ex-offenders attend three-hour support sessions each week for eight weeks. These sessions focus on getting the offender to accept responsibility for his or her behaviour. A crucial aspect of the program is an exploration of the thought process and behaviour that leads to the criminal act. The Foundation for People Incorporated use this program to identify individuals who are appropriate to place on CSOs. More than 85 per cent of graduates of the CARE program have had no further contact with the law. When individuals recognise that it is their responsibility to redress their current situation, there tends to be a more positive attitude to undertaking programs that will assist in their reintroduction to the community.

In Hartlepool in the United Kingdom, two organisations—Society of Volunteer Associates (SOVA) and the Cleveland Country Probation Service—have established a joint program known as HOPE (Hartlepool Offenders Partnership Endeavour). The project aims to recruit local people to work with offenders and people at risk guided by probation officers. The principle objective is to help offenders get back into the community, expressly through increasing their chances of finding employment.

Offenders are encouraged to take advantage of available literacy courses, social and life skills training and further education schemes. The two organisations decided to utilise volunteers in this project as they believed volunteers could offer their time, commitment, personal qualities and numerous personal skills to individuals. The scheme provides one-to-one support from a member of the community to the offender. Although the project has only been operating for a short time, it has become evident that the level of crime within the Hartlepool area has been reduced significantly while the employment rate of offenders and youth at risk has increased.

Another interesting program providing an alternative to incarceration is 'Sentenced to Read' Incorporated, operating out of Moorehead, Kentucky, USA. 'Sentenced to Read' is a structured alternative for young offenders who would otherwise be sentenced to gaol or work programs. The program was the brainchild of C. J. Bailey, who put forward the idea after watching juveniles return to court time after time because of their frustration and failure
in school. Once sentenced to the program, the youth's reading and life skills problems are
diagnosed and he or she begins a weekly schedule of one-to-one instruction with a trained
tutor. The three components of the program are:

- basic remedial education;
- pre-employment and employability skills training; and
- a try-out employment setting which ultimately leads to being employed by the
  business or employer.

The program services all offenders aged 14 to 21 years and has had significant success
with individuals completing the course. Program founder, C. J. Bailey claims nearly 80 per
cent of its participants successfully complete the program. Of those who return to school,
80 per cent stay while 70 per cent entering try-out employment are hired permanently by the
participating business. Others are referred to skills training programs.

Perhaps the most telling statistic is the rate of recidivism among 'Sentenced to Read'
clients—it is only 20 per cent compared to 80 per cent statewide and nationally. Two key
factors in the program's success are:

- within Kentucky, education groups, business leaders and civic organisations have
  joined forces to combat the literacy and school drop-out rate of young people.
  These problems contributed greatly to the number of people in the criminal
  system;
- the program's success also relates to the fact that it is conducted on a one-to-one
  basis. All services are provided by an individual tutor to one individual—a
  situation alien to many of the offenders. This also gives the program the flexibility
  to cater for the different needs of each individual.

As mentioned earlier, keeping people out of prison involves stopping them from
returning to the prison system. The following discussion highlights programs that aim to
address this issue.

Changing demographics in the United Kingdom have created a shortage of skilled
labour. As a result, employers have been forced to look at the disadvantaged in the labour
force as a possible source of skilled labour. One such target group is ex-offenders.

Two key organisations—namely the Apex Trust and the National Association for the
Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO)—have worked hard to encourage
employers to consider ex-offenders as a possible pool of skilled labour. The Apex Trust
established an Employers Advisory Committee, bringing together key employers for twelve
months to review the current status of prisons and post-prison services. This resulted in a
report titled 'Crime, Employment and Ex-Offenders—the Employers' Perspective' which
has, in turn, resulted in the establishment of a range of projects. Three of these are
discussed below.

- A two-year research and development project is under way to investigate a
  range of ways to introduce employers into the prisons and help prepare inmates
  for work;
- the establishment of a skills audit research project to identify local labour market
  skills requirements and compare those to identified skills of offenders. Where
  possible, linkages are made and/or programs established to provide the
necessary skills training to ensure effective employment placement of offenders upon release;

- after discussions with local employers, the Holloway Prison in the UK developed a scheme to allow prisoners nearing release to leave prison one day a week for work placement. Where possible and appropriate, individuals are placed with employers on release.

In conjunction with these three projects, extensive efforts are also being made to ensure that any developments link in to other support structures, therefore ensuring that individuals gaining skills and exposure to employers will also be aware of services and programs that can address other social and welfare issues they may face.

Similar efforts are made in the United States by the Missouri Department of Corrections. The Department has established an advisory committee of labour, business and industrial leaders to advise and assist prisoners and prisons in developing relevant industry work and training programs suited to the region in which the prison is located.

In the United States of America, extensive efforts have been made to try to ensure that individuals gain relevant skills within the prison system. For example, in some prisons, it is compulsory for individuals to take classes which aim to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. There are also extensive efforts to involve employer bodies in the establishment and operation of private companies within the prison system.

As is often publicised, one of the big moves in the United States is the privatisation of prisons. The implications of this move are continually being argued by various community sectors; however, there are some very positive outcomes as seen in Florida's Pride Program. The mission of Pride is to manage existing and future prison industries and enterprises as profit making ventures. There are now programs in 17 state prison institutions, employing 200 qualified managerial and supervisory staff who work with the public sector to ensure the skills taught are parallel to those in the community. The emphasis on relevant skills training greatly helps Pride when it assists with job placement of the trained prisoners on their release.

Another example of employer involvement in institutions is the Free Venture Program, run by the Californian Youth Authority in partnership with private industry. It aims to train offenders for meaningful jobs while assisting victims of crime and reducing institutional costs. Two distinct models undertaken within this program are outlined below.

- An Employer Model, where a company owns and operates a business inside the prison. The company has direct control over hiring, firing and supervision of the prison-based workforce and individuals are paid award wages. An example of this particular model can be seen in the Transwest Airline (TWA) project—a telephone computer-based service taking reservations for the airline—at the Ventura School in California. This business employs up to 68 young inmates on a part-time basis and guarantees them a minimum of four hours employment a week. When the project initially started several years ago, the company had concerns about prisoners' ability to carry out the tasks given. Now, the company directs most of its overload work to the prison.

- A second model, known as the Customer Model, is where the company contracts with the prison for the provision of goods or services for a fee. The prison has direct control over the hiring, firing and supervision of its prison-based workforce. This is similar to schemes currently operating in Australian prisons although, in America, individuals are again paid an award wage.
In some instances, individuals can, while undertaking this customer model, also learn enterprise skills to enable them to become self-employed or employed in this area upon release. An interesting example of this is an animal grooming business at the Ventura School. Individuals participating in this program spend three days providing grooming for animals and two days undertaking an enterprise skills course. In several cases, students have established their own successful business upon release from prison.

In both these models, individuals are exposed to real-life working conditions, preparing them for employment upon release. What presently happens in Australian institutions is that the prison-based industry operates on contract models, but the offenders are not expected to work at a level expected in the regular workforce. This generates problems for individuals obtaining employment upon release and then working at the same pace that he or she worked while in prison.

As highlighted within the Free Venture Program, individuals are paid award wages. In receiving wages, they also have to pay taxes, and after tax is deducted, the wages are divided into the following categories; 25 per cent goes to the state to offset room and board costs; 15 per cent is paid in restitution for crime victims; 40 per cent is put aside in a forced savings account; and finally, 20 per cent is made available to the youthful offenders canteen fund.

Operating on this principle achieves three things: first, individuals can participate in a quality workforce; second, they can be seen to pay some form of restitution to the victims of crime; and third, a forced savings account ensures that they leave the prison system with some money in their pocket. This is often not the case in Australia where individuals leave prison with little or no money. In one particular case from the Ventura School, an individual who had participated in the animal grooming business while incarcerated was able to save more than $2,000. She used these funds, and the skills gained through the self-enterprise component of the grooming business, to establish her own business upon release.

The Customer Model as outlined above has also been undertaken at various work release facilities in the United States. This provides those on work release with an opportunity to establish a financial base while still under a sanction from the courts. It also enables them to enhance skills gained within the prison system and/or learn new ones that will benefit them when they are released. Having seen the skills and abilities of offenders undertaking these particular projects, employers will in many cases look more favourably on employing offenders upon release.

A new and innovative joint project—undertaken by the WA Department of Employment and Training and the Department of Corrective Services—revolves around individuals taking a self-employment course while in prison. The program is known as the 'Prisoners Self Employment Program' (PSEP) and two successful pilots were conducted in 1989. The program aims to:

- provide the opportunity for offenders to explore whether self-employment is a viable employment option for them on release; and
- coordinate community and government resources to assist offenders to develop a viable business idea(s) and upon release support them while they establish and maintain that enterprise/business.

The three key components of the program are:

- the course, which involves 35 hours of tuition on subjects ranging from life planning and goal setting to market research and business planning. The course
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has been adapted from an existing program run by the Department of Employment and Training for the general community:

- post course forums, providing individuals with one-to-one support to further develop their business plan;
- linkage to a business mentor before release who provides assistance and advice during development of the business plan and in the early stages of operation.

Although it is yet too early to qualify or research the impact of the program, the reactions of offenders and employers to date has been very positive. Two course participants have, upon being released, undertaken the similar course run in the general community. Several others have indicated that the course helped them gain employment upon release, even though it is not self-employment.

The exercise has also provided the opportunity for employers to become more informed and better educated as to why people are in the prison system. This initial involvement has made them realise that there needs to be closer liaison between employer bodies, Corrective Services and other institutions dealing with offenders and ex-offenders. They also recognise that most people entering the judicial system are unemployed and lack skills.

Skills training in prison is another issue that needs to be seriously looked at. In many Australian prisons, individuals can gain some skills through employment in the secondary or primary prison industries. In many cases, however, the training and skills gained within those industries are not recognised in the labour market.

Bathurst Prison in New South Wales has an extensive apprenticeship program whereby individuals with long terms of imprisonment can complete a formal apprenticeship. Upon release, they are fully qualified tradespeople. Individuals in WA can also undertake apprenticeships but legislation prevents them from becoming fully qualified tradespeople until they are formally indentured by an employer once released. There is also very limited trade union involvement in Western Australian prisons, creating another hurdle that needs to be overcome.

In Europe, the unions are involved in the provision of trade training in prisons. This greatly enhances an individual’s chances of gaining employment upon release because their certificate is widely recognised throughout the field and there is no reference as to where the individual gained the trade skill. The unions recognise that individuals from the prison system should have equal opportunity to access the employment market.

As mentioned earlier, company and institution partnerships have been established where companies provide relevant skills training direct to offenders to ensure they have the skills to fill vacant company positions. This principle of providing relevant and recognised skills training to individuals to satisfy current labour market demands should, where possible, be incorporated into prison training. Having taken the time to appropriately skill prisoners, they must then be linked to suitable jobs upon their release.

The New York State Department of Corrective Services has established a state-wide computer system to address this issue. The system contains information on all offenders in prison and/or on probation, listing their level of skills and what they have achieved while in prison and on parole. This listing is then matched to a list of all identified job specifications and opportunities to inform the offender what types of jobs he could gain upon release. This system is also linked to the Department of Employment to assist with job placement of offenders released from prison.

Individuals gaining a whole series of skills to compete in the labour market often still have a limited support structure to help them achieve economic independence. This, combined with the community’s negative attitude towards employing ex-offenders, means
appropriate support networks must be established to place individuals into employment, education or training and enable them to access other support services such as accommodation. Several projects addressing such issues are outlined below.

Victoria’s Second Chance Business Register has only one objective: to provide a database of employers prepared to offer, without prejudice, employment to individuals with a prison record or currently serving community-based sanctions. All referring agencies dealing with offenders and ex-offenders can access this database. The Second Chance Business Register aims to:

- maintain a computer register of businesses offering employment to ex-offenders;
- increase employer awareness of the needs of ex-offenders and enlist their support in rehabilitation;
- link employers with referring agency staff seeking to place ex-offenders in the workforce;
- develop a support network for ex-offenders in employment;
- work with referral agencies to help motivate ex-offenders to take and retain jobs.

People who can access the Second Chance Business Register are those who:

- have a criminal record and are actively seeking work;
- prefer to be honest about their past; and
- have access to a referring worker who can provide support for three months after placement.

A key element in this project’s success is the fact that an individual placed with an employer is supported for up to three months by that agency, thereby addressing the ex-offender’s needs outside the workplace. In addition, the employer, by taking on the offender without prejudice, makes a commitment to provide that employee with additional support, reducing the chance of failure. Such support includes allocating a good role model from their staff to help the new employee settle into the workplace and the community. The result is a permanent change in the offender’s life, rather than merely a change in his or her employment status.

Although the Second Chance Business Register has only been operating since late 1988, it has had, and is continuing to have, success with Melbourne businesses offering employment, training, and professional support to assist individuals to attain and retain employment. Second Chance is convinced that the increased employer awareness also provides unforeseen benefits to the client group, regardless of whether they are referred to Second Chance. There is growing optimism in the client group about their ability to enter and remain in the workforce. They see employers viewing them as individuals, not just ex-offenders. Second Chance would argue that placements are not the project’s sole indicator of success. Wide publicity has opened up other non-quantifiable areas which benefit the whole client group.
A series of support agencies assist in the welfare concerns of Australian offenders, ex-offenders and their families. The only organisation providing such a service in Western Australia is Outcare, which was mentioned earlier.

The Outcare program, and others throughout Australia, provide accommodation, welfare and, in some cases, employment assistance. However, many of these organisations operate on a welfare model, perpetuating the low self-esteem, low self-expectation problems mentioned earlier.

Pioneer Human Services—a privately funded, non-profit organisation operating out of Seattle, Washington—offers similar services, but attacks the problem using an enterprise model. The organisation provides a positive role model to the ex-offenders whom it is trying to assist. The organisation works to sell its skills through the provision of services rather than asking for government handouts. It provides a range of services including housing, alcohol and drug treatment programs, and contracted correctional programs including work release facilities and an electronic home detention monitoring service. Finally, it conducts a range of enterprises, providing marketable services to the community while providing jobs, training and work experience for ex-offenders.

This organisation has an annual turnover of more than $13m, of which 75 per cent is gained through commercial operations and 25 per cent through government contracts! Of its 200-strong workforce, 80 per cent are ex-offenders, mostly people with an alcohol and drug abuse problem. Pioneer Human Services provides a complete range of support services for ex-offenders. Individuals can be housed, employed, and have their social problems addressed through services provided by the organisation. In addition, several of the organisation's enterprises involve the preparation of the buying and selling of food—giving the ex-offenders a low-cost but quality food source.

Pioneer Human Services' main enterprise is Pioneer Industries—a light metal fabrication facility contracting with the Boeing Commercial Airplane Company and other Seattle firms. This industry was established following an approach to Boeing for the opportunity to undertake a percentage of their light fabrication work. Several other US firms, like Boeing, have a corporate philosophy to offer a percentage of their contract work to non-profit organisations rather than offer them money in the hope that it will benefit disadvantaged groups in the labour market. Such an approach has the potential to allow Australian organisations to expand their existing welfare and accommodation services to include an enterprise component.

Pioneer Enterprise employees must be free of alcohol and drug use and are required to undergo a urine test before and during employment. Employees must also undertake a minimum of three hours on-the-job training as part of their 40-hour week. The training can be job specific or relate to basic education or personal development. Employment is provided for an 18-month period and is undertaken in three stages. Each six-month stage is progressively more challenging.

Upon completion of their term, assistance is given to the individual to be placed into employment in Seattle or other States. In some cases, particularly in the light metal fabrication industry, several offenders have established sub-contracting businesses with the company so it can meet the contracts given by Boeing.

There is a staff turnover of about 180 per cent in the enterprise area, most of which occurs in the first 30 to 60 days of employment. One of the main reasons for the high turnover is that individuals return to alcohol or drugs. Those who do are channelled back into the organisation's alcohol and drug treatment programs or linked to other government and non-government programs. This provides an ongoing support structure for each individual, in the hope that he or she will eventually return to Pioneer Industries as a positive contributing member of its workforce.
Pioneer Human Services also runs a hotel in downtown Seattle. The hotel is 'dry' and has 132 rooms—of which 45 are used for alcohol and drug-free living, 50 are allocated for paying guests and 37 are occupied by long-term residents who lived there before it was bought by Pioneer Human Services. The hotel has a year-round 95 per cent occupancy. A drug rehabilitation program is run in the hotel to help residents address their alcohol or drug abuse problem. Anyone—without exception—caught in possession of alcohol or drugs is asked to leave the hotel within 24 hours. This provides a secure environment for those people trying to beat an alcohol or drug problem. It also exposes the wider community—the hotel's paying guests—to people who are usually seen as social drop-outs. Incredibly, this hotel, given all the services it provides, is self-financing.

The cost of crime in terms of money and resources, and also in human terms, is enormous. The hardships faced by the victims and the offenders have long-term effects on the development of all communities. To keep people out of prison and reduce the impact of crime on the community, programs developed within prisons, or as alternatives to prison must enable individuals to obtain skills so they can participate equally in the community. Individuals must have the opportunity to break the crime/unemployment/crime cycle by securing their economic independence through work. The community must also get more involved in providing sanctions (custodial or non-custodial) to individuals. If not, individuals will continue to commit crimes because they do not have the skills and abilities to participate in the community legitimately.

The offenders, and the community, deserve to have that chance.

References

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