



QCS response to Prison Employment Services for First Nations Peoples- Discussion Paper

Discussion Questions

1. **How should the Priority Reforms from the National Agreement on Closing the Gap be embedded in a Commonwealth-funded prison employment service?**
 - The Department develop an evidence-based pre-release Employment Pathway Plan (EPP) in consultation with correctional jurisdictions.
 - Identify relevant and appropriate government data sources/sets to ensure full access to relevant data to better inform employment services support for First Nations.
 - Develop transparent and meaningful KPIs with providers DEWR contract with to ensure QCS can more accurately monitor progress against key milestones and provide more tailored service delivery and interventions.

2. **How can we design and deliver a culturally competent service?**
 - Ensure all agencies provide and develop evidence-based design and delivery with culturally competent organisations.
 - Ensure government agencies develop partnership with First Nations agencies and representatives to build cultural competencies across government.

3. **What sort of support does the service need to provide to participants while they are in prison?**
 - Provide funding for employability skills programs prior to release.
 - Provide access to programs funded and facilitated in partnership with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities.
 - Introduce flexible options to allow prisoners to sign up with their preferred employment service provider prior to release. This should include options such as Workforce Australia, Workforce Australia Specialist & Disability Employment Services rather than the 'one' contracted provider per region.
 - Ensure housing and accommodation issues are addressed prior to release; this will ensure sustainable employment placements.

4. **How can the service help First Nations people who have been incarcerated after release? (Including connection to mainstream services, family support or paid work?)**
 - All appointments should be scheduled prior to release e.g. Centrelink, Psychologist, Provider etc, with active follow-up post-release to ensure person is supported as required post-release as part of EPP.

- Ensure they leave prison with relevant ID paperwork needed to move forward. e.g., Tax File Number, Medicare Care, ID as part of the EPP.
- Continue the cultural connections that many develop during their incarceration and help link them in with place-based organisations and support groups e.g. Community Services agencies, Aboriginal Art organisations, Elders Groups, Youth Services, Yarning Circles, Cultural Dance etc.
- Consider First Nations mentoring programs to support people to retain employment.

5. How can the service help employers to hire First Nations people who have been incarcerated?

- Seek data to identify First Nations people that have not returned to custody in the last 5 years and develop a program to connect these people to recent First Nations people released from jail for them to act as a positive role model/champion to support them to reduce recidivism rates.
- Develop a positive promotional campaign which includes promoting 'good news' stories of other First Nations people who have led a productive life post release – show that there are positive opportunities and good role models who have interacted with the criminal justice system.
- Promote greater promotion of organisations committed to a greater First Nations workforce.

