

Submission 20. IDEAL Placements

IDEAL Placements would value an opportunity to provide TWES services to individuals returning from incarceration. IDEAL sits 3-4 hours in travel from the two major prison facilities Townsville and Rockhampton which feed into our caseload. Recorded data for our region shows that 30 prisoners are released back into the community per month. Of these one third are ATSI. We currently provide services to 114 TtW and 44 DES ATSI participants across our sites and is inclusive of 29 ATSI ex offenders.

We're a Not for Profit who have provided DES services for 28 years in Mackay region and the only TtW and CTA providers locally. Prisoners could come straight to IDEAL if these services could be provided without the need for a handoff. We employ a Senior & Junior (Indigenous) Employment Business Broker to engage with employers and provide job opportunities for all of our participants.

IDEAL encourages our ATSI participants to have one of our ATSI staff accompany them when attending a job interview. When accepted this has proven to be beneficial to participants. IDEAL takes steps to be part of a throughcare process which is culturally competent and involves Corrections, Health Services, Housing. Currently we facilitate collaboration that continues a service if started when in prison and help a non paroled individual to adjust to life in the community.

We have diverse staff including ATSI. IDEAL has a close relationship with ATSI organisations and businesses in Mackay and regions. We use their suppliers where possible and attend meetings, events, schools, local jobs sessions and NAIDOC events to improve our specific servicing to current & new ATSI participants. As a result of our relationships IDEAL is hosting the next local Black Coffee morning with strong ATSI business owner attendance.

How should the priority reforms from the national agreement on Closing the Gap be embedded in a Commonwealth funded prison employment service?

Better shared decision making could be achieved by

- inclusive advisory/Governance board rep which includes a First Nations person who can speak from experience maybe prison worker, police officer, Police Liaison Officers etc
- introduce a prisoner rep with lived experience
- introduce prisoner survey for compulsory completion
- engage relevant Traditional Owners with employers
- include ATSI partnerships with Providers
- use a similar model of Qld Local Thriving Communities reform for Commonwealth
- Governors/managers of prisons must sign up to the service
- Government being open to changing their own employment requirements/ EEO

Engage other support services from controlled organisations to create partnerships with ATSI

- Government to engage with effective agencies to train and impart knowledge to ATSI organisations to assist with accountability and understanding of their processes. Government and its funded agencies to work closely with ATSI organisations to commit to the use of their cultural advice and skills.
- Use the throughcare model to extend wrap around services with key stakeholders in the prisoner's rehabilitation to ensure no gaps in service after release
- Tiers of Government commit to a MOU for a co-ordinated process to assist prisoners to get the best employment opportunity upon release including connection back to country

Information should be shared to all ATSI communities and organisations in

- Annual Report
- Ensure ATSI people contribute to the data
- Include investment outcome – mapping
- Prisoner surveys
- Feedback on program outcomes, released prisoner numbers at agency meetings
- Create a register for those industries that don't require criminal history checks for employment so that all ATSI agencies are aware and encourage engagement and support

How can we design and deliver a culturally competent service?

- Collaborative approach to provide service provision for prisoner to move from incarceration and back into society/their own community
- Introduce a cultural representative/advisor to Governance board
- Build stronger relationships to eventually establish community controlled partnerships
- Ensure good communication & program advice between all parties including families
- Respect and consider the individuals needs, vulnerabilities and incapacities
- Maintain involvement with local ATSI organisations, Corrections, Health, Providers and other key stakeholders.
- Introduce ATSI JCAs to perform ESAts specifically for prisoners
- Include ATSI suppliers, employers and Traditional Owners for local protocols
- Engage Providers who show a good working relationship and involvement with their local ATSI community and understand the needs of the individual
- Cultural capability training for all including ATSI
- Treat service with priority - to date there's a start and finish in servicing not a lot in between and little proven commitment to positive outcomes
- Request funding a model for Providers to train and casually employ ATSI community members to attend Provider, ESAt appointments and job interviews with Provider & individual if requested
- Remove the layer of complexity to employment involved with criminal history and stereotypical socioeconomic disadvantage
- Include funds for cultural components in Provider subsidy entitlements in plans to culturally address prisoner barriers

What sorts of supports does the service need to provide to participants while they are in prison?

Individuals in prison need to have a consistent message regarding the service. They need to be encouraged when participating and allowed to attend organised appointments if not face to face then via virtual means.

- Prepare for work Resume writing and interview skills can be done whilst incarcerated
- Access to an ESAt which should be considered for all inmates over 6 months incarcerated
- ESAt interview to be conducted with Provider assistance so barriers addressed properly
- Ability to take organised phone calls from Providers on a weekly basis for a relevant time
- Access to local jobs market information to choose their industry of choice that may be available to them on release
- Complete theory part of employment training with Provider mentor
- Show positive relationship between provider and ATSI organisations

- Use this small window of opportunity when they are open to change their trajectory to goal set with them. Help to understand their values and give a sense of hope

How can the service help First Nations people who have been incarcerated after release?

Once released from prison the priorities of the individual often changes and the Provider would need to engage promptly. The current model the individual to be transferred to their new provider ideally before release. Proven that this is not the case. If ESA was completed and streamed properly the individual should become DES. Service supports

- Social & emotional wellbeing through partnership with ATSI programs
- Digital inclusion – could be for family unit
- Service mapping for wrap around services
- Shared decision making process for individual between their stakeholders
- Include family unit – build working culture in family. Youth not engaged in work introduce TtW , back into school system, partner an eligibility for CTA or training. Joint family involvement. Build trust in family unit.
- Prepare for work review employment processes, update resume, complete any licences, attend interviews
- Employment or further training
- On going support

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

Employers need to be communicated with appropriately for advice of service. Many misconceptions about employing ex prisoners were discussed.

- Develop an Employers Guide – expectations, supports, assistance, cultural competencies, standards, myths, second chance opportunities, value to broader communities
- Involve ATSI businesses and employers to be engaged in program through Black Coffee
- Build cultural capabilities with employers
- On going support either through peer mentoring or DES provider
- Increase wage subsidy or introduce a prisoner wage support for employers
- Consider a hybrid working model. Could still support inclusion and may give greater flexibility around where/when people can work. Employer may benefit by building a healthy, productive, stable workforce. Not suitable for all industries but could benefit some by increased productivity, cost reduction and retention.