

Queensland Corrective Services

# Prisoner Employment Policy and Action Plan 2008-2011

Real skills for real jobs - making it on the outside

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Queensland Government  
Queensland Corrective Services

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# Foreword

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Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) offers a range of intervention programs that are designed to assist a prisoner to reintegrate into the community and reduce their risk of reoffending.

Prison industries is one of Queensland's most successful intervention programs, employing around 75 per cent of the eligible prisoner population in commercial and service activities.

Not only does participation in prison industries contribute to the good order of correctional facilities, it provides prisoners with the opportunity to acquire practical and vocational skills which will contribute to their ability to obtain and retain employment once released from custody.

I am pleased to present the Agency's vision for the future of prison industries under the Prisoner Employment Policy. The Prisoner Employment Policy aims to expose prisoners to the real world working environment and encourage offenders to develop a strong work ethic. By giving prisoners meaningful work skills QCS is laying the ground work for prisoners to pursue avenues of employment to help them make it on the outside.

Under the Prisoner Employment Policy, QCS will work to establish more productive links with industry and employment leaders to give prisoners the best chance at developing skills that will meet the needs of Queensland's job market.

Judy Spence MP

Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport



# Introduction

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Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) is committed to providing a range of offender intervention programs that are focused on reducing recidivism while also representing the Agency’s statutory purpose of “community safety and crime prevention through the humane containment, supervision and rehabilitation of offenders”.

As part of the rehabilitative process, QCS operates prison industries to provide prisoners with opportunities to develop general and specific work skills that will assist them to break the post-release unemployment cycle and, as a consequence, reduce their risk of re-offending.

The new Prisoner Employment Policy forms the foundation of QCS’ goal to revitalise prison industries and maximise its ability to deliver a prison industries program that benefits prisoners, industry and the community. It also contributes to the Government’s ambition for a Fair Queensland by targeting employment programs at disadvantaged and long-term unemployed Queenslanders, as outlined in *Towards Q2: Tomorrow’s Queensland*.

The Prisoner Employment Policy will establish a consistent commercial framework for the Agency’s operations. The policy will also encourage private and public sector partnerships and ensure that prisoners have increased exposure to the real world working environment.

F P Rockett  
Director-General



## Prison industries **Vision**

“Delivering meaningful work and training opportunities to prisoners to maximise their post-release employment potential.”

# Queensland's prison industries

Research supports the view that a prisoner's risk of re-offending is reduced if given the opportunity to develop work-related skills prior to release.

In Queensland, prison industry activities are designed to help prisoners break the cycle of re-offending to become responsible and contributing members of society after release.

There are two types of prison industries operating in Queensland. Service industries are programs that employ prisoners to maintain the self-sufficiency of the correctional centre and are not fee for service. Commercial industries also operate, where programs run on a fee for service basis. These include:

- laundry, bakery, textile, agricultural and dairy operations
- the building and assembly of timber and metal products
- basic assembly and packing, painting and powder coating and mechanical work.

Prison industries are located in all 13 Queensland correctional centres, including the State's two privately-run facilities. During 2007-2008, about 75 per cent (2830) of available prisoners in high and low security facilities were engaged in prison industries. Of this figure, 30 per cent (1145) worked in commercial industries, including farming activities and 45 per cent (1685) in service industries.

For 2008-2009, it is estimated that 1455 prisoners will be engaged in commercial prison industry or farming activity, and a further 1885 prisoners will be involved in non-commercial employment activities.



## Prison industries **Meaningful employment**

Did you know that about 50 per cent of offenders have never worked? To gain meaningful employment upon release it is important to provide meaningful work opportunities while in custody.

Employment in prison industries aims to provide transferable skills, knowledge and a positive work ethic for offenders to take with them into post-release employment.

# A time for growth

Over the years, Queensland's prison industries have provided diverse opportunities for prisoners, which for many has led to permanent employment opportunities upon release. However, with current predictions indicating that Queensland's prison population will climb to more than 8900 by 2015, it is critical in order to ensure the continued success of the prison industries program that the purpose and future sustainability of prison industries is supported by a new Prisoner Employment Policy (PEP) and action plan.

Prison industries in Queensland operate to a standard comparable with other Australian and international jurisdictions. However, QCS has identified opportunities to revitalise operations and increase consistency in the delivery of prison industries across Queensland. QCS will achieve this by:

- broadening the focus of prison industries to maximise a prisoner's chance of gaining employment post-release
- improving the commercial viability of prison industries to provide training for prisoners relevant to the needs of the employment market
- improving flexibility of service delivery to cater for regional differences and operational practicabilities
- strategically pursuing business activity
- increasing engagement with content experts in the public and private sector.

The PEP will drive this revitalisation and provide a strong foundation for QCS to build sustainable prison industries that support enhanced prisoner employment and skill acquisition.



## Prison industries **Vocational education and training**

Since 2001, vocational education and training (VET) integrated with correctional industries program has been conducted at Capricornia and Woodford Correctional Centres. During 2004, it was extended to the Maryborough Correctional Centre. The program will be extended to Lotus Glen Correctional Centre in 2008.

With this model of delivery, trade instructors manage on-the-job training of prisoners employed in workshops in partnership with trainers from registered training organisations.

During 2007-2008, a total of 210,000 hours of vocational education and training was delivered in correctional centres across Queensland. Seventy seven per cent of this vocational education and training was successfully completed.

# Policy statement

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Queensland Corrective Services is committed to providing prisoners with “real world” employment and training opportunities to increase a prisoner’s reintegration prospects post-release and to meet the demands of Queensland’s job market.

## Policy objective

QCS is committed to supporting safe and caring communities, as outlined in *Towards Q2: Tomorrow’s Queensland*. Our policy objective is to provide prisoners with training and employment opportunities which will help prisoners to break the cycle of unemployment and offending behaviour when released. Under the Prisoner Employment Policy, QCS will:

- operate under a governance framework that promotes accountability and transparency in commercial arrangements
- engage prisoners with meaningful work activities in line with community expectations and for the maintenance of security and good order in correctional facilities
- provide vocational education and training opportunities to assist prisoners to obtain post-release employment
- provide prisoners with purposeful activities
- pursue public and private sector partnerships to maximise skill acquisition to improve a prisoner’s prospects of employment on release
- off-set prison operating costs.

## Prison industries **Building for Queensland Corrective Services**

For several years Queensland prisoners have manufactured furniture for use within new and refurbished correctional centres including Maryborough, Wolston, Capricornia, Woodford, Brisbane Women’s, Brisbane and Townsville correctional centres. Items such as bed bases, book cases, desks, chairs, dining tables with fixed seating, benches and outdoor settings are designed by staff and purpose-built for a corrections environment. In 2005, Queensland prisoners also made furniture for two new prisons in Victoria.

# A new prison industries model

A new prison industries model has been developed to support QCS' capacity to pursue commercial opportunities and facilitate rehabilitation outcomes, throughcare and community safety. Central to the new model is the roll-out of a 12-hour working day to assist as many prisoners as possible to develop a sound work ethic and obtain recognisable skills that meet the needs of potential employers. The model also retains the best elements of the current system.

The new model will mean that the prison industries program will:

- operate in unison with other rehabilitative programs to meet policy objectives
- link with vocational education and training so relevant accreditation can be obtained
- acknowledge employers as vital stakeholders in prison industries allowing QCS to provide real world experience for prisoners
- operate under a consistent operational and commercial framework to engender industry confidence in the viability of prisoners as a legitimate workforce it is acknowledged that regional differences (for example, in resourcing) will impact on the implementation of the model
- value, in commercial terms, the contribution of service industries to QCS
- use internal contract processes that are consistent with the National Competition Policy.

## Prison industries **Skill diversification**

Welding is normally viewed as a non-traditional trade for women. However, offenders at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre are encouraged to undertake welding activities in a workshop environment. The project commenced with welding to make farm gates and progressed to making trampoline frames. The women approach it with enthusiasm and have proven their ability to consistently produce high quality products.





# Competitive neutrality

## Position on National Competition Policy and competitive neutrality

Under the National Competition Policy (NCP) launched in April 1995, the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments agreed to apply competitive neutrality principles to the operation of their significant government business activities. One of the primary objectives of the policy is to ensure that government business does not enjoy any competitive advantage, simply by virtue of government ownership.

The primary purpose underlying the operation of prison industry activities is to facilitate the rehabilitation of prisoners. While these industry activities are conducted within a commercial framework, this is done to ensure the replication of “real world” conditions in order to enhance the work experiences of the prisoner participants.

As rehabilitation is the primary driver of industries, it is not classified as a significant business activity.

However, the necessary commercial aspects of prison industry activities do require that elements of the NCP requirements are observed in order to guard against any anticompetitive conduct.

QCS has a range of supporting processes and other safeguards in place to ensure compliance with NCP requirements. These measures include:

- a pricing policy that ensures the full costs of production are accounted for in the pricing of goods and services
- an advisory committee which includes representatives from the departments of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, Employment and Industrial Relations, and Education, Training and the Arts and other employee groups to vet any business proposals for any potential anticompetitive implications
- A due diligence process incorporating advice from independent bodies (such as the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry) to assess business proposals for any potential adverse impacts on local business

- The use of competitive tendering processes to elicit private sector interest in conducting activities within prison industry facilities
- Concentrating capacity in the production of goods or services in market sectors which reduce the risk of competition against private industry.



# Prisoner employment action plan

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## Why a prisoner employment action plan?

Over the years, QCS has forged a sound prison industries program that helps to ensure security and good order of correctional centres while also providing prisoners with practical skills to increase their ability to find post-release employment. Through the Innovative Prison Industries Project, QCS has identified opportunities for the enhancement and revitalisation of current practice as well as the development of innovative ways to operate. Collectively these strategic opportunities will support the new PEP. QCS will implement the PEP and associated strategies through a prisoner employment action plan.

## What will the prisoner employment action plan achieve?

The plan will drive the implementation of strategies that:

- provide prisoners with employment opportunities that assists the development of both practical and specific skills during imprisonment
- establish a governance framework that promotes accountability and transparency in commercial arrangements
- provide a more integrated relationship between prison industries, Vocational Education and Training programs and the Advance2Work program to deliver more opportunities for recognition of training
- establish more productive links with the departments of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, Employment and Industrial Relations and Education, Training and the Arts to guide the establishment of industry activities which provide prisoners with skills that are relevant to the contemporary employment market
- build partnerships with the public and private sector, consistent with the Queensland Government's commitment to the National Competition Policy, with a primary emphasis on the production of goods for export or import replacement.

“The plan will provide prisoners with employment opportunities that assist the development of both practical and specific skills.”

## Prison industries **Sharing ideas**

Offenders who were manufacturing security boxes suggested some modifications to make the boxes difficult, if not near impossible, to break into. The modifications were warmly received by the designers who immediately adopted the changes and used the modifications in similar security cabinets.

# Prisoner employment action plan

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## How was the action plan developed?

The plan was developed in consultation with QCS staff and overseen by the Innovative Prison Industries Project Steering Committee.

Consultation involved discussion about current practice and the potential for best practice. As a result, the following five strategic statements were identified as important objectives that QCS seeks to meet to achieve best practice:

- develop effective partnerships
- maximise real world opportunities
- build internal capacity
- facilitate access to intervention opportunities
- enhance vocational education and training opportunities.

The action plan lists key strategies that are integral to establishing a new prison industries model for the Agency. In implementing strategies, regional issues will be taken into consideration to ensure best fit for all centres.

The plan is a dynamic document that will evolve with the continued development of QCS' prison industries program and will be used as a reference document for the implementation process.

## How will the plan be evaluated?

An evaluation framework has been developed to monitor progress of the plan. To maximise outcomes the framework has been designed simultaneously with the PEP, model and plan. This has ensured that a framework has been developed which is flexible enough to support the dynamic nature of the plan. More importantly, under this framework there will be a measure of both strategic and operational outcomes.



# Prisoner Employment Action Plan 2008-2011

## Strategic direction 1: Develop effective partnerships

| Goal   | Outcomes  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Prison industries are based on public/private partnerships</b></p> | <p><b>Government and peak union and industry bodies are actively engaged in the development of prison industry activity</b></p> <p><b>Successful prison industries are established in partnership with the public and private sector</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Strategies</b></p>   | <p>Develop a QCS marketing and communication strategy to promote prison industries including its workforce capabilities.</p> <p>Enhance partnerships between QCS and the departments of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA) and Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR), TAFE QLD and other registered training organisations to accelerate access for prisoners to training, industries and employability training programs, including traineeships and apprenticeships.</p> <p>Encourage private sector involvement in Queensland prison industries, by promoting “partnership” and “direct investment” options through major employer associations.</p> <p>Enhance QCS’ commercial framework to ensure adherence to National Competition Policy requirements and accountability across centres.</p> <p>Formalise employment, contract sourcing, management and remuneration practices into procedures to foster confidence in the private and public sectors and support staff and employers to meet best practice and commercial consistency.</p> <p>Forge partnerships with private industry to deliver industry specific training that leads to skill accreditation opportunities for prisoners, pre- and post-release.</p> <p>Review contract forms, when developed, to ensure they clearly reflect the commercial framework.</p> |

# Prisoner Employment Action Plan 2008-2011

## Strategic direction 2: Maximise real world opportunities

| Goal  | Outcomes   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Suitable industries and business opportunities are identified that meet the needs of QCS and stakeholders</b></p> | <p><b>Prison industries are sustainable and geared to meet market demand and skill shortages to optimise a prisoner's employment prospects on release</b></p> <p><b>Prison industries support competitive Queensland manufacturers and service sectors</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Strategies</b></p>  | <p>Establish a governance committee to oversee the implementation of the Prisoner Employment Policy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Establish an advisory committee that oversees QCS commercial activities and provides business advice.</p> <p>Roll out a business information management package to all centres.</p> <p>Conduct a comprehensive review of the prisoner remuneration process.</p> <p>Enhance the Integrated Offender Management System (IOMS) database to facilitate reporting on strategic and operational performance.</p> <p>Establish collaborative arrangements with Queensland Treasury, Department of Premier and Cabinet, DTRDI, DETA, DEIR and non-government organisations such as the Australian Industries Group (AIG), unions and Commerce Queensland.</p> <p>Collaborate with the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry (DTRDI), DETA and DEIR to identify areas where current and future skill shortages exist in Queensland.</p> <p>Profile Queensland's prisoner population to maximise prison industry activity and prisoner skill acquisition in relevant areas.</p> <p>Conduct quarterly environmental scans, which include advice from the AIG and Industry Capability Network, of the employment needs of Queensland's manufacturing and service sectors to identify opportunities for mutually beneficial training partnerships.</p> <p>Conduct an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of prison industries in reducing re-offending post-release.</p> |

# Prisoner Employment Action Plan 2008-2011

## Strategic direction 3: Build internal capacity

| Goal  | Outcomes   |
|---|--|
| <b>Prison Industries are managed successfully and consistently across the State</b> | <b>The delivery of prison industries is supported by staff and employers dedicated to best practice in skills and training development</b> |
| <b>Strategies</b>   | Develop a recruitment and retention strategy for prison industry staff.  |
|   | Develop a staffing model that provides consistency, accountability and professional development for prison industry staff.                 |
|   | Enhance the grievance/complaint handling mechanism that supports transparency and accountability.  |

## Strategic direction 4: Facilitate access to intervention opportunities

| Goal   | Outcomes   |
|--|--|
| <b>Prisoner rehabilitation opportunities are maximised</b> | <b>Prison security and good order is enhanced<br/>Activities support reintegration</b>   |
| <b>Strategies</b>  | Roll out the structured day, whereby prison industries run seven days per week, with two six-hour shifts per day, to all high security correctional centres. |
|  | Provide a range of industry-related activities that match the abilities of prisoners with specific needs.  |

# Prisoner Employment Action Plan 2008-2011

## Strategic direction 5: Enhance vocational education and training (VET) opportunities

| Goal  | Outcomes  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Prisoner training, education and work experience outcomes are optimised</b></p> | <p><b>Accreditation opportunities for prisoners are increased through an integrated prison industry program</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Strategies</b></p>  | <p>Integrate the areas of commercial industries, prison employment services, adult education and vocational education and training under the management of one unit to increase the focus on skill development as an effective intervention to reducing re-offending.</p> <p>Determine the corporate and regional staff resourcing requirements of the industries/training unit to ensure the effective support and integrated delivery of all related services.</p> <p>Identify service activities that have labour market employment opportunities post-release and related accreditation opportunities to maximise vocational outcomes.</p> <p>Conduct an assessment of the relative merits of the current Trade Instructor classification through the AIG.</p> <p>Replace all industry activities that do not embody the principles of the policy with a range of more appropriate activities.</p> <p>Roll out Integrated VET to all high security centres.</p> <p>Profile the prisoner population to identify the most suitable pool for training and employment.</p> <p>Examine the viability of a training needs analysis tool for prisoners.</p> <p>Audit all prison industries staff involved in training and assessment to ensure they possess a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.</p> <p>Pursue partnerships with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Main Roads and Local Government to incorporate strategies to address Indigenous unemployment into the prison industries program.</p> |

