

INQUIRY INTO THE EFFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PRISONS

Economic Regulation Authority Prison Review

Public Submission – Mr Simon Faulkner, 8 Dryandra Crescent, Darlington, 6070

January 7th, 2015

My own experience in the sector dates from 2003 and I have delivered numerous interventions to prisoners in all metro facilities and in many regional prisons. I have also trained many prison program providers in the DRUMBEAT intervention and been involved in two significant research studies.

I received an invitation to submit at very short notice and am unable to directly respond to your questions. However I hope to shed some light on some of the frustrations I have encountered within the system that I believe are related to its inefficiencies.

My main role in the prison system is as a provider of contracted programs; in particular a music therapy initiative known as DRUMBEAT developed to engage Aboriginal persons and improve social and emotional health. The program is strongly evidence based and in use in prisons across Australia – previous research has been completed in the Alice Springs Correctional centre where the program remains active.

There remains strong bias in favour of western based therapeutic interventions that are incompatible and generally ineffective for Aboriginal prisoners. The models for interventions that support rehabilitation need to be culturally secure and proven to mediate change for Aboriginal inmates. The vast majority of programs and program managers in WA prisons are schooled in western therapeutic models that Aboriginal people find threatening and humiliating. Few if any of these interventions have any proven evidence base with the Aboriginal population and are failing them.

Research into alternative interventions face significant hurdles from DCS staff and regulation. The research projects I have been involved in have been beset by interference and power plays on behalf of DCS staff that have been greatly discouraging. I have conducted research in many different environments without challenge, but my experience in working with the DCS research committee has been difficult and often unprofessional.

My own belief is that the rehabilitative role of the prison system needs to have far greater support and be much more accountable if we are to improve the prison system and reduce re-incarceration rates, particularly for Aboriginal people.

Thankyou for your time,

Simon Faulkner

Please note – this submission is made as a private individual and may not represent the views of my employer.