



# Don't Want Repeat Customers?

I'm Talking To You

In some industries, such as healthcare and justice systems, the goal is to avoid having customers come back! This is especially true for the corrective services.

Managing a prisoner's journey from incarceration to release has many challenges. One of the most important is preparing the offender for life back in society – to break the cycle of offending behaviours and keep people out of the criminal justice system.

**45%** Back To Jail  
In 2 Years

In Australia, the national rate of prisoners returning to prison is alarming. Nationally, nearly half of all ex-prisoners (45.2%) return to prison within two years of release. This high rate of recidivism is repeated in figures from the State of Victoria (43.6%).

**323** AUD Per Day  
117,895 AUD p.a., per prisoner

This has significant cost implications: in 2020, the cost of keeping a prisoner in custody per day in Australia was calculated at A\$323 per day (A\$117,895 p.a., per prisoner). The State of Victoria's annual recurrent Corrections budget of around a billion dollars, plus capital works makes up a significant proportion of state expenditure.



+1704 966 2100



team@inPlaceSoftware.com



www.InPlaceSoftware.com

## Reducing Recidivism And Preparing Individuals For A Successful Life Post Incarceration

Helping even a fraction of the thousands of people released from Victoria's prisons each year from returning to custody would save the state tens of millions of dollars each year.

▶ **The Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety** is addressing this far-reaching issue with the intent to reduce recidivism based on individually designed reintegration pathways. These pathways include rehabilitation programs, prisoner education and skill development, pro-social community reintegration planning and access to pre- and post-release employment. Managing these services is complex and multifaceted, with responsibility for service delivery, program and contract management extending across many teams in the Corrections Victoria division of the Department.

▶ **Government investment in education, training, rehabilitation and return to the community programs for prisoners is driven by value for money and reduction in recidivism.** Key performance measures such as program participation and course completion rates are essential to gauge the reach and effectiveness of programs and contracted services. Other factors including parole eligibility, prisoner risk and reintegration need ratings and literacy and numeracy levels provide guidance on the prioritization of programs and services. The bottom line for government and prisoners alike is return on investment in the form of people who, once out of the prisons system, stay out.



Corrections Victoria identified early that it required an adaptable information system to manage this complex suite of programs and associated outcomes.

The information system needed to perform case management functions, provide insight and opportunities for collaboration across myriad internal and external stakeholders, and report on and manage contractual performance. After a rigorous public tender process, the department chose InPlace Software from QuantumIT, a SaaS-based platform originally developed to support universities and other educational bodies in the management of work integrated learning programs in settings as diverse and multifaceted as clinical placements in health disciplines, student-teacher assignments, internships, industry projects plus other extra-curricular student activities such as study abroad programs.

The QuantumIT team worked with Corrections Victoria users led by Alex Laragy, Strategic Projects Manager, Education, Training and Employment Branch, to configure and customize InPlace to develop a new product tailored for the corrections industry. The depth of functionality and flexibility of the InPlace product enabled the team to get a stable system into production in rapid time.

The first release addressed two core requirements:



### Planning And Organisation Of Prisoner Education And Training Needs

A detailed assessment of incoming prisoner education needs involves behavioural and risk assessment, social reintegration planning, and vocational assessment, planning and skill development. Learning plans developed for individual prisoners capture course delivery demand and employment goals, and feeds into the contracted service delivery of the state's education providers.



### Prisoner Case Management

Individual case management plans are created for all offenders on entry to the correctional facilities in Victoria. These plans capture risks and behavioural issues that tailor the prisoner management model to the individual and create a progress record that supports review of parole and other assessments during that person's custody episode.

According to Mr Laragy, management of external education provider performance and the identification of target and priority groups for service delivery have been some of the most significant impacts of InPlace Corrections:



Staff engagement with the system has been exceptional. The Prison Industries team can easily identify prisoner skills appropriate to needs of the internal work programs organized in the various prisons. As participant engagement with work programs and educational services proceeds, the system captures the developing prisoner profile, supporting identification of additional skill acquisition, post-release employment needs, and builds a resume-like picture for future internal work activities, progress assessments and pre-release planning.

The suite of program delivery initiatives supported by InPlace Corrections complements the recommendations made by the Victorian Ombudsman in her comprehensive study from 2015.

Victorian Ombudsman

Investigation into the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners in Victoria 17 Sep 2015

“ It is well established that a prisoner’s prospects for successful rehabilitation are improved if they are able to work after release. Less than 14 per cent of prisoners have completed secondary schooling and it is clear that low literacy and numeracy is widespread. Prison is a good opportunity to address this and I understand there will be compulsory education assessments for prisoners from 2016 – a welcome development.

Offering prisoners the opportunity to train or retrain is a valuable use of time and resources, however our prisons regularly fail to meet benchmarks for the education and training they have committed to.

“ Secure and adaptive information systems provide essential support to service delivery improvements and change in a risk-averse environment such as corrective services. Since implementation of InPlace Corrections we have seen and can demonstrate clear improvements in contracted service delivery against key performance measures. These measures include overall participation rates (particularly amongst the indigenous prison population), literacy and numeracy skill development, and most notably course completion rates. The service provider contracts are written to drive outcomes, and InPlace Corrections enables us to manage the KPIs that link outcomes to payments based on real operational data in a transparent and accountable structure.

The direct value obtained by the Department in terms of increased contract and performance management capability and measurable education program delivery has more than justified the entire cost of the system.

The new system has experienced rapid acceptance throughout the Department. Participation in education, training, employment and reintegration programs are all influential factors in Parole Board assessments. The system has ensured that case management review and parole assessments are informed by a reliable, comprehensive digital record.

### The Ombudsman Identified Education, Skills And Training As Critical To Tackling Recidivism

As noted by the Ombudsman, access to sustainable, meaningful employment is recognized as a key factor in reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

The Department in the process of establishing a team dedicated to connecting current and recently released prisoners to sustainable employment in the community. In support of this work, Mr Laragy is anticipating the coming release of the InPlace Corrections employment sourcing module.



One of the key aspects of InPlace Corrections is its ability to provide a broad range of data that can be readily interrogated and applied to support program delivery and identification of key outcomes. The table demonstrates an unofficial analysis of InPlace Corrections data, displaying the correlation between engagement in education and return to the prison system in Victoria.

The results to this stage appear promising, although it must be noted that this is not official Departmental analysis and the sample size and time span is insufficient to provide any conclusive observations. There is however a reasonably clear correlation between undertaking study and a reduction in recidivism.

The latest feature is the 'Return to Employment' module, supporting functions such as:

- ✓ Management of relationships with employers
- ✓ Configuration of job candidate profiles
- ✓ Matching exiting prisoners to employers based on factors such as skills, certifications and location
- ✓ Providing ability for employers to lodge opportunities for prisoner employment with Corrections
- ✓ Employer search of candidate profiles to enable specific offers based on Occupational Categories
- ✓ Conducting post-employment assessments on the success of the placement. This enables continuous improvement in matching potential employees to employers and enables employers to provide feedback to the Department about placed resources.

The Ombudsman's 2015 report also identified transitional services as a key to successful prisoner exit with reduced reoffending. The new InPlace Corrections employment module will enable expansion of work experience programs and support prisoners through pre- and post-release work placements. InPlace Corrections is expected to make a substantial contribution to the success of the Department's prisoner employment programs.

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*It comes down to a simple choice, really.  
Get busy living or get busy dying.*

Andy Dufresne  
"Shawshank Redemption"

Mr Laragy expects the 'Return to Employment' feature of the InPlace Corrections project in Victoria to be at least as significant as the earlier work, as the Department seeks to remain at the forefront of education, training, reintegration and employment service delivery to prisoners.