

2019 ANZSOC Conference

Straight Talking – a Peer Mentoring Trial:
preliminary findings

Claire Seppings



DEAKIN
UNIVERSITY

How it all began



One day as we walked around the prison visit centre courtyard, as we had done many times before, he said as once again 'the prisoner', after five years free in the community; 'I don't know how to be straight' (2013). 'Craig' during his last prison sentence.

Prisons are full of individuals who want to change but think they can't, or lack the courage or skills to try. Enabling those individuals, who are lost in the system, meet past offenders who have changed successfully is one of the most effective and inspiring things I have ever seen in prison. Barry Greenberry, former Governor HMP Isle of Wight (User Voice, n.d.)



...all prisoners once they leave jail believe they are alone in the world and can only relate to other prisoners. This is why another ex-prisoner (mentor) is fantastic as being the tool in changing the way they make decisions out of fear. If I knew this stuff before I never would of come to jail. I applaud what you guys are doing – Good luck! (2017). The words of a prisoner in the peer mentoring development focus group.

We're up and running



Straight Talking A Peer Mentoring Program



Volunteers are required to mentor men who are exiting prison.

If you have adult prison life experience, good communication skills and are community minded, we need you!

We are recruiting individuals who can use a mentoring approach to provide advice, guidance and support to persons being released from prison.

Successful peer mentors will be outgoing, resilient and enthusiastic. They will have a positive attitude and non-judgemental approach and be prepared to invest time, commitment and energy to help people create lasting change in their lives.

They will encourage, support and prepare people for release from prison and help them reintegrate through sharing an understanding of the issues faced when returning to the community.

Essential to a successful mentoring relationship is the ability to build a strong relationship based on trust and respect, and to support the mentee to set and achieve personal goals.

An effective mentor also has the confidence to challenge another person's attitudes and behaviours.

If you have previously spent time in prison, now is the chance to put this experience to good use and become a mentor.

Training and ongoing support will be provided.

If you want to know more about the 'Straight Talking' Peer Mentoring Program contact:

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Reformed offender program Help for inmates

OLIVIA SHYING

OFFENDERS who have turned their lives around after leaving prison are being called on to support current inmates.

A groundbreaking program, funded through philanthropic grants and delivered by Deakin University experts, will see Mamgooneet prison inmates linked with ex-prison mentors to help them transition into society.

Project co-ordinator Claire Seppings said the Straight Talking peer-mentoring program would help inmates navigate the end of their sentence and transition to post-prison life.

"The mentors will go into prison to build a relationship with the inmates and then follow that relationship through," Ms Seppings said.

The pilot program — made up of about a dozen mentors and an equal number of participants — will be open to prisoners who have a connection with Geelong.

"It will be open to people returning to live in the Geelong area and who feel that they could benefit from the program," Ms Seppings said.

"The mentors will be someone who has the experience of adult prison in the past and wants to be a volunteer peer mentor."

The program, supported by Geelong's Give Where You Live Foundation, the Ian Potter Foundation and the HMS trust, is based on a program run by UK charity User Voice, founded by former prisoner Mark Johnson.

Mr Johnson said previously former prisoners provided guidance because they were able to establish trust and relationships with inmates.

The Victorian program is in the final stages of development. Ex-prisoners interested in becoming mentors are encouraged to attend an information session at Deakin Waterfront Percy Baxter Lecture Hall tomorrow at 5pm.

For further information call 9246 8318.

Change in the making



They need people like Joe coming in to speak to Squads every time they are on. This was one of the most raw and real sessions we have had and this is something the prison needs...better understanding of prisoners as people...has shaped the view of how I want to be and the difference I want to make...as a role model. MCC new prison squad training July 2019

As a facilitator I am blown away with the Peer Mentor Program and hope, as you do, for it to remain and grow. I would hope tomorrow's session will be consolidating what the men in group are hearing. The life that can be lived after leaving prison. Thank you for having such positive stories that can be shared and maybe will be a catalyst for change. Some of what they wrote 'there is hope for the future'. MCC Remand Program Facilitator August 2019



...look bro I just want to say thank you for the support you given me you have been big role model in putting my best foot forward still got long way I sat and watch few of your videos on fb and bro out of every body that's ever come in to my life I think you have mad the biggest impact on me wanting to change and I just want say big thanks I still haven't used ice bro so lifes good brother... mentee to his mentor October 2019



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