

ACEA Forums a Great Success!



Elizabeth Drake

The ACEA Forums with Edith Cowan and WADoJ in Perth, and Deakin and Corrections Victoria in Melbourne were very successful. The objective in organising the Forums is to share professional knowledge which can support correctional education in Australia and assist student prisoners. We also want to increase awareness of our work I the wider audience to ensure a better understanding of the value of what we do for the community.

In Perth, Beth Drake who worked for the Washington State Institute of Public Policy since 2006 on adult correction programming, provided an excellent presentation to a group of close to 90 at the WADoJ Academy. Participants were from local universities, NGO's who provide transition to community services, DoJ staff and professionals from other government departments. Beth's presentation was used as part of a professional development training activity for WA correctional education staff and was attended by staff from 8 Perth public and private metropolitan prisons and regional educators from Bunbury and Eastern Goldfields.

While in Perth, Beth visited a male maximum security prison and a female exit prison, viewed a prisoner art exhibition at the World Heritage listed Fremantle Prison, provided a presentation to WADoJ correctional administrators at head office in the CBD, and met with Alison Xamon, an elected parliamentarian from The Greens (WA) Party.

While in Melbourne, Beth provided a presentation to approximately 50 participants in the CBD who were from universities, NGO's, research groups, Corrections Victoria (CV) and other government department staff. The Forum was also attended by the Shadow Minister for Corrective Services in Queensland, the honourable Trevor Watt.

Beth's visit to Melbourne provided ACEA with an opportunity to meet with some important supporters of correctional education and training; Dave Tout from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Hugh Guthrie, senior fellow Centre for VET Policy at University of Melbourne Graduate School, and Ron Wilson, Deputy Chair Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board in Victoria.

I also met with Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) Co-Presidents Daniella Mayer (Chisolm Institute) and Jo Medlin (TAFE NSW) to discuss the possibility of ACEA and ACAL working more closely together. The meetings with the ACAL and ACER representatives led to discussions and a tentative agreement to participate in the 2019 ACEA conference in Melbourne. Their participation and that of ACFE would assist ACEA in forming closer working partnerships with adult basic education sector going into the future; an important step in raising awareness on ABE issues in prisons and the wider community.

The Forums also gave us an opportunity to work with our university partners especially, Dr. Margaret Giles from ECU and Dr. Lesley Hardcastle from Deakin, who individually presented on the Future Beyond the Wall: Improving Post-release Employment Outcomes for People Leaving Prison research project. There were a number of other university representatives at the Forums and this was an excellent result and their attendance was much appreciated.

Special thanks to Helen Foley and Stephen Seymour from the University of Southern Queensland who attended the Forum in Melbourne. Their efforts to increase access to IT for prisoners has helped hundreds of prisoners across Australia. And to Deborah Westfield from CV who did such a great job in organising the Melbourne Forum!