

Contract Director 2007 – 2010 Reference for Ron Isherwood

In 2007 Serco PLC took over the Borallon Correctional Centre in Queensland and I was the Director responsible for the handover from Management Training Services (MTS) and for the management of the centre for 3 years. The contract bid had a very complex and difficult set of outcomes to be delivered by the management team, however as a United Kingdom based bid, the experience and knowledge of the Queensland Correctional Services was very limited and so we had to learn very quickly how things were done.

We had a very tight budget and soon realised that there was no drug treatment course funding for the centre, despite there being a significant issue with substance abuse across Australia. I was surprised that at this time a prisoner could not leave prison if he had a drug problem and could not evidence clean urine samples on or throughout his discharge and parole period. We had prisoners who were locked into this cycle of not being able to rid themselves of this addiction and so consequently remained in prison, some for many years after their original discharge date.

Having witnessed this, I decided to put in place a substance misuse support system that relied on staff including this additional work in their everyday tasks and for the support of prisoners helping each other become substance/drug free. The course had clinical and expert support, but it relied heavily on the culture of the unit we created and prisoners buying into a compact to help each other to become drug free and change their lives, eventually meeting the criteria to obtain freedom.

This work could not have succeeded without the support and help from people like Ron Isherwood, who as a previous drug taker and who knew how to help fellow inmates to rid themselves of this addiction. Ron was very knowledgeable and helped write and deliver these courses, writing specific plans for individuals to follow with support from him and others, be it staff or prisoners. Ron was a hard worker who worked on this unit for 10 months and committed to actively participating 7 days a week. He created a healthy life style on the unit, helping to get course members fit and healthy, bringing in Yoga and taught this alongside healthy food knowledge and additional food options that we provided, which was significantly enhanced against the normal prison fare. Ron organised specialist groups like Narcotics Anonymous and other professional specialists to come into the centre to talk to course members about recovery, laps and relapse and how to stay clean when they finally got out of the correctional system, teaching them how to cope with life and addiction.

I know he personally had many successes and I also know that at least 10 course members from that time have remained drug free and gone on to have successful law-abiding lives, all down to Ron and others at this time to engage in this work. Ron has not only helped others, but has been able to change his life in such a way that he now continues to help people outside of prison through this passion to get people clean. He has a wide range of personal knowledge, a lifetime of experience and the patients and skills to teach and help people rid themselves of this social scourge. I would recommend to anyone seeking help, how privileged and lucky they would be to have Ron as part of their support, a very safe and trusted pair of hands to invest in.



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Borallon Correctional Centre