



**Community Justice Coalition  
and**

**International Commission of Jurists (Aust)**



# ***RESOLUTION — 25<sup>th</sup> November 2010 Education In Prisons Seminar***

In spite of the significant numbers of prisoners incarcerated in NSW, the 2009/2010 budget for offender programs, including education, fell slightly. In 2008-09, the share of the Corrective Services budget of over a billion dollars allocated to inmate education and vocational training programs was around 2.5%. The number of teachers dealing with the growing inmate population has remained static in recent years.

Research has demonstrated that the provision of adult education and vocational training in its own right has an impact on reducing recidivism. Results of 12,000 assessments of literacy and numeracy skills of inmates conducted since 2007 demonstrate that a majority of inmates have low levels of literacy and numeracy skills which require enrolment in adult basic education courses.

Funding and access to educational programs for inmates has not kept pace with the massive increases to the NSW prison population in resulting from the law and order auction in previous state election. All political parties must commit if elected to government in March 2011 to commit increased funding for education and vocational training programs.

Funding must also be provided to ensure that inmates have access to well stocked libraries, are able to access distance and electronic education courses if suited to their needs, and have access to modern technology such as computers.

Computer access as referred to within the 'Offender Access to Computers Environment' outlined by the Commissioner in his reply of 21st May 2010 to the letter from the CJC to the Minister [ March 25th

2010] should be extended to allow prisoners' use of computers in their cells within a secure network environment.

As outlined by the CJC in that letter to the Minister computers can provide:

- ▶ Educational programs for prisoners. With servers in the wings of jails, access to education programs are conveniently and effectively provided;
- ▶ Prisoners with intellectual stimulation;
- ▶ Training in a vital skill that most prisoners will need on their release.
- ▶ Prisoners with access to legal resources to assist with their cases. They are able to read and respond to briefs, and access their transcripts and legal Acts which these days are generally provided on CD-ROMs. Through servers in the wings, prisoners could also be given
- ▶ Access to online legal resources in the nature of those provided by the Australasian Legal Information Institute (AUSTLII);
- ▶ Email access to prisoners' families, thus maintaining the communication between prisoners and family members, parents, partners, children critical to their rehabilitation.

Inmates must have access to a broad range of education, cultural, recreational and vocational development programs.

**This meeting calls on the NSW government and all political parties to commit to:**

- ☛ Legislative guarantees to improve access and funding of educational programs for inmates, including the right for inmates to education, consistent with United Nations and Council of Europe recommendations.
- ☛ Increase the number of teachers employed in corrections.
- ☛ Address impediments to inmates participating in education and vocational training programs in Correctional Centres by making these programs a priority in the structured day.
- ☛ Employment of Aboriginal teachers in each correctional centre, and support for existing experienced Aboriginal teachers.
- ☛ Giving inmates access to computers in their cells within a secure network environment.