

# ACTCS

## New Employment Opportunities (NEO) Program

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The New Employment Opportunities (NEO) Program is a crime prevention initiative of the ACT Government that aims to provide prisoners with the opportunity to engage in meaningful and sustainable paid employment, work experience, vocational training, and education for the purposes of rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.

The NEO program's main area of operation is to provide external employment upon release. In addition, the program includes:

- Internal Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) skill development and experience, and
- Transitional Release work placements in the community.

### Program Overview

Government Departments, community organisations, and private enterprise employers that are willing to support the NEO program goals are identified.

A matrix of suitable employment positions within the respective organisations and the relevant skills and experience requirements is developed. Generally the skill set requirements are directly related to current ACT skill shortage areas.

All prisoners arriving at the AMC undertake skills audits and vocational assessments.

Prisoners identified as potentially suitable for the external employment positions are encouraged to undertake relevant work experience and Vocational Education and Training whilst at the AMC.

Prisoners who are deemed suitable may be transferred to the Transitional Release Centre (TRC) at the AMC. Prisoners who are accommodated at the TRC may subsequently attend approved work experience placements or undertake further Vocational Education and Training in the community on a daily basis.

Program participants, including the Host Employers are provided with ongoing support and monitoring for the duration of the program.

### Employment upon release

To assist in achieving this goal, ACT Corrective Services and the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce have partnered to promote the NEO program and encourage our regional business community to support this valuable crime prevention initiative.

The NEO program has also developed linkages with Commonwealth Job Services Australia providers in the ACT area. ACT Providers include:

- Auswide-Caloola
- Salvation Army Employment Plus
- Max Employment
- Campbell-Page
- IPA

Both Auswide and Caloola have employment consultants that attend the AMC and provide advice to prisoners on their options and the support available to them through their respective organisations upon their release.

Through Commonwealth Job Services Australia providers, employers are also able to access a range of assistance from training to wage subsidies.

## **Skill development and training**

Prisoners received into the AMC undergo skills audits and vocational assessments to identify areas for development.

Through the NEO program, business-like industries operated by the AMC provide work skills and habits for prisoners in work environments that match as much as possible, a comparable industry environment outside of prisons.

The AMC has education and training facilities available to provide realistic skill development and experience in a range of Industry and Vocational areas including Building and Construction, Asset Maintenance, Horticulture, Hairdressing, Information Technology, Business Studies and Hospitality.

In addition to prisoner employment in business-like industries, prisoners are responsible for the cleaning and care of their living unit, community work, and other activities that are linked to employability skills within the AMC. These activities assist prisoners to establish work habits and skills in a work-like, but non-commercial environment.

The AMC also has a flexible workshop area (Industry Skills Centre) that can be configured to provide realistic employment experiences and to carry out a range of manual and mechanical process manufacturing or assembly activities according to enterprise business requirements. The Industry Skills Centre is supported with a range of nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training programs, courses and certificates.

## **Transitional Release work placements**

For prisoners transitioning back into our community, the Transitional Release Centre (TRC) provides an opportunity to participate in work experience placements with host employers and community based organisations.

The work experience placements are designed to provide an opportunity for the prisoner to demonstrate to potential employers that they would be a reliable and trustworthy addition to their workforce. The placements provide an opportunity to gain valuable experience and demonstrate practical skills that increase the likelihood of gaining and maintaining permanent employment upon release. This enables prisoners to obtain and engage in employment in the community with a view to maintaining that employment on release from prison.

Host Employers and community organisations participating in the NEO program also benefit through being able to access an additional skilled and semi-skilled workforce.

Contact us at [neo@act.gov.au](mailto:neo@act.gov.au)

View our website at <http://www.neo.act.gov.au> (under construction)