

Dear Committee Secretary,

Like many Australians, I believe that diversionary programs focussing on education and employment are crucial to reversing the statistics of incarceration for Indigenous youths. Through a Vocational Training and Employment Centre (VTEC) a holistic approach could be used to reduce the numbers of Indigenous youths entering the criminal justice system. The [VTEC model](#) works for Indigenous people who have been long term unemployed – we could replicate this for Indigenous youth who are at risk of falling through the cracks.

There are huge disparities in employment, participation and economic outcomes for Indigenous people in Australia. Criminal records are a major barrier to many Indigenous people finding work. The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse identified that criminal history adds a layer of complexity to employment in addition to the socioeconomic disadvantage Indigenous ex-offenders experience. The Government needs to take positive action now before another generation of Indigenous people become trapped in the welfare dependency cycle.

Regards

**Bridie Turpeinen**