

2004 PACCOA CONFERENCE REPORT (Probation And Community Corrections Officers' Association Inc)

PACCOA is an Australia wide professional association for Probation and Community Corrections Officers. The aims of the association are:

- ◆ To develop the profession of probation and parole / community corrections and advance the quality of justice in society through the contributions of members;
- ◆ To provide an organisation through which members can develop a professional identity;
- ◆ To deal as a representative body at appropriate levels with matters of concern and interest in the field of community based offender management;
- ◆ To promote monitor and improve practice standards;
- ◆ To facilitate the exchange of information between members within participating agencies
- ◆ To cooperate with other agencies in implementing strategies to achieve to primary prevention of crime and to minimise the impact of crime upon the community;
- ◆ To promote community awareness of matters relating to offending behaviour and the management of offenders;
- ◆ To promote research on relevant issues;
- ◆ To promote and maintain standards of ethical practice amongst members;
- ◆ To contribute to continuing professional education of members.

PACCOA is affiliated with similar organisations in New Zealand, United States of America and on 18 July 2004 at a pre conference reception signed an agreement with the Conference Permanente Europeene de la Probation (CEP), further cementing, PACCOA's international links with other probation professional bodies.

From 19 to 21 July 2004, PACCOA held their annual conference in Alice Springs. The theme for the conference was: Working with Indigenous Offenders: Is Probation part of the Problem / Solution? The venue was the Alice Springs Convention Centre. Probation and Community Corrections Officers attended this conference from all states and territories of Australia. Also international guests from the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand participated in the conference. The conference was open to attendance by other interested parties and members of the public. Attendance at the conference exceeded 150 in number.

Betty Pearce on behalf of the Arrernte people, traditional owners and custodians of the land welcomed everyone to Alice Springs. Dr Peter Toyne MLA, Minister for Justice and Attorney General welcomed everyone to the conference. Mrs Patricia Miller, Deputy Administrator of the Northern Territory, officially opened the conference. She is also an Arrernte woman, the 2004 Northern Territorian of the Year and currently the Director of Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service. Mrs Miller gave the first keynote address. Other guest speakers included:

- Ethne Wallis, immediate past Director General of the National Probation Service of England and Wales, now Director of the English and Welsh National Offender Management Service Change Team;
- Dr Susan Gordon, Magistrate, Children's Court of Western Australia;
- Ken McMaster, Principal of Hall McMaster and Associates of New Zealand, an expert in program design for indigenous offenders and offenders in general;
- Ruwayda Carloo, from the Western Province Government in the Republic of South Africa;
- Richard Coates, Chief Executive Officer, Department of Justice, Northern Territory.

Over the next 2 days a further 29 papers and workshops were presented.

In her final remarks at the conclusion of the conference Ms Ethne Wallis noted how few Probation and Community Corrections Officers there were in Australia when compared to the United Kingdom. She also mentioned the large geographical areas serviced by these officers.

During the conference PACCOA extended thanks to a number of individuals who freely gave their time to make the conference such a success and acknowledged the support of the Northern Territory Department of Justice.

The conference was attended by 32 Northern Territory Probation and Parole Officers. The 7 remote area Aboriginal staff were assisted to attend the conference through a \$10,000 Remote Workforce Development Grant from the Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment. This allowed for the payment of registration, accommodation, airfares and travel allowance. Other Probation and Parole Officers north of Alice Springs took recreational leave and travelled to the conference in departmental vehicles with the remote area staff. NT Correctional Services paid for the registration (\$5,750) and accommodation (\$2,640). All staff returned to their regions at the conclusion of the conference.

Attendance to the PACCOA Conference was an opportunity to gain further knowledge and understand contemporary practice in dealing with indigenous offenders, particularly as a number of presenters were indigenous. Also it was a unique opportunity to associate with our interstate colleagues and exchange information. All staff gained tremendously from this experience.

Therefore ongoing support, including similar financial support, is sought for Probation and Parole Officers to attend future PACCOA conferences. The next PACCOA Conference is expected to be held in Australian Capital Territory in November 2005. The theme is likely to highlight the issue of 'throughcare'.

Graeme Pearce
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28 July 2004.