

# Education in Corrective Services

## *a Personal Account*

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*Education or lack thereof is definitely life shaping.*

I write this reflective piece from my Gaol cell. I am soon to be reintegrated into society and I feel a mixture of excitement and hopefulness for my future. There have been significant events in my life that I believe have effected where I am now and the future direction I am taking, education is a substantial factor in this.

My father and I escaped Vietnam, leaving my mother and other family members who had not been able to come with us. After a long, dangerous and circuitous journey we arrived in Australia, I was traumatised by what we had experienced and I could not speak or understand a word of English so the challenges were far from over.

Looking back it's hard to comprehend that after all I had experienced so far in my young life, I found school terribly frightening. This was some time ago and there were no other NES students at my school or ESL support. I could not comprehend anything that was happening around me, walking down the corridor was petrifying and the playground was alien territory. I recall making a conscious decision to practice being invisible as it was so much easier than trying to deal with teachers questions or peers. I found the concentration and confusion I experienced quite exhausting. The only subject that was tolerable was maths because I could at least follow a bit by observing the equations unfolding on the blackboard.

I do not wish to make excuses; I accept that I am responsible for my situation because of choices that I made. Looking back though, I can see how I drifted into crime. I was young, frightened and angry. My father was working enormous hours out of necessity, I struggled immensely at school and I felt very isolated. I reflect on being drawn into gang life and see that it was so smooth and comfortable for me. I had found companionship, a sense of belonging. It was also an outlet for my anger and frustration and I was shown respect. I excelled and was 'promoted' rapidly through the ranks. Here was something I was good at.

I was incarcerated at a young age. I entered the system in Juvenile Justice and transitioned directly to Maximum Security when I turned 18yrs of age. I have served only the one term, but it's been a long lag. I have had a great deal of time and some support through programs to reflect on and address my criminogenic behaviour. Education within Corrective Services has offered me a great deal in order to prepare for and make possible a positive future.

I can now speak, read and write English which has enabled me to succeed in higher levels of education and vocational training. My academic achievements have prepared me well for the workforce and despite my incarceration I have been able to develop a strong skill set. I have been able to secure a very good position of employment that I will commence shortly upon my release. I will be able to support myself and enjoy a positive future; something that I previously thought would never be attainable. The future is looking bright!

ANON