

Vietnamese Women Offenders: Challenges for the Victorian Correctional System?

Presented by Hanh Tran

Corrections Victoria



Overview

I. Arrival

- Settlement
- Life chances.
- Problems in the new society.

II. Statistics

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- Correctional System: Punishment, Re-education or Rehabilitation?
- Victorian Prisons
- Parole Orders / Community Dispositions.
- Rehabilitation Programs.

IV. Conclusion Corrections Victoria



I. Arrival

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Political events:

**Exodus of the 1945,
division of the
country between the
17th parallel.**

**Second exodus of the
1975: the fall of
Saigon.**

**Hundred of thousands
of people have left
the country**



Settlement

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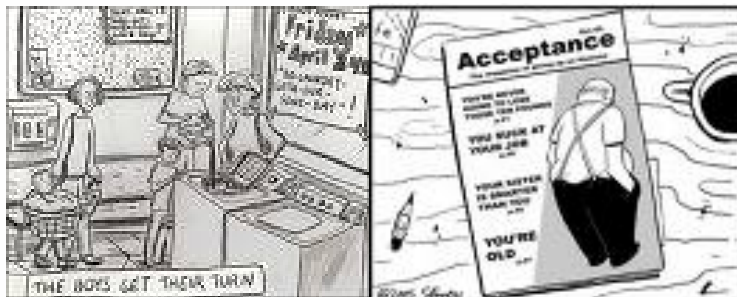
What do Australian Governments offer?



Settlement

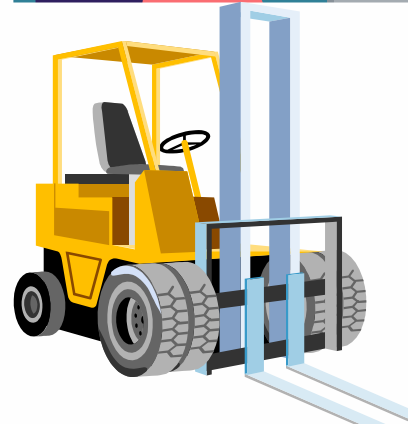


- Acceptance
- Australia is a lucky country.
- Freedom
- Social Security
- Equal opportunity
- Multiculturalism
- Recognition of contribution



Settlement

- All kinds of employment (normally unwanted by the mainstream) were accepted by the Vietnamese people.

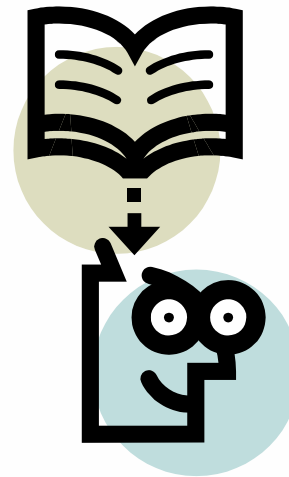


Life Chances



- Education: to learn a new way of life, to gain a knowledge and to make contribution to the Australian/Victorian Governments.

Vs



- Take advantage of the naivety and the generosity of the Australian Governments

Problems in the new society



- Cultural conflicts / intergenerational issues
- Rebellious youths / social problems, ie. Leaving school early, drug users, organised gangs, etc.
- Family break-ups.



II. 2006 Statistics

Victorian Population by country of birth

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Country of birth	Total persons	% of persons	Australia	% of person in Australia
Australia	3,434,470	69.6%	14,072,944	70.9%
England	163,959	3.3%	856,939	4.3%
Italy	82,849	1.7%	199,121	1.0
New Zealand	63,995	1.3%	389,463	2.0%
Viet Nam	58,878	1.2%	159,850	0.8%
China	56,561	1.1%	206,591	1.0%



Victorian Population by Language spoken at home

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Language	Total persons	% of total person	Australia	% of total person in Australia
English only	3,668,284	74.4%	15,581,333	78.5%
Italian	133,326	2.7%	316,890	1.6%%
Greek	117,877	2.4%	252,220	1.3%
Vietnamese	72,163	1.5%	194,855	1.0%
Cantonese	66,853	1.4%%	244,553	1.2%
Mandarin	64,377	1.3%	220,601	1.1%



II. Statistics of Vietnamese women in the Victorian Criminal Justice System

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- 245 females prisoners are currently being held in the Victorian female prisons, of which 25 were of Vietnamese background or 10.20%.
- 388 offenders reporting to Sunshine CCS, of which 75 were of Vietnamese background or 19.3%.
- A total of 56 female offenders reporting to Sunshine CCS, of which 9 were of Vietnamese background or 16%.

Profile of Vietnamese women prisoners

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Classes/Occupation

- Single Parents
- Married Couples / De facto
- Business Persons
- Overseas Students
- Temporary visa / non-residents.

Type of Offences

- Fraud
- Cultivate
- Drug Traffick.
- Drug Use
- Crimes Associated With Gambling

III. Perception of the Victorian Legal System

- Correctional System: Punishment, Re-education or Rehabilitation?



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- Australian Law respects life of individuals
- Death penalty does not exist in the Australian Legal System.
- Serious drug traffickers receive imprisonment.
- In some Asian countries, including Vietnam the price for drug trafficking is the death penalty.

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Prisoners / offenders facing the Law in Vietnam



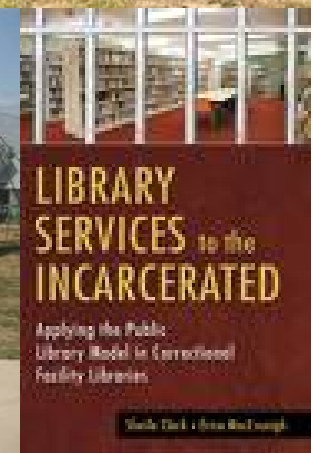
- In the Vietnamese Legal System, you can not speak
- Drug Trafficking in Vietnam brings either the death sentence or life imprisonment.
- It is considered “unlucky” to be caught in Viet Nam for drug trafficking.

Victorian Prisons

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- A change of environment.
- A break from the home environment / which may include domestic violence
- A “holiday resort”: a relief from stresses and pressures in life, compared with prison in Vietnam.
- Life in prison is very comfortable, compared with prisons in Vietnam.
- Provided services



Victorian Prisons (cont)

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- Unmotivated to participate in learning English.
- Language barriers deter from participating in any programs in prison.
- It is easy to say “I can’t speak English” than to participate in the mainstream programs
- Reluctant / unwilling to participate in Vietnamese speaking programs.



Victorian Prison (cont)

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- In prison, they have all services being provided to them.



- It is confidential: no one knows if they were imprisoned.



Victorian Prisons (cont)



- The prisoners' perceptions, ie. no repentance after the release: because it may be deemed worthwhile exchanging a short time in prison for a lifestyle brought about by committing crimes.
- Recidivism rate??



Sunshine Community Correctional Centre



- Take advantages of the current system
- Language barriers deter from participating in rehabilitation programs.
- Mental health issues: abuse vs genuine suffering, lack of psych services in the Vietnamese Community
- Drug users
- Taking advantage of Medical services.
- Avoid contacts with Vietnamese CCO's: making offenders accountable and fear of being known in the community



Sunshine Community Correctional Centre (cont)



- Shame / Avoid being recognised when attending Correctional Centre
- Inadequate preparation for release on Parole
- Wanted to be returned to prison because of order conditions pressures, as they were unable to adjust to community after their release from prison vs virtually no pressure in the prison system.
- Self-discharged completely from any parole order conditions.
- Absconded and become illegal residents when pressures become too great.

Rehabilitation Programs



- In prisons, there are Community Integration Programs, Drug and Alcohol, Gamblers, Cognitive Skills Programs and some other TAFE courses.
- At Community Correctional Centre: Cognitive Skills Programs, Drug and Alcohol Counselling, Indo-Chinese Individual Counselling Program, etc.



Rehabilitation Programs (cont)



- The role of the Vietnamese Liaison Officer: has created and implemented Vietnamese speaking programs for prisoners.
- Implementation of compulsory / pre-requisite programs for Vietnamese female prisoners.
- In the community, the Indo-Chinese program will continue to be part of the rehabilitation to the Vietnamese offenders.

Conclusion

- A need for active community involvement in the Rehabilitation programs.
- Compulsory programs.
- Further programs be developed to meet the needs of Vietnamese prisoners / offenders.

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