An innovative food processing course at the Alice Springs Juvenile Detention Centre has had its first commercial success with a young offender graduating to a full time job.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said the Certificate 1 in Food Processing, conducted in partnership with Charles Darwin University, provided detainees with the opportunity to gain skills in pastry, baking and food processing.

"Its success has already been measured with the full-time employment of a recently released young offender as a baker in a regional town in Victoria," Mr Elferink said.

"This young man was granted permission to remain at ASYDC past his 18th birthday to allow him to finish his course.

"It is hoped that the other programs and life skills training he received at the centre will prevent him from re-entering the justice system."

"Detainees that enter into the program develop a passion for cooking – a skill that can be used throughout their lifetime.

"Not only do they learn to cook healthy and fresh meals, they also are taught about healthy food choices, and it is hoped they take this knowledge back to their communities and share with their families," Mr Elferink said.

The Certificate I in Food Processing was an introductory qualification with a specific focus on providing production assistance for baked products.

It is delivered on site at the centre in a custom made commercial kitchen housed in a transportable container which was relocated from the Taminmin High School in Darwin on a loan arrangement through the VET in Schools Program.

Units of the course include safe food handling, environmentally sustainable products, operating equipment, work safety and preparation of basic mixes.

The kitchen container is used in conjunction with the Owen Springs Education Unit (run by the Territory’s Education Department) and classes are delivered by CDU who send an instructor to Alice Springs every eight weeks for the purposes of practical kitchen work and assessment.

Mr Elferink said since commencing the program in 2011, the program has seen four full graduates, and to date approximately 30 partial completions.

"To complement the kitchen, garden beds have been established where local produce will be grown by detainees," Mr Elferink said.

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JOHN ELFERINK MLA | Member for PORT DARWIN

“Education and training in horticulture is occurring on an ongoing basis and all detainees admitted to the centre are enrolled.

“This program started in April 2013 and is a nationally recognised course called the Stephanie Alexander Horticulture Program after the noted Victorian food expert.

“It’s giving detainees the chance to understand the importance of growing and consuming healthy foods,” Mr Elferink said.

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