A significant day for corrections in the Northern Territory

8 September 2014

The Northern Territory Government’s single largest infrastructure project, the Darwin Correctional Precinct (DCP), has today officially been opened, signalling a new chapter for correctional services.

"The 1048-bed prison will be used to educate and train prisoners, ensuring that their time inside is spent preparing them to be productive members of the community once they finish their sentences," Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said.

"Unlike Labor, we don't think prison should be a holiday. It is an opportunity to change destructive patterns of behaviour through hard work.

"The Territory Government’s ‘Working Prisons Policy’ will focus on employment as a means to break the vicious cycle of repeat offending and reduce the Territory’s high recidivism rate.

"Fewer prisoners in our jail system not only means significant savings for Territorians, but also less crime on our streets.”

Minister Elferink said today’s opening of the DCP will allow the Territory Government to have an increased focus on prisoner learning, training and work programs.

“Our 'Sentenced to a Job' program is already providing many inmates with something they have never had before; paid employment and self-worth,” Mr Elferink said.

"Through work, people are able to break away from the passive welfare system, a poisonous problem which contributed to many inmates offending in the first place.

"If we release prisoners back into the community with skills and a better prospect of gaining paid work, they are much less likely to reoffend and end up back in the Territory’s jail system.”

Minister for Infrastructure Peter Styles said that despite a need for a new prison, in 2008 the former Labor Government chose a Rolls Royce model that the Territory simply could not afford.
"The former Labor Government’s ‘Prison-Mahal’ model has left taxpayers footing a $1.8 billion bill that will take 30 years to pay off,” he said.

"Rather than exploring ways to reduce repeat offending and address prisoner numbers in the Territory, the Former Labor Government got out their cheque book and signed on the dotted line for a brand new $495 million prison - which will be a drain on the Government’s Budget for decades to come.

Minister Styles thanked Northern Territory Government employees who have worked on the planning and construction of the significant infrastructure project.

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