Correctional services in the Territory will be reformed by the Country Liberals Government to reduce repeat offender rates and the impact on the Territory’s bottom line.

Measures included in the Mini Budget will begin the reform process, including:
- $1 million for early intervention and residential camps (boot camps) for juvenile offenders
- $448,000 to create an additional community work party at both the Alice Springs and the Darwin correctional centres
- The QuickSmart literacy and numeracy program to be rolled out in correctional centres.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said under the previous Labor Government the Territory had the highest recidivism rate in the country with half of offenders in prison returning to prison within two years of being released.

“Aside from the obvious impacts on these people’s lives, we simply cannot afford to continue to have people caught in this revolving door. It is costing the Territory more than a quarter of a million dollars per day to keep offenders locked up,” Mr Elferink said.

“To reduce the recidivism rate, the focus must be on correction and for this to happen offenders need to overcome two of the major barriers to gaining meaningful work: poor literacy and numeracy skills and real job experience.

“The Territory will lead the nation by implementing the QuickSmart program in our correctional centres. This program is tailored to the individual’s education level and has demonstrated results in increasing the literacy and numeracy levels of participants. We will utilise this proven program to increase the literacy and numeracy of inmates.

“Providing access to education is just half of the equation; prisoners also need to be engaged in the workforce. Two additional community work parties will develop prisoners’ work skills as well as building community relationships.

“These measures will provide inmates with the essential skills to be at worst job ready and at best employed when they leave the prison system.

“The benefits of the Country Liberals Government’s approach are two-fold: reducing the recidivism rate will save the Territory money; and increasing the literacy, numeracy and
real job experience of offenders will mean they can forge a future for themselves and be a contributing member of society, both financially and socially.

“Our young offenders will also be dealt with firmly and fairly. The focus within the boot camps will be on work rather than play from dawn to dusk to instil a strong work ethic in young offenders.

“We know many of our young offenders lack self esteem and confidence about what they can achieve in life. The boot camps will provide structure and teach our young offenders about rights and responsibilities so they can become positive members of our community.

“Not only has the Country Liberals Government inherited the highest recidivism rate in the country from the previous Labor government but also a jail which will cost us $1.8 billion over 30 years just for the building, and maintenance. This commitment will bind the next seven incoming governments.

“To make matters worse, at the current rates the new prison is likely to be at capacity once it is completed.

“The Darwin Correctional Centre capacity will be increased to 857, with $1.8 million allocated in 2012-13 and $2.4 million ongoing from 2013-14. Progressive development of the Correctional Industry Program is anticipated to earn $580,000 per year more in revenue by 2015-16.

“The new prison was just one of the expensive legacies inherited from Labor. These commitments in all departments have been evaluated and prioritised.”

Other new funding commitments of the Department of Correctional Services include:

- $2.45 million in 2013-14 and 2014-15 and $2.24 million ongoing from 2015-16 for the Ali Curung partnership farming project
- $670,000 ongoing from 2012-13 for the Alice Springs Juvenile Detention Centre
- $457,000 to recruit the management of the Commissioning Team for the Darwin Correctional Precinct
- $120,000 to restructure the kitchen facilities at the Darwin Correctional Centre
- $409,000 in 2012-13 and $342,000 ongoing from 2013-14 to increase the sitting days of the Parole Board.

“As part of the Mini Budget process, we have had to review our expenditure in all portfolios. In the Department of Correctional Services, saving measures of $1.25 million in 2012-13 and $2.5 million ongoing from 2013-14 were identified,” Mr Elferink said.

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