Prisoners have been put to work in Arnhem Land and collected enough recyclables to fill more than 50 large bags, equivalent to saving 126 tonnes of CO2 or planting 189 trees for carbon absorption.

A partnership between the Northern Territory Government and Keep Australia Beautiful Council (KABC) has seen 30 low security prisoners participate in an ‘Arnhem Land Blitz’ clearing remote communities of unnecessary rubbish and waste.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said the partnership ensures prisoners are making a positive contribution to their community and giving back for the crimes they have committed.

“Prisoners provide free labour to not-for-profit community organisations, non-government organisations and local government projects that would not otherwise get done due to lack of local contractors or funds.

“Both the Territory Government and KABC benefit from the partnership with Arnhem Land returning to its natural beauty and being cleared of rubbish and waste, while prisoners learn new skills and work ethic,” Mr Elferink said.

KABC Northern Territory CEO Heimo Schober said the prison work party is a great source of litter control in the area.

“The prisoners have not only reduced rubbish in the area, they have also learned the correct way to recycle and developed an appreciation for the benefits of recycling,” Mr Schober said.

“The prison work party has provided invaluable assistance to KABC and I hope that once the prisoners are released, they are able to use their knowledge to positively influence their own communities by taking ownership and responsibility for binning their rubbish.”

Prisoners have been taking part in the ‘Arnhem Land Blitz’ prior to arriving at this month’s Garma Festival where they will assist with the set-up, operation and pack-up process.

While at Garma, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be signed between the Yothu Yindi Foundation, the Gumatj Corporation and the Department of Correctional Services for the annual provision of a prisoner work party to assist with the Festival.

Mr Elferink said the MOU would be reviewed in 2016 and then every year after that.

“Prisoners are now expected to work while they are in jail, where they will learn new skills and trades to increase the likelihood of gaining employment upon their release, and the partnership with the Garma Festival will extend that opportunity into these remote communities.”

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JOHN ELFERINK MLA | Member for PORT DARWIN

MEDIA RELEASE

The work party now at Garma is scheduled to complete cleanup and recycling programs at Ramminginning, Manningrida and Oenpelli on their return.

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