A permanent low-security prisoner work camp will be established at Nhulunbuy in a move that will keep inmates close to their traditional homeland while also increasing their employment opportunities upon release.

Inmates from the Datjala Work Camp will move into a 50-bed facility and participate in a mix of volunteer work and paid employment through the Sentenced to a Job program.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said Budget 2014 has allocated $2.45 million in 2014-15 and ongoing funding of $2.24 million per year to meet the camp’s operational costs.

The Datjala Work Camp will mostly accommodate offenders who have family and community ties to the East Arnhem Region, allowing them to retain their cultural values while serving out their sentence.

“Offenders at the camp will be put to work across the East Arnhem region to complete projects which would otherwise not have been accomplished due to labour shortages or a lack of funding,” Mr Elferink said.

“These prisoners will give back to the very community they offended against.

“Inmates who prove that they are suitable to take part in the Sentenced to a Job program will be placed in paid work with local employers.

“These low-risk offenders are a flexible labour solution for local businesses who are struggling to find employees.

“We are offering a stable labour force for local businesses that may be finding it difficult to attract workers following Rio Tinto’s announcement to curtail the alumina refinery at Gove.

“Prisoners will not compete with locals for jobs, instead they will work in positions which cannot be filled.

“Already, there are 16 prisoners participating in the Sentenced to a Job program at Nhulunbuy and are employed as refuse truck drivers, bakery assistants, pest controllers and in the construction industry.

“Inmates are more likely to retain employment when they are released from prison if they are close to their home community and family, therefore providing them with a reason to not reoffend.

“I want to provide prisoners with a reason to never re-enter the corrections system, and employment is key.
JOHN ELFERINK MLA | Member for PORT DARWIN

“\(\text{I want these prisoners to get off the ball and chain that is passive welfare and instead be self-sufficient with something to lose.}\)"

“The Country Liberals Government is committed to reducing the Northern Territory’s high recidivism rate, which currently sits at 52 per cent.”

Mr Elferink said the partnership between the Department of Correctional Services and the Gumatj Corporation to establish the Datjala Work Camp was a great step forward towards a shared vision of reducing repeat offending in the Northern Territory.

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