INDIGENOUS ELDERS OFFER LEADERSHIP AND ADVICE TO PRISONERS

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A group of more than 25 Indigenous elders have met in Darwin today to identify innovative ways to assist inmates to get off the path of reoffending once they are released from prison.

The Elders Visiting Program (EVP) capitalises on the knowledge and leadership of Indigenous elders to improve a prisoner’s prospects of reintegration once they are released.

The program also ensures that links with culture and community are maintained while an inmate serves out their sentence.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink has addressed the elders and outlined the synergies between the Northern Territory Government’s new approach to reducing recidivism and the important work of the EVP.

“The Country Liberals Government is focused on prisoner education, training, and work programs to ensure that inmates are more employable once they leave the corrections system,” Mr Elferink said.

“Low-security prisoners are also able to participate in Sentenced to a Job, a paid employment program which sees inmates working out in the community in real jobs and earning award wages.

“The EVP is able to provide the guidance and encouragement that a prisoner needs to remain working in a job well after they serve out their sentence.

“The Northern Territory Government has recently announced an initiative aimed at arresting the high rates of recidivism amongst the Indigenous population.

“Located in Nhulunbuy, the Datjala Work Camp will allow prisoners to remain close to their homeland while also increasing employment opportunities upon their release.

“The camp will mostly accommodate prisoners who have family and community ties in the East Arnhem Region. All inmates are expected to work in either volunteer or paid employment through the Sentenced to a Job program.

“Culture and family is clearly very important to many of the Indigenous inmates and it is important that these ties are maintained.

Mr Elferink said every avenue must be explored to reduce recidivism in the Northern Territory, which currently sits at 57 per cent.”

Media Contact: Danielle Lede 0404 515 414

www.nt.gov.au
GPO Box 3146, Darwin NT 0801