John Elferink  
Minister for Correctional Services  

Times change for corrections in the Northern Territory  
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The Northern Territory Government’s single largest infrastructure project, the Darwin Correctional Precinct (DCP), is expected to be completed in the coming months and will signal a new chapter in correctional services.

The Country Liberals Government will use the 1048-bed prison to educate and train prisoners and ensure that their time inside is spent working, instead of being locked in a jail cell, unproductive and idle.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said despite the $495 million ‘prison-mahal’ model which was burdened on taxpayers by the former Labor Government, this Government will use the new facility to actively drive down recidivism.

“The former Labor Government gave up on developing programs and plans to reduce repeat offending in the community, instead simply building a new prison that will cost $1.8 billion and take the Territory taxpayer 30 years to pay off,” Mr Elferink said.

“The Northern Territory Government’s ‘working prisons policy’ will focus on employment as a means to break the cycle of repeat offending to keep crime down.

“I want a prisoner to walk away from jail with the necessary skills that will enable them to gain and retain a job and become a law abiding, tax paying member of the community.

“A person is much less likely to reoffend when they are engaged in meaningful employment, compared to relying on the toxic poison that is passive welfare.

“Low-security prisoners are also eligible to participate in the Northern Territory Government’s paid employment program, Sentenced to a Job, where inmates earn award wages, pay tax and rent for their cells and contribute to a victims’ assistance fund.

“We have come a long way from the ‘rack and stack’ model of previous corrections facilities where prisoners are simply locked in their cells with little to no focus on rehabilitation.”
The DCP is the Top End’s fifth prison and will have the capacity to house significantly more prisoners than the Darwin Correctional Centre at Berrimah, which was originally designed to hold 110 prisoners more than 35 years ago.

While there have been major technological advances since the first prison was established in the Northern Territory in 1870, prison cells at the DCP are basic and are not air-conditioned.

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