New legislation to guide correctional services into the future

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New legislation has passed through the Northern Territory Parliament which will provide an improved and modern foundation for correctional services’ approaches and objectives.

The new Correctional Services Bill 2014 reflects the advancements to corrections in the Territory, with a greater focus on the expectation on prisoners to learn and work.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said the legislation replaces the existing Prisons (Correctional Services) Act, which, through time, has become outdated.

Changes defined in the new legislation include:

- Additional provisions that enable prisoners to engage in work
- Ability for prisoners to financially contribute to their own learning programs, where they have sufficient funds in their account
- Provisions to recover costs from prisoners in the event that they destroy or damage custodial property, a monitoring device or any other equipment provided to them.
- Ability for the Commissioner of Correctional Services to release a qualifying prisoner on administrative home detention towards the end of their sentence on strict conditions, which will likely include a condition to wear an electronic monitoring device.

“The opening of the soon-to-be completed Darwin Correctional Precinct (DCP) at Holtze will signal a new chapter of corrections in the Northern Territory, and it is important that we have the legislative framework to reflect current practices,” Mr Elferink said.

“This approach to corrections will make prisoners accountable, responsible and constructive, and provide them with opportunities to elevate themselves and prevent them from returning to the corrections system.

“We must correct an offender’s behaviour and provide them with the tools and know-how to reform themselves, and for many, break away from the poisonous passive welfare system.”

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