Media Release

John Elferink
Minister for Correctional Services

Prison dogs receive new home at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre

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Efforts to keep drugs and other contraband out of the Territory’s correctional centres have taken a big step forward with the official opening of a new facility for the Drug Detector Dog Unit at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said the new $453,000 building will provide the dogs and their handlers with a quality, locally built, fit-for-purpose base from which to carry out their important work.

“Not only do these dogs carry out routine cell and grounds searches, they act as a visible and potent deterrent to visitors considering smuggling in drugs and other contraband items,” Mr Elferink said.

“The security of our correctional centres is essential in ensuring our communities remain safe and that staff and prisoner welfare is not compromised by illicit substance use.

“The new centre is a big step up from the 12 year old transportable, mining style donga which the Unit has operated out of until now.

“The facility will provide a modern home for the valuable, highly trained animals that play an important role at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

"The type of dogs used and their roles had evolved since the first dog unit was established in Alice Springs back in 2002, with attack dogs making way for the less physically threatening but no less effective Passive Alert Drug Detection (PADD) dog and the General Purpose (GP) dog."

There are currently five handlers in charge of four PADD and three GP dogs.

The GP dogs are especially used in crowd control, handler protection and tracking and have been used very effectively in joint operations with the Northern Territory Police Force.

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