Prisoners dishing up greens

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Prisoners at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre (ASCC) have been busy in the garden producing more than 30,000 bunches of bok choy per year for local consumption.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said around 15 prisoners have been growing the produce to keep up with demand and have been learning valuable horticulture skills along the way.

“The bok choy is sold to a local wholesaler which then distributes it to restaurants and supermarkets in Central Australia,” Mr Elferink said.

“Prisoners at the ASCC plant three-week-old seedlings which they harvest every three weeks, yielding on average 600 bunches per week,” he said.

Senior Industrial Officer Jaren Ewin said inmates are keen to get their hands dirty and learn about farming practices which they can use when they are released

“They are enthusiastic to learn these new skills and have become very committed to creating a successful crop,” he said.

“This goes to show that the prison can produce an environmentally friendly, high-quality product for consumption.”

Also growing on the grounds of the ASCC is a mixed citrus orchard with Valencia and Washington Naval oranges, mandarins, limes, lemons and grapefruit. These are watered using recycled water treated on site at ASCC. The recycled water is treated with a chlorination system to remove all bacteria prior to its use.

When the weather begins to cool the prison will be expanding the operation to include other crops which are suitable for growing and harvesting in the area.

Mr Elferink said the Northern Territory Government’s Working Prisons policy means that every capable inmate should be working in the prison system, whether it is in the laundry, kitchen or garden.

“It is simply not productive to have a prisoner sitting in their cell twiddling their thumbs, they should be made to work and earn their keep,” he said.
Media Note: Images attached, featuring Senior Industrial Officer Jared Ewin.

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Image 1.JPG
Image 2.JPG