One of the world's most respected and experienced prison officials has been appointed as the head of the Northern Territory's Corrective Services.

Denmark's Jens Tolstrup has beaten an elite field of candidates to be named as the new Director of Correctional Services.

The worldwide search to fill the position has provided the Territory with an exemplary appointment – Mr Tolstrup a proven performer on the national and international scene.

Over nearly 4 decades, Mr Tolstrup has managed prisons, has helped governments from several countries to reform existing correction systems and establish new ones.

Mr Tolstrup is considered one of the pre-eminent experts in his field and has been used as a consultant in a number of countries including Israel, South Africa and Azerbaijan, and has as well provided expert advice on correctional reform to the Council of Europe.

He's also been a consultant on several television programmes and movies about prisons.

Mr Tolstrup said he was excited about the opportunity and looks forward to turning the Northern Territory Correction Service into one of the best of its type in the world.

"The Territory offers unique opportunities and unique challenges," Mr Tolstrup said.

"I've already met some prison officers during a visit to the Alice Springs and Darwin Correctional Centres and I have seen first hand their commitment and professionalism."

"I can't wait to work with them to establish a world class Corrections Service," Mr Tolstrup said.

Minister for Justice Dr Peter Toyne said the selection of Mr Tolstrup marks a new era in Corrections in the Territory.

"Mr Tolstrup has all the credentials and the proven ability to make a real difference in the Territory," Dr Toyne said.

"The timing couldn't be better – Mr Tolstrup has helped to implement changes for the better in corrections centre around the world – the Territory is about to undergo its own transformation."

The appointment of Mr Tolstrup coincides with the first meeting of the
Implementation Committee overseeing prison reform in the Territory.

Dr Toyne met with the Committee, including prison officers and their Association earlier today, in the first step towards turning the vision for a new correctional service into a reality.

“The Northern Territory will have the most progressive Correctional Centres in the country following the adoption of the Path to Good Corrections,” Dr Toyne said.

“The Government will provide $18.5 million over four years to implement the reforms and another $8 million for the upgrade of facilities.”

“We are preventing crime by preventing re-offending. Programs will be implemented to reduce the number of inmates who re-offend once released to cut the population of our correction centres.”

“Prison officers will play an important role in achieving this goal.”

“We will also give prison officers the opportunity to follow a career path by reshaping corrections and giving greater recognition to the job as a profession.”

“This will be achieved by supporting training – an additional 10 prison officers will be employed to facilitate this improvement of skills and qualifications.

“This should help to recruit more prison officers and just as importantly retain them.”

The review of adult custodial services was conducted by one of the most respected experts on correction centres, Dr Ole Ingstrup (President of the International Corrections and Prisons Association).

Mr Tolstrup will commence on 4 August 2004.