MEDIA RELEASE

PRISON MUST BE A DETERRENT

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Only 5% of prisoners in Territory jails are tested randomly for drug use every month, according to figures obtained by the Country Liberals.

Shadow Minister for Corrections, Willem Westra van Holthe, said the numbers raise questions about the effectiveness of the Government’s drug testing regimes in prisons.

“With more than 1100 prisoners in the two main Territory jails, there must be scope for a tougher regime to deter the use of illicit drugs in our Corrections system,” Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“Jail is supposed to serve as a deterrent from re-offending and if inmates feel under the pump from a rigorous, effective testing regime, they will be less likely to risk drug use on the inside and less likely to re-offend.

“Even with the limited testing regime, 21 prisoners tested positive for cannabis and one for morphine use in Berrimah jail and 22 tested positive for cannabis use in Alice Springs last year.

“In the month of October 2011, almost 20% of those tested were found to have had cannabis in their system. It’s possible a similar percentage of inmates across the entire prison population were similarly affected.

“The Government will spend $1.8billion building the Taj Mahal of prisons in Darwin, and that ludicrous spending must not be used as an excuse for failure to properly resource drug testing programs.

“The Department provided no details of the testing outcomes at the Barkly Prison Farm. I will be seeking that information immediately.”

(See attached document)

Further comment: Willem Westra van Holthe 041 4 778 430