New prison to be built at Holtze

Chief Minister Paul Henderson today announced Darwin’s new prison precinct will be built in Holtze as part of the Government’s new era in corrections.

The prison precinct will incorporate an 800-bed Doug Owston Correctional Centre and a secure mental health unit and will be built about four kilometres north of Howard Springs Road.

Construction of the new precinct is intended to be delivered through a Public Private Partnership, in order to achieve best value for Territorians.

“Darwin’s prison precinct and the new era in corrections is part of this Government’s commitment to building a safer Territory,” Mr Henderson said.

“There are more police in the Territory than ever before, and people who break the law are getting caught and going to jail.

“But almost half of all offenders are back in jail within two years – we must break the cycle of reoffending to reduce prisoner numbers and build a safer community.”

The site for the new Darwin prison precinct was chosen in consultation with the Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood, about the new era in corrections under the Parliamentary Agreement.

“I welcome Mr Wood’s input into and support for the new era in corrections,” Mr Henderson said.

“The existing prison at Berrimah is outdated and does not have the infrastructure or capacity needed to deliver the rehabilitation and education programs needed to change behaviour and break the cycle of reoffending.”

Correctional Services Minister Gerry McCarthy said the new prison will adopt best practice in security, design and construction.

The new prison will include:
- dedicated space for education, programs support, industries, and life skills training;
- program space and accommodation for Elders and Respected Persons working with prisoners;
- a horticulture area for food production;
- staff training facilities; and
- a Drug Detection Dog Unit.
The 36-bed secure Mental Health Behavioural Management Facility at the precinct will be managed by the Department of Health and Families.

“This new facility will more effectively and appropriately accommodate offenders with mental health issues,” said Mr McCarthy.

Work is expected to start on site in 2011/12 and the prison is planned to be operational in 2014.

Mr McCarthy said the prison precinct is part of the Government’s five-point new era in corrections package that will be rolled out over four years.

The package aims to cut prisoner numbers by at least 20% - or 220 – and bring the Territory’s reoffending rate down from 47% to in line with at least the national average of 39.3%.

It delivers:

- New sentencing options – Community Custody Orders and Community Based Orders – giving courts the power to order offenders into rehabilitation, education and training, and work programs;
- An extra 45 alcohol and drug treatment beds, including the construction of a new centre in Alice Springs;
- Electronic surveillance transmitters and voice recognition security to allow Corrections to monitor the behaviour and location of offenders on community orders, home detention, and parole;
- Improved reintegration and post release support; and
- Construction of new prison facilities, including the new Darwin prison precinct and a new Katherine Prison Farm.

The new era in corrections builds on the Government’s significant investment in police and alcohol reform.

For more information about the new era in corrections, visit www.safeterritory.nt.gov.au or email newera@nt.gov.au.

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