MEDIA RELEASE

John Robertson MLC

Minister for Corrective Services
Minister for Public Sector Reform
Special Minister of State

Tuesday 7 July

LITHGOW LEADS THE WAY IN FIGHT AGAINST MOBILE PHONES IN PRISON

Lithgow Correctional Centre will lead the way for the whole of Australia if a trial of mobile phone jamming technology is given final approval for commencement later this year, said Minister for Corrective Services John Robertson ahead of a visit to the region this week.

The Minister will tour Lithgow Correctional Centre on Wednesday July 8 at 9:30am with local MP Gerard Martin.

Mr Martin welcomed the Minister's announcement and said the new mobile phone jamming technology, if successful, would make living in the vicinity of correctional centres safer.

"Mobile phones in prisons are a serious risk to prison and community safety," said Mr Robertson.

"A mobile phone in the hands of a prison inmate is a potential murder weapon. They can be used to run criminal activities on the outside, threaten witnesses and organise escapes - that's why this new technology is so important.

"Mobile phone jamming would render mobile phones in prisons completely useless.

"The State Government hopes to commence the trial by the end of 2009; however, we do need approval from the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

"We are hopeful that our application to the Commonwealth to trial this innovative technology will be ticked off in the not too distant future."

Mr Martin said the trial of mobile phone jamming technology at Lithgow would showcase the great work of local prison officers all around Australia.

"Every state and territory government in Australia is making a financial contribution to the trial at Lithgow because the project is so important to national prison safety and security," said Mr Martin.

"My priority is to ensure that our prisons are safe but also, that mobile phone communications in surrounding areas aren't affected.

"New Zealand has now successfully employed the technology in several sites, without affecting communications outside the prison walls.

"This is an exciting development for the staff at Lithgow Correctional Centre and the local community, who will all benefit from this new technology that will make our prisons safer."

Mobile phone jamming will supplement strategies already put in place by the State Government to keep prisons contraband free. These include visitor and inmate searches, metal detectors, x-ray machines and a new program to train dogs to detect the chemicals found in mobile phone batteries.

Media contacts: **John Robertson (c/o Lucy Muirhead) 0402 730 710**
Gerard Martin 0427 245 759