MEDIA RELEASE

John Robertson MLC

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

Thursday, July 9

MINISTER WELCOMES NEW PUPPIES TO KIRKCONNELL CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

Minister for Corrective Services John Robertson and Local Member for Bathurst Gerard Martin will be greeted on their visit to Kirkconnell Correctional Centre this Thursday July 9 at 1:15pm by some unusually friendly inmates – four new puppies.

The pups, whose names will be announced at a handover ceremony that day, are the newest entrants to the Pups in Prison program – a partnership between the Department of Corrective Services and Assistance Dogs Australia. Kirkconnell Correctional Centre is located on Sunny Corner Rd, Yetholme.

“The Pups in Prison program is a fantastic initiative whereby inmates care for and conduct basic training with puppies that are then given to someone with a disability to help with everyday tasks,” said Mr Robertson.

“The dogs learn skills such as opening and closing doors, picking up dropped items and pressing the button at pedestrian traffic lights. They also help to provide companionship for people at home and relieve some of the loneliness and isolation associated with living with a physical disability.

“It will be another 18 months of intensive training before they graduate from pups in prison to pups on parole.

“They will then undergo a further six months intensive training with Assistance Dogs Australia before commencing service with their new owners.”

Local Member for Bathurst Gerard Martin said the arrival of the pups was an exciting day for the local community who have taken part in competitions to name the new pups.

“Children from Meadow Flat Public School and the Bathurst community in general have each been given the chance to name one of the new pups,” said Mr Martin. “The other two names will be chosen from a ballot of staff at Kirkconnell Correctional Centre and all will be announced today at a special ceremony.”

“All we know at the moment is that each of the puppies’ names will begin with ‘K’ for Kirkconnell.”

Minister Robertson said inmates who participate in the program learn about commitment and responsibility – they are more likely to enrol in other rehabilitation programs and are better prepared for life post-release.

“This program not only delivers huge benefits to people who need assistance in the home, it also aids with the rehabilitation process for prison inmates,” said Mr Robertson.

“Some of these inmates have never experienced unconditional love at any time in their lives. These pups help the inmates learn how to relate, trust and care for something – all valuable skills for life after prison.”

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