
MEDIA RELEASE

John Robertson MLC

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



Tuesday, August 4

NEW PROGRAM GIVES YOUNG INDIGENOUS OFFENDERS A SECOND CHANCE

This Thursday 6 August, the Governor of NSW Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir will open Balund-a, a second chance program for young adult indigenous offenders in Northern NSW – the first of its kind in Australia.

Minister for Corrective Services John Robertson said the NSW State Government is committed to addressing the causes of high indigenous incarceration rates with more than one in five inmates in NSW of aboriginal descent.

“Balund-a is unique because it allows magistrates to give young indigenous offenders one last try at addressing the causes of their criminal behaviour before they are sentenced.

“13 of the 14 offenders who have successfully completed the program to-date have avoided ending up in prison upon their return to court.

“At full capacity a total of 50 men and women will live at Balund-a, working the cattle farm, participating in structured programs everyday and working to confront the reasons why they’ve committed crimes in the past.

“It is all about setting up the best possible chance for young adult aboriginal offenders to turn their lives around before they enter the correctional system.

“If we can keep 50 young aboriginal men and women in this region out of prison each year and give them the chance to make something of their lives, then the program has been a success.”

The full name of the program is Bugilmah Burube Wullinje Balund-a. This translates roughly to “Be good now you have second chance down by the river”.

“Balund-a is a tangible example of the Government’s commitment to reduce reoffending by 10 per cent by 2016 under the State Plan.

“There is a strong focus on cultural reconnection, literacy, vocational skills, life skills, substance abuse treatment and rebuilding family and community relationships.

“All residents must be 18 – 35 years of age and can be referred to the program from as far afield as Kempsey, Armidale and the Queensland border.”

Half of the staff employed at Balund-a are indigenous including three local aboriginal elders. A majority of the activities at Balund-a are delivered by community-based groups (many of which are Aboriginal) and their content and delivery reflects the needs of the predominantly Aboriginal clientele.

Media contact: Daniel Kildea 0418 673 773

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“This facility takes the lessons we have learnt at our existing aboriginal programs in prisons such as Yetta Dhinnakkal near Brewarrina and Warakirri at Ivanhoe and applies it to individuals pre-sentencing.

“That is what makes Balund-a so different – the hope is that these residents will never end up in fulltime custody.”

The Governor of NSW her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir will officially open the facility at 12:00pm, Thursday 6 August at Balund-a (Tabulam), 186 Welsh Road, Mookima Wybra via Tabulam.

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