



MEDIA RELEASE

Driver skills steer a better course into a bright future

Tuesday 2 November 2016

A new program that encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates to complete their Driver Knowledge Test aims to help reduce vehicle offences and recidivism rates among young people.

Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice NSW have signed a memorandum of understanding with Roads and Maritime Services to have the test available in correctional centres.

CSNSW Commissioner Peter Severin said the program was aimed at young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates to reduce incarceration rates and increase the number of licenced drivers.

“CSNSW is working hard to reduce recidivism rates through programs, education and support, which provides young inmates with skills, knowledge and opportunities,” Mr Severin said.

“Allowing young inmates to complete their test can mean when they’re released they can go straight to Roads and Maritime and collect their learner licence.

“This not only saves time but reduces the temptation for them to drive without a licence.”

Juvenile Justice Executive Director, Melanie Hawyes, said support was targeted towards Indigenous youth in our centres of legal driving age to improve their confidence, employment prospects and to prevent reoffending.

“We offer eligible detainees in the Waratah Pre-Release Program the opportunity to sit for the Driver Knowledge test and we have Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre detainees able to practice the Driver Ability Road Test online during after school programs,” Ms Hawyes said.

“Once detainees are eligible for outings, staff can accompany detainees to Service NSW to complete the test. There are various driver safety and learn to drive programs that Juvenile Justice clients can access.

“These types of initiatives help build confidence and gives young people responsibilities that can assist them stay out of trouble.”

Roads and Maritime Services Chief Executive Ken Kanofski said the agency was focused on helping young people achieve their goals.

“We have a strong history of helping Indigenous youth in NSW through our traineeship programs for example,” Mr Kanofski said.

“That is why the agency is pleased to team with Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice NSW to provide another avenue to support Indigenous youth in NSW.

“This will enable young people to focus on learning the road rules and ensuring when they do get released, they can obtain their licence.”



Justice Corrective Services

There are 715 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates aged under 25 in the state's correctional centres, with a recidivism rate of 66.7 per cent – 15 percentage points more than non-Indigenous inmates of the same age group.

Anecdotal evidence from community and custodial corrections officers also suggests many young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people breach parole due to driving offences and are ordered back to prison.

“It's important we stop this cycle of reoffending and breach of parole, which leads to young people returning to correctional centres again and again for driving offences,” Mr Severin said.

“We hope this program will help to reduce some of that reoffending.”

*Inmate data is based on current statistics.

**Recidivism rates are based on sentenced inmates released in 2013/14.