



MEDIA RELEASE **Eight drug-detection doggies emBARK on their new careers**

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The sniffing out of contraband in the state's prisons has been given a boost after Corrective Services NSW welcomed eight specially-trained frontline pooches.

The K9 Handlers and their drug-detecting dogs graduated after undergoing an intensive 16-week course in specialised dog handling and training.

K9 Training Manager Sharon Charman said they will be a valuable addition to the more than 40 staff and their K9s already working in the unit.

"The new recruits have learnt a variety of theory including dog psychology and dealing with incidents to the practical experience of searching inmates and visitors at correctional centres," Ms Charman said.

"The class was a great mix – with the correctional officers coming from a variety of backgrounds and experiences – and they all worked well together while their dogs were very adaptive to new environments and information.

"They'll play an important role like the rest of the unit, which conducts regular searches at prisons across the state to help fight drugs and other contraband getting into correctional centres. This provides and promotes a safer environment for staff, inmates and visitors."

The K9 handlers and their dogs will be based in a number of regions across the state:

- Three in the Sydney metropolitan area;
- One in the Hunter and Northern region;
- One in the Southern region;
- One at Junee Correctional Centre; and
- Two in the Central West region.

The K9 unit is part of the elite Security Operations Group and is deployed to assist with inmate search operations and visitor operations.

Each handler is assigned a dog and is responsible for training him or her to recognise particular odours. Some of the dogs are trained to discover drugs while others are trained to detect phones and even explosives.

The SOG conducted more than 85,000 searches of visitors, their property and their vehicles last year, including more than 67,000 with K9s.

This resulted in 243 visitors being charged by police for contraband offences. Correctional centres refused entry to 573 visitors for the same reason during this period.

K9 handler Ben Kember, who is partnered with 14-month old kelpie Jazzie, said it was a great coincidence that all the dogs matched well with their handlers.

"All the new recruits selected a dog at the beginning of the course, the personalities clicked and we stayed with them throughout the course," Mr Kember said.

"All the dogs got along well like their handlers.



Justice Corrective Services

“I feel thankful to be part of this unit and assist staff at all the centres to ensure we’re stopping drugs and other contraband from coming into the prisons.”

K9 handler Mick Campbell, who is partnered with 20-month old Border Collie kelpie cross Seb, said it’s great having a new mate on the job.

“It’s exciting when you achieve milestones with your dog such as when they first smell a particular drug odour,” Mr Campbell said.

“I love having a second family with the K9 unit and our furry friends.”