



MEDIA RELEASE

Prison program rehabilitating dogs helps rehabilitate inmates

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Hundreds of rescue dogs have been adopted by caring families as part of a prison work program that is also helping inmates reduce their chances of reoffending.

The Dog Rehabilitation Program, a joint venture between CSNSW and the RSPCA NSW, has been running at the Outer Metropolitan Multipurpose Centre in Windsor since June 2010.

Inmates re-socialise and re-educate dogs that have been surrendered or rescued, and may be suffering from ill health or behaviour-related issues.

Governor Ivan Calder said there is a 70 to 75 per cent success rate of the dogs being rehabilitated.

“Six inmates are currently participating and they undertake tasks including providing the dogs with appropriate food, water and exercise, conducting animal training and identifying when the dogs are injured or sick,” Mr Calder said.

“The inmates, who are carefully assessed to participate in the program, have the opportunity to obtain certificates in animal studies, which is a nationally recognised course.

“The great thing about the program is that the dogs are given a second chance while the inmates are also given the training and vocational skills to have a second-chance on the outside.

“It gives the inmates an opportunity to give something positive back to the community.”

The program is conducted at the back of the correctional centre where there are 30 purpose-built kennels. There is also a training room and seven yards for the dogs where special exercises are conducted.

Governor Calder said the program teaches the inmates life skills and respect for others.

“The dogs are dependent on the inmates to be cared for, cleaned and fed so the inmates learn a sense of duty,” Mr Calder said.

“The inmates also work along different staff - custodial, programs and RSPCA staff - which are the first steps for a lot of them to having healthy, functional relationships with people on the outside.

“The work of staff at this centre is very much focused on providing work opportunities and programs to offenders nearing the end of their sentences in a bid to help them reintegrate into the community.”

RSPCA NSW Assessment and Rehabilitation Manager Michael Cataldo said to date six inmates have successfully passed the Certificate II of Animal Studies.

“More than 700 dogs have gone through the inmate rehabilitation program,” Mr Cataldo said.



Justice Corrective Services

“There’s really nothing quite like witnessing and being part of inmates and dogs who have both come from difficult and broken backgrounds, come back to life through the program, as they go through a mutually healing process.”

Once the dogs have completed the rehabilitation program and been assessed by RSPCA officers, they are returned to the RSPCA Yagoona shelter for adoption.