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MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday, 22 July 2018

WOMEN RETURN TO BERRIMA CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

A rising female inmate population has led the NSW Government to reclassify the 75-bed Berrima Correctional Centre as a prison exclusively for women.

Male offenders have been in Berrima prison since it was recommissioned in September, 2016. These inmates were absorbed into the wider system last month.

The centre was once a female prison between 2001 and 2011.

Minister for Corrections David Elliott said better policing and tougher sentencing had resulted in an increase in female inmate numbers.

“There has been significant growth in female numbers and this has been addressed with the construction of more than 500 additional beds for women,” Mr Elliott said.

“Since September 2016, we have significantly increased capacity by reopening centres. This includes the 94-bed female prison, Mary Wade Correctional Centre at Lidcombe, which opened in November last year.”

Upgrades made to the minimum-security prison include replacing urinals with appropriate bathroom facilities, two Audio Visual Link suites for court appearances and legal visits, upgrading bunk beds and an additional assessment cell.

Corrective Services NSW Commissioner Peter Severin said offenders who pose the greatest risk of reoffending were being targeted in a record \$330 million investment in rehabilitation programs including courses for inmates on short sentences.

“It’s important to recognise that women in the prison system suffer from high rates of sexual and domestic violence, so programs are designed to address these specific needs and offer a real opportunity to break the cycle of reoffending,” Mr Severin said.

The proportion of women reoffending within 12 months of leaving prison has dropped in the past seven years, from 41.2 per cent to 38 per cent.

There are just over 1,000 women in NSW prisons, including Bathurst, Broken Hill, Cessnock, Grafton, Junee, Mid-North Coast, Wellington, and female centres at Emu Plains, Silverwater, Dillwynia near Windsor and Mary Wade in Lidcombe.