MEDIA RELEASE

CORRECTIONS WORK DESERVES A MEDAL

NSW is spearheading a push for corrections officers to be awarded a national medal for distinguished service, in line with national honours already awarded to police, fire, ambulance and emergency services.

NSW Attorney General and Minister for Justice Brad Hazzard is making the announcement today at the Corrective Services Ministers Conference in Brisbane.

“An Australian Corrections Medal, recognising distinguished service by corrections officers, is long overdue,” Mr Hazzard said.

“The Commonwealth has relied on a 20 year old review of the Australian Honours and Awards system when determining whether new awards should be made.

“That review did not address the unique dangers and risks of serious injury faced by staff in the corrections environment.

“NSW’s Inspector of Custodial Services reported on the high risk environment where corrections officers, on behalf of the community, manage a significantly damaged population in an environment that is not designed to nurture the human spirit.

“Corrective Services NSW holds a Remembrance Day each November.

“Two officers have died in the past 20 years – one stabbed with an HIV infected needle and another following an unprovoked, spontaneous assault by an inmate.

“There are similar tragedies in other States and Territories,” Mr Hazzard said.

“I have written to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Hon Joshua Frydenberg about the need for an Australian Corrections Medal and would be happy for him to visit a prison in NSW to see first hand the work of corrections officers.

“There is a great deal of interest in an Australian Corrections Medal within corrections ranks. Many former members of the Australian defence forces pursue careers in corrections services, and this paramilitary nature may in part explain the interest.

“The Inspector of Custodial Services commended the professionalism and humanity of custodial officers and said there was an unfortunate absence of political and public understanding and acknowledgement of their work.

“An Australian Corrections Medal recognising distinguished service would go some way to righting this wrong,” Mr Hazzard said.