



# Brad Hazzard MP

## Attorney General Minister for Justice

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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Thursday July 31 2014

## HELPING WOMEN BREAK THE PRISON CYCLE

Attorney General and Minister for Justice Brad Hazzard today announced \$250,000 in funding for a mentoring program which helps women who have been in prison get on track and break the cycle of re-offending.

The Department of Justice has partnered with the Women in Prison Advocacy Network (WIPAN), to provide mentoring services over the next 18 months to at least 50 women who are due for release from custody or have recently been released.

“This is about breaking the vicious cycle of crime and ensuring these women do not return to prison and can play an active and positive role in society,” Mr Hazzard said.

“Many women who have been in prison have children and this program helps them with their family responsibilities— helping prevent future generations from continuing the same pattern of criminal behaviour.

“We know that the majority of women successfully return to the community after serving a custodial sentence. We need to increase that majority.”

#### Key facts:

- Women make up around 7% of the prison population in NSW
- The majority serve short sentences of less than six months
- Many female offenders have complex histories including substance abuse, mental illness and family violence and need specialised support to re-enter the community

WIPAN Director Kat Armstrong said the program – which is run by a group of women including ex-prisoners, lawyers, academics and women from the broader community since 2010 – is believed to be the only one of its kind in NSW

“The mentoring may include practical assistance - filling in forms, applying for educational courses, seeking stable housing - as well as support through modelling healthy relationships and encouragement and guidance in navigating positive life decisions,” Ms Armstrong said.

“Through one-on-one relationships with a trained female mentor we provide non-judgmental, practical and emotional support to help with the transition back into the community and to assist the mentee move away from offending behaviour.”

The partnership will run until January 2016 and will be evaluated by the Department of Justice.