

# **Official opening of the Chapel at Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre**

**Thursday 9 June 2011**

## **Introduction:**

- **Mr Laurie Glanfield, Director General of the  
Department of Attorney General and Justice**
- **Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW  
(CSNSW) Ron Woodham**
- **The Rev Rod Moore, Corrective Services NSW  
Chaplaincy**
- **Mr Larry Bolger, General Manager of the  
Silverwater Correctional Centre Cluster**
- **Mr Gary McCahon, General Manager State  
Emergency Service**
- **Aboriginal Elder Aunty Yvonne To'a**
- **Board of Management members and other senior  
officers of Corrective Services NSW**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In welcoming everyone here today I'd like to offer my congratulations to the Corrective Services NSW Chaplaincy and the Rev Rod Moore for the valuable service provided in prisons by our Chaplains.

Ladies and gentlemen, the support of Chaplains in a correctional environment is vital for the well being of both staff and inmates.

Chaplains help create a safe, secure and humane environment through the provision of pastoral care and

their presence can help soften the mood within a prison and ease tensions that can flare up without warning.

They are a broad church, representing twelve different faiths, or church bodies, and ministering to the different streams of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism

In May last year the NSW inmate population peaked at about 10,400 and while it has cut back since then, inmate numbers are still around the 10,000 mark.

Chaplains are integral to the daily operation of correctional facilities and today we now have 80 Chaplains, 38 of them full time, and about 42 sessionals providing services for inmates.

Correctional officers deal with the prison system as a whole - ensuring the safety and protection of the community while overseeing inmates in a secure environment – while Chaplains by the nature of their work always deal with inmates as individuals.

By this, I don't mean simply as members of different faiths but as ordinary human beings who experience fears, have emotional and spiritual needs, who worry about their families and who agonise over the reasons why they have come to the end of the road and are behind bars.

Chaplains are called on to be everything from a counsellor, a helping hand, a good listener to a provider of spiritual guidance.

They are there to help inmates in times of grief, stress and tragedy and provide comfort and reassurance.

Without Chaplains, many inmates would be totally alone with their troubles and I'm sure many have quietly said: "Thank God - whomever that might be - you were here for me."

While Chaplains are also there to lighten the load for inmates' families.

And they are there too for staff when the going gets tough in an environment which has tension, stress and strain.

Without the support of Chaplains over the years the correctional system in NSW – and I'm sure in other States – would have much greater stresses placed on it.

Certainly on the human level anyway.

Ladies and gentlemen, Corrective Services NSW continues to build a network of quiet places in our prisons where inmates and staff can go to pray, or quietly reflect.

The Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre Chapel is the latest such facility.

I am told the new Chapel was originally an office for correctional staff until the former general manager of Silverwater Women's, Gary McCahon, pushed for the demountable to be relocated inside Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre.

In the past women had difficulty accessing the old Chapel without an escort. now that the new chapel is here, I understand attendances have greatly increased.

As well, there is seating in the area for people to have a coffee and a chat with the Chaplain.

I would like at this point to give a special thank you to the St Vincent de Paul Society for providing financial assistance to the Chapel through their “People in Special Ministry Fund” which helped provide essentials like furniture and a lectern.

Ladies and gentlemen, Silverwater Women’s Correctional centre today houses about 228 remand and sentenced maximum security female inmates, including Drug Court and Mental Health specific units.

The Centre is clearly a vital cog in the NSW correctional system and that is why it is so important that the women here have an easily accessible Chapel...a place where a Chaplain can offer everything from spiritual guidance and support to a quiet word when spirits are low and personal problems become a mounting burden.

Ladies and gentlemen I now have great pleasure in  
officially opening the new Silverwater Women's  
Correctional Centre Chapel

Thank you