

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Crime Prevention
Minister for Corrections
Minister for Youth Justice
Minister for Victim Support



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HELPING PEOPLE INTO JOBS AND BACK ON TRACK AFTER PRISON

A new partnership between the Andrews Labor Government and private business will see hundreds of prisoners employed after their release – getting more lives back on track, driving down reoffending and building a safer community for everyone.

Under the Post-Release Employment Opportunities program, a number of textile and food wholesaling businesses will provide employment for up to 225 people when they leave prison and return to the community over the next two years.

The employment opportunities are supported by vocational training and education undertaken inside Victorian prisons, including warehousing, food processing, general maintenance and textile work like making prison tracksuits and mattresses.

This employment program is supported by the investment in the *Victorian Budget 2022-23* for two employment hubs at the Marngoneet Correctional Centre and Loddon Prison to help prisoners get sustainable employment when released.

The Prison Industries program within Corrections Victoria employs more than 1,400 prisoners from 13 public prisons in 65 distinct industries. In 2020-21 it achieved a turnover of \$38 million and helped prisoners gain vital skills to re-enter the workforce.

After a rough start in life, including periods of homelessness, Luke Anderson went to prison where he became determined to turn his life around.

He is a firm believer in the benefits of post-release employment helping to change prisoners' prospects by improving self-esteem, mental health and the ability to live a life free of crime.

Since Luke's time in prison, he has founded three companies, including Fair Threads, which provides a web-based clothing store that sources prison-compliant clothing at low cost to help families purchase the right clothes for loved ones in jail.

Budget papers revealed that the recidivism rate in Victoria improved last year with an expected outcome of 37.7 per cent compared to the target of 41 per cent.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Corrections Natalie Hutchins

"By working in partnership with private businesses we've created opportunities to improve community safety by supporting prisoners to get employment and get their lives back on track once they are released."

"A job provides income, independence and the opportunity to be a contributing member of the community – all of which are significant factors in reducing someone's risk of reoffending and improving their life."

Quote attributable to former prisoner and founder of Fair Threads Luke Anderson

"Post-prison employment allows inmates to continue counselling and other self-improvement practices they have begun in prison and gives them the resources to pay for essentials such as food, petrol and housing."