

# Media Release

**The Hon Enver Erdogan MP**  
Minister for Corrections  
Minister for Youth Justice  
Minister for Victim Support



Monday, 20 March 2023

## **BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE AFTER PRISON**

The Andrews Labor Government is helping break the cycle of reoffending by offering training in construction to prisoners to help them secure a job after release.

Minister for Corrections Enver Erdogan today visited Loddon–Middleton Prison in Castlemaine to meet corrections staff and prisoners who are part of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Centre of Excellence program that provides prisoners with the opportunity to obtain civil construction licenses and tickets.

Former prisoners have turned their lives around by using the program to find employment and pre-apprenticeship pathways and land a job in the construction sector, as well as warehousing and traffic control.

The *Victorian Budget 2022/23* allocated \$37 million over three years to ensure prisoners have access to quality VET education programs that reduce barriers to paid employment upon release.

The program is delivered by Corrections Victoria in conjunction with Bendigo Kangan Institute and major employers in the civil construction industry. It provides prisoners intensive training over 12 to 15 weeks and focuses on practical skills such as operating forklifts, skid steers, excavators and elevating work platforms.

Program participants are also given the opportunity to meet with civil construction employers to discuss potential employment opportunities as part of their transition to work in the community upon release.

Corrections Victoria provides people in prison with training, education, employment services, and community reintegration programs to ensure they have the best chance of leading safe and productive lives when they return to the community.

There are five VET Centres of Excellence in Civil Construction and one VET Centre of Excellence in Welding across the state's prisons, with the Labor Government investing close to \$7 million over four years into programs aimed at supporting people in prison to get back to work.

This funding will see the establishment of Employment Hubs and Employment Specialists in Prisons – connecting people to employment support and job opportunities prior to release.

The Victorian recidivism rate of former prisoners returning to prison under sentence within two years has remained lower than the national rate for the last five years.

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Corrections Enver Erdogan**

*“Employment opportunities are vital to reduce the risk of reoffending — that’s why programs like these are so important to help support prisoners turn their lives around and improve community safety for all.”*

*“A job provides income, independence and the chance to be a contributing community member – all of which are significant factors in reducing someone’s risk of reoffending and improving their life.”*

### **Quote attributable to Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards**

*“The Centre of Excellence program gives prisoners a real opportunity to give back to the community and successfully rehabilitate.”*

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