

# Government agencies seek community input on the best ways to reuse Brewarrina Correctional Centre

The plan for the reuse of the Brewarrina Correctional Centre (the Centre) shows what can be achieved when government agencies listen to and focus on the needs of the community.

Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) operated the centre near the remote north-west NSW town of Brewarrina as a minimum-security prison for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, until its closure in mid-2020. CSNSW was aware that the prison significantly supported local employment and the local economy, and was keen to ensure that any reuse of the facility recognised the impacts it would have on the community. It tasked Property and Development NSW (PDNSW) with identifying alternative uses for the 10,500-hectare site.

PDNSW faced two significant issues in finding a use for the site. Firstly, the remote location reduced its capacity for alternative uses. Secondly, the community was concerned that its closure would have adverse social and economic impacts, including for the area's Traditional Owners, the Ngemba, Ualarai, Murrawarri and Wailwan Aboriginal peoples.

PDNSW worked collaboratively with key stakeholders – CSNSW, the local community, the Brewarrina Shire Council and the Brewarrina Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) – to identify potential innovative uses for the facility. To identify community needs, PDNSW and CSNSW launched a 'Call for Future Use' campaign to encourage community members to put forward ideas. They also allowed the community to be at the centre of the decision-making process.

Feedback highlighted the need for a women's drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre and identified a desire to return portions of the centre that contained culturally significant land to Traditional Owners. The Brewarrina LALC sought access and control of these lands to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to undertake production and agricultural activities.

To achieve these outcomes an agreement has been reached to transfer a portion of the land to the Brewarrina Shire Council, to lease the site to Orana Haven Aboriginal Corporation who will establish a drug and alcohol rehabilitation and prevention service for Indigenous women.

The centre will assist women in acquiring skills that enable them to address the underlying disadvantage that can lead to drug and alcohol abuse. It will also provide employment opportunities for the community and attract people with skills in health care, social work and education to the area.

Agreement has been reached with the Brewarrina LALC to transfer to Indigenous ownership approximately 10,000 hectares of land, which will be used for agricultural and cultural purposes. Achieving this outcome has strengthened the relationship between the NSW Government and local Indigenous communities. These lands will provide Brewarrina's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community with opportunities to establish businesses, leading to employment and educational opportunities. Importantly, it will also provide the local Indigenous community with a place to connect with their land.



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