



Prisoners at Dillwynia Correctional Centre will be given tablet computers in their cells. Photo: Janie Barrett

# Prisoners given own computers in trial to cut reoffending rates

**Jacqueline Maley**

Inmates at two Sydney jails will be given tablet computers to use in their cells in the first trial of its kind in Australia, intended to encourage prisoners' personal autonomy and reduce rising reoffending rates.

More than 600 Android tablets will be handed out to women at Dillwynia and men at John Morony prisons in Sydney's north-west in the \$1.5 million program.

They will operate through a secure, closed Wi-Fi network that will give inmates access to literacy and numeracy sessions, cognitive behavioural therapy programs and enable them to manage their prison bank accounts online.

Other functions will include

"We need to provide opportunities for self-efficacy that don't exist," Mr Grant said. "We expect people to take responsibility for themselves, but we are putting them in an environment where everything is done for them and to them."

Premier Gladys Berejiklian has set a target to reduce adult reoffending by 5 per cent by 2023, following a rise in reoffending rates in recent years.

The NSW prison population has also increased steadily, standing at 13,466 in March 2019, up from 10,000 in 2013.

The most recent figures from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research show 40.7 per cent of adults exiting prison in 2017 were convicted of another offence

of more serious personal, property or drug crimes. It is notoriously difficult to tackle, due to the complex interplay of social disadvantage, policing and "tough on crime" justice measures that work to put offenders back behind bars.

Risk factors for reoffending include accommodation problems, drug and alcohol addiction, poor mental health and pervasive pro-criminal attitudes.

Cognitive behavioural therapy designed to change prisoners' thought patterns is available in NSW jails and has been found to be effective in reducing recidivism but it is difficult to give prisoners a high enough "dosage" of the therapy with contact hours, Mr Grant said.

"If you're doing one of those pro-

ld lp ir at  n- is b-	<p>phone calls to family and lawyers, and possible future participation in group therapy sessions.</p> <p>Corrective Services NSW Deputy Commissioner Luke Grant said some prisoners were in their cells for up to 16 hours a day, and the tablet program would enable them to use the time constructively.</p>	<p>within the next 12 months, up from 39.4 per cent the previous year.</p> <p>Productivity Commission research has found that 51 per cent of adults released from prison in NSW in 2017-18 returned with a new sentence within two years.</p> <p>Corrective Services is targeting recidivism in prisoners convicted</p>	<p>grams, you'll be able to extend the experience. The key elements of that program will be available to you in your cell on the tablet device," he said.</p> <p>The full rollout will be completed by September. If the six-month trial is successful, Mr Grant would like to expand the program.</p>
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