

## **Workshop 21: Capacity building around a new correctional centre**

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Since the NSW Government announced in 2000 that a new correctional centre will be built at Kempsey to house 350 inmates TAFE NSW North Coast Institute has been involved in the capacity building of the local Aboriginal community to secure as many positions within the facility as possible.

Construction commenced in 2002 and is on track to take its first inmates in early 2004. In February 2003 the Premier announced an additional 150 bed extension taking the capacity to 500 inmates. It is expected that the expansion will be completed by 2005. The facility will hold maximum, medium and minimum security, as well as have mothers and babies section.

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During 2002 the Macleay Valley Aboriginal Employment Strategy Group was formed to identify education, employment and training possibilities for the Aboriginal community in the construction of the facility as well as across all functional units. The MVAESG is made up of representatives from various government departments, Aboriginal organisations and local Aboriginal community members.

Many Rivers ATSI (then ATSI) commissioned a report to investigate potential employment opportunities. The report '*Indigenous employment opportunities associated with the Mid North Coast Correctional Facility*' identified short and long term employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. Meetings were held with representative from ATSI, TAFENSW North Coast Institute and the Dunghutti Elders with Department of Corrective Services (DCS) to get their commitment to the report and identify strategies to make this happen.

The Djigay Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Education, Kempsey Campus offered a range of courses that assisted potential DCS employees and prepare them for the entrance tests for a Custodial position.

Funding was accessed through 'Community Solutions' to employ an Aboriginal Project Officer whose role was to be the link between the DCS and Aboriginal communities in promoting the employment opportunities.

The cooperative approach taken in the mid north coast area for the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre will ensure that this new facility will be culturally aware not only of the Aboriginal inmates, but for the Aboriginal staff as well.