

MEDIA RELEASE

**Minister for Juvenile Justice
The Hon. Graham West MP**



Wednesday, 10 February 2009

MENTORS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG OFFENDERS

Twenty two volunteer mentors from South East Sydney graduated last week from a NSW Government - funded mentoring program aimed at reducing reoffending among young people, said Minister for Juvenile Justice Graham West, Member for Miranda Barry Collier, and Member for Menai Alison Megarrity.

Mr West thanked the volunteers for taking part in the mentoring training, and for helping to reduce reoffending in NSW.

"The NSW Government provided more than \$85,000 to Shire Wide Youth Services to support the development and the implementation of their new program, INSPIRE," Mr West said.

Mr Collier said INSPIRE targets young people who have been in contact with the state's juvenile justice system, by providing them with a mentor for 12 months.

"The mentor is a role model for the young person, spending time each week to help the young person engage positively in the community," Mr Collier said.

Ms Megarrity said the mentor and the young person decide on activities together that can include writing a resume, finding a job, engaging in community groups, or simply talking about life. For some young people, they would just like time out from their family.

"The volunteers come from varied backgrounds, ranging from university students to retirees. They each bring a unique perspective of life to the young people who they will be mentoring," Ms Megarrity said.

Stef Jandl, Mentoring Coordinator, Shire Wide Youth Services, said, "The INSPIRE (Innovative, Non-judge-mental Support Program Intended to Re-Engage) program provides one-on-one support and guidance to assist young people in making meaningful, law-aiding decisions about their future.

"We thank the NSW Government for providing funding for our program.

"We believe that by providing young people with intense contact with positive adult role models who can support and encourage them, this will significantly improve their chances of staying on the right path," Ms Jandl said.

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