



Anthony Roberts
Minister for Corrections
Minister for Counter Terrorism

MEDIA RELEASE

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BLUE TREES BRANCHING OUT FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

From Broken Hill to Inverell, Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) staff across the state have been whittling, welding and painting blue trees in the name of mental health awareness.

Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections Anthony Roberts said 50 blue trees have been unveiled at CSNSW workplaces as part of the Blue Tree Project.

CSNSW met its target to create 50 trees by World Suicide Prevention Day.

“The idea of the Blue Tree Project is not only a symbol of hope but one of resilience and strength – that no matter how tough things get, there is always someone you can turn to and that should never be forgotten,” he said.

“We hope these blue trees will promote conversations among staff, and encourage those who might be suffering and speak up.”

Staff and inmates have been involved in creating their distinctive blue trees – from murals and collages to welded sculptures and painted tree trunks.

Acting Commissioner Kevin Corcoran PSM said Hunter Correctional Centre-based manager Vicki Rivett lost her son Luke Watson last year and inspired CSNSW to take part in the project.

“It’s no secret our staff work in a difficult and challenging environment and now, more so than ever, we need to make the effort to look out for one another,” he said.

“Vicki isn’t alone in her loss – mental health can be a silent killer. It is an issue that affects the lives of millions, can be greatly misunderstood and, in some cases, can end so tragically.”

CSNSW wellbeing and resilience project officer Jane Cox said the Blue Tree Project is one of several wellbeing initiatives staff can take part in. Another is Stand TALR, a specialised course to help reduce the stigma and increase understanding of mental illness.

“If people get to a point where they are impacted by mental health it doesn’t just affect their work life, it affects their home life and their relationships,” she said.

“CSNSW is focused on assisting staff, not only through specialised programs, but with peer support officers and dedicated staff welfare officers.”

The Blue Tree Project was launched in WA in 2018 by a woman in memory of her brother, who had taken his life. The project involves creating or painting a dead tree blue either in memory of a person who has taken their life, or to spark difficult conversations and raise general awareness about mental health and suicide prevention.