



## **NSW prisons welcome first female Islamic chaplain**

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A Muslim community leader from Sydney's west has become Corrective Services NSW's first female Islamic chaplain.

Manal Daher works two days a week, providing pastoral care, spiritual support and religious advice to female inmates at Mary Wade, Silverwater Women's, Dillwynia and Emu Plains correctional centres.

The 36-year-old said she was hoping to make a difference through her role.

"I am here to remind both Muslim and non-Muslim women that we all makes mistakes, but it's never too late to change our paths in life," Ms Daher said.

"I feel it is important that female inmates hear from a female voice as they feel more comfortable sharing parts of their lives with a woman rather than a male chaplain."

Ms Daher has worked in the Sydney Muslim community over the past decade and is NSW's first formally-qualified female Islamic Chaplain.

She runs her own organisation, Unity 4 Our Community, at Chester Hill, which assists Muslim women from broken families and relationships to access housing and other services or reconnect to the Islamic faith.

"I want to provide hope for Muslim women and show them that there is a sisterhood available when in need," Ms Daher said.

While working at the prisons, Ms Daher provides one-on-one counselling to inmates and teaches inmates to read the Qur'an and Arabic language during group sessions.

Ms Daher is one of around 80 full-time, part-time and volunteer chaplains from various faiths. There are currently 17 female chaplains.

Chaplain Services Coordinator Reverend Dr Keith Mascord said chaplains had a multi-faceted role.

"Not only do they assist the wellbeing and rehabilitation of offenders, chaplains are there to support correctional centre staff and inmates' families during times of stress and trauma," Mr Mascord said.

"Chaplains can also help prepare offenders for release by connecting them with churches, community organisations and mentors."

Ms Daher has also been a Qur'an teacher for more than ten years, a Disaster Recovery Chaplain and runs a charity called A.F.A.S Inc, which assists orphans and refugees in Turkey.

**CSNSW media inquiries: 0419 258 290 – calls only, no SMS**