



# Acacia prisoners graduate in small business

WITH a certificate IV in small business management from the C Y O'Connor Institute behind them, more than 20 Acacia prisoners now have the skills to run their own businesses in future.

Acacia Prison hosted a graduation ceremony last Wednesday for 69 prisoners who had undertaken business management studies – the second year in a row CY O'Connor and Acacia Prison combined to conduct a successful training course at the prison.

Enrolments were up this year, with 120 prisoners embarking on the course. Of those 26 who completed the certificate IV, another 43 finished a number subjects in the 10-unit course and 13 achieved special achievement awards.

Acacia Prison director Paul McMullan said the

graduation ceremony built on the success of last year's introduction of the study course and would lead to a better future for those who took part.

The quality of their work was first class and the attitude and self-confidence of a number of the prisoners improved as they worked their way through the course.

Acacia Prison, WA's only privately-run prison, is operated by Serco.

"Serco strongly believes that education is a key factor in a prisoner's rehabilitation," Paul said.

"That's why we offer a number of courses from university and TAFE level qualifications to nationally recognised trade skills."

One graduating student, who cannot be named, said having never been successful with anything in their life they

were determined to complete this course no matter how many hours they would have to study.

"I was proud of myself for not giving up and the sense of achievement is amazing, so much so, that I have decided to enrol in university to gain a degree," the student said.

Paul said the nationally recognised qualification would equip prisoners on release from prison to successfully manage a small business and would encourage further study.

The course taught the principles of operating a small business, financial skills, marketing and business development.

Mr McMullan said the Acacia external students paid the same fees as other TAFE students, attended lectures in the prison for 10 hours each week and completed the same assignments.

A number of prisoners were planning to set up their own businesses when released and others were being encouraged to continue their studies to complete the certificate.

The graduation ceremony will be attended by relatives of the students.

CY O'Connor advanced skills lecturer Dr Sak Sarangapani said the successful completion of another course at Acacia had built on the strong relationship between the prison and the institute.

"I'd like to thank the management at Acacia for establishing the right academic environment for these prisoners to be able to better themselves," Dr Sarangapani said.

C Y O'Connor is looking forward to continuing its work at Acacia.



**Graduation address:** Acacia Prison director Paul McMullan addresses the graduating prisoners with CY O'Connor Institute representatives and Acacia staff in the background.