**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Stronger Futures: Local Canberra Construction Company Giving Ex-Prisoners a Second Chance**

Longstanding Canberra construction company Woden Contractors (Wodens) is changing lives by providing individuals transitioning from incarceration at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) with the skills, licenses, and support needed to build a sustainable career in the construction industry. The Wodens Civil Taster Program plays a crucial role in breaking the cycle of reoffending, offering a pathway to stability, long-term employment, and a fresh start.

Many individuals face significant challenges upon release, with research showing that more than 40% of people released from Australian prisons return within two years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Barriers such as unstable employment, housing insecurity, and limited access to support services often make reintegration into society difficult, increasing the likelihood of reoffending.

The Wodens Civil Taster Program is breaking the cycle in Canberra by providing funded, industry-recognised training, stable job opportunities, and wraparound support to help participants reintegrate successfully and build long-term careers in the construction industry.

Jointly funded by Wodens, the Australian Government's Launch into Work program, and the ACT Training Fund Authority, and delivered in partnership with The Umbrella Collective, Worldview Foundation, St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra, and the Master Builders Association, the program is not just creating jobs—it is transforming lives and building life-changing opportunities.

Managing Director for Woden Contractors, Ben Helmers, says that for individuals leaving the justice system, securing full-time employment can be a significant challenge.

“As a long-standing construction company, we have always fostered a family-oriented culture. We prioritise direct employment over subcontracting, creating a cohesive and supportive work environment that helps individuals, especially those transitioning from the justice system, build stability and long-term careers.”

Research suggests that by providing real opportunities like those through the Wodens Civil Taster Program, it is possible to break the cycle of reoffending and empower individuals to reclaim their futures.

The program provides essential pre-employment training, including White Card certification, Asbestos and Silica Awareness training, hands-on work experience with Wodens, and Worldview’s Holistic Life Management Program, which develops critical soft skills.

“By working at a grassroots level, we can help build financial independence, strengthen communities, and offer a fresh start.”

The success of the Civil Tasters Program speaks for itself, with the inaugural round seeing 15 participants complete their training—nine securing roles at Wodens and five finding employment through Worldview.

Building on this momentum, the second intake is now underway, with 13 more participants set to enter the workforce by the end of the financial year, further strengthening pathways to long-term stability and economic independence.

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