

Prison break for new tradies

Apprentices start careers with jail job

ADAM HOURIGAN

adam.hourigan@dailyexaminer.com.au

NEW apprentice Jason Donovan admitted when he came on-site four weeks ago for his first day on the job, he was a little overwhelmed.

It's not just any site. It might just be the biggest infrastructure project in the country.

"When we first walked in it was a big eye-opener," Mr Donovan said.

"But I'm pretty stoked now to be on such a big project.

"Meeting all the guys has been pretty cool – they help us out and we learn something every day."

Mr Donovan is one of six young local Aboriginals who have begun work on construction of Grafton's Clarence Correctional Centre after securing apprenticeships with Laser Plumbing and Electrical.

Their new boss, managing director Steven Campbell, said he remembered exactly how it felt starting out.



IF THE HAT FITS: Apprentices Dallas Tighe, Vincent Tighe, Jason Donovan, Leroy Linwood and Eileen Holten find a cap to fit Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Sarah Mitchell at the Grafton Correctional Centre site.

Photo: Adam Hourigan

"I was a plumber, and it was daunting. We're encouraging them to ask questions and take the opportunity," Mr Campbell said.

"They're doing things that I never learnt already. It's a massive opportunity and

hopefully the skills they get now will put them in good stead."

The recruits met with NSW Government Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Sarah Mitchell and Clarence MP Chris Gulaptis on site this week.

"The construction of the new correctional centre is already providing a significant boost to the Clarence Valley community and local economy," Mr Gulaptis said.

"This includes creating new job opportunities for our local

Aboriginal community.

"We are delighted to have these six fantastic graduates working on this vital piece of state infrastructure."

As part of this program, a group of local Aboriginal community members completed

their Certificate I in Civil Construction, with six graduates recruited by local contractor Laser Plumbing and Electrical to work on a \$20 million plumbing and electrical contract for the correctional centre.