

# Racehorse rescue

By Stacey Post

SOMETIMES a second chance is needed in life.

Helping to give ex-racehorses a new lease of life are inmates at St Heliers Correctional Centre at Muswellbrook.

A program, in partnership with the prison and Racing NSW, has been giving inmates the chance to work with horses once their time on the racetrack has come to an end. Overseeing the thoroughbred welfare and retraining program is former police horse trainer Scott Brodie.

Mr Brodie was an officer with the mounted police in Sydney for 12 years and was a qualified instructor with the Equestrian Federation.

He travels to the Upper Hunter once a month to monitor the program which includes six months of spelling and six weeks of ground work undertaken by inmates.

"Some inmates just handle the horses, which is a real start for sonic guys," Mr Brodie said.

"We also work with guys that are hands on and had experience in the industry, like track workers etc, that actually ride."

Mr Brodie said the program was a saving grace for both man and

"The horses would normally have very uncertain futures," he said.

"People think you can take a [race] horse out into a paddock and they'll be right.

"But you can't ... the toughness has been bred out of them.

"They only know how to go and stop.

"For the guys if they come into the program and work well within it, they learn how to deal with life and deal with people.

"It teaches them empathy."

Following their time in Muswellbrook, the horses are then transported to Canterbury in Sydney where Mr Brodie and his team polish off the horses and turn them into pleasurable riding partners.

Horses for the program are

sourced from studs across the state and once rider-ready are re-homed across Australia.

The program has been running for almost a year and 24 ex-racehorses have already found new homes.

Mr Brodie said a partnership with the RSPCA means every horse that goes through the retraining program will be found a new home.

Before St Heliers jumped on board, the program was run out of Randwick in Sydney.

Mr Brodie said the program came about after a vision from Racing NSW chief executive officer Peter V'landys.

Racing NSW is also investing in thousands of dollars worth of infrastructure at the prison, including round yards and an undercover shed.

The Racing NSW Thoroughbred Retraining Program is always looking for donations of ex-racehorses.

For more details on donating a racehorse or to buy a retrained horse, visit the program's site at [www.facebook.com/NSWTRT](http://www.facebook.com/NSWTRT).

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