

Community focus leads to award

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1 A strong focus on developing meaningful relationships with local community groups and encouraging them to play a role in prisoner rehabilitation is one of the key reasons that Junee Correctional Centre's Gerome Brodin has been named the 2013 GEO Employee of the Year.

A cultural advisor at Junee, Gerome has been instrumental in increasing the levels of community engagement with the prison over the past 18 months.

"We have encouraged the community to get involved in the prison and invited many groups to be part of the programs that we run for inmates at the cultural centre," Gerome said.

"It's good for the inmates. They need to reconnect and engage with the community. When they are in prison they are cut-off from society and by getting members of the community to visit we are creating an important link to the outside world."

Gerome said the engagement program also served to answer many questions people in the community had about the operation of the correctional centre and the type of programs that are put in place by GEO to reduce recidivism.

"We are showing members of the community what the prisoners are doing and highlighting the fact that GEO is focused on education, employment and cultural programs designed to prepare inmates for their release," he said.

Gerome worked in abattoirs for 15 years before moving into the corrections industry in 2004. Of Samoan heritage, he grew up in New Zealand and has great respect for the diverse cultural groups inside the prison.

The cultural centre at Junee Correctional Centre is known for its striking appearance due largely to the magnificent artwork that adorns the walls, but it is the programs that are run from the centre that make a difference. These include programs in art, music, health, fitness and literature and Gerome is constantly looking to introduce new elements.



Junee Correctional Centre's Gerome Brodin is the 2013 GEO Employee of the Year.

"Every idea presented by Gerome is not only innovative and culturally sound, but also embraces our corporate philosophy of providing 'Better Corrections, Safer Communities'," said Junee Correctional Centre general manager Andy Walker.

"Gerome excels in the role of cultural advisor. He is a committed and diligent employee with a proven ability to encourage, motivate and inspire both offenders and staff across a broad range of cultural topics.

"He has also developed great networks within the community and in the process increased the profile of Junee Correctional Centre and knowledge of the work we do to reduce recidivism."

Outside of work Gerome's focus is on his family — wife Charmaine and children Karinda, 20, Ruby, 12, and 10-year-old Dru. He has a passion for music and writing and has just finished his first novel.

"I love what I do," he said of his role at Junee. "The most rewarding thing is coming up with an idea that works and getting positive feedback

from the inmates. It is great when you see that a program is having an impact.

"There are a lot of good staff at Junee in operations and programs, so to be nominated for Employee of the Year by the correctional centre in the first place was a privilege and then to be selected by GEO is very humbling."

Tertiary scholarships awarded

2 The GEO Group Australia has awarded a total of 30 tertiary scholarships this year as part of its annual program. The scholarships are awarded to family members of staff who are attending tertiary institutions.

At Junee Correctional Centre a morning tea was held to acknowledge 11 scholarship recipients. Fulham Correctional Centre is planning a similar presentation for seven scholarship winners, while Parklea (three) and Arthur Gorrie (nine) have also distributed the awards.

Each scholarship recipient receives \$500 towards expenses associated with their tertiary studies.



It always gives me great pleasure to introduce each edition of the *GEO Insights* newsletter and never more so than when we celebrate our Employee of the Year.

Every year it is a privilege to meet with the finalists of the Employee of the Year award to learn

about their work and gain inspiration from their energy, innovation and commitment.

It is a truly humbling experience to see what individuals can achieve at our centres — achievements made especially impressive given that corrections is one of the toughest environments to work in.

This year's finalists have again reset the benchmark for excellence and endeavour.

From Parklea, senior psychologist Raksha Lutchan was nominated for her leadership of the programs team and her commitment to quality, standards and staff development in this most critical of functions. Her work included the development of interventions that will reduce reoffending and help achieve safer communities.

From Fulham, correctional officer Alex Poulos is the epitome of the modern outcomes-focused correctional officer. Progressing rapidly through the company, Alex blends the highest standards of professionalism with excellent team-player skills and a therapeutic perspective.

Arthur Gorrie's nominee, Niel Davidson, reminds us that the smooth operation of a large and challenging correctional centre is no mere accident, but depends on a myriad of individuals performing their duties with diligence. Niel's attention to detail and commitment to supporting

his colleagues ensures that when assistance is needed it is ready and at hand.

At our annual awards ceremony it was a pleasure to announce Junee Correctional Centre's cultural advisor Gerome Brodin as the 2013 GEO Employee of the Year.

A flood of recommendations from the centre as well as from external stakeholders paid tribute to Gerome's incredible commitment to the cultural life of the centre as well as his vision and ability to inspire others.

I will not dwell on what is written elsewhere in this edition about Gerome's work. I will say, however, that I like so many others, have found Junee's cultural centre and the activities conducted within it to be awe-inspiring.

Gerome and the other award finalists have my heartiest congratulations.

Pieter Bezuidenhout - Managing Director



From left: Sidd Mehta, Shirley Sheppard and Troy Ittensohn now enjoy a smoke-free environment at Arthur Gorrie.

Arthur Gorrie is smoke-free

3 Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre is now smoke-free after implementing Queensland Corrective Services' non-smoking policy.

All Queensland prisons became smoke-free on 5 May. As part of the lead-up local working groups were established to develop and implement strategies to support staff and prisoners in the transition to a non-smoking environment.

The Arthur Gorrie working group was a multi-disciplinary team comprising staff from various departments, senior management and representatives from Queensland Health and Queensland Corrective Services.

The group initiated an education and communication strategy to inform prisoners and staff of the health risks associated with smoking and the programs available to help them quit.

Prisoner representatives were consulted through the Prisoner Advisory Committee and peer

support systems were put in place. Some of the initiatives included wristbands for prisoners on nicotine replacement therapy to identify those needing support and dedicated health promotion nurses communicating with staff and prisoners.

A healthy lifestyle expo was also staged at the cultural centre with the support of health providers and cultural elders.

More than 70 per cent of the Arthur Gorrie prisoner population who smoked voluntarily participated in the quit smoking process.

Queensland Corrective Services acting commissioner Mark Rallings recently wrote to Arthur Gorrie general manager Troy Ittensohn to thank the local working group for their "outstanding work" in planning and effecting the transition to a smoke-free workplace.

Arthur Gorrie is now a healthier environment for staff, prisoners and visitors.

New units at Fulham

4 Fulham Correctional Centre will have the capacity to accommodate an additional 54 prisoners following the announcement by Minister for Corrections, Edward O'Donohue, that 18 relocatable accommodation units will be installed at the centre.

The minister recently attended the centre with Department of Justice executive members and explained that fitted-out shipping containers, each housing three prisoners, would help accommodate the state's growing prisoner population.

"This will generate up to 20 full-time ongoing jobs once those beds are delivered and up to 40 jobs during construction," Mr O'Donohue said. "It will be very good for the local economy, good for economic activity, good for jobs growth in this part of Gippsland."

Fulham general manager Trevor Craig welcomed the news, saying that once the cells were installed there would be extra positions for custodial, nursing, program and administration staff.

"I have a real belief that we've got to work hard to resettle people in the community so they don't reoffend. I'm hoping to set this unit up for violent offenders where we deliver programs, education and industry training, working towards that resettlement so they don't reoffend," he said.

Planning for the installation of the accommodation units and additional infrastructure has begun in earnest and once established they will add substantially to the transitional services provided by Fulham.

Fab four win accolades

5 Four GEO employees have been acknowledged for their outstanding commitment and application to their roles at the annual GEO Employee of the Year award ceremony in Sydney.

The 2013 award finalists were Niel Davidson, Alex Poullos, Raksha Lutchman and Gerome Brodin, who all won plaudits from GEO's executive team for their efforts last year.



The finalists in the 2013 GEO Employee of the Year award (l-r) Niel Davidson, Gerome Brodin, Alex Poullos and Raksha Lutchman.

Fulham correctional officer Alex Poullos was described as someone who performs at the highest level on a daily basis and demonstrates the philosophy of 'Better Corrections, Safer Communities' through his diligence.

Niel Davidson, a security officer at Arthur Gorrie, was nominated for his hard work and dedication to the safety and security of the centre.

Senior psychologist Raksha Lutchman demonstrates exceptional management skills at Parklea and makes a strong contribution to the centre through her ongoing development of programs and services.

June's nomination, cultural advisor Gerome Brodin, was named the 2013 GEO Employee of the Year for his work in developing the cultural centre, increasing prisoner participation in programs and developing strong community networks.

The GEO Employee of the Year receives a \$4000 travel gift card, \$1000 spending money and two weeks special leave. The other finalists receive a trip with a partner to the capital city of their choice (in New South Wales, Victoria or Queensland), accommodation and \$500 spending money.



NSW TAFE Riverina Institute teacher Billy Kimber shows inmates how to crutch sheep.

Mobile farming helps educate

6 There has been plenty of activity on the farm at Junee Correctional Centre recently with a new mobile shearing trailer in action as well as a mobile butcher.

The unique shearing trailer was designed and built by inmates at the prison in conjunction with TAFE NSW Riverina Institute's Primary Industries Centre (PIC).

Set up with a race and portable yards the trailer can be used almost anywhere. Inmates studying agriculture will use the trailer to crutch and shear sheep at the centre and it will also be used by the PIC at other sites.

The mobile butcher attended the prison to add another element to the inmates' agricultural education. Lambs on the farm were prepared for consumption as they would be on a normal working farm.

Each stage was demonstrated with the butcher showing the inmates how to prepare the meat into various cuts and how to make sausages and rissoles.

The majority of inmates involved in the master-class were from metropolitan areas and had never witnessed this process so it was a fantastic opportunity to see how meat packaged in supermarkets or sitting in butchers' windows is prepared.

To-date the inmates have experienced many elements of life on a farm including growing vegetables from seeds, preparing and testing soil for crops, breeding chickens, raising and selling lambs and shearing sheep.

Bird survey at Parklea

7 Members of the Cumberland Bird Observers Club and Cumberland Environmental Group have undertaken a survey of birds in the wetlands at Parklea Correctional Centre.

The facility has two wetlands — one covering about five hectares and one smaller — that are probably the product of landscaping works over a rural dam and drainage line prior to government purchase of the land more than two decades ago.

The landscape and quiet surrounds of the centre's secured outer grounds provide an ideal habitat for a wide variety of birds, particularly waterbirds.

A sizeable island sits in the middle of the larger wetland and the area is covered with trees, shrubs, native grasses, herbs and groundcover.

Four people conducted a walk-around survey of the birdlife in April and a total of 50 bird species were detected over two hours. Being the tail end of the season for migratory wading birds conditions were not the best for spotting waders. In fact they were absent!

However, such is the capacity of the Parklea wetlands to attract a wide range of waterbirds

in the warmer and drier months of the year it is anticipated the site will be alive with wading birds when other wetlands might be struggling.

Both the Cumberland Environmental Group and the Cumberland Bird Observers Club were indebted to the management of Parklea for the maintenance of a viable bird habitat in Western Sydney and for the opportunity to observe it.



An eastern great egret. Photo courtesy Mark Fuller.

IN BRIEF

Fulham fosters *FriendShip*

The children at East Sale Kindergarten are enchanted with the latest addition to their playground — a brightly painted galleon that holds pride of place.

For many years it had been the dream of kindergarten assistant Rosanna Murray that a big ship be part of the playground equipment. Rosanna's wish came to fruition with the help of Fulham Correctional Centre industry manager Ian Riley and a group of prisoners.

A number of local businesses also came on board providing paint, materials and screen-printing to complete the project. Due to its size, the galleon was delivered to the site in three sections and then carefully assembled with the help of kindergarten families.

The galleon was christened the *FriendShip* — a tribute to the partnership between the correctional centre and the community.



All aboard — the *FriendShip* at East Sale Kindergarten.

Arthur Gorrie honoured

Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre has been recognised for its outstanding commitment to the protection of the Queensland environment with two Healthy Waterways awards. The awards honour the efforts of individuals, groups and organisations helping to protect and improve South East Queensland's waterways.

Arthur Gorrie won the Community Award category — recognising initiatives that demonstrate a high level of community participation — as well as the \$10,000 Minister's Grand Prize, awarded to the most innovative and outstanding winner from all categories.

Arthur Gorrie is part of a unique collaboration called Connecting Community for Waterways that sees community members collect native seeds that are delivered to Arthur Gorrie for propagation by inmates enrolled in horticulture programs. More than 100,000 plants have been grown and returned to the community for planting in waterway restoration initiatives.



Champions — Wagga Wagga Chess Club members (l-r) Joe McGirr, Mick Thorpe, Ryan McKenzie and Martin Alster.

Check in mate at Junee

Members of Wagga Wagga Chess Club have been visiting Junee Correctional Centre every second Sunday for the past year, playing chess against 10-15 inmates.

In late June the centre staged a four-way tournament between two Junee teams and the Albury and Wagga chess clubs for the title of 'Junee Correctional Centre Check in Mate' champion.

The event was complemented by a live band, barbecue and unlimited coffee supplied by two inmates trained as baristas. The friendly atmosphere belied the intense competition with Wagga coming out on top, ahead of Albury and the Junee 'A' team.

Inmates presented both visiting teams with paintings of their home venues as well as a perpetual trophy and individual trophies. Junee plans to stage the event every six months.

"This has been such a great event for all concerned, but especially for the guys in the centre who contributed so much of their time to make it such an enjoyable event," said Wagga Wagga Chess Club president Martin Alster.

Parklea hosts art exhibition

Parklea Correctional Centre has hosted the New South Wales section of the Art from Inside exhibition.

An annual competition and exhibition that is staged nationally, Art from Inside is run by Prison Fellowship and encourages creative expression from current and former inmates.

There are three categories — painting, drawing and applied art. The 2014 theme was *Searching for the light*.

Prison Fellowship runs art programs in 26 countries and the creative expression of inmates is celebrated globally every four years at the Prison Fellowship World Convocation.

Parklea hosted the public exhibition in its visitors café over 10 days in June with 84 works on display including 20 prepared by Parklea inmates. Over 250 people visited the exhibition.

IN FOCUS

Technology in prisons

by Dom Karauria

Sitting in the warmth of a control room on a wet night monitoring a large prison with closed-circuit television, motion sensors and radio systems, it is difficult to imagine how our colleagues from earlier years managed without the technologies that we take for granted.

Similarly, the ability to instantly call up a prisoner's record on jurisdiction-wide information technology systems has revolutionised our ability to access and share information. This allows us to case manage individuals to unprecedented levels in an effort to reduce the risk of reoffending.

Irrespective of the job it performs — from new biometric authentication systems that offer instantaneous and foolproof identification to some of the extraordinary intelligence tools that untangle the often opaque and complex relationships between offenders and their associates — it is clear that technology has a critical role to play in prisons.

In fact, it is difficult to envisage any aspect of our work that will not be impacted by technology in the future. This growing reliance on technology does, however, pose a number of challenges.

Firstly, it will become increasingly necessary for individuals choosing corrections as a career to be very comfortable working with technologies.

Secondly, we will have to get accustomed to working outside the confines of our own functions. As systems become more interconnected and integrated the traditional silos that still exist — despite our best efforts — will be eroded by the demands of the systems we use. Each function will require information from others and we will all have to become multi-disciplinary in our work.

Of course no element of technology is a substitute for excellent interpersonal skills when dealing with prisoners face-to-face. Technology may record that a prisoner is at risk of self-harm or perhaps suffering from a mental illness, but it will always remain the job of the individual to manage that prisoner safely and securely. Technology will never replace the critical interpersonal element of the work that we do.



Dom Karauria is director correctional services at The GEO Group Australia.

