

Ravenhall celebrates first anniversary



Ravenhall Correctional Centre's senior management team celebrate the centre's first anniversary.

Ravenhall Correctional Centre in Melbourne has celebrated its one-year anniversary with a function attended by more than 200 staff, alliance partners, Corrections Victoria personnel and guests.

The prison received its first intake of 25 prisoners on 13 November 2017.

"By 7pm we still had to process 15 prisoners and I wondered if we would be working well into the night to process the initial group," said Ravenhall general manager Trevor Craig when reflecting on that day.

"We have certainly come a long way since — in just 12 months Ravenhall has taken in 3345 offenders and processed 5268 prisoner movements including transfers and discharge.

"Today all of our procedures and policies are very streamlined and the centre functions as well as any other prison in the system.

"That is a significant achievement when you consider where we came from with a completely new facility and a staffing roster that comprised predominantly new recruits."

The confidence that Corrections Victoria has in Ravenhall was reflected earlier this year when it instructed GEO to increase prisoner numbers to the centre's full built capacity of 1300 beds

— initially the plan was to limit the capacity to 1000 prisoners.

Speaking at the anniversary function, Corrections Victoria deputy commissioner Rod Wise commended Ravenhall for running so well that the increase in prisoner numbers had not affected the centre's operations.

He also thanked GEO and centre staff (over 600 employees have worked at Ravenhall during the year) for accommodating the state's requirements so well.

The prison has been extremely busy with more than 855,000 meals served, more than 18,000 visitors received and over 72,000 prisoner medical appointments undertaken (including 55,200 nursing and 9410 general practice consultations).

The GEO Group Australia managing director Pieter Bezuidenhout commended Ravenhall staff for the first year of operations, noting that of 140 GEO facilities worldwide Ravenhall is a leader in rehabilitation and reintegration through its delivery of GEO's 'Continuum of Care' model and the operation of The Bridge Centre. He also acknowledged the work of GEO's alliance partners in this area.

A dedicated community reintegration facility,

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The Bridge Centre allows men released from Ravenhall to receive services and support on a voluntary basis for up to two years post release — over 300 have taken advantage of this opportunity.

Ravenhall clinicians and GEO's alliance partners attend the centre to deliver post-release services, while three staff provide a permanent presence.

Other figures that demonstrate the work being undertaken in rehabilitation and reintegration over the past 12 months at Ravenhall include the delivery of 10,500 hours of vocational/academic learning and over 1700 prisoners completing remand, offending behaviour and/or alcohol and other drug programs.

Over 2000 clinical screenings and assessments for remand, offending behaviour and alcohol and other drug programs were undertaken and over 1100 prisoners participated in individual clinical intervention during the year. A further 500 prisoners completed personal development and life skills programs.

There were also over 6000 episodes of pre-release service delivery for prisoners to address transition and reintegration needs (some receive multiple services).

GEO's alliance partners include Melbourne City Mission, YMCA and Bendigo Kangan Institute. GEO also partners with Forensicare and Correct Care Australasia for health services.



Corrections Victoria deputy commissioner Rod Wise.

MD'S MESSAGE



Welcome to this edition of *GEO Insights*. In the final edition of 2018 we report on a variety of milestones and achievements across all our facilities.

One year ago we opened Ravenhall Correctional Centre in Melbourne. Very often new centres experience

challenges in their early days. New systems and approaches, coupled with prisoners keen to try their luck with what they perceive as inexperienced staff, can often result in problems during the initial start-up.

One year on and all associated with Ravenhall can be immensely proud — especially as the

prison has coped effortlessly with a late change in role and an increase in population.

Planned as a facility for sentenced prisoners, Ravenhall now houses one of Victoria's largest remand prisoner populations. Even more remarkably, the Victoria government activated the additional 300 beds available — boosting the population from the initial limit of 1000 to the full built capacity of 1300.

For a newly-opened facility to be entrusted with both a fundamental change in function as well as a major increase in prisoner numbers is an exceptional achievement.

"The prison is looking wonderful and the team is doing a terrific job," said Corrections Victoria commissioner Dr Emma Cassar when she inspected the facility recently.

Elsewhere, Junee and Fulham correctional centres are progressing with their upgrades and expansions.

I was particularly taken with the idea to repurpose anti-climb drums from the old

fence at Junee as garden beds for community organisations. That's quite a story to tell for their new owners — and typical of the innovative thinking of the staff at Junee.

In Queensland, GEO has continued its proud tradition of supporting the endeavours of the next generation of Australians. Kieran Rocks is a talented soccer player and Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre was proud to sponsor this exceptional young man in his sporting pursuits.

Congratulations to Esther Dekkers at Fulham for making a significant sacrifice and having her locks chopped for charity. A huge thank you to the prisoners who collectively contributed over \$500 for the privilege of watching the barber in action.

Finally, I close by wishing you and your family a very peaceful festive season.

Pieter Bezuidenhout
Managing Director



Local MP Steph Cooke and George Liakatos from Crust Pizza Wagga (third from right) celebrate the funds raised for Rural Aid with Junee Correctional Centre staff (from left) Trevor Coles, Scott Brideoake, Michael Perkins and Daniel Halliburton.

Support for farmers

2 Junee Correctional Centre has raised over \$15,000 for the Rural Aid 'Buy A Bale' campaign that supports farmers.

The local region is feeling the impacts of the drought and the location of the centre means that many inmates and staff either come 'off the land' or have family or friends in farming.

Staff and inmates were keen to support local farmers and a number of fundraising ideas were canvassed with a pizza promotion a clear favourite.

The GEO Group Australia (GEO) and the centre collaborated with Crust Pizza Wagga to develop a promotion to sell pizzas to staff and inmates and donate all money to the Buy A Bale campaign.

Crust Pizza Wagga supplied the centre with

over 1500 pizzas across a three-day period and donated a further \$1000 to the cause. Over \$5000 was raised through pizza sales, which GEO matched.

Through a number of other fundraising initiatives — including selling raised garden beds and hanging pots made by inmates to staff — a total of \$15,588 was donated to Rural Aid.

"This was a fantastic effort and demonstrates the way inmates can contribute and give back to the larger community in a way that also promotes pro-social behaviour," said Junee Correctional Centre general manager Scott Brideoake.

"Our thanks to Crust Pizza Wagga for their generosity of time, discounted pizzas and the donation to this very worthwhile cause."

Ravenhall takes more awards

3 Ravenhall Correctional Centre continues to feature prominently in major industry awards across a number of categories.

At the annual Master Builders (Victoria) awards night, John Holland won the 'Excellence in Construction of Commercial Buildings over \$80m' category for its work on Ravenhall.

The centre was also one of five finalists in the 'Best Operational Project' category at the national PPP Awards. The awards acknowledge public private partnerships.

Earlier this year the Ravenhall Prison Project was named Australia's best infrastructure project at the National Infrastructure Awards.

Delivered by the GEO Consortium, key members of the Ravenhall Prison Project are The GEO Group Australia, John Holland, Honeywell and Capella Capital.



From left: John Holland executives Stephen King and Connie King with The GEO Group Australia's commercial director Frank Thorn at the Master Builders (Victoria) 2018 Excellence in Construction Awards.



A section of the new inner perimeter fence being constructed at Fulham Correctional Centre.

Perimeter upgrade at Fulham

4 Fulham Correctional Centre has embarked on a \$1.4 million upgrade of its perimeter security.

The project, being delivered by Honeywell, includes installation of a new 3.6 metre high inner perimeter fence and associated electronic surveillance systems.

State-of-the-art security technology includes a microphonic acoustic fencing system and video cameras triggered by motion recognition software.

Highly sensitive microphonic sensors detect any disturbance to the fence including climbing, cutting and lifting of fence mesh.

The sensors interface with Honeywell's digital video system which alerts the cameras to any motion and aims them at the area.

The current perimeter security at Fulham consists of an external main fence, an internal 'courtesy fence' and vehicle patrols.

The new fence removes the need for patrols due to its sophisticated design and enhanced technological capabilities.

It will span a total of 1.6 kilometres and sit between the main external fence and a new smaller 'courtesy fence'. A T-shape design provides motion detection for all three fences as well as the 'sterile zone' between them.

Top staff trainer recognised

5 Correctional manager Daniel Marr from Junee Correctional Centre has been recognised for his contribution to staff training and assessment winning the GEO National Workplace Trainer and Assessor Award 2018.

"Daniel has extensive operational experience covering more than 20 years," said Junee Correctional Centre deputy operations manager Wayne Doherty.

"He is focused on continuously learning and developing best practices within the centre and imparting these practices to staff through the development and delivery of quality training."

The award was presented at GEO's recent Trainers and Assessors Recognition Workshop. The two-day workshop provided professional development opportunities for 10 GEO trainers and assessors considered the company's highest achievers.

To participate in the workshop staff had to meet specific criteria including delivering training and/or assessment for more than five years and in particular a high volume over the past 12 months.

GEO is a registered training organisation delivering nationally recognised training and qualifications in correctional services. In 2018 GEO issued over 220 qualifications.

Staff are not obligated to deliver training and assessment. They offer their time as part of a commitment to the professional development of their colleagues. More than 100 staff voluntarily undertook this role across all centres in 2018.



From left: Daniel Marr is congratulated by Junee Correctional Centre general manager Scott Brideoake on winning the GEO National Workplace Trainer and Assessor Award 2018.

Boxes for Aussie wildlife

6 Junee Correctional Centre is again playing a role helping orphaned and injured brushtail possums be released back into the wild through its support of the local branch of Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service (WIRES).

Inmates undertaking TAFE courses have constructed 30 design-specific timber possum boxes for WIRES. This follows the delivery of 25 boxes in 2016. The boxes significantly increase the survival chances of possums.

While in care at WIRES possums are housed in a box. They are released into the bush in the same box so they have familiar surroundings and don't have to compete with other Australian natives for tree hollows.



WIRES representative Ellen Kemp introduces an orphaned joey to possum boxes made at Junee Correctional Centre.

Possums may require ongoing care at the WIRES shelter for between a week to four months depending on the nature of their misadventure.

Glenda Pym from WIRES said possums regularly come into care as orphaned joeys due to motor vehicle impacts.

"These wonderful community partnerships are critically important to us being able to continue to make a difference to our wildlife in need," she said.

A similar project has been implemented at Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre where prisoners have built 18 transportation boxes for the Save the Bilby Fund.

Launched in 1999, Save the Bilby Fund is a national charity that is dedicated to saving the bilby from the threat of extinction.



From left: Arthur Gorrie trade instructor Andy Rocks and administration manager Sidd Mehta with Kieran Rocks.

Support for young soccer star

The GEO Group Australia and Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre have supported the sporting path of 14-year-old soccer player Kieran Rocks. Kieran was selected in the Queensland team to play at the national championships in Coffs Harbour and received a \$500 sponsorship from GEO.

It was Kieran's debut representing Queensland and he started in great style scoring on the opening day against South Australia to level the match at 2-2.

The overall cost to represent Queensland at the event was \$2600. Kieran's father, Andy Rocks, who is a trade instructor at Arthur Gorrie, thanked GEO for its support.

Queensland finished the tournament in fourth place, losing just one game to eventual winner Perth Glory.

Funds for Starlight

When correctional supervisor Esther Dekkers commented on a prisoner's unconventional haircut she had no idea that it would lead to more than \$1000 being raised for the Starlight Children's Foundation.

In a brief exchange of banter Esther said the haircut was "atrocious" and that he should shave it off. The prisoner suggested Esther should shave her locks off and her response was "if the unit raises \$500 for charity I will".

Within 12 hours of the challenge being issued, 67 prisoners in the Nalu Unit had pledged over \$550. Several days later Esther's head was shaved with most of the prisoners in the unit watching on.



Fulham correctional supervisor Esther Dekkers and the prisoner whose casual comment led to funds being raised for Starlight Children's Foundation.

Fulham's management team agreed to match the prisoners' contributions and this resulted in over \$1000 being donated to the foundation which has been brightening the lives of sick children across Australia for 30 years.

Fencing put to good use

A major expansion at Junee Correctional Centre will result in the centre housing an additional 480 inmates. As part of construction works more than 1.7 kilometres of new perimeter fencing has been erected.

Rather than discard the old fencing it has been repurposed by inmates working on the centre's farm. Barrels that previously sat on top of the fences have been made into raised garden beds and other materials have been used to make hanging flowerpots.

The centre decided to donate some of the garden beds to community organisations and relayed this information through its Community Consultative Committee.

Three local schools accepted the offer and are using the garden beds to grow vegetables. This was an ideal outcome as it means students are being encouraged to grow their own produce and learn about healthy eating.

Junee High School asked for 20 garden beds while six were divided between Ganmain Pre-school and Eurongilly Public School.



A student at Ganmain Pre-school tends to vegetables in a garden bed supplied by Junee Correctional Centre.

\$4000 for Polished Man

Ravenhall Correctional Centre has raised \$4000 for the Polished Man charity.

Funds raised through Polished Man are channelled into trauma prevention and trauma recovery programs for children who are at risk of or have suffered violence.

The global charity challenges men and women to paint their fingernails — blue and purple are popular colours — during October to spark conversations around violence against children and encourage donations.

Over 300 Ravenhall prisoners participated in the fundraiser and contributed almost \$2500. Additional funds were contributed by The GEO Group Australia, Ravenhall Correctional Centre staff, their family and friends.

Funds are provided to organisations such as Australian Childhood Foundation, Survivors & Mates Support Network and Hagar Australia.

Prisoner peer programs

By Keith Ketheeswaran

Director, governance and performance assurance

A research article brought to my attention recently has particular relevance for GEO as an organisation that places a premium on engaging with the prisoners in our care.

The article concluded that using prisoners as peers — particularly in the areas of health promotion and harm reduction — can be extremely beneficial.

The research found that being a peer was seen as a very positive role and the information provided by the peer was highly valued.

Advice from prisoner peers was found to reduce risky behaviours after release and there was evidence that services delivered by peers were preferred over those provided by professionals.

For many it is far more attractive to take advice and support from someone who has lived the same experiences and faced the same challenges rather than rely on the expertise of professionals — no matter how highly qualified they might be.

Of course the real answer lies in a combination of the two — specialised services delivered through highly qualified staff with peers serving in a complementary role.

GEO has extensive experience in delivering this unique model.

At Junee Correctional Centre, for example, prisoner peers play an important role in delivering the Healthy Inside Program. This program has produced wonderful results in engaging marginalised prisoners and getting them involved in exercise and healthy-living activities.

Another example is the innovative use of prisoners trained in mental health first aid at Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre to help identify possible distress in fellow inmates.

Both programs require very careful consideration of the roles peers perform and the need to limit their responsibilities. However, both have demonstrated that — when properly used — prisoners have untapped potential in helping GEO achieve its ethos of providing 'Better Corrections and Safer Communities'.



Keith Ketheeswaran.