

Former prisoners continue to reach out for support during COVID-19

Men released from the GEO Group managed Ravenhall Correctional Centre in Melbourne were provided with more than 4700 instances of telephone support and case management through The Bridge Centre, also managed by GEO, during the recent COVID-19 lockdowns.

The Bridge Centre is a Community Reintegration Centre that offers men the opportunity to continue their rehabilitation outside of prison — supported by specialist post-release case-managers, clinicians and community partners.

GEO National Director of Rehabilitation and Reintegration Dr Sarah Gray said COVID-19 significantly impacted the way post-release rehabilitation and reintegration services could be delivered.

“While ideally we would be meeting with the men face-to-face, we had to move all of our operations to phone and video-based services,” Dr Gray said.

In the six months from June 2020, an average of 790 instances a month of telephone support and case management were provided. Over the same period last year, there were an average of 290 phone calls and 40 face-to-face visits a month.

“In addition to providing men with the usual support offered by The Bridge Centre — information and assistance with basic care needs, drug and alcohol counselling, family support, housing and employment — there was a high level of support to men in how to manage their rehabilitation and reintegration during lockdown,” Dr Gray said.

From June to November 2020 the following support was provided:

- 812 individual men received 4734 instances of phone support or case management.
- 164 family members were provided with 222 instances of support.
- 119 men were provided with 342 instances of support from The Bridge Centre Clinician.

Dr Gray said: “Since opening in late 2017, The Bridge Centre has supported hundreds of men with the rehabilitation journey they began in prison and while they reintegrate into the community.

“Take up of the services offered is voluntary, but the high level of support being pursued demonstrates the importance of continuity of care for people exiting custody.”

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