

The Bridge Centre sets reintegration standard

The GEO Group Australia has set a benchmark in international corrections through the establishment of a dedicated community reintegration facility that is directly linked with the Ravenhall Correctional Centre in Melbourne.

Called The Bridge Centre, it allows men who are released from Ravenhall to receive services and support on a voluntary basis for up to two years after release.

Located just four kilometres from Melbourne's central business district with direct public transport links, the centre is specifically designed to facilitate successful reintegration into the community and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Ravenhall clinicians and GEO's alliance partners attend the centre to deliver post-release services based on prearranged appointments, while a centre manager and two caseworkers provide a permanent staff presence to support casual drop-ins.

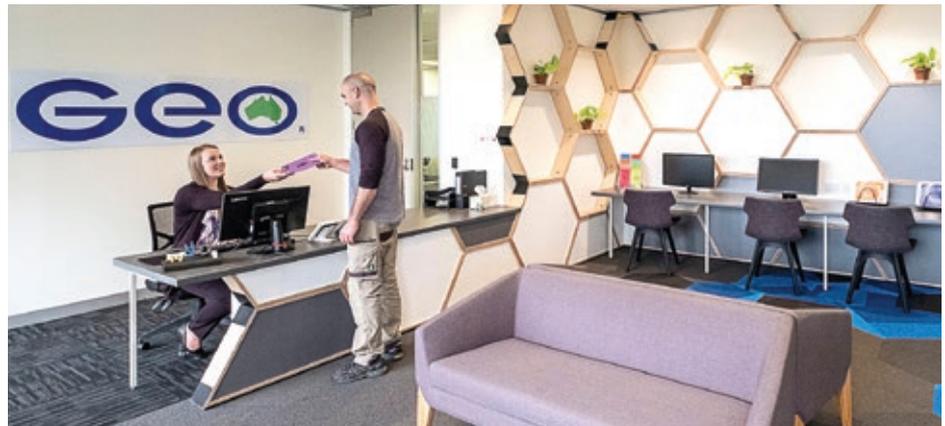
"The Bridge Centre is designed to help men rebuild their lives when they exit prison," said The GEO Group Australia's director, offender development services, Dr Sarah Gray.

"It provides support through transitional housing, counselling, mentoring, education, employment and other post-release services.

"We provide a place that is safe, inclusive, welcoming and culturally sensitive — not only for the men but also for the people who are important in their life such as partners, children, extended family members and significant others.



Dr Sarah Gray.



A corrections benchmark — The Bridge Centre is a dedicated community reintegration facility for prisoners released from Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

"Importantly, GEO and alliance partner staff who attend the centre are working with the same clients they were working with in prison so there is an existing relationship and a continuum of care."

The Bridge Centre offers a holistic model of support that focuses on identifying, developing and investing in the skills, capabilities and strengths of its clients.

It also helps them to reconnect and strengthen relationships with people who are important in their lives.

All men released from Ravenhall Correctional Centre are eligible to attend the centre including those who are not subject to parole or a community based order. They can also access the services after prolonged periods of non-attendance within the two-year timeframe.

"If 12 or 18 months down the track an individual finds they are struggling and need our help they can return to The Bridge Centre and will receive the same level of support as they would immediately upon release," said Dr Gray.

"It is an environment that provides close staff and peer support as well as opportunities for social interaction and teamwork.

"Our approach is individualised and looks at health, emotional wellbeing, education, financial support as well as psychosocial or behavioural needs. A strong sense of community enhances the spirit of the model."

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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.

25 years service

After 25 years of exceptional service Sister Rosemary Terry has retired as chaplain at Junee Correctional Centre.

When the prison opened in 1993 Sister Rosemary asked if she could volunteer. With 20 years experience as an educator she was able to bring teaching skills in literacy and numeracy along with many other attributes.

Shortly afterwards Sister Rosemary took on the position of chaplain and up until her retirement was spending three days a week at the centre.

Sister Rosemary said she has taken great delight in seeing prisoners turn their lives around and considers Junee Correctional Centre a place of hope.

"Sister Rosemary has been a very important and highly respected member of our team for such a long time," said Junee Correctional Centre general manager Scott Brideoake.

"Her dedication to providing chaplaincy services to both prisoners and staff over 25 years has been nothing short of exceptional and we wish her all the very best in retirement."

MD'S MESSAGE



Welcome to this edition of *GEO Insights*. I start with the unfortunate news that we have been unsuccessful in our bid to retain the contract for Parklea Correctional Centre. Please see the In Focus column on the back page of this newsletter for more details.

On a positive note, in Melbourne we have opened The Bridge Centre. This is Ravenhall Correctional Centre's community reintegration facility and it represents a first for international corrections.

Prisoners released from Ravenhall have the opportunity to access continued support,

guidance and services as they re-enter the community. The Bridge Centre covers key areas critical to successful reintegration such as accommodation, employment and health services. These are delivered by GEO and our alliance partners.

The Bridge Centre will play an important role in helping Corrections Victoria achieve its objective of facilitating the successful reintegration of released prisoners and reducing reoffending rates. It is at the heart of GEO's Continuum of Care model.

At Junee Correctional Centre a long and successful partnership has concluded with the retirement of Sister Rosemary Terry who has provided chaplaincy services to both prisoners and staff for 25 years. We wish Sister Rosemary all the best in retirement.

Elsewhere in this edition we report on further success for the industries program at Arthur

Gorrie Correctional Centre. The prison has strong relationships with many local businesses and organisations and a partnership to manufacture temporary fencing is a great example of this.

It is significant to note that although Arthur Gorrie's population is entirely remand it consistently returns the highest levels of prisoner employment, completed programs, and prisoner education and training participation of all Queensland's high security prisons. This underlines the great work of the team at Arthur Gorrie.

Finally, our five centres received a visit from The GEO Group senior executives David Donahue and Kyle Schiller. David and Kyle were over from the United States to meet with clients and review the centres. My thanks to everybody who helped make their visit a success.

Pieter Bezuidenhout
Managing Director



Prisoners have depicted Dreamtime stories through art on internal walls in Fulham's Yeerung Unit.

Art strengthens cultural identity

Indigenous prisoners at Fulham Correctional Centre have again made a major contribution to the annual *Confined* art exhibition staged in Melbourne.

Confined 9 featured works by Indigenous artists currently in or recently released from prisons throughout Victoria.

It is the most significant event for the Indigenous Arts in Prisons and Community Program. Delivered by The Torch organisation, the program focuses on the role of culture and cultural identity in the rehabilitation of prisoners.

This year's exhibition was the largest to-date and featured 190 artworks from 172 men and women. A total of 102 pieces sold during the month-long exhibition generating just under \$76,000.

The art program at Fulham Correctional Centre has a high level of participation with a dedicated art room in the prison's Indigenous unit, known as the Yeerung Unit.

Pieces from 15 current Fulham prisoners and several former Fulham inmates were accepted for the *Confined 9* exhibition.

Additionally, prisoners recently painted three internal walls in the Yeerung Unit and placed artworks on the external walls of the unit's entry foyers.

The internal walls depict different Dreamtime stories of the Gunaikurnai people — the tribal group that have inhabited the local region for at least 18,000 years.

Junee graduates acknowledged

In a moving ceremony 57 students were honoured with graduation certificates at the 9th Annual TAFE NSW Graduation Ceremony at Junee Correctional Centre.

Successfully completing a course within a prison takes great dedication and for many the graduation ceremony was one of the proudest days of their life.

The award winning partnership between TAFE NSW and GEO enables inmates to undertake customised courses to assist them in their reintegration back into the community.

Currently 60 per cent of the centre's population is enrolled in 20 courses with TAFE NSW. It is one of the highest participation rates of any correctional centre in the state.

Junee Correctional Centre general manager Scott Brideoake implored the graduates to use their education as a platform for positive change.



Junee Correctional Centre general manager Scott Brideoake and Mathew with his Student of the Year award.

Senior executives travel ‘down under’



GEO Corrections Leadership Team executives David Donahue (front left) and Kyle Schiller (far right) with The GEO Group Australia managing director Pieter Bezuidenhout (back left) and Fulham general manager Col Caskie.

4 The GEO Group’s David Donahue (senior vice president and president US Corrections and Detention, and International Operations) and Kyle Schiller (executive vice president, administration US and International Corrections and Detention) travelled ‘down under’ to learn more about GEO’s Australian operations.

David and Kyle toured GEO’s five Australian facilities and held meetings with colleagues and senior jurisdictional representatives.

Starting at Parklea Correctional Centre, they inspected the new minimum-security unit before meeting with Minister for Corrections, David Elliott, and Corrective Services NSW commissioner Peter Severin.

The duo then travelled to Brisbane to meet with Queensland Corrective Services commissioner Peter Martin and visit Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre.

David and Kyle had two days in Victoria. First they spent time at Fulham Correctional Centre before visiting the new Ravenhall Correctional Centre in Melbourne and its community reintegration facility, The Bridge Centre.

Meetings were held with Corrections Victoria’s acting commissioner Rod Wise and the Ravenhall project team.

David and Kyle completed a busy week with a tour of Junee Correctional Centre where they inspected the early stages of expansion works.

Big heart reaches out to youth

5 “I come back every year because my heart tells me to.” These few words say a lot about 24-year-old Arthur Gorrie correctional officer Ayrle Timmermans who for the past three years has taken a group of young Australians over the demanding Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea (PNG) as a leader in the Kokoda Challenge Youth Program.

Ayrle first walked the 96-kilometre track in 2009 as a 16-year-old. The following year, four days after finishing school, she joined the army and at 19 was deployed to Afghanistan.

“I discharged from the army in late 2014 and the following year my heart brought me back to the Kokoda Challenge Youth Program to be a leader for a new generation of kids,” she said.

Each year Ayrle and three other leaders work with 12 children who do physical training midweek and Sunday bushwalks to prepare for the trek. Ayrle teaches them about the World War II battle of Kokoda so they understand why Kokoda has a special place in Australian history.

The Kokoda Challenge Youth Program accepts

children from all walks of life. It is a 13-month commitment — they train for five months then spend eight months doing community service after returning from PNG.

“Seeing the change in the kids from day one is absolutely phenomenal,” said Ayrle.

“We volunteer because we love what this program does for the youth of today — it truly does make them better members of the community.”



Ayrle Timmermans at the Isurava Memorial on the Kokoda Track.

Art focuses on mental health

6 An art exhibition with a difference has been held in Wagga Wagga exploring the journey towards mental health experienced by inmates at Junee Correctional Centre.

Called *Journey Man*, the exhibition contained 30 artworks completed by seven inmates during a therapeutic art course designed to encourage the participants to express their personal experiences as they deal with mental health issues.

Sold by auction on the opening night, all artworks were donated by the artists to contribute to the support of mental health awareness in the local region.



Art mentor Anthony Boerboom works with Junee inmates. Photo courtesy Junee Southern Cross.

More than \$4600 was raised for Riverina Bluebell. The funds will be used for community workshops and presentations on mental health.

Local art mentor Anthony Boerboom worked with the seven inmates for two years and has been involved with the prison for over a decade.

One inmate, who truly embraced the art therapy, created 20 pieces for *Journey Man*. Anthony described the pieces as “exquisite” and praised the inmate for “his courage to put on canvas his struggle with mental health, his past experiences and his journey toward a more emotional state of wellbeing”.

“Being in prison can be a dark place to be,” he said. “However some prisons have bright places and one of these institutions is Junee Correctional Centre.

“It has a cultural centre that provides inmates with the opportunity to work on their programs and fill their time positively and productively by participating in their chosen area of creativity, be it cultural expression, music, dance, writing and poetry or visual arts.”



From left: Arthur Gorrie's Jacobus Havenga, Sidd Mehta and Heath Maslen with The Advanced Group contractor Shane Gallamore (second from right).

Strong fencing partnership

Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and The Advanced Group have celebrated the milestone of manufacturing 20,000 concrete blocks used as support bases for temporary fencing.

Significantly, the strong partnership has also seen four former prisoners who were part of the manufacturing team gain casual employment through The Advanced Group.

The project has two manufacturing components. Inmates working in Arthur Gorrie's metal workshop repair and fabricate temporary fencing panels while another group make concrete blocks to support the panels.

In 2017, Arthur Gorrie inmates repaired and fabricated almost 13,000 panels or more than 30 kilometres of fencing for use on construction sites.

"The employment element of the partnership has been very successful for both parties," said Arthur Gorrie finance and administration manager Sidd Mehta.

"The Advanced Group get trained and skilled workers who slot into the job straight away and the fact that we are able to help prisoners find employment immediately upon release is a great result for the individuals and for GEO in our efforts to reduce recidivism."



Corrections officers Helen Dolan and Prinesh Narayan with care bears made by Fulham prisoners.

Care bear program revived

The Morwell Lions Club's decision to distribute care bears to agencies providing support to children affected by family violence has revived the soft toy program at Fulham Correctional Centre.

Care bears can help comfort a child accompanying parents attending counselling sessions and are also used by paramedics at traumatic events such as road accidents.

The soft toys program at Fulham started in 2015 with more than 70 small bears provided to Ambulance Victoria.

The latest batch of hand-sewn bears are much larger with Fulham providing 21 high quality toys to Morwell Lions Club for distribution to local support agencies.

Wests Tigers on board

Parklea Correctional Centre has expanded its relationship with the Wests Tigers Rugby League Club with the focus on health and wellbeing.

The club — which competes in the National Rugby League competition — and its players have begun delivering seminars and workshops for prisoners. Wests Tigers has delivered a similar program at Goulburn Correctional Centre.

The club is also conducting a 'book drive' at its home games in season 2018 to collect books for the Parklea library.

Last Christmas players helped GEO staff deliver toys to children at Campbelltown Hospital. The toys were donated by GEO with some handmade by prisoners in the centre's workshop.



Junee Correctional Centre's Trevor Coles (right) with leaders and members of the 1st Junee Scout Group.

Support for local youth

Junee Correctional Centre's strong program of community support has continued over recent months with a number of initiatives aimed at local youth.

Inmates created a fundraising event with the goal of delivering children a message on the importance of keeping active. Their efforts led to new sporting equipment kits worth about \$1000 being handed to the principals of Junee's three primary schools.

This was followed by inmates raising \$1000 for the 1st Junee Scout Group to help a number of scouts attend the Australian Jamboree to be staged in South Australia in 2019.

The centre has also acknowledged young achievers in the community with its annual scholarships and recognition awards. Valued at \$10,000, the awards cover four categories — academic excellence, creative arts, sporting distinction and financial hardship.

A message to Parklea Correctional Centre staff

*By Pieter Bezuidenhout
Managing Director*

As you are aware, Parklea Correctional Centre is one of the most complex prisons in Australia and as a result it has unique operational challenges.

Unfortunately, while we were working through those challenges and dealing with different prisoner cohorts and their specific requirements, Parklea also attracted a great deal of negative media coverage.

While the media has a duty to report on matters of public interest, it is regrettable that much of what has been reported was based on misinformation.

I share the disappointment and frustration of Parklea staff with the manner in which the centre has been portrayed in some quarters.

However, there is a NSW Parliamentary Inquiry underway and we will be providing it with the facts and strongly defending Parklea Correctional Centre's many achievements.

Our contract ends in March 2019 and management will transfer to another provider. I appreciate that this will be a time of uncertainty for you. Please be assured that information will be provided about the process for transfer of employment.

The new provider will be obligated to consult and inform Parklea staff about such matters and GEO is also required to assist in this process. I can assure Parklea staff that we will spare no effort in supporting you.

There will be an opportunity for me to speak directly with you in the coming months however I wish to place on record my appreciation for the job you have done and continue to do.

GEO assumed management of the centre in 2009 in a highly successful transfer from public operation. Since that time Parklea staff have managed one of Australia's largest and most challenging correctional centres.

You have coped brilliantly with a significant increase in the centre's capacity and smoothly managed the introduction of a whole range of new prisoner groups as well as new services.

Thousands upon thousands of prisoners have passed through Parklea Correctional Centre during GEO's management of the facility and you have assured their safety, security and wellbeing. You should be proud of your record.