

Expansions underway



Inside one of the new cell blocks at Junee Correctional Centre.

In response to increasing prisoner numbers and the growth of particular cohorts such as prisoners on remand, Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW) and Corrections Victoria are increasing the capacity of their prison systems.

The GEO Group Australia is playing its part through expansion of the two prisons it manages in Victoria as well as Junee Correctional Centre in NSW.

The expansions will help ensure prisoners' welfare and access to rehabilitation and reintegration are maintained.

Ravenhall Correctional Centre in Melbourne has become a key resource in the Victorian correctional system since it opened 18 months ago.

Initially envisaged as a 500-bed sentenced facility, Ravenhall opened as a 1000-bed sentenced and remand centre with additional capacity for a further 300 prisoners.

This provision was taken up last year, taking Ravenhall to a capacity of 1300.

Already Australia's most innovative correctional centre, with state-of-the-art rehabilitation and reintegration programs, Ravenhall has also become one of the country's largest.

At Fulham Correctional Centre in regional Victoria, construction is underway on a 137-bed expansion. This comprises an accommodation unit and a 35-bed segregated-custody unit for the intensive management of prisoners with challenging behaviours.

Expected to be completed in mid-2020, the expansion will see Fulham join the growing ranks of Australian correctional centres with capacity in excess of 1000.

Expansion works at the 853-bed medium-security Junee Correctional Centre began in April 2017 and include a new 480-bed accommodation area as well as activities and services infrastructure. A purpose-built administration building and prison gatehouse have already been completed.

The expansion models Junee's existing design and adds four accommodation units including one for remand inmates. The new area is rated for maximum security prisoners and significantly increases Junee's operational flexibility, offering a 'surge capacity' to 720.

Hundreds of Riverina tradespeople and labourers are benefitting from the expansion. Cootamundra MP Steph Cooke visited the site recently and said at the peak of construction

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there were more than 250 tradespeople working at the prison.

"Building works have progressed smoothly and the centre is on track to open this year with around 130 ongoing prison jobs available for Riverina residents," she said.

"The positive economic impacts of a centre of this size are not only being felt now but will continue to benefit Junee and the surrounding areas.

"I'm also told that each accommodation block's 120 modular-cells were installed in just 10 days — an impressive result, which demonstrates the excellent work of the team."

Junee Correctional Centre general manager Scott Brideoake said the centre currently employs more than 280 staff with about half from the local area.

"We are a proud employer and endeavour to be a good neighbour in the Riverina region," he said.

"The centre is dedicated to reducing reoffending through education and vocational training and GEO will continue to keep this as a priority as the prison expands."



Junee Correctional Centre general manager Scott Brideoake with Cootamundra MP Steph Cooke.

MD'S MESSAGE

Welcome to this edition of *GEO Insights*. We start with news of expansions at our centres in New South Wales and Victoria. These two jurisdictions continue their timely planning for future demand and invest in additional prison capacity across a mix of private and publicly

managed facilities.

At Fulham Correctional Centre work is underway to add 137 beds and significantly enhance the prison's capacity to manage challenging prisoners. This development will move Fulham into the ranks of facilities managing 1000-plus prisoners.

At Ravenhall Correctional Centre there has been

rapid growth and diversification of function. Last year Corrections Victoria asked GEO to increase prisoner numbers to the centre's full built capacity of 1300, making Ravenhall Victoria's largest correctional facility.

The 480-bed maximum-security expansion at Junee Correctional Centre is progressing well. The four accommodation units are nearing completion and, in keeping with the centre's existing operational model, one of these will be allocated to remand inmates.

Mindful of how quickly inmate numbers can grow, Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW) has provided for a 'surge capacity' which will allow Junee to service a further 240 inmates within the new development.

GEO's growth continues to be driven as much by expansion of existing centres as it does through new contracts. Our teams at each centre continue to excel by managing each expansion safely and securely.

Elsewhere in this edition, we celebrate the contribution of Keith Ketheeswaran who retires

from the position of director governance and performance assurance and welcome Kim Blinkhorn into this role.

I am particularly pleased to have Kim on the team as she brings exceptional experience in corrections including overseeing the monitoring functions for CSNSW in her previous role. Kim was also instrumental in developing new outcomes-based performance measures which increasingly define our contracts.

Finally, it is with great disappointment that I report the news that Queensland has decided to end the privatisation of prisons and that Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre will move to public management.

Although regrettable, such decisions are not uncommon. Across Australasia since 2005 there have been 12 occasions when the management of a facility has switched, be that from public-to-private, private-to-private, or private-to-public.

Pieter Bezuidenhout
Managing Director



From left: TAFE NSW spray painting and panel beating teacher Richard Clark with Jarrod Roesler and Junee Correctional Centre offender services manager Trevor Coles and industries manager Peter Holt.

Inmates make a wish come true

2 A unique collaboration between Junee Correctional Centre, TAFE NSW and Make-A-Wish Australia has made a teenager's dream come true.

Jarrod Roesler, 19, has faced significant challenges over the years including being diagnosed with kidney failure at 12 and the death of his best friend in a farming accident.

Jarrod spent four years on dialysis before receiving a kidney transplant.

His friend, Jack, had been restoring an old 'ute' before his death and Jarrod decided he would take Jack's vision and see the car restored to its former glory.

The first recipient of a wish from the Wagga branch of Make-A-Wish Australia, Jarrod asked for the 1971 Holden HQ to be restored in Jack's

honour rather than make a wish for himself.

Junee Correctional Centre and TAFE NSW were approached to see if inmates participating in TAFE courses would help restore the vehicle.

With the support of staff and TAFE teachers, inmates refurbished the car, painted the body and fitted a custom-built tray.

Over 300 hours of work went into the vehicle and Jarrod, now in good health, will complete the refurbishment.

When he saw the car for the first time Jarrod was lost for words.

"I could never imagine it would have reached the level it has," he said. "I would never have been able to get it there and I am so thankful for those who made it happen."

New director

3 The GEO Group Australia is pleased to welcome Kim Blinkhorn as the new director governance and continuous improvement.

In an impressive corrections and criminal justice career spanning 30 years, Kim has worked across several jurisdictions in Australia and represented Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW) internationally.

Kim's time with CSNSW included overseeing the contract monitoring of private prisons and the development of next generation service standards and key performance indicators.

She also chaired the working group for revision of the National Guidelines for Corrections in Australia in 2018.

During a placement in the United Kingdom, Kim worked with the chief inspector of prisons and gained an insight into that system's regime of prison inspections.

GEO will benefit from Kim's insight and experience, particularly the guidance and leadership she will bring to GEO delivering on its performance obligations.



Kim Blinkhorn.

Plant partnership grows

4 A partnership between Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and a community environment group has blossomed into an award-winning plant nursery enterprise, benefitting the environment and providing prisoners with new skills to assist them when they return to the community.

Somerset Regional Council mayor Graeme Lehmann applauded the partnership at a recent meeting with Arthur Gorrie general manager Troy Ittensohn. The council is one of a number of organisations throughout Queensland



Somerset Regional Council mayor Graeme Lehmann (left) and Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre general manager Troy Ittensohn with a selection of plants grown at the prison.

supplied with native plants grown at the prison in partnership with Save Our Waterways Now (SOWN).

SOWN provides planting material such as potting mix and seeds or seedlings which the prisoners nurture into tubestock.

“This is an extraordinary success story,” said Arthur Gorrie finance and administration manager Sidd Mehta.

“We now supply about 100,000 plants a year to SOWN, which is committed to improving the natural habitat of Brisbane waterways and distributes the plants to councils, community groups and organisations throughout South-East Queensland.

“We’ve come a long way since we started in 2010 in response to local landscapes being devastated by widespread flooding. Back then only five or six prisoners were involved in the nursery which produced about 15,000 tubestock plants.

“There are now as many as 15 prisoners involved, doing everything from washing planting pots and sourcing fertiliser from onsite worm farms to germinating seeds and potting-on plants as they mature.”

Arthur Gorrie engages the services of a TAFE teacher who provides the prisoners with a high level of horticulture theory and practical training. Over the years, the partnership has been recognised with a number of environmental awards from community groups.



Carlton co-captain Patrick Cripps found the visit to Ravenhall Correctional Centre valuable. Photo: Cristian Filippo

Carlton visits Ravenhall

6 The YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) delivers a number of programs at Ravenhall Correctional Centre including the Visiting Teams Program.

This program provides opportunities for community visitors from a range of sectors to attend the centre and meet with prisoners.

Earlier this year, the YMCA coordinated a visit for the entire playing list and coaching staff from the Carlton Football Club which competes in the Australian Football League.

The visitors participated in a volleyball game and table-tennis tournament with prisoners. There was also an opportunity for prisoners and players to share stories.

Carlton co-captain Patrick Cripps told the *Herald Sun* newspaper that the prison visit was confronting but valuable. He said many of his conversations made him realise he had been handed opportunities denied to many in Ravenhall.

“It was interesting. It makes you pretty grateful the position you are in. For me I was lucky to have a strong family upbringing that instilled values that gave me the best opportunity in life.

“And it was interesting speaking to a couple of the guys there, one thing they lack is a bit of purpose and direction. That was something I was provided so I feel pretty grateful.”

Maori and Pacific Islander prisoners performed a haka on the day, which was a powerful demonstration of the importance and strength of their culture.

Supporting the local agricultural industry

5 Prisoners from Fulham Correctional Centre are supporting the local agricultural industry and helping to improve soil health in the region through their work at Gippsland Water’s Dutson Downs property.

The 8500 hectare property is home to a soil and organic recycling facility. The facility produces Revive Recycled Compost which is distributed to farms through agricultural services company Gibsons Groundspread. About 1000 tonnes of compost is produced each week.

As many as seven prisoners work at the facility each day collecting and removing plastic contaminants.

The prisoners use rubbish pickers and buckets to undertake a task that is not easy. The work is tedious and appears never-ending with the elements working against them. Driving wind means that as pieces of plastic are collected others fly into their place. A paddock can be clean one day and completely covered in plastic the next.

The prisoners have demonstrated their ability to think ‘outside the square’ by recommending

improvement to the equipment they use to increase productivity.

The facility treats and recycles liquid and solid waste from businesses. Most is used in the composting process. It is the first facility of its kind in Victoria and reduces the amount of waste going to landfill.



A group of prisoners about to start work at Gippsland Water’s soil and organic recycling facility.

IN BRIEF

Parklea transition complete

The GEO Group Australia's contract for the management of Parklea Correctional Centre ended on 31 March.

GEO won the contract in 2009 and smoothly transitioned into the centre in a mere 30 days — a process praised by the Minister of Corrections and Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW) at the time.

Over the years the centre experienced numerous expansions, changes of function and the introduction of new prisoner cohorts — with GEO positively responding to all requests from CSNSW.

A highly complex centre to manage, CSNSW senior management recognised the remarkable job delivered by staff at Parklea Correctional Centre.

The Parklea team once again demonstrated the very best of GEO values in supporting a highly professional and incident-free transition to CSNSW.



Junee Correctional Centre industries manager Peter Holt (left) and offender services manager Trevor Coles with the goanna sculpture.

Aboriginal art for Lillier Lodge

Junee Correctional Centre inmates have designed and constructed a large metal goanna sculpture that has been donated to Lillier Lodge in Wagga Wagga.

The sculpture, that resulted from a collaboration with TAFE NSW, now adorns an external wall of the lodge.

It was unveiled along with Aboriginal artwork painted by local Wiradjuri elder Aunty Kath Withers — who worked with inmates at the prison over many years.

“Having this artwork will not only promote recognition of the traditional owners of Wiradjuri country on which we stand and its elders, but also will welcome those who live and journey here from around the region,” said Lillier Lodge manager Margaret Dalmau.

Lillier Lodge provides accommodation for people undergoing cancer treatment at nearby facilities.

Keith Ketheeswaran retires

March saw the retirement of The GEO Group Australia's director governance and performance assurance, Keith Ketheeswaran.



Keith Ketheeswaran.

Of Sri Lankan heritage, Keith joined GEO in 2005 and brought with him a wealth of experience from the world of international standards and risk management.

In addition to his intellect and subject expertise, Keith also brought great humour, an ability to relate to all he met and real kindness in performing his professional duties. He held the respect of his colleagues and the confidence of customers.

Senior management and staff wish Keith a wonderful retirement and acknowledge his significant contribution to GEO.

Celebrating Chinese New Year

Ravenhall Correctional Centre has held its second Lunar New Year festival. The festival celebrates the beginning of a new year on the traditional Chinese calendar.

The event was attended by prisoners, staff and external visitors, including Buddhist monks from the Quang Minh Temple in Melbourne.

A highlight was prisoners performing the traditional lion dance — designed to bring luck and fortune — in a colourful and highly decorative costume.

A collection of intricate origami figures showcased some of the prisoners' skills in the art of paper folding and attendees also enjoyed traditional Chinese food.

The importance of these types of cultural events for the prisoners cannot be overstated as they provide opportunities for community engagement and connections to culture — which play a key role in enhancing reintegration outcomes.



Prisoners perform a traditional lion dance as part of Lunar New Year celebrations.

Queensland prisons to be publicly-managed

The Queensland Government has decided to end the privatisation of correctional facilities.

As a result, both Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and Southern Queensland Correctional Centre (operated by Serco) will be publicly-managed.

The GEO Group Australia has operated Arthur Gorrie since 1992.

It is one of the best performing prisons in Queensland and GEO has continually earned plaudits from Queensland Corrective Services for its management of the centre along with an ‘innovation bonus’ in each of the last three years.

Recent Queensland Government figures confirm that Arthur Gorrie has the highest proportion of prisoners undertaking education and training and the largest number of prisoners completing accredited programs throughout the state's prison system — figures that confirm the centre's focus on reducing reoffending and enhancing public safety.

In its 2016 report, the Queensland Audit Office also recognised Arthur Gorrie's record in rehabilitation and reintegration.

The centre had the second highest proportion of prisoners employed while in prison and the second highest proportion of prisoners successfully completing vocational education and training courses.

These are exceptional results for any prison, let alone a busy remand facility that provides services at one of the lowest cost-per-prisoner levels of any Queensland correctional centre.

The Queensland Government has stated that its decision was informed by the Crime and Corruption Commission's Taskforce Flaxton report.

None of the report's 33 recommendations suggested ending privatisation — in fact the report envisaged prisons would continue to be privately operated.

Also, contrary to media reports, Arthur Gorrie has a lower prisoner-on-staff assault rate than comparable prisons in Queensland.

GEO is indebted to its employees at the centre who have performed outstandingly over the past 27 years. GEO will work closely with the Queensland Government as the centre transitions and keep staff fully informed of developments.