

Junee Correctional Centre staff resilient in challenging times

In challenging conditions – including a major expansion, bushfires and the outbreak of COVID-19 – operator of the Junee Correctional Centre, The GEO Group Australia, has achieved full compliance with its contractual obligations in 2019-20.

Corrective Services New South Wales assesses the Centre's performance against the requirements of GEO's contract.

Junee Correctional Centre General Manager Scott Brideoake said the 12 months ending in March 2020, was a testing time for staff, who confronted extra challenges on top of those they already faced working in a custodial environment.

"Not only were we working towards the end of a major expansion project at the Centre in December, but the community was enduring summer bushfires and now the impacts of COVID-19," he said.

"Being able to deliver such a strong performance demonstrates the commitment of our local workforce and I am certainly proud of our staff's resilience in being able to adapt in these difficult circumstances."

Following two-and-a-half years of construction, the Centre's new 480-bed maximum security wing officially opened on 11 December, with work on some additional service areas being finalised. The project, which allows a 'surge' capacity of up to 720 inmates, includes the delivery of new activities and services infrastructure, and a purpose-built administration centre.

At the peak of construction, up to 300 tradespeople worked on site. The prison's expansion also delivers continuing employment for 130 people in the Riverina.

"There is no doubt this major expansion project saw considerable disruption to work-as-usual for Junee staff," Mr Brideoake said. "I'd like to commend all of our staff who continued to carry out their regular duties during this transitional period, which was soon to be followed by one of Australia's worst bushfire seasons on record."

In response to the devastating impact of last summer's bushfires, Junee inmates donated \$3,200 to the local fire brigade for extra equipment for its fire trucks and leftover gifts from the children's Christmas party for children who lost their homes. Staff and inmates also donated \$3,000 to the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital.

"Now we are in the middle of a pandemic, which has enforced strict new protocols for staff and inmates to minimise the risk of COVID-19 entering the prison," Mr Brideoake said.

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