

WOMEN WHO INSPIRE

WORKING BEHIND BARS



Hosking, Strong and Westin are part of the team from Corrections Victoria at Department of Justice and Community Safety.

WOMEN IN CHARGE
 "Victoria has a long tradition of women in senior leadership roles in Corrections," Strong (above centre, with team members Jenny Hosking and Melissa Westin) explains. "And I have been very fortunate to work with them, and learn from them."

During her three decades in the industry, Greenfield has developed a passion for leadership. "Not a day goes by where I don't recognise the privilege it is to lead a fabulous team of staff," she explains.



Before taking on the general manager role at Fulham Correctional Centre, Greenfield managed the daily operations at SuperMax in Goulburn, NSW.

WHO FINDS OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WORK IN AUSTRALIA'S PRISONS FROM THOSE ON THE INSIDE

For anyone who watched in horror as *Prisoner's* evil officer Joan Ferguson, aka "The Freak", roamed the halls of Wentworth Detention Centre in the '80s cult show, you might have a pretty distorted idea about what it's like to work in a corrections facility. But there's so much more to the industry than just bars and locks.

"Most people get their perceptions of what it's like to work in corrections from what they see on television or in the movies, but in reality you don't have to be rough and tough, or without compassion," Natalie

BOTTOM LEFT, COURTESY OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW

Greenfield, general manager at Victoria's Fulham Correctional Centre, a privately run prison by The GEO Group Australia, tells WHO. "Being genuine and being yourself is key for me, both among staff and with the prisoners."

The 50-year-old is one of more than 1322 females working in prisons in Victoria alone. Heading up the state's largest regional correctional centre in Sale, she oversees staff training and development – with almost half of her team made up of women – safety and security, budgets, prisoner education and rehabilitation, health, and prisoner employment. "You're presented with challenges and learning opportunities every single day," she tells WHO. "No two days are ever alike."

In her 30 years in the industry, there aren't many areas Greenfield hasn't been a part of. She has taken on a number of roles including working in prisons of all security classifications, investigations, intelligence,

governance and compliance, hostage response and the K9 squad.

However, it's a career that Greenfield never had initially envisioned for herself. "As a young woman, I'd never considered working in corrections and I had no firm career plan," she explains. "One day I met a friend of a friend who absolutely loved her job in the industry, so I sent off an application, just to see if I'd get in. Then at 21, I started my training to be a prison officer at the Brush Farm Corrective Services Academy, in Sydney, and I've never looked back."

Greenfield admits it's the "opportunity, variety and flexibility" that has kept her climbing the ladder over the past three decades, as well as her ongoing curiosity about the industry. "At times it can be extremely tense in what can be an unpredictable and challenging environment," she says. "But generally I enjoy the rewards of managing people."

While originally a very male-dominated career path, the corrections industry has seen a huge increase in female recruitment in recent years – with 41.3 per cent of the workforce in public corrections now being women. "We've been deliberately recruiting a diverse workforce for many years now, because a sound prison system has prison officers from varied backgrounds," Larissa Strong, acting commissioner of Corrections Victoria, Department of Justice and Community Safety, tells WHO.

Having 21 years experience in corrections, like Greenfield, Strong is aware of the misconceptions of the industry. "Some people don't see the link between prisons and people," she explains. However, Strong, 52, insists it isn't just about keeping offenders under lock and key.

"A significant aspect to the industry is getting to the bottom of the issues that resulted in a person coming into prison in the first place," she tells. "We see ourselves as case managers for each prisoner, helping them through education, employment, drug, alcohol and mental health programs to provide them with the appropriate tools and resources to turn their lives around."

In Strong's case, she enjoys what she does because "it's work that matters". "Learning about people's experiences prior to them coming to prison and understanding how they ended up where they are is really important to inform strategy," she tells. "And it's important in a culture that supports rehabilitation."

With female employment increasing by five per cent over the past five years, it's evident more females are pursuing careers in corrections thanks to support from industry leaders. "No matter what pathway or career goals women want in corrections, there's opportunities across the board," Strong adds.

• *By Sara Tapia*
National Corrections Day on January 15 is an opportunity to recognise the tireless efforts of Corrective Services staff members

"You don't have to be rough and tough"
 - GREENFIELD