

MAINTAINING AND CELEBRATING CULTURE



Junee Correctional Centre Aboriginal Liaison Officer Jess Alexander and Indigenous men participate in a Smoking ceremony for NAIDOC Week.

The culture, history and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are celebrated at all GEO-managed correctional centres, with a range of special events held over the past few months for staff and prisoners.

NAIDOC Week

Junee Correctional Centre staff and 271 Indigenous inmates have participated in a range of activities for this year's NAIDOC Week, which was themed Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up!

The days were broken into halves - one group commenced celebrations on the oval with a Smoking ceremony, Welcome to Country delivered by Wiradjuri Man Les Williams, a stomp the ground ritual and a football knockout competition.

The second half of the day, inmates attended the Cultural Centre where they participated in a Yarning Circle. There were presentations from visitors - Riverina Medical and the Land Council, along with art provisions.

Lunch for all participants was made up of Indigenous foods, emu meatballs, crocodile cous cous and kangaroo curry. The week was a great success.

The Art of Incarceration

A group of current and former prisoners from Fulham Correctional Centre have featured in *The Art of Incarceration* - a new documentary that was released on Netflix on 3 July, headlining its NAIDOC Week collection.

Narrated by Uncle Jack Charles (Boonwurring/Dja Dja Wurrung), the film looks at the over-representation of Indigenous Australians in the prison system and explores how art and culture can empower First Nations people while in custody and post release.

It also offers hope as it follows the men's quests for cultural identity and spiritual healing as they prepare for the annual *Confined* exhibition through The Torch art program and life on the outside.

10 years of Dreaming Inside

On 19 May, the 10th volume of *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre* was launched at the Wollongong Art Gallery, by renowned writer Melissa Lucashenko. The event featured Aboriginal music, dance and an auction of inmate art, with further promotion at the Sydney Writers' Festival.

Begun by Auntie Barbara Nicholson, the writing program, helps inmates with literacy, self-esteem, greater cultural awareness and an increased ability to

understand their own feelings.

Auntie Barb said: "I never imagined we'd get to 10 years. It's a testament to the strength not just of the books or the program, but of the inmates themselves."



MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR



It is pleasing to see the many and varied activities being undertaken to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our care.

These initiatives are integral in the

implementation of our Aboriginal Wellbeing Strategy, and I commend everyone involved in ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women in custody are supported to maintain their connections with culture. This includes The Torch program which has been featured in a new documentary filmed at Fulham Correctional Centre called *The Art of Incarceration*, recently released on Netflix. It also includes our writing initiative – *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre* – now in its 10th year.

It is also great to read about all of the ways the Family Team at Ravenhall Correctional Centre is supporting men in our custody with parenting strategies and reconnecting them with

their children. Ravenhall is also to be commended for its GEO Pride flag and commitment to inclusiveness.

Our centres continue to raise much-needed funds for a number of important causes and charities such as Australia's Biggest Morning Tea and provide donations of goods that offer prisoners the opportunity to develop valuable skills.

All of this work is being undertaken against ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Once again, thank you for your diligence towards protecting the health and safety of your colleagues, prisoners, visitors and communities.

Pieter Bezuidenhout
Managing Director

Specialist practitioners boost family connections

The Family Team at Ravenhall Correctional Centre runs innovative programs dedicated to reducing recidivism that strengthen family connections and improve life skills. The programs recognise that social and family support is an important area of an individual's life and can strongly influence the success of a prisoner's transition back into the community.

Team members have been able to achieve excellent outcomes for participants: reconnecting them with their children for the first time during incarceration; supporting them through difficult Children's Court hearings and Case Plan meetings; providing strategies for parenting from a distance; creating alternative and more effective communication strategies; and ensuring participants remain mentally active.

The team facilitates the following programs:

As the only dedicated Family Programs team within a Victorian Correctional Centre, our Family Practitioners provide **Family and Child Protection** support to participants. They liaise with Child Protection departments on court and child contact matters and advocate for fathers to have safe and meaningful contact with their children.

Practitioners also provide support around connecting and re-connecting prisoners



From left: Demi Kivimets, Cassandra Avendano, Liz Roper, Frank Quosdorf and Maureen Limock.

with their family members – through the **Family Connect** program.

Fathers and carers are also eligible to complete an accredited **Triple P** parenting program. The program encourages participants to actively engage in a range of exercises to learn about the causes of child behavioural problems, goal setting, using strategies to promote child development, manage misbehaviour, and plan for high-risk situations.

Our **Read Along with Dad** program aims to strengthen the relationship between fathers and their children

through a pre-recorded audio book. It gives children the opportunity to hear their Dad's voice and offers a significant opportunity for bonding.

The **GEO Life Skills** program comprises four modules: Self-Care, Communication, Healthy Living, and Money Wise. They aim to assist participants to improve their life skills in a supported group work environment.

Brain Gym delivers activities and games in varying forms and levels of difficulty to promote and encourage thinking, problem solving, and expanded knowledge and vocabulary.

Men at Fulham give back to community



L-R: John Embling, CGHS acting CEO Mandy Pusmucans, Caroline MacLachlan, Jan Embling (Ninety Milers), Rebecca Gunning (CGHS) and Rose Ljubicic (Vocational Services Manager at Fulham Correctional Centre). Photo: Tom Parry, Gippsland Times.

The restoration of an old timber bench seat has given men at Fulham Correctional Centre the opportunity to utilise their woodworking and construction skills while working on a wonderful community project.

The bench seat was fully repaired and renovated by men working in the centre's Industry Learning Centre. On 31 May it was proudly donated to the Sale Hospital Oncology Ward for its Reflection Garden.

General Manager Natalie Greenfield said the project was the result of a partnership with The Ninety Milers community organisation, which had been fundraising to renovate the garden.

"We had an old bench stored off site and realised this was a great opportunity for some of the men to apply the skills they attained in their Cert II Construction course to restore it back to its former glory," Ms Greenfield said.

"The men also had to apply project management and project costing skills as part of their work and have taken great pride in being able to create something meaningful for patients at the local hospital.

"Being able to provide vocational skills training to the men in our custody is an integral part of their rehabilitation and post-release reintegration into the community."

Pride Month celebrations at Ravenhall

Ravenhall Correctional Centre has celebrated Pride Month, held annually in June, with several activities, acknowledgements and new initiatives focused on promoting the LGBTIQ+ community and highlighting some of the issues members face.

On 1 June, a special flag raising ceremony was held at the front of the centre to raise the progress Pride flag. This ceremony was conducted by Operations Manager – Security Rick and Correctional Supervisor Kelly Oakley, with a speech by Reintegration Officer Nicholas Gee (Nic) on LGBTIQ+ history and its connections to corrections. Of significant note, Ravenhall is the first correctional centre outside of the UK to raise the flag, and the first to fly the flag for the full month.

Ravenhall's inaugural LGBTIQ+



The Pride flag at Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

Committee also met to acknowledge, support and continue the fantastic work undertaken by Nic. A broad collection of GEO and Alliance Partner staff from all roles came together to form the committee members. The committee will focus on staff and prisoner-related issues and will meet on a regular basis to provide guidance to LGBTIQ+ matters.

EVALUATION

ENCOURAGING WELLBEING PROGRAM RESULTS

The Research and Evaluation (R&E) team recently reviewed GEO's 'Wellness' program, which is based on the recovery model.

Facilitated at Ravenhall Correctional Centre by GEO Clinicians, the 24-hour program targets sentenced men with a moderate to high risk of reoffending and mental health issues. This approach is strengths-based and focuses on uplifting the wellbeing of a prisoner rather than directly managing their mental health problems.

Following a detailed examination of the evidence, the results suggest the program helped prisoners change. Seven out of the nine targeted short-term outcomes were achieved, with increases in emotional regulation and area of strength. This is often an area that can be difficult to shift in relatively short programs.

Feedback from participants on the delivery of the program was also very positive and opportunities to fine-tune the program were noted, which included broadening eligibility to prisoners without a mental health issue.

There have also been some team movements recently. The R&E team was excited to welcome Samantha Waters to the team in the role of Researcher and Evaluator. Samantha was previously working as a Family Practitioner in the Family and Programs Team.

Additionally, the next cohort of interns have begun their internships at The Bridge Centre and recently toured Ravenhall as part of their onboarding program.

AFL legend Eddie Betts shares stories of resilience

In April Ravenhall Correctional Centre welcomed AFL legend Eddie Betts who addressed more than 140 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners and staff about racism and resilience.

Ravenhall Correctional Manager Michael McDonagh said the much-anticipated visit was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

"Eddie sat around the fire pit and spoke candidly about his personal journey from remote Western Australia - as a young boy who couldn't read and write who had a dream to play AFL," Michael said. "He spoke of his transition to bustling Melbourne and to finally realising his dream of playing AFL.

"He also discussed the importance of being a role model to younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the importance of having an education. As a young boy Eddie couldn't read and write, but has now written a number of children's books that are available in Victorian pre-schools."

Eddie spoke about being a positive influence and using his profile to educate people around racism and being a voice for Aboriginal and Torres



Gifts made for Eddie Betts by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men at Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

Strait Islander people across the country.

A number of men in the Kulin Yulendj Cultural Centre were joined by Eddie for a yarning circle and he listened to their stories. The men presented him

with several gifts they had made for him, including paintings, boomerangs and clap sticks.

The visit was very positive for the men and is still spoken about fondly today.

IN BRIEF



Michael Horne and Donna Moulds at the awards.

Riverina Training Awards

June Correctional Centre's Vocational Services Manager Donna Moulds and Contract & Performance Manager Michael Horne were excited to attend this year's Riverina Training Awards, representing GEO as a Gold Sponsor.

Held on 9 June at the Griffith Regional Theatre, Donna was honoured to present the Rising Star Award.

"We are looking forward to continuing our support for this event in 2023, where we hope to nominate inmates who have achieved their traineeships", Donna said. "We also hope to nominate

one of our Facilitators for Training Excellence."

Course in Johnny Cakes

In May, Bendigo Kangan Institute delivered two sessions of the one-day short course 'Cook Johnny Cakes' from the Mumgudahl training package for Aboriginal men at Fulham Correctional Centre.

Johnny Cakes are a bush scone, which is a cooking tradition that has been shared amongst families and communities over many generations. Twenty men attended the sessions. Many had not previously engaged with education or cooked a Johnny Cake.

Bakery Treats

June Correctional Centre's annual Australia's Biggest Morning Tea event, held on Friday 27 May, was a great success with \$2500 raised towards supporting people impacted by cancer.

More than 1500 cakes, cookies, cheese and bacon rolls, sausage rolls, lamingtons, bee stings, carrot cakes and a large celebration cake were baked by inmates at the centre.

Vocational Services Manager Donna

Moulds said: "Lori-Ann Ford, our incredible Baker continues to outdo herself and this year was no exception.

"Her passion and expertise ensures we have a successful day," Donna said.

"Lori-Ann was asked why she goes to such lengths for a fundraiser, and she explains that this was close to home and has experienced firsthand the devastation cancer causes to those suffering and loved one's supporting them.

"Secondary to this a fundraiser like Australia's Biggest Morning Tea provides the inmates an opportunity to contribute to a very purposeful fundraiser. They know they are learning new skills they can take with them upon reintegration back into the community."



Baker Lori-Ann Ford in the centre's bakery.

