

Media Release

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Life after prison: The Bridge Centre supports thousands of men leaving custody

Eight former prisoners have shared their personal journeys in a collection of short stories being launched to mark the five-year anniversary of The Bridge Centre – a community reintegration centre purpose-built to support men being released from Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

The first of its kind in Australia, The Bridge Centre was established by The GEO Group Australia (GEO), in partnership with Corrections Victoria, to provide ongoing support services for men post-release.

Since seeing their first client in 2018, The Bridge Centre staff have provided vital support for more than 4000 men released from Ravenhall Correctional Centre. The family members of more than 1000 men have also been provided with information and support.

GEO Managing Director Pieter Bezuidenhout said: “Our purpose was to create a facility where people who have left prison could access information, resources and services that would help facilitate their successful reintegration to the community.

“Accessing this help would be voluntary and would start prior to a man’s release from Ravenhall Correctional Centre,” Mr Bezuidenhout said.

“It would enable men to engage with the clinical staff and Alliance Partners they had developed a rapport with while in custody and align with The GEO Group’s international Continuum of Care® model for managing prisoners.

“Five years on and our vision has been realised. We have a team of highly qualified specialists delivering holistic, sensitive, trauma-informed and practical services for men leaving custody.”

The stories presented in *Foundations for a better future: Five years of The Bridge Centre* are only a snapshot of the thousands of milestones - large and small - being achieved in the lives of former prisoners.

“You will read about hardship, addictions, violence and mental illness, and about new beginnings,” Mr Bezuidenhout said.

“You will share in each man’s reflections and their own personal journey as they work hard, with purpose and determination, to rebuild their lives and avoid reoffending.

“Their stories showcase the value of this approach to successful community reintegration.”

Post-Release Case Workers at The Bridge Centre provide ongoing case management and, where required, facilitate referrals to external agencies to address key reintegration needs. Men released from Ravenhall Correctional Centre, along with their families, can access support for two years post-release.

GEO is contracted by the Department of Justice and Community Safety to deliver operations, programs and services at the Ravenhall Correctional Centre and Fulham Correctional Centre in Victoria.

GEO is Australia’s largest provider of private correctional services. Our focus is on rehabilitating prisoners and giving them the support and growth to become positive and productive contributors to our society. Find out more at: geogroup.com.au

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