

## LIFE AFTER PRISON: THE BRIDGE CENTRE SUPPORTS THOUSANDS OF MEN LEAVING CUSTODY

To mark five years of operations of The GEO Group Australia's innovative community reintegration centre – The Bridge Centre – eight men have shared their personal journeys of life after prison in a collection of short stories showcasing how they have been supported to succeed.

The first of its kind in Australia, The Bridge Centre was established by GEO, in partnership with Corrections Victoria, to provide ongoing support services for men released from Ravenhall Correctional Centre. Accessing support is voluntary and starts prior to a man's release.

Since seeing their first client in January 2018, staff have provided vital support for more than 4000 men released from Ravenhall. 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.

"It would enable men to engage with the clinical staff and Alliance Partners they had developed a rapport with while in custody and would align with GEO'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. The book was launched at a special event attended by staff, clients, stakeholders and partners.

"Their stories showcase the value of this approach for successful community reintegration," Mr Bezuidenhout said.

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 Healthcare awarded contract in Victoria's men's public prisons

Earlier this year, the Victorian State Government awarded GEO Healthcare – a subsidiary of The GEO Group Australia – a new contract to provide primary healthcare services in Victoria's men's public prisons, 13 sites, from 1 July 2023.



GEO's former National Director of Health Services, David Grace, has been appointed as the General Manager of GEO Healthcare and is a key player in the transition of services and of staff employed by the current service provider. Mr Grace will report to the GEO Healthcare Board comprising GEO Managing Director Pieter Bezuidenhout, Director, Governance and Continuous Improvement Kim Blinkhorn, Commercial Director Dr Frank Thorn and newly appointed National Director, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Dr Fiona Murphy.

The new business will have a strong clinical governance structure supported by various committees and network groups. These include networks for Aboriginal Health, Population Health, Nurse Practitioners, Medical Practitioners, Health Services Managers and Alcohol and Other Drugs.

The health services contract reflects new service specifications aligned to the Healthcare Services Quality Framework for Victorian Prisons (2023). They focus on enhancing health services to Aboriginal and

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## MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR



It has certainly been an exciting and busy start to the year with The GEO Group Australia celebrating some significant milestones in its operations, including being awarded a new contract to deliver primary healthcare services in Victoria's men's prisons. The transition from the

current provider to GEO Healthcare is well underway as we approach our 1 July commencement.

It was great to attend the five-year anniversary of The Bridge Centre, which has seen more than 4000 men receive post-release support after leaving Ravenhall Correctional Centre. The event attended by Bridge Centre staff and clients, representatives from Corrections Victoria and other key stakeholders also saw the launch of a book of short stories featuring some of the real-life journeys of men supported by our programs.

I would like to welcome Dr Fiona Murphy to the Executive Leadership Team as our new National Director, Rehabilitation and Reintegration, taking over the role from Dr Sarah Gray who has embarked on a new career opportunity with our best wishes.

Also, I would like to pay tribute to a highly regarded and long-time former GEO colleague Richard Laws who has sadly passed away after being ill with cancer. Richard worked for GEO for almost 20 years and I extend my condolences to his family and friends.

We are always looking at new ways to support GEO staff and last month rolled out a new Employee Assistance Program and wellbeing platform called LifeWorks. Access is confidential, with some elements also available to family members of staff.

Finally, it is so good to see our staff engaging in special events such as National Corrections Day, International Women's Day, Pride Month and Waitangi Day. These activities recognise the contributions made by our staff, celebrate our diversity, and contribute to cultural inclusion.

**Pieter Bezuidenhout**  
Managing Director

## GEO Healthcare awarded contract



From left: Aboriginal Health Manager Malcolm Timbery; Director, Clinical Services Rory Maguire; General Manager David Grace; Director, Safety and Quality Diane Videky; Human Resources Manager Kate Fortuna and Executive Assistant Roshni Mehra.

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Torres Strait Islander people – including the deployment of Aboriginal Health Workers within the workforce; integrating alcohol and other drug services which includes harm reduction programs; and incorporating Hepatitis assessments and treatment. There will also be a focus on groups of people that have not traditionally accessed prison health services, including those who are younger, older, have a disability, identify as LGBTIQ+, or are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Mr Grace and Ms Blinkhorn visited each prison in January to meet with the staff of the current contractor, including the Health Service Managers and other key stakeholders.

Mr Grace said: "It is exciting to be appointed to lead the team to deliver the new 2023 primary healthcare specifications to the Victorian men's prisons. The new specifications will offer more tailored services to people in prison and ensure that they receive a

standard of care consistent with what can be obtained in the community. We will be aiming to provide the very best service possible to people in prison.

"We have already met with many of the staff previously providing services at the sites and look forward to them transitioning to GEO Healthcare. I am confident these staff will make a welcomed and valued contribution to the delivery of primary healthcare services under the new specifications."

Ms Blinkhorn said: "The recent appointment of our Aboriginal Health Manager Malcolm Timbery, has been especially significant – and we are confident we can grow the Aboriginal workforce into the future."

GEO is committed to fulfilling the contractual requirements of this new and exciting contract with strong partnerships with the State and all key stakeholders, both in the community and internal to Justice Health.

## Kobi and Kim strike gold

Proudly representing the Fulham Correctional Centre, Health Promotions Nurse Kobi McLachlan with her horse Blackall Park Duchess and Food Services Manager Kim Andrews with her horse Kiandre Infinity won 11 medals and three Champion Sashes between them at the 2023 Victorian Emergency Services Equestrian Games from 29-30 March.

Kobi and Duchess won three gold medals, four silver medals, and two Champion Sashes, across show jumping and dressage events. Kim and Infinity won a gold medal, two silver medals, a bronze medal and a Champion Sash, as well as several other prizes across multiple show jumping and dressage events. Congratulations on your incredible rides!



Kobi McLachlan (left) and Kim Andrews with their champion horses and collection of awards.

# New officers graduate to join the ranks at Ravenhall

During March, Ravenhall Correctional Centre's Pre-Service Course 01/2023 graduated with 29 new Correctional Officers who have been settling into their new roles to support the prisoners within the centre's care.

The trainee officers have undertaken an intense eight-week course to provide them with the necessary skills and training to succeed in ensuring the safety and security of the centre and in adopting its unique rehabilitation and reintegration model of offender management.

With this graduating course, the Correctional Officer ranks have received a significant boost.

Pleasingly, all starting recruits successfully graduated. This is the first occurrence of a starting squad graduating together in full.

The role of a GEO Correctional Officer is one of significant responsibility. More than just security officers, our Correctional Officers are case managers responsible for facilitating meaningful rehabilitation – so that our prisoners may reintegrate into society and make a positive contribution to their communities.

Recruitment for the next Pre-Service Course is well underway and scheduled to start in May.

# New appointment to Executive

In January, Dr Fiona Murphy was appointed The GEO Group Australia's National Director, Rehabilitation and Reintegration, in addition to her

role as Director, Rehabilitation and Reintegration at Ravenhall Correctional Centre. She has also been appointed to the new GEO Healthcare Board.

Fiona joined GEO in August 2016 as part of the Ravenhall Commissioning Team and has been instrumental in developing the Ravenhall Continuum of Care® model, Australia's pre-eminent prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration delivery model.

GEO Managing Director Pieter Bezuidenhout said: "Fiona is a highly valuable member of the Ravenhall Senior Leadership Team and has contributed to several initiatives implemented by GEO across our business over the past six-and-a-half years. Please join me in congratulating Fiona on her new role."



Dr Fiona Murphy

# Vale Richard Laws

On 27 January 2023, former GEO General Manager Operations and New Technologies Richard Laws, 57, passed away after enduring a 12-month battle with cancer.

Richard was part of the GEO family for nearly 20 years after commencing as the Investigations Manager in 2001. Over his tenure, Richard was seconded to roles as General Manager at Junee and Parklea Correctional Centres for significant periods. He was also actively involved in special projects, tenders, and 'start-ups' of new contracts.

Richard ended his career at GEO in 2020 to take up a new opportunity with Serco in New Zealand.

Richard will be missed by his GEO family and friends and our thoughts

and condolences go out to Richard's partner and his children.



Richard Laws with good friend GEO Director, Correctional Services and Junee Correctional Centre Manager Dom Karauria.



Twenty-nine new Correctional Officers have joined Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

## IN BRIEF

### National Corrections Day

On 20 January, our correctional centre staff celebrated National Corrections Day, with this year's theme "Working Together to Reduce Reoffending!"

Fulham hosted Corrections Victoria Assistant Commissioner Scott Jacques and Gippsland Free From Violence representative Fay Wilde, Regional Coordinator Health Promotion, Gippsland Women's Health.

Staff at Ravenhall Correctional Centre were treated to lunch and presentations from key visitors, including a reading from GEO's new publication *Foundations for a Better future: Five years of The Bridge Centre*. Like Fulham, the centre was lit up in blue for the occasion.

Junee Correctional Centre celebrated with a special employee lunch, followed by the Senior Leadership Team hosting an afternoon event in the Cultural Centre for all staff to attend. General Manager Dom Karauria presented to staff about the significant role they hold in protecting the community, rehabilitating inmates, and working to reduce reoffending.

### Waitangi Day celebrations

On 3 February, Fulham Correctional Centre celebrated Waitangi Day for the New Zealand and Islander cohort in honour of the signing of the Waitangi Treaty of 1840. The purpose of the event was to unify the participating cohort and bring awareness of the day to both staff and prisoners. The event was led by the prisoners with music, cultural decorations, cultural food, prayer and Haka all being set up and performed by the men.

### Ravenhall staff join Pride March



A proud group of Ravenhall Correctional Centre staff participated in this year's Midsumma Pride March, on 5 February, in support of the LGBTIQ+ community – their second Pride march. Those marching included members of the centre's LQBTIQ+ Committee, Custodial Officers, Clinicians, Administration, and family supports.

GEO and Ravenhall are proud to support and promote respect and inclusivity among staff and those in our care. The Ravenhall team will continue to place significance on providing visibility of its efforts around diversity and creating safe places for all.

### International Women's Day



IWD computer background displayed at Ravenhall.

On 8 March, Ravenhall Correctional Centre staff celebrated International Women's Day 2023 #EmbraceEquity and marked the occasion with a special event attended by representatives of its Alliance Partner organisations.

Speakers Simone Lawire (Forensic Operations Manager) and Dr Fiona Murphy (GEO National Director, Rehabilitation and Reintegration) shared inspiring stories of change in the correctional industry. A presentation on the importance of equity and the progress of women within corrections was also shared with participants.

Fulham Correctional Centre also held a range of activities, including a video presentation of staff and the centre was lit up in purple overnight. In a formal address, General Manager Natalie Greenfield said: "Equity needs to be something we think about, know, value and embrace. It means creating an inclusive world. It's up to each of us to challenge gender stereotypes, call out discrimination, draw attention to bias, and seek out inclusion."

At Junee Correctional Centre, women were recognised for their contributions towards making significant changes in what has been a male dominated industry – paving the way for future generations. The Human Resources, Health Services, Vocational Services and Operations teams all have women at the helm who are providing opportunities for equality and diversity through strong leadership across the centre. HR representatives also attended 'All things women' in Junee – an event to promote recruitment opportunities and break down the stigma of females working in corrections.

### Scholarships for Junee youth

Junee Correctional Centre has awarded 13 GEO Youth in Focus scholarships to young people in the community.

The scholarships, with a combined value of up to \$10,000 each year, were established to recognise and encourage the considerable achievements of young people, aged 13 to 25, within the Shire. Nomination categories include Academic Excellence, Sporting Distinction and Creative Arts.

GEO is very proud of this partnership and our ability to invest in our youth.

### New EAP and wellbeing platform

Staff have access to a new confidential Employee Assistance Program and innovative digital wellbeing platform called LifeWorks which was rolled out in March.

LifeWorks includes a wealth of online resources and information to support mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing. This includes personal and work-related support, with a range of features also available to the family members of staff.

### Inspiration for Fulham staff



On 5 April, around 150 Fulham Correctional Centre staff joined an hour-long presentation by motivational speaker Gethin Jones of Unlocking Potential – who presented from the United Kingdom about his life story and his perspective on how to make a significant impact on prisoners' lives.

Having had a 20-year involvement with the criminal justice system, including eight years in prison, one of Gethin's key messages was: "It wasn't the system that rehabilitated me ... it was the individuals that worked within it." His story of hope and perseverance was weaved throughout his presentation and reinforced to staff that their engagement in working with prisoners was of significant value and assists in their desistance journey.

Feedback from participants was extremely positive and reinforced for many why they work in the industry.

