

INAUGURAL ABORIGINAL HEALTH DAY A SUCCESS



Vocational Services Manager Julia Nepia and a First Nations participant making smoothies at the Ravenhall Correctional Centre's Aboriginal Health Day.

Ravenhall Correctional Centre recently held its inaugural Aboriginal Health Day, with planning underway for further health-focused initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of First Nations people in GEO's care.

General Manager Col Caskie said: "The health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is poor in comparison to the rest of the Australian population, with higher rates of disease burden and lower life expectancy.

"We also know many people coming into custody generally have poorer health in comparison to the broader community," Mr Caskie said.

"Good health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a holistic concept that includes physical, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing, so we developed an event that incorporated all of these elements for the men."

The multi-purpose hall was converted into an exhibition-style event that included areas where the participants could talk to internal and external health service professionals about various health issues, including diabetes, mental health, diet and immunisation. Medical stations were provided to measure height, weight and blood pressure, and to action any required referrals. There were also information sessions featuring guest speakers in the Cultural Centre and activities in the gym.

Aims of the healthcare event

In addition to promoting health and wellbeing through information and activities, the event aimed to:

- Help improve the health literacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in GEO's care;
- Build and strengthen their relationships with healthcare staff; and

- Build relationships with healthcare partners and other stakeholders, particularly to provide pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people post-release.

Engagement among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who participated was high as the Ravenhall team works to support their health and wellbeing and to improve their healthcare outcomes pre- and post-release.



Blood pressure was measured as part of the event's activities.

MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR



As we approach the end of the year, I want to thank all of you for your ongoing commitment to delivering outstanding correctional services for the benefit of the people in our care, and to maintaining the safety and support of the communities we work in.

As you would be aware, we have learned the NSW Government will assume the management of Junee

Correctional Centre at the end of the current contract in March 2025. After successfully managing the centre for over 30 years, this news was met with tremendous disappointment and came as a complete surprise to all of us when it is widely acknowledged that Junee Correctional Centre is one of the best performing correctional facilities in the state.

As has been reiterated, this decision by the government is in no way a reflection of the centre's operations, but part of a broader remit to de-privatise assets in NSW. GEO will work closely with the State Government to ensure a smooth transition and to help secure employment for staff keen to remain at the centre.

I would like to congratulate staff at our centres who continue to innovate in the delivery of programs to support the people in our care. New initiatives include an Aboriginal Health Day and pet therapy program at Ravenhall, while at Fulham charitable work by men

learning new skills has included making Christmas toys for donation and work crews have been involved in clearing part of The Gippsland Rail Trail ready for the planting of donated trees. These programs and events are an important part of our Continuum of Care® model.

I would also like to commend the team at GEO Healthcare for their outstanding efforts in being recommended for accreditation in the National Safety and Quality Health Services Standards – a contractual requirement and the same standards used by all public and private hospitals. This is a huge milestone in the delivery of healthcare services in men's public prisons in Victoria.

Finally, whether you are taking a break over the festive season, or are on shift at one of our sites, I would like to extend my sincerest and very best wishes to you and your loved ones. Thank you once again for 2023, and I look forward to working with you in 2024.

Pieter Bezuidenhout
Managing Director

Soft toys crafted by men learning textile skills donated to Red Knights

Dinosaurs and teddy bears are among a donation of toys that have been handcrafted by men learning textile skills at Fulham Correctional Centre – ready for charities to gift this Christmas.

In a long-standing tradition, the toys were presented to the Red Knights Motorcycle Club on 7 December for its annual Keith Hamilton - Sale and District Toy Run on 9 December.

Centre Vocational Services Manager Rose Ljubicic said every year a group of men undertaking vocational skills training learn to cut patterns and hand stitch soft toys, knowing they will be donated for children in need.

“Over the past 12 months, and with the support of a GEO Textiles Trade Officer, eight men have made 35 soft toys for this year's event,” Ms Ljubicic said. “Not only are these men learning new skills that could help with securing employment post-release, but they are applying their skills with a sense of purpose and pride by being able to support the local community.”

The Red Knights Australia Local Chapter President, Andrew Young, said: “The Red Knights are proud to be associated with The GEO Group Australia and Fulham Correctional Centre in passing on these gifts to The Salvation Army and St Vincent De Paul.”



From left: Fulham Correctional Centre Acting General Manager Rick Dobson and Vocational Services Manager Rose Ljubicic with The Red Knights Road Captain Scott Rice, Quarter Master Matthew Lovelace and Local Chapter President Andrew Young.

Pooch therapy trial at Ravenhall

GEO's ongoing commitment to innovation and fostering rehabilitative cultures within the facilities it manages has seen a new therapy dog program trialled at Ravenhall Correctional Centre – 'Therapy Pooches for People'.

Therapy dogs are renowned for having a positive impact on people in hospitals, aged care, schools, and courtrooms, so why not in a correctional setting?

'Therapy Pooches for People' is skilfully facilitated at Ravenhall by

certified K9 handlers Amanda and Dee – Correctional Officers from the Metropolitan Remand Centre. The program provides visits from four certified Great Danes – majestic dogs known for their gentle demeanour and commanding presence – who play a crucial role in creating a positive and nurturing atmosphere.

The trial proved highly successful, with staff and participants reporting reduced stress, increased companionship and improved morale. Staff witnessed a positive impact in the overall environment.

Great Dane Nahla's attendance started many positive conversations about how lovely and gentle she was, despite her size, and several of the men said that her visit had made their day.



Great Dane Nahla visited Ravenhall Correctional Centre as part of a trial of the 'Therapy Pooches for People' program.

NSQHS Standards: GEO Healthcare recommended for accreditation

Complementing its first five months of successful operations in providing primary health services in Victorian men's public prisons, GEO Healthcare has been assessed and recommended for accreditation in the National Safety and Quality Health Services (NSQHS) Standards.

GEO Healthcare is required to be accredited by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care as complying with the NSQHS Standards. These are considered the 'gold standard' for healthcare accreditation within Australia, and are the same standards used by all hospitals.

The assessment survey was held on 14-17 November, with three assessors who reviewed GEO Healthcare's Head Office and sampled eight of its 13 service delivery sites.

The eight NSQHS Standards are:

- Clinical Governance
- Partnering with Consumers
- Preventing and Controlling Healthcare Associated Infection
- Medication Safety
- Comprehensive Care
- Communicating for Safety
- Blood Management (GEO Healthcare was exempt as it does not administer blood or blood products in prisons), and
- Recognising and Responding to Acute Deterioration.

At the survey's conclusion, the assessors summarised their findings to GEO Healthcare staff via videoconference. The lead assessor explained that they look for high congruence for each standard between written policies, what staff tell them they do, what the assessors observe staff doing, and what the patients say the staff do. Based on their review of GEO Healthcare, the assessors determined GEO Healthcare as compliant with the NSQHS Standards without additional recommendations.

Aboriginal health services praised

The assessors made special comment of the strong emphasis incorporated



Beechworth Correctional Centre staff participating in the Accreditation Summation Meeting via videoconference. From left: Acting Associated Health Service Manager Di Paul, Administrative Support Officer Team Leader Loz Shallue, Health Service Manager Julie Jenkins, and Registered Nurse Amanda McInnes.

in the Standards for ensuring an organisation's safety and quality priorities address the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The assessors commented that GEO Healthcare was doing this well due to additional Aboriginal Health Services being provided under its new service delivery specifications.

They also commented on witnessing authentic partnerships between staff and their patients, with staff considered empathetic and providing positive healthcare experiences. The assessors also randomly interviewed several patients at each site and reported all patients they interviewed spoke highly of the staff and health services.

GEO Healthcare General Manager David Grace PSM said he was delighted with the outcome of the accreditation survey.

"Our staff have done an excellent job in preparing GEO Healthcare for

accreditation. Staff have really taken on board the mantra that safety and quality is everyone's responsibility," Mr Grace said.

"GEO Healthcare has amazing staff who do a wonderful job. I couldn't be prouder of their achievements since the commencement of service delivery on 1 July."

Congratulations to the team

GEO Director, Governance and Continuous Improvement Kim Blinkhorn said; "In anticipation of the formal result of achieving accreditation – I would like to congratulate General Manager David Grace and his Senior Leadership Team – Dr Shabaz Hussain, Rory Maguire, Holly Rosario and Heidi Matthes, with a special thanks to Di Videky who was instrumental in providing the panel with the required documentation, organising the site visits and managing the overall accreditation process for GEO Healthcare."

Winning Christmas card design



The winning entry by Lara Giltrap.

Congratulations to Lara Giltrap, 9, who is the winner of GEO's annual Christmas Card Design Competition.

Each year the children and grandchildren of GEO staff are invited to submit a festive drawing, with the child who submits the winning entry awarded \$200. Their artwork is recreated as a digital card for GEO stakeholders.

Program helping family connections



Ravenhall's 'Just for Dads' program helps strengthen family networks.

A program that is helping men at Ravenhall Correctional Centre to maintain strong connections with their children is proving valuable in GEO's efforts to support the success of their reintegration post-release.

The 'Just for Dads' program is coordinated by Ravenhall Correctional Centre's Family Team during school holidays. The team facilitates themed activities to enable good engagement between fathers and their children, without other family members present.

For two hours, Dads can connect with their children in a more relaxed way

than during a regular prison visit. They can move about the Visits Centre and enjoy time together playing games, making craft, and can even share a cupcake they have decorated together. For children, the program helps lessen the challenges of visiting Dad in prison and provides an opportunity to connect and strengthen their ongoing relationship.

Local Rail Trail project has provided a valuable employment opportunity for men on work release



From left: Maffra Land Care's Bonnie Reeves and Gippsland Rail Trail Committee Member Beth Ripper OAM with GEO's Matthew Wheeler, Vocational Services Manager Rose Ljubicic and General Manager Natalie Greenfield.

A section of The Gippsland Plains Rail Trail in Maffra has received a much-needed 'facelift' following a donation of native plants to Fulham Correctional Centre and the Maffra and Districts Landcare Network.

A selection of native trees, shrubs, and grasses along the Princes Highway East Upgrade a Major Roads Project Victoria project – have been donated by MRPV and Laing O'Rourke for the project to help improve the local environment.

Work to clear the Rail Trail ready for planting was carried out by several men from the minimum security Nalu unit at Fulham Correctional Centre, who were eligible for external employment.

The Fulham Community Work Crew removed weeds and laid mulch to help prevent future invasions of weeds. The project will not only beautify this section of the Rail Trail but create an ecosystem to attract and support native fauna.

Fulham Correctional Centre's Vocational Services Manager, Rose Ljubicic, said participating in these kinds of projects was an important part of a prisoner's rehabilitation and their successful reintegration into the community after release.

"This project offers us a great opportunity to partner with local Landcare volunteers to renew a section of The Gippsland Plains Rail Trail for locals and visitors to enjoy," Ms Ljubicic said.

"We thank MRPV and Laing O'Rourke for donating these plants as well as Maffra Landcare with their donation of surplus plants – a small gesture that will make a real difference in the community."

New course builds confidence among team leaders

A new Team Leaders course has been introduced at Junee Correctional Centre to support staff in leadership positions and help build their confidence in decision making and incident management.

The three-day workshops are being delivered under the guidance of GEO National Learning and Development Manager Timothy Glanville and cover a broad range of topics. Elements include the role of Team Leader, incident approaches, delegation, de-escalation and debrief planning.

In addition to structured lesson plans and activities, participants can share their experiences while enjoying the advice and guidance provided.

A wealth of experience went into the design and syllabus, which includes table-top challenges, scenario-based cell viewings, and post-action reviews.

After the first Team Leaders Course was held in May, they have continued to be delivered throughout the year achieving great outcomes for participants, their staff and the broader centre. The ultimate outcome is a safe and collaborative approach in working together as a team.



Back from left: Harrison Sloan, Paul Landrigan, Nathan Seymor, Trent Burns, Simon Vanzanten. Front from left: Daniel Marr, April Spencer, Cody White, Jesse Bargallie, Emma Jennings, Taylah Wright.