

## REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION STAFF FEATURE AT JUSTICE SUMMIT



GEO Manager Research and Development Crystal Kimber presenting at the Summit.

Several of GEO's rehabilitation and reintegration staff were excited to be part of the Future Justice and Corrections Summit 2024, held in Sydney in March – an event that afforded a fantastic opportunity to explore evidence-based practices within the criminal justice system.

The event brings together key stakeholders from government departments, private and public operators, architects, health practitioners, and social assistance organisations to discuss, plan and implement the future of corrections in Australia and New Zealand.

Across a number of sessions, GEO staff were able to share some of the organisation's innovative approaches to support prisoners, that enable the correctional environment to positively contribute to rehabilitation outcomes. This included participation in three panel presentations:

- Fiona Rogers (Manager, Community Reintegration Centre) and Jo Kosylo (Manager, Transition and Reintegration) discussed GEO's unique Continuum of Care® model, including pre- and post-release services for people exiting

Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

- Patrick White sharing his voice as a lived experience practitioner who was initially incarcerated at Ravenhall Correctional Centre and engaged in services at GEO's Bridge Centre post-release service before being employed by GEO as an Alcohol and other Drugs Counsellor.
- Tiana Koehrer (Manager Aboriginal Programs) explored strategies within correctional environments to improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Laura Crowe (Clinical Manager, Specialist Units) and Crystal Kimber (Manager, Research and Development) also presented a case study on unique approaches to the professional development of custodial staff that can support and promote a rehabilitative ethos, including specific training and the implementation of reflective practice and supervision models.

**GEO says farewell to  
Managing Director  
Pieter Bezuidenhout**



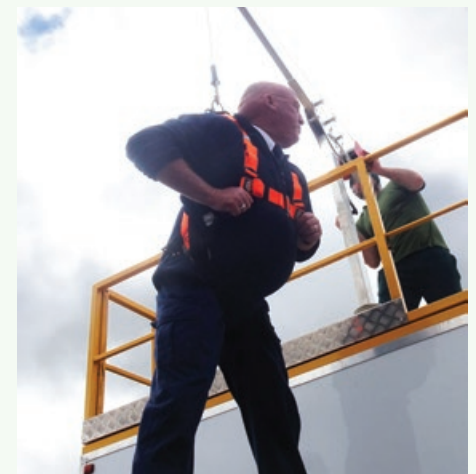
## New Course To Support Employment Opportunities Post-Release

As part of The GEO Group Australia's Continuum of Care® effort, June Correctional Centre has developed a new course that is enabling men to build skills in industries most likely to employ people with a criminal record.

Statistics show that when men are able to earn an income and support themselves, and their families, this contributes to a reduction of recidivism and can change the trajectory of future generations.

Development for a Cert II in Resource and Infrastructure course began in March 2023, with the first 21 men awarded their new qualification, which includes a Safe Work License for Forklift and White Card, credentials for working in confined spaces and at heights – all which add value to the men's resumes and ability to find work post-release. A further 24 men are currently enrolled, with 61 men on the waitlist.

Specific units within the qualification were selected to maximise the skills that are more desirable in industries more likely to employ those with a record. Industries that may not request a police check are traffic control, construction, maintenance and repairs, and engineering. The courses were then adapted for delivery within a correctional setting. Men with short-term sentences and those on remand are prioritised for inclusion.



June Correctional Centre Education Coordinator Gary Doohan during a teaching session.

## AFTER 20 YEARS IT'S FAREWELL FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR



It was on 3 May 2004 that Pieter Bezuidenhout joined The GEO Group Australia as Managing Director. In the 20 years since, Pieter has seen many changes in the delivery of correctional services in Australia, and across the organisation. He shares his thoughts with us for his final message in GEO Insights.

### **How has the industry changed since you began at GEO?**

At the core of delivering correctional services is the principle of providing a safe, secure and humane environment – not just for the people in custody, but also for staff and our providers, and obviously to keep the community safe. That has not changed over the 20 years, however there has been an increasing focus on the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of people leaving custody. I am proud to say GEO leads the way and it is reflected in the organisation's Continuum of Care® model globally.

Vocational training and upskilling are critical elements of ensuring people are employable after release. Our efforts in promoting and providing healthcare are further important factors to help people successfully reintegrate in the community. These areas all work in tandem to ensure people are better equipped to manage their lives effectively post-release, and to reduce their risk of reoffending. Simply put, we need to move from trying to accommodate 'better prisoners' to helping them become 'better citizens'.

The second significant change is that the matrix to measure successful management of prisons has significantly expanded. Today Australian private prison operators are measured in the effectiveness of delivering their services across more than 40 key performance indicators. When I first started it was

more like 10. I believe this is a positive step, but it should be expanded across jurisdictions to include all prisons whether they are public or privately managed.

### **What have been the greatest challenges?**

I believe the most difficult times have been major transitions out of facilities due to changes in government policy. Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre is a case in point and now sadly the Junee Correctional Centre. These are periods of momentous change and uncertainty for staff, many who have devoted their entire careers working in our centres, and is something they do not deserve.

Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenging time for all of us, but no more so than for the hundreds of staff working in our correctional centres who were faced with daily and continuous challenges ensuring adequate prevention measures were adhered to, managing local breakouts of infection, and ensuring the people in prison could continue to access as many services as possible while under lockdown.

### **What are your proudest moments?**



2019: Opening of Junee Correctional Centre's new maximum security wing with General Manager Scott Brideoake, Cootamundra MP Steph Cooke and NSW Corrections Minister Anthony Roberts.

Over the 20 years, as an organisation we have enjoyed many successes, however some of the proudest achievements for the organisation include winning the contract for the Ravenhall Correctional Centre and the opening of The Bridge Centre – the only reintegration facility of its kind in Australia. Securing an extension of our contract to run Fulham Correctional Centre also comes to mind, and winning the health services tender for Victorian men's public prisons.

I am also immensely proud of the incredible work by staff and prisoners to support our local communities, and it is a wonderful reflection of our people embracing GEO's corporate values. There are too many initiatives to mention, suffice to say that Junee Correctional Centre has led the way with many of these, including their Meals on Wheels program, building unique cars

which are donated to be auctioned for the benefit of local charities, donations of items made in industries to community organisations, school sponsorships and fundraising efforts.

Some of the firsts in our industry have also included ISO accreditations and developing and implementing GATEWAY. I am similarly immensely proud of the work being delivered under our three-year Aboriginal Wellbeing Strategy.

### **Does anything in corrections still surprise you?**

Not really! However, I am continuously amazed and delighted how our staff are always professional no matter the challenges they may face. I know that while no workplace is perfect, the staff in our centres strive to maintain a respectful culture. I remain extremely proud how they conduct themselves.

### **How do you see GEO's future in Australia?**

I have strong hopes for the ongoing success of the organisation. Our contracts to deliver correctional services at the Fulham and Ravenhall Correctional Centres are in place for another 11 and 18 years respectively, and GEO Healthcare's services potentially for about 10 years.

What I have seen is that privatisation is very much linked to political cycles, as evidenced with the decisions regarding the recent Junee Correctional Centre Agreement, and some years ago with the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre contract. I believe the pendulum will swing again and, sometime in the future, private operations will again be considered a preferred option for governments. I unreservedly maintain the corrections industry needs a mixed economy to bring out the best of both public and private operations.

### **What does life hold in store in your retirement?**

I will let you know in a year or two!

**Pieter Bezuidenhout**  
Managing Director



2015: Community fundraising by inmates from Parklea Correctional Centre is supported with a donation from GEO.



# Healthcare staff successfully evacuate patients during bushfires

GEO Healthcare staff have been praised for their part in the successful evacuation and relocation of men from Langi Kal Kal Prison during a recent bushfire emergency.

On 27 February, Corrections Victoria then took the precautionary action of evacuating all prisoners from Langi Kal Kal Prison. More than 300 people relocated to Western Plains Correctional Centre. This followed the relocation of 13 vulnerable patients some days earlier.

Within two hours of the announcement, GEO Healthcare staff at Langi Kal Kal Prison completed plans to work at Western Plains Correctional Centre until it was safe to return. Another 28 vulnerable patients were transferred to Hopkins Correctional Centre on this day and housed in a unit that was quickly recommissioned for the evacuation. Staff were deployed, medications were relocated to the relevant locations, consumables were available at Western Plains Correctional Centre, and essential healthcare services continued to be provided without any significant issues.



GEO Healthcare staff on site at Western Plains Correctional Centre.

Fortunately, Langi Kal Kal Prison did not experience any injuries to staff or property loss from the nearby bushfires on 28 February, with prisoners returned the next day.

GEO Healthcare General Manager

David Grace PSM said: "I would like to acknowledge the wonderful efforts of all GEO Healthcare staff involved in the evacuation, which went very smoothly. All patients were safely relocated, and all essential healthcare services continued to be provided."

# New training centre officially opened



Above: The new Phil Munnings Training Centre. Right: GEO Managing Director Pieter Bezuidenhout and Fulham Correctional Centre General Manager Natalie Greenfield unveiling the plaque to be displayed at the training centre.

Corrections staff, and family and friends of the late Phil Munnings, gathered for the official opening of Fulham Correctional Centre's new training centre on 16 April, which has been dedicated to the memory of the Operations Manager who passed away almost 12 months ago.

General Manager Natalie Greenfield

said: "This building stands not only as a physical structure, but as a testament to Phil's enduring legacy - his integrity, excellence and unwavering commitment to the mission and values of our organisation. It also symbolises our commitment to professional development and the pursuit of excellence in corrections.

"Our dedicated staff will engage in training, education, and skill-building activities that are essential for maintaining safety and security for all that enter Fulham - a vital investment in the ongoing growth and empowerment of our staff, recognising the crucial role they play in upholding the principles of justice, rehabilitation, and public safety," she said.





## Centres mark key events

Staff at all GEO-managed correctional centres celebrated National Corrections Day, on 19 January, with a BBQ breakfast, lunches, presentations and announcements of GEO Employee of the Year nominees. The annual event is a day that recognises and thanks corrections staff for their tireless work and commitment to protect the community, provide safe and secure prisons and support people in custody with their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community post-release.

This year's International Women's Day, on 8 March, was also marked across all of centres and included presentations from staff and visitors on the theme of inspiring inclusion.

## Cubby houses donated to local schools



Nambrok Denison Primary School Acting Principal Kylie Edney (L), with Fulham Correctional Centre Manager Natalie Greenfield and Vocational Services Manager Rose Ljubicic.

Two new cubby houses built by men undertaking a Certificate II in Construction while at Fulham Correctional Centre have been donated to local schools.

Vocational Services Manager, Rose Ljubicic, said the cubby houses were constructed to building code standards by six prisoners last year as part of the course being delivered by instructors from the Bendigo Kangan Institute. They have now been delivered to the Maffra Primary School and Nambrok Denison Primary School.

"The men involved in building these cubby houses have been learning construction and joinery skills for six to 12 months in our Industry Learning Centre as they work towards attaining a formal qualification while in custody," Ms Ljubicic said.

Nambrok Denison Primary School's Acting Principal, Kylie Edney, said: "The new cubby house will be a great addition to our current playground, providing an environment that encourages exploration, cooperation, and communication. The space will be enjoyed by many of our students, and we are appreciative of this donation."

## Fruitful employment opportunities for men post-release



Men attending a Fruit2work presentation.

Men at Fulham Correctional Centre are embracing post-release employment opportunities with social enterprise and charity Fruit2work - via a long-standing partnership with the Centre's Vocational Services team.

On 20 February, senior representatives of Fruit2work delivered two information sessions at the Centre, which were attended by 115 prisoners supported by 21 staff. Of those, 46 men expressed interest in engaging in post release employment preparation.

Fruit2work, now managed by a former prisoner of Fulham Correctional Centre, provides opportunities for people who have been involved in the justice system - delivering fruit, milk, and pantry items to businesses.

Since the partnership began in December 2022, Vocational Services staff have assisted 194 men in preparing for post-release employment with Fruit2work.

Further, 121 referrals have been made for men to benefit from education services that help with skills required for post-release employment - digital literacy support, resume and cover letter writing, and basic literacy and numeracy. Around 40 men have undertaken virtual interviews prior to their release, and have been successful in obtaining employment.

## GEO in neutral gender pay gap range

Each year GEO submits workforce data to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), which is charged with promoting and improving gender equality.

Recently, the WGEA published data examining gender pay gaps from 4,962 employers who employ 100 or more employees. This data covered a total of 4,931,902 employees. GEO's data showed a median total remuneration gender pay gap (includes additional payments such as bonuses, super and overtime) of 4.9%, which is pleasingly within the neutral gender pay gap range set by the WGEA.

Please note the WGEA also collects non-binary data, but employers provide this information on a voluntary basis and, as such, it has not published the related pay gap this time around.

## Leadership program to expand

2023 saw The GEO Group Australia embark on an organisational leadership journey that aimed to empower and develop the leadership and management capabilities of its correctional staff.

Director of Correctional Services Dom Karauria endorsed the use of a 'cross-centre fertilisation leadership program - where operational staff across all GEO-managed correctional centres could meet, learn, and grow through formalised training specific to managing people within a correctional environment and shared experience. External Australian-based leadership development organisation Proteus Leadership collaborated with GEO to design and deliver a leadership program specific to meeting the identified needs of correctional middle management.

The initial program consisted of 11 Custodial Graduates, who spent nine months undertaking multiple online group workshops on topics such as 'Leading and Managing Yourself', 'Moving from Mate to Manager', and 'Leading People & Culture'. The group were able to attend the final coaching session and graduation ceremony at Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

Further GEO-Proteus Leadership Development programs will begin in July and expand participation to all correctional divisions, including GEO Healthcare.



Graduates of the GEO-Proteus Leadership Development program at Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

