

Career switch brings rewards

When Trevor Coles, at the age of 41, nervously gave up his management role in the electrical industry in Wagga Wagga to complete a course in welfare and community service as a full-time student, he had no idea about future employment opportunities.

"Except that hopefully I would be helping people," he said. Five years later he is The GEO Group Australia's 'Employee of the Year'.

As a through care specialist at Junee Correctional Centre he and colleague Catherine Parmenter are responsible each year for assisting almost 800 inmates make the transition to life after Junee.

At the 2007 Employee of the Year awards ceremony held recently in Sydney, Trevor received a glass-beveled award, \$4000 travel voucher, \$1000 spending money and two weeks additional leave from managing director Pieter Bezuidenhout and executive general manager human resources Pierre Langford.

Trevor was selected from four remarkable nominees for the annual award. Also nominated were Jeffrey Cooke of Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre, Phillip Pedder from Fulham Correctional Centre and Michael Breese, who works at Melbourne Custody Centre.

The other finalists received an interstate trip for two, incorporating a visit to another GEO centre, and \$700 spending money.

"The four of us were invited to Sydney to meet the executive management team and the nominees experiences were highlighted at a luncheon," Trevor said.

"The achievements of the other guys were quite amazing. Each of them was outstanding."

It is said that fortune favours the brave and so it was with Trevor Coles. While completing his welfare and community service course he noticed a Junee Correctional Centre advertisement for a through care specialist.

"I have always believed there was a gap in the system introducing former inmates back into society," Trevor said.

A Wagga Wagga resident for 15 years and with family and links established in the local community he quickly dashed off an application. The rest is a history of success.

Trevor has strongly promoted that inmates are encouraged to obtain specific and generic job and life skills before they leave Junee.



> Trevor Coles is the 2007 GEO Employee of the Year.

On behalf of up to 20 inmates each week he liaises with government and non-government agencies — such as Centrelink and the Department of Housing — as well as employment agencies to arrange client interviews and rehabilitation assessments.

The role is vital in GEO's commitment to reducing offender recidivism.

Trevor's nomination for Employee of the Year was supported not only by the management team at Junee, but also by testimonials from a number of Junee employees and external stakeholders.

Comments included: "... shown dedication, enthusiasm, initiative and inspiration in not only his through care role, but also as a supportive team member of the Offender Services Team."

He was also praised for his involvement in the creation of the innovative 'Dayungan' through care project and his work with 'Men's Shed'.

The Men's Shed concept offers fully equipped and supervised workshops with tools and materials for older men in society to tackle diverse community projects.

It was also noted that during his annual leave Trevor visited a Canadian Correctional Centre to review the CORCAN program, which is a world renowned cutting edge rehabilitation initiative designed to train inmates so that after their release they have a better chance of obtaining employment.



MD's desk

I'm pleased to report that The GEO Group Australia has continued its solid performance into 2008.

As mentioned previously, the new Arthur Gorrie five-year contract has been signed and prisoner intake for the 180-bed extension is planned to commence in June.

At Junee, the team is gearing up for a re-tender and we anticipate that tender documents will be released in mid-June. The tender team will develop an offering that builds on our excellent record of delivery.

GEO has also received notification of contract extensions to other businesses. Pacific Shores Healthcare has had its contract to deliver correctional health services throughout Victoria extended to June 2009, while Fulham is finalising an extension of the contract renewal period from June 2009 to June 2012.

These contract extensions confirm GEO's position as a trusted provider of correctional services — reflecting our mission of being a provider of choice.

It is interesting to note that across our five businesses, GEO has been asked to respond to five initial tenders, five re-bids and 17 contract extensions — that's 27 instances when our services have been chosen in preference to others. A 100 per cent record in which we can all be proud!

Preparations for the launch of the *GEO Builds Better Lives* culture continue apace — and we will shortly share with you the vision, mission and guiding principles that will govern the way we take the business forward.

Each success is built upon one thing and that is *you*. Our mission statement balances GEO's desire to be the provider of choice while recognising that we can only do so by being the employer of choice. That means attracting, retaining and developing the best people in the industry to deliver our services and continue building our reputation.

I am therefore delighted to express my thanks and admiration for our 2007 Employee of the Year finalists — Jeffrey Cooke, Michael Breese, Phillip Pedder and, of course, the winner Trevor Coles. Please enjoy reading about their achievements in this edition of

The GEO Group Australia newsletter.

Pieter Bezuidenhout
Managing Director

Junee celebrates 15 years

Junee Correctional Centre (JCC) has celebrated its 15th anniversary.

The first correctional centre in Australia to be privately designed, constructed and managed, JCC has set a high standard for private prisons and has been managed continuously by GEO through a re-bid and two contract extensions.

The GEO Group Australia managing director Pieter Bezuidenhout gave the keynote address at a recent celebratory dinner. He said five key stakeholders — the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, employees, suppliers, inmates and the local community — would ultimately judge JCC's continued success.

Celebrating the achievement were more than 250 staff and guests including 34 employees who have been at the centre since it opened

on 19 March 1993. All staff received an anniversary magazine and the 34 'originals' received special gifts.

During the evening some amazing figures were presented including the fact that over 15 years JCC has served 11 million meals, provided 1.4 million medical appointments, delivered 250,000 hours of community work, achieved one million days of prisoner work, provided 180,000 days of education and training, received 45,000 prisoners and 200,000 visitors, and injected over \$300 million into the local community.

"Staff, community members, government agency representatives, service deliverers, visitors, inmates and other stakeholders, have all made a significant contribution to the story that is Junee Correctional Centre," said general manager Dom Karauria.



> Inmates celebrate the opening of Junee's Yindyamarra Cultural Centre.

Meeting diverse cultural needs

Junee Correctional Centre (JCC) recently celebrated the opening of its Yindyamarra Cultural Centre.

Recognising the diverse cultural needs of the prisoner population, the team at Junee worked with inmates and community representatives to design and construct a centre that will play an important role in assisting prisoners to build better lives.

More than 120 guests attended a vibrant opening ceremony with presentations by Aboriginal and Islander dancers.

The centre was established under the guardianship of the Wiradjuri people to provide a culturally appropriate venue for a range of educational, spiritual and cultural activities.

It also enables external agencies and local elders to work with inmates in a setting that encourages positive outcomes.

Wagga Wagga elder aunty Gail Manderson says the centre provides an opportunity for prisoners to reconnect with their communities and cultures and move on from the past.

"It's a new beginning for the boys. It will give them some peace," she said.

Awesome foursome win awards



> The finalists of the 2007 GEO Employee of the Year award — (from left) Jeffrey Cooke, Michael Breese, Trevor Coles and Phillip Pedder.

Four outstanding members of The GEO Group Australia team travelled to Sydney recently for the prestigious Employee of the Year awards.

The finalists — Trevor Coles, Jeffrey Cooke, Michael Breese and Phillip Pedder — were acknowledged by the company's management team.

"To be nominated as a finalist in our annual awards from more than 1100 employees is a magnificent achievement," said managing director Pieter Bezuidenhout.

"I thank them for their commitment and admire them for their ability to consistently perform at a high level in their respective roles."

During 2007 each GEO business nominated an Employee of the Month or an Employee of the

Quarter and the finalists were selected from these nominees.

For payroll officer Jeffrey Cooke, who has been with the company for 15 months, his selection still mystifies him.

"I was just doing my job," he said. "The other nominees were all from the operational side of the company so to be the only non-operational nominee was a great honour and thrill. Perhaps it was my work assisting with late leave applications and promptly dealing with overtime payments. That tends to make you popular."

Comments from his nomination were more specific: "... works tirelessly to ensure that staff get the best possible service ... a hallmark of Jeff's work is his attention to detail."

For 10 years corporal Michael Breese toured the world's hotspots with the British army until he met a Geelong girl in a London pub and life altered dramatically. He resigned from the army, travelled to Australia and applied for a job as a casual court officer.

Two years later, as a shift manager, he was Melbourne Custody Centre's nominee for Employee of the Year.

"I think the experience in the army has been a huge help. It taught me to be level headed in difficult circumstances and also how to manage people," Michael said.

Comments from his nomination included: "Demonstrated enthusiasm and leadership traits which are articulated in his daily duties ... willing to undertake higher duties."

The work of Phillip Pedder's 'Nalu Bush Gang' following floods that ravaged parts of Gippsland won him Fulham's nomination.

"The flood relief work and the construction of new ramps and walkways along the beach certainly assisted the local community and gave us all a sense of satisfaction," he said.

A correctional officer for five years, Phillip says a rewarding part of his employment is taking inmates on adventure camps that include horse riding, white water rafting and hiking.

"The aim is to show them that there are better ways to get enjoyment out of life rather than the lines they have been following," he said.

It was highlighted in his nomination: "... has a strong rapport with the young offenders at Nalu and it is this relationship that aids their rehabilitation and reintegration."

Women establish network at Fulham

Fulham Correctional Centre has formed a Women's Network Group to acknowledge the valuable contribution that women provide to the operation of the centre and to recognise the diverse range of skills and perspectives they bring to the workplace.

Less than 30 per cent of Fulham's 280 staff are women and they are employed in a variety of roles including custodial officers, medical and administration staff, counsellors, program facilitators, trainers and in catering.

The small number linked with the diversity of roles and a 24-hour/seven day roster means many of the female staff work in isolation.

The idea of the Women's Network Group resulted from an initiative by the Fulham Workplace Consultative Committee to provide further support for female employees.

At a recent celebration of International Women's Day two inspiring women addressed female employees at Fulham and recounted their experiences in local government.

Councillors Beth Ripper and Lisa Price, both former mayors of local councils, spoke about the challenges and rewards of their roles.



> L-R: Beth Ripper and Lisa Price with Fulham's health services manager Jan Te Maru.

In Brief



> L-R: Fulham's Phillip Munnings, Regina Mildenhall, John Wharf and Sean Falzon with the World Youth Day cross and icon.

Celebrating World Youth Day

Fulham Correctional Centre recently celebrated World Youth Day when it welcomed a giant cross and the Icon of Our Lady painting on their journey around Australia.

Over the last 24 years, the 3.8 metre wooden cross, which was entrusted to the youth of the world by Pope John Paul II as a symbol of Christ's love for humanity, has travelled to every continent as part of World Youth Day.

Fulham was one of a small number of prisons and youth detention centres in Australia invited to participate in its journey and inmates, staff, chaplains and local Catholic representatives warmly welcomed the cross and icon.

A service was conducted with prisoners taking part in the readings. Many of those present took the opportunity to touch the cross and participate in the symbolic healing and reconciliation it represents.

Following further local celebrations, the cross and icon continued their journey in the lead up to World Youth Day, a six day event in July that will attract 125,000 international visitors to Sydney.

Sunrise breakfast show

It was a very early start to the day for members of Fulham Correctional Centre's senior management team when they prepared breakfast for employees as a small gesture of gratitude to their hard working colleagues.

Even the local roosters had not stirred when the management team donned gloves and cooked bacon and eggs for the influx of staff arriving at Fulham.

A request for a gold coin donation raised a total of \$550 for the children's ward of the local hospital in Sale.

Arthur Gorrie on remand

The transition process to establish Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre (AGCC) as a 'remand only' facility has commenced.

An initial group of 48 sentenced protection prisoners were transferred to Woodford Correctional Centre just north of Brisbane recently, followed by the relocation of 50 remand prisoners from Woodford to AGCC.

This process continued over a three-week period until all prisoners scheduled for transfer had been moved.

Arthur Gorrie remains at maximum capacity while waiting for the Brisbane Correctional Centre to commence operations and for the opening of the new 180-bed unit at AGCC.



> L-R: Junee's Stuart Finch and Matthew Karpanen with RCCC's Damien Williams.

Barbecue a cancer winner

The Riverina Cancer Care Centre (RCCC) in Wagga Wagga continues to enjoy a successful partnership with Junee Correctional Centre.

Junee recently donated a trailer barbecue to the RCCC to raffle to help raise funds for its expansion and renovation program.

Inmates constructed the trailer barbecue as part of their skill based training and the project provided another opportunity for them to contribute to a positive community-based initiative.

Junee Correctional Centre also assists the RCCC by organising fundraising events and has made chairs for its conference room as well as storage cupboards.

Hot on cold cases

Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre (AGCC) is using its education television channel to assist Crime Stoppers and the program's cold case playing cards initiative.

AGCC recently introduced the channel to broadcast education programs to each prisoner's cell.

The cold case playing cards series, which depict unsolved crimes, is being broadcast throughout the prison to encourage prisoners to provide information to help solve the crimes.

Direct phone link

A telephone providing a direct link to Ombudsman Victoria has been installed at the Melbourne Custody Centre to allow inmates to report any complaints they have about their treatment.

Use of the telephone is supervised but the prisoner is afforded privacy during the call.

The centre in conjunction with Victoria Police initiated installation of the phone following a request by the office of Ombudsman Victoria.

Farewell four-legged friends

It is with mixed feelings that Junee Correctional Centre prepares for the graduation of four of its most popular visitors — Sunny, Valentine, Simba and Viva.

Over the past 12 months the dogs have won the hearts of many at Junee. They will graduate in July followed by six months of intensive training and testing at the Assistance Dogs Complex in Sydney before they commence their lives as assistance dogs.

Inmates and staff involved in the project have found it to be extremely rewarding. The outstanding progress of the dogs is due to the support of staff and volunteers Ruth Stockton and Jean Purvis, who assist inmates with the training.

JCC is expecting to receive another group of pups in August and they will have big paws to follow.



> Losing the L-plate — Sunny is one of four assistance dogs graduating from Junee.

Editorial and photographic contributions for the GEO newsletter are sought from all centres. Forward your contributions to Maria Buckley at: mbuckley@thegeogroupinc.com.au