

Prize for property post

The role of property officer is undoubtedly one of the most thankless in any correctional centre.

Trying to locate misplaced items as well as purchasing for the centre, the staff and the inmates can be a massive headache. But at Junee everything has been rolling along efficiently and without fuss.

In fact, a lack of complaints over six months went unnoticed until the centre's inmates congratulated Carmen Bates on the way she handled their purchasing requirements.

More people joined the chorus and when the centre called for nominations for 'Employee of the Year' the name at the top of the list was property officer Carmen Bates.

The resounding plaudits included this commendation from management: "Carmen has made a substantial contribution to the company...gained the respect of staff and inmates alike... and displays a high level of professionalism".

The result is that the self-confessed Sydney "city slicker" turned farmer's wife is The GEO Group Australia's 2008 Employee of the Year.

Carmen moved to Junee two years ago so that her husband could help manage his family's grazing property.

"I love living in the country and life on the farm is fantastic," she said.

Having worked in customer service for most of her life she saw the duties of Junee property officer, when the position was advertised last year, as an extension of her former roles.

"It's offering people what they want and being organised about it," she said.

Her tasks include purchasing a wide variety of goods for prisoners including clothes, compact discs and other personal items.

"Naturally you have to check what they are allowed to buy, source the various purchases, register each item and then distribute it," she said.

"I also handle lost property, confiscated goods and a string of other challenges."



> GEO's 2008 Employee of the Year, Carmen Bates.

It's a big change from the shops of Sydney to the property office at Junee.

"Many of my friends were surprised with me moving to the country — but then to be working in a correctional centre!" she said.

Carmen believes she was "incredibly fortunate" to be named Employee of the Year ahead of her fellow finalists whose devotion to service she described as "outstanding".

Fulham transitional assistance program coordinator Tony Puser was one of the four finalists. Tony joined Fulham in 1997 and has held his current position for five years. Management said Tony was: "fervent and enthusiastic. He has earned the respect of management, co-workers, prisoners and external agencies".

Health services manager at Pacific Shores

Healthcare, Laurie Walker, was another finalist. He was nominated for displaying a high level of competence and taking on extra responsibilities. "All his staff find him approachable, professional and compassionate," said management.

Melbourne Custody Centre court supervisor Greg Swan also made the final four after establishing an outstanding relationship with both Victoria Police and the Department of Justice at the Moorabbin Justice Centre. "His professionalism and attention to detail is clearly demonstrated in all aspects of his management at the facility," his nomination said.

Carmen receives a \$4000 travel gift card, \$1000 spending money and two weeks special leave as Employee of the Year, while the other finalists each received an interstate trip with a partner and \$700 spending money.



MD's desk

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of the GEO newsletter.

Last month I had the very gratifying duty of presenting the 2008 Employee of the Year awards to four individuals who have excelled at their jobs and been recognised and nominated by the management teams at their respective workplaces.

To the winner – Carmen Bates from Junee – and the other finalists, Tony Puser from Fulham, Laurie Walker from Pacific Shores Healthcare and Greg Swan from Melbourne Custody Centre, I extend my congratulations and thanks for jobs not only done well, but done to an exceptional level.

Their achievements are in the best tradition of our governing principles and our *Building Better Lives* ethos.

Every year we recognise and celebrate the achievements of the Employee of the Year and every year I am heartened by how many individuals working within GEO go the extra mile to provide a service that is widely recognised as being of the highest quality.

It is worth noting that such excellence is achieved every day across all areas of our operations. Every job or role has the potential to be carried out with excellence and it is often the more day-to-day duties that can really make a difference if done well.

On a sad note, two members of the GEO family passed away recently.

Correctional officer Kevin Biram died at his home in April. He was one of the first employees when Junee opened in 1993. Kevin, 64, was kind, caring, had a happy disposition and was respected by all his colleagues.

In June, Fulham correctional officer John Cunningham passed away. John, 52, joined GEO in 1997 and worked in several departments. Many Fulham staff attended the service and his colleagues formed a guard of honour. One said afterwards: "I have never been so proud of wearing the GEO uniform as I was standing in the guard of honour with so many of my colleagues paying respect to John and his family".

GEO extends its condolences to the families of both Kevin and John.

Pieter Bezuidenhout
Managing Director

Pups lick Fulham after Junee

Four eight-week-old black labradors have instantly become the most popular inmates at Fulham Correctional Centre.

Fulham has joined Junee Correctional Centre in the 'Pups in Prison' program, which unites officers, inmates and community representatives over 18 months as they train and socialise a group of special dogs.

The program is managed by Assistance Dogs Australia, which undertakes the final intensive training before the dogs begin assisting people with disabilities.

At Fulham, Faran, Fever, Friday and Farley have toured the centre, exploring and meeting many new faces prior to beginning their training.

The eight inmates selected as trainers, two for each pup, are responsible for feeding, grooming and training. Fulham employees and community volunteers provide assistance.

Special kennels have been constructed in a low-security area of the prison where four mature trees have been planted to commemorate the program and provide shade.

While Fulham has just joined the program, Junee recently had its second group of dogs graduate.



> Fulham staff involved in the Pups in Prison program (l-r) Joanne Morton, Myrone Girdler, Esther Dekkers, Brendan Halliwell, Irene Perkins and Janet Watson.

New South Wales Minister for Corrective Services John Robertson said the dogs — Viva, Simba and Roscoe — would assist their new owners in tasks such as opening and closing doors, picking up dropped items and pressing the button at pedestrian traffic lights.

"These pups also help the inmates learn how to relate, trust and care for something. All valuable skills for life after prison," he said.

Assistance Dogs Australia was started in 1996 and has since placed almost 100 dogs around Australia. Each dog takes two years to train at a cost of \$25,000.

Koori FACES brings a smile

An indigenous parenting program, the first ever to be conducted in a correctional centre, has been held at Fulham.

The Koori FACES Program is a five-week course that aims to increase the confidence of parents, carers and families of Aboriginal children.

Twelve inmates graduated from the course, which places an emphasis on an increased

understanding and knowledge of oneself, Aboriginal culture and parenting practices that assist in building resilience to behaviours such as drug and alcohol misuse.

The program was a resounding success. Family members, elders and representatives from Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Corrections Victoria, Office of Correctional Services Review, KONNECT Transition Program and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs were among 50 guests who enjoyed the graduation celebrations.

A highlight was the presentation of a large framed Aboriginal flag to Shaun Braybrook, manager of Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place (WNLP) by Bess Yarram, chairperson of the Gippsland Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council. The presentation was in recognition of the partnership between Fulham and WNLP.



> Aboriginal dancing was part of the festivities at the graduation ceremony.

Private misapprehensions

A presentation by GEO managing director Pieter Bezuidenhout to the New South Wales government's recent inquiry into the privatisation of prisons provided a perfect opportunity to dispel numerous misapprehensions about privatised correctional facilities.

Mr Bezuidenhout told the inquiry there were many inaccuracies and misconceptions in the various submissions the inquiry had received. He highlighted six that were repeated consistently.

The first of these was that private prisons are more expensive to operate than public prisons.

"That is absolutely incorrect," Mr Bezuidenhout told the inquiry.

He said the costs at Junee amount to \$124.29 per prisoner per day against the statewide average for minimum and medium security prisons of \$184.03.

"That is a substantial difference of \$60 per day per prisoner," he said.

The second misunderstanding is that private prisons can only make money by cutting corners and compromising safety and security thereby putting public safety at risk.

Mr Bezuidenhout said the Department of Corrective Services' submission showed



> *GEO is a consistent high performer on security measures.*

emphatically that Junee had outperformed the department's prisons for more than 10 years in all key measures of security and public safety.

"We have only one tenth the number of escapes and considerably less assaults on officers by prisoners," he said.

The third misapprehension was that private prisons save money by cutting rehabilitation programs.

"We have achieved 100 per cent of the targets set in all rehabilitation, education and pre-release programs," Mr Bezuidenhout said.

On employee welfare, Mr Bezuidenhout said GEO staff are happy and content. Average sick leave is five days a year, which is half the figure recorded by public sector prisons.

Another misnomer is that private prisons are less accountable. Junee has more measures in place and reports more thoroughly than public prisons because of its contractual obligations.

"Junee has more than 165 performance indicators monitored monthly," Mr Bezuidenhout said.

"In addition the centre is closely scrutinised by the Ombudsman and the Auditor General."

The final misapprehension addressed was the claim that private prisons chose the prisoners they take — only managing 'easier prisoners'.

"We have not refused inmates and contractually are not allowed to refuse inmates," Mr Bezuidenhout told the inquiry.

"Junee has the same classification as Cessnock. Therefore minimum, medium, remand and maximum security prisoners are all placed at our facility."

Mr Bezuidenhout completed his presentation by highlighting GEO's close involvement with the community at Junee — employing local people, initiating a community consultative committee and returning in excess of \$25 million annually to the local economy.

He said that inmates have undertaken more than 250,000 hours of reparative work for the benefit of the local shire and also supported the community through scholarships and donations.

The company has also introduced casual labour contracts at Junee so that farmers and other locals can work for several weeks at the prison in any quiet time between seasons.

Mr Bezuidenhout said that privatisation is not a sell-off of assets as is sometimes claimed.

"The prison remains the property of the state and the state oversees the delivery of the service that we provide," he concluded.

Scholarships for family

As part of the *GEO Builds Better Lives* program, the company recently introduced a tertiary scholarship program for GEO employees and their families.

Each year GEO will offer 55 tertiary scholarships. The scholarships are awarded to GEO employees and their immediate family members following a competitive selection process.

The \$500 scholarships provide financial assistance towards the cost of books, fees or accommodation.

At Fulham Correctional Centre, for example, 10 scholarships were awarded this year for studies in a wide range of subjects including nursing, biomedicine, law, education, veterinary nursing, social work and equine performance management.



> *GEO achieves 100 per cent of its prisoner rehabilitation, education and pre-release programs targets.*

In Brief



> From left: Cheryl Fulton, Kerry Hammer, Bill Brennan, Tommy Hafey and Gayle Shanley.

Talking Tommy

Former Australian Football League coach Tommy Hafey addressed Fulham staff during lockdown training on World Health Day.

Hafey coached more than 500 games for Richmond, Collingwood, Geelong and the Sydney Swans during a distinguished career. He won four premierships and his teams played in 10 grand finals.

An amazingly fit 77-year-old he inspired staff with his positive attitude to life and boundless enthusiasm. He spoke on the commitment needed to succeed and the importance of working as part of a team.

Hafey captivated staff with his anecdotes about individuals who achieved success despite early setbacks and amused attendees with tales of his own exploits.

Jubilant Jiggles

Fulham Correctional Centre's softball team, FCC Jiggles, is the Wellington Softball Association Corporate Challenge Competition premiers.

Health services manager Jan Te Maru coached the team to its first grand final victory since Fulham entered the league in 2000. Comprising correctional officers, supervisors and administration support officers, the team thrashed the opposition 26-1.

Team members Margie Collins, Simone Te Maru, Esther Dekkers, Marianne Shannon, Sean Driffill, Phillip Pedder, Sean Elson, Nicky Benedetti and Brad Fleay celebrated their win, together with back-up players Craig Stewart, Lynn Shivers and John Power.



> The jubilant FCC Jiggles.

A decade of custodial care

Ten years of managing the Melbourne Custody Centre was celebrated with fond memories by GEO employees, former colleagues and friends from the Victoria Police recently.

About 80 people attended a function at which GEO managing director Pieter Bezuidenhout congratulated staff on the national and international reputation they had built for the quality of care delivered at Melbourne Custody Centre. "A reputation earned in a uniquely challenging environment," he said.



> Dorothy McKay and Nigel McReaddie with Madoc.

Welsh happiness

Madoc, a very friendly Welsh corgi, brings plenty of smiles when he visits elderly residents at the Canossa nursing home and private hospital at Oxley in Queensland.

In a program sponsored by Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre, Madoc visits every week with his owner Dorothy McKay. Madoc underwent special training so he can be in close contact with residents and patients who have mobility problems.

Operations manager at Arthur Gorrie, Nigel McReaddie, recently accompanied Madoc on a visit and was amazed at the response the dog generates.

Arthur Gorrie has a special relationship with Canossa. Every December a number of residents come to the centre for Christmas lunch with the management team. Demand is so high that a Christmas in July lunch is now staged for those who miss out in December.

Gorrie goes golfing

Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre has again sponsored a team in the LJ Hooker Redland Bay Golf Day for Cystic Fibrosis, which raises funds to find a cure for this terrible affliction.

Cystic fibrosis is a genetic condition that affects the lungs and digestive system, impairing the ability to breathe and digest food. It is the most common life threatening genetic condition affecting children in Australia and New Zealand.

The players representing Arthur Gorrie at the Carbrook Golf Club were John Hafner, Simon Hafner, Greg Briskey and Michael Natalier. They secured a respectable third place and helped raise \$6000.

Fulham aids fire victims

Employees and inmates at Fulham Correctional Centre have undertaken a number of activities to raise funds for victims of the bushfires that ravaged Victoria in February.

Fulham's Health Services Social Club donated \$500 to the bushfire appeal, while prisoners donated about \$900. A special breakfast raised a further \$536, while two employees donated more than \$500 in lieu of taking annual leave days owed. Employees also donated whitegoods, furniture, toys, electrical goods and clothing.

As part of the Gippsland Bushfire Relief fundraising, Fulham also sponsored four teams in a charity golf day that raised several thousand dollars.

Riverina TAFE contract

Junee Correctional Centre and TAFE NSW Riverina Institute have established a \$1.2m contract for training and education services.

The contract will provide over 100,000 student contact hours per year for inmates in courses such as horticulture, transport and logistics, engineering, automotive, building and construction, cultural studies, numeracy, literacy, information technology, business and hospitality.



> Riverina Institute director Rosemary Campbell with Junee's acting general manager Tim Hickie.

Harmony at Arthur Gorrie

The Arthur Gorrie Cultural Centre is known as 'The Brother's Place of Learning' and it lived up to that name on Harmony Day as inmates celebrated Australia's cultural diversity. At this year's event teachings were given on a variety of subjects including human habitation in Australia 50,000 years ago, ancient Egypt, the 'Trail of Tears' of the Cherokee nation, the origins of the Tongan and Samoan cultures and Maori creation stories.

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