

Restoring prisoners' skills through replica vehicles

An interest and skill in designing horse drawn coaches of yesteryear for Buln Buln East's Ricky Fomaro has become part of a rehabilitation program at Sale's Fulham Prison.

Mr Fomaro and his wife Wendy have been constructing horse drawn carriages and currently have 30 at their property.

Independent prison visitor Murray Lobbley, a friend of Ricky, recommended the building program as a part of certificate 2 in woodwork and engineering run at the prison.

Mr Fomaro organised for the prisoners to construct an exact 1854 replica 14 seat Cobb and Co coach with plans sourced from Florida.

This was followed by a year long project of designing and constructing a horse drawn hearse.

Ricky and Wendy provided materials, wheels, axles and springs along with a book suggesting varying plans for construction.

A monthly visit to Fulham for updates on the progress of construction and "interaction with the prisoners and staff was always very polite and enjoyable" Ricky said.

Fulham Correctional Centre industry manager Ian Riley said the prisoners had been happy to assist the Fomaros over the past couple of years with the current project of the funeral hearse was even more challenging

"The whole project took about one year to complete but those who participated did so with enthusiasm and vigour to learn," he said.

The nine selected prisoners were chosen based on existing skills and the length of time the applicants had to

serve.

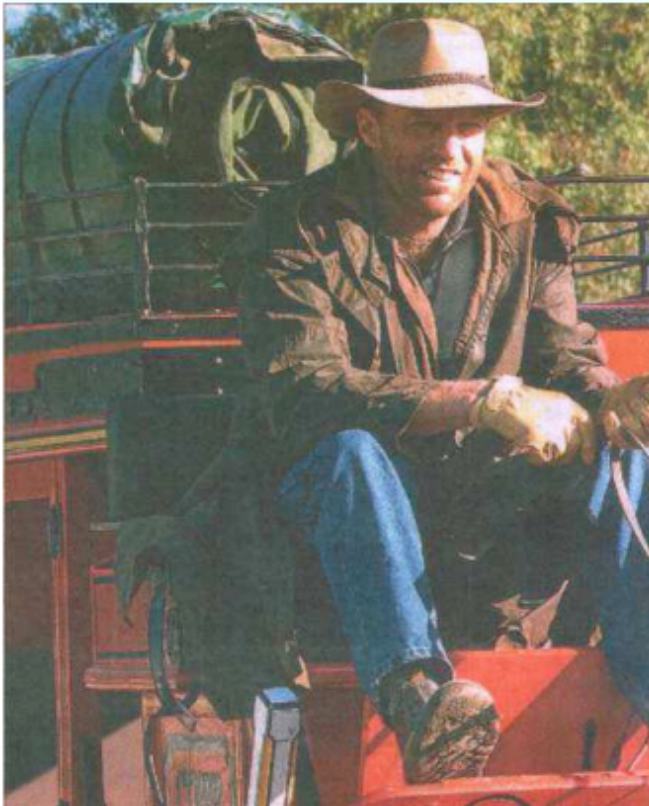
The popularity of the projects is such that a selection process is held and some prisoners are cut from the list.

All three prisoners who worked on the engineering section gained accredited certificate two qualifications in engineering and the six woodwork participants all gained certificate two cabinet making and furnishings qualifications.

The Fomaros source specifications and design ideas from Toowoomba museum and construct the wheels for the prison projects.

Mr Fomaro would like to open up the old Cobb and Co coach routes throughout Victoria for use with their fleet of coaches.

The next project in discussion between Mr Fomaro and the prison is restoration of a Morris Minor car and a farm cart.



Ricky Fomaro at the control of one of his many horse drawn carriages he re-creates. Prisoners at Fulham Correctional Centre in Sale gain valuable skills in their rehabilitation helping Mr Fomaro bring his ideas to reality.