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EXPANDING HORIZONS: Junee Correctional Centre's cultural advisor Gerome Brodin has been named as the GEO Group's national employee of the year. Picture: Declan Rurenga

Breaking boundaries earns Gerome award

THE man behind the Yindymarra Cultural Centre at Junee Correctional Centre has been recognised for his work in developing cultural awareness and involvement.

Cultural advisor Gerome Brodin has been named as the GEO Group's national employee of the year.

"It's a privilege and I'm very embarrassed about it," he said.

For Mr Brodin, doing a job that he loves is reward enough.

"I enjoy the interaction with the community, colleagues and inmates, I feel being rewarded for the job is doing it," he said.

As cultural advisor Mr Brodin helps drive the correctional centre's cultural programs which are used to reach out to members of 40 cultures including Asians, Aboriginals, Australians, Muslims and Pacific Islanders.

"I'm lucky in this position that I can do that."

"Other staff are on the

frontline and I think they get overlooked, they're doing a great job," he said.

Within the GEO Group Junee has the distinction of having been the first to have a cultural centre and was the first to celebrate the end of Ramadan with the Eid festival along with Australia Day, Anzac Day, Chinese New Year, Polyfest and NAIDOC Week.

"It's acknowledgement of (the inmates') cultural heritage," Mr Brodin said.

Aside from days of celebration, Mr Brodin has initiated programs that promote understanding within the community and have been used to mentor people "at risk" of incarceration.

Activities in the cultural centre are also used as a reward for inmates doing the right thing, but also used to break down the barriers between people.

"I think people stereotype

people based on their culture; here we provide cultural connections and a sense of belonging," Mr Brodin said.

Offender services manager Trevor Coles said cultural programs were a part of breaking the cycle of re-offending.

"Cultural boundaries can be crossed and all beliefs can be celebrated and hopefully inmates can take that back to the community," offender services manager Trevor Coles said.

"It can be easier to offend if you're not part of something.

"The greatest contribution Gerome has given this place is the feel ... (the cultural centre) is open to all cultures," Mr Coles said.

It's the third year running a staff member from the Junee Correctional Centre has been chosen as the Australian employee of the year for the GEO Group.