

Correctional Centre Celebrates 20 years



JUNEE's largest employer, the Junee Correctional Centre, has celebrated 20 years of operation.

On Tuesday staff at the centre marked the anniversary with a special luncheon acknowledging the changes to the centre over the decades and the commitment of staff.

The centre, which cost \$53 million to build was considered to be a lifeline for the town described to be "on its knees" following drastic cutbacks by State Rail in the late 80s.

Despite more than 50 towns vying for the jail, Junee council and politicians banded together to see Junee get the project to ensure the town's survival.

It would become the biggest employer in Junee, surpassing the railway.

Of the initial intake of staff, there are still 20 who have continued to work at the jail since it opened.

On Tuesday they were recognised for their dedication to their profession by jail general manager Andy Walker.

“Twenty years in corrections is a long time for most staff and it can be a stressful workplace,” Mr Walker said.

“It takes dedication from the staff to stay in the industry.

“Many of them started as base grade prison officers with some taking over manager roles including the community gangs and intel.”

Over the 20 years there have been a number of major changes at the centre which has enabled The GEO Group to maintain its private operation.



One of the biggest was the doubling of prisoner musters.

“We had an increase in the muster with the double up of cells, which certainly helped NSW with the growth in prisoner numbers,” Mr Walker said.

“In the last few years we have also developed a wide range of opportunities for inmates.

“There has been huge growth in our industrial area, including the construction and involvement in Habitat for Humanity, and the creation of the steel industries to create trailers, which has enhanced the interests of inmates to gain skills to use when they are discharged.”

A 20-year anniversary dinner has been planned for later in the year and will include the acknowledgement and presentation of Corrective Services clasps to long-serving staff.

ABOUT JUNEE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

- Construction of the centre began in August 1991 and was officially opened on March 19, 1993.
- Built at a cost of \$53 million, the facility was opened by NSW premier John Fahey.
- The opening day was topped off with a charity ball which was held in the centre. Guests were invited to be “incarcerated” for the night, given guided tours, talks on the jail and a prison meal before being shown to their “cells” for the night. They were then released the following morning.
- The first inmates arrived on April 1, 1993.
- The Junee Correctional Centre was the first privately operated centre in NSW. It is one of only two. The other is Parklea.
- The first escape was in 1994.
- The centre's first and only open day for the public drew more than 14,000 visitors from across the Riverina.