



As featured in
The CEO Magazine
 For more info visit
theceomagazine.com.au

SERVING Communities

Corrections Victoria is setting the standards for the state's prisons and community corrections with an emphasis on rehabilitating the offenders it cares for and supporting the safety of communities it operates within.

Images by Joseph Feil



Passion and dedication drive the diverse team at Corrections Victoria. As a business unit of the Department of Justice, Corrections Victoria sets strategy, policy, and standards for the management of the state's system of correctional facilities, develops programs for the containment and rehabilitation of prisoners, and facilitates the community-based supervision of offenders.

Jan Shuard, Commissioner of Corrections Victoria, spoke to *The CEO Magazine* about her passion for the corrections sector and the people it employs and cares for. In an industry that many would consider tough and thankless, Jan is motivated by the importance of the work she and her team are doing.

"I genuinely have a love for the sort of work that we do, and I think that's because there's always more that can be done and it's work that matters. In a perfect

society, I guess we could change the lives of everybody that came into our care. In reality, at the very least we aim to have a positive influence on everyone who comes through our doors, whether that's through community corrections or prisons.

"The second thing that keeps me motivated is the people that work in this industry. From an outsider's perspective, I'm sure it seems pretty thankless, but our staff have a real passion for the work. You're working with a group of people—from my executive group to our general managers who run our prisons and community corrections centres, and their staff—who have a passion for this work.

Jan's work matters to the wider community also: "We can make a difference in people's lives, and ultimately that makes a difference to the community's safety as well. Your work is never done in this industry." Jan was awarded the Public Service Medal in 2011 for outstanding public service in the

"From an outsider's perspective, I'm sure it seems pretty thankless, but our staff have a real passion for the work."

- Jan Shuard

delivery and management of correctional services.

Jan started out in corrections in Western Australia during the early 80s. She worked her way through many different jobs and promotions in Western Australia's prison system over the course of nine years. After that, Jan moved into juvenile justice, where she took on young offenders between the ages of 10 and 18, and was made head of the juvenile custodial system for Western Australia.

"For many people, it's easy to be concerned by the adult corrections system, but then view young offenders as just young prisoners. They're not: there's a whole different focus to it. Working with kids that are in trouble and providing both custodial and community-based options is a different kind of challenge.

"It's really important to maintain a network of peers to make sure that the service you're delivering is the >



best that it can be in juvenile justice. You rely heavily on your colleagues in other jurisdictions to make sure that you're getting the balance right. In doing that, I was part of a national group of administrators for juvenile justice."

As a part of this collaborative effort, Jan worked with representatives from Victorian corrections systems, and admired the Victorian approach to justice issues. "When I was approached for the job in Victoria, I knew that my beliefs and the way I go about

my work aligned with what Victoria was doing," Jan says.

"In some ways, there were things going on in Victoria that I would have loved to have seen in Western Australia, but which just weren't happening there. For example, the Aboriginal Justice Agreement in Victoria is unique, in terms of the commitment of the government and the commitment of Aboriginal communities to address the over-representation of Aboriginal people in contact with the justice system—things like that really excited me. It was a new challenge and frontier where I could learn new things and work with new people."

Jan has continued to collaborate with other corrective services across Australia and New Zealand through the Corrective Services Administrators Council and its working groups. Biannual meetings bring together all commissioners to share contemporary good

practice and learn from one another's experience.

NSW Corrective Services Commissioner Peter Severin spoke to the value of bilateral or multilateral collaboration between Australian states' and territories' and New Zealand's corrective services on important matters. "Jurisdictions, including Victoria and New South Wales, are working most effectively together to ensure that good practice, knowledge, and experiences are shared wherever possible. Recent experiences include the changes to parole supervision and exploration of new electronic monitoring technologies."

Since taking the job as Victorian Corrections Commissioner at the end of 2012, Jan's leadership has been commended by many who work with her. The Honourable Judge Sue Pullen of the County Court of Victoria says that Jan has managed the mammoth task of overseeing Corrections Victoria

with professionalism and sensitivity. "Jan is continually looking for ways to improve the services offered and the practices of Corrections Victoria and has, from my observations, provided strong leadership skills," Judge Pullen says. "There have been a number of high-profile incidents in the corrections portfolio in Victoria over the past years, and Jan has dealt with the many pressures and decisions since her appointment with professionalism."

According to Jan, culture is absolutely fundamental to how Corrections Victoria operates. "We deal with a group of people that often don't have the same level of skills or responses in their toolbox that we have, so they'll sometimes respond in aggressive or negative ways. Our staff have to know how to deal with that, stay calm, understand that for what it is, and not respond in the same way.

"Having a culture that is absolutely built on being respectful to people, treating people decently, and knowing that you're there to make a difference is vital. All of those things are critical from the top to the bottom.

"Even though our institutions are relatively open and transparent and often under the scrutiny of external review, I would say that at the end of the day it is Corrections Victoria staff who have responsibility and duty of care for the people in prison—ultimately, we still hold the keys and lock people away," Jan says.

Private sector contractors G4S and GEO are committed to working closely with Corrections Victoria to understand their safety and security requirements. Managing Director, Care and Justice for G4S Australia and New Zealand Dennis Roach states, "As a private sector contractor, G4S is vitally aware of the need to continue to provide innovation in services and cost-effective solutions in the contracts we operate for Corrections Victoria. With an ever-changing justice landscape, we work closely with Corrections Victoria to understand their areas



of concern and potential pressure points both current and future, and develop innovative solutions that draw on our local and global sector expertise to address these requirements using both leading-edge technology and custodial management techniques."

For Jan, creating an environment where prisoners feel safe is every bit as important as the interventions that Corrections Victoria provides. "I have a very strong belief that unless you create an environment where prisoners feel safe and feel able to address the causes of their offending in an environment that is respectful of their privacy and personal circumstances, then even the best programs can be ineffective."

Jan emphasised the importance of people needing to be able to go to these programs with a belief that Corrections Victoria will be respectful of the process that they need to go through. Such programs tend to raise a lot of personal issues relating to the prisoners' childhoods and the kind of parenting or nurturing they received. "It's not an easy thing to sit in a group of a dozen peers and reveal the awful harm that you might have inflicted on someone in the community. It's even more difficult to reveal the things that might have led to that harm, and what things they need to deal with in their

"Having a culture that is absolutely built on being respectful to people, treating people decently, and knowing that you're there to make a difference is vital."

- Jan Shuard

own lives so that they don't do it again.

"The people we deal with generally have poor health and lower levels of education, often because they have been living disruptive lives. It's harder for them to participate in those programs than it would be for somebody who had a fairly stable life and enjoyed being part of the broader community."

Corrections Victoria partners with the non-government sector to assist and support people exiting prison to reintegrate into their communities. According to VACRO (Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), this is achieved through careful planning, high-quality case management, and positive communication with the management and staff at Corrections Victoria.

"The Commissioner has proven herself to be a compassionate, fair, and very effective leader of the Victorian correctional system, and there has been constructive change during a time of immense growth and stress upon the system," says VACRO CEO Carol Nikakis. "Her quiet and personal approach, aligned with positive and stable leadership, has encouraged everyone involved in the sector to confidently work towards better outcomes for prisoners and their families." •



G4S aim to be the partner of choice assisting governments to build safer communities.

We operate in more than 120 countries and have over 618,000 employees worldwide.

G4S Care and Justice is an integral part of the Australian and New Zealand justice and health sectors. Working with our customers across multiple government jurisdictions to help create safer communities.

We provide state of the art security and safety solutions through our prison management, court security, prisoner transport, forensic security, youth justice, electronic monitoring and non-emergency patient transport services.

If you need a Care and Justice solution, our experience of both the local and global environments will ensure that we deliver a service that is based on the very latest international best practice.

For more information on G4S, visit www.au.g4s.com
Contact: +61 3 9864 4044

Securing Your World