

The Project

Ravenhall Prison Project



Project scope

The new prison will initially accommodate 1,000 prisoners, with built capacity for 1,300 prisoners should this be required in the future. It will incorporate 75 dedicated forensic mental health beds, and forensic mental health services for approximately 100 other prisoners at the prison on an outpatient basis. GEO Consortium has engaged Forensicare, a Victorian Government statutory agency and specialist provider of services for offenders with mental health conditions, as the forensic mental health services provider.

A Partnerships Victoria public private partnership

In 2012, the government announced plans to build a new medium-security men's prison at Ravenhall, in Melbourne's west. On 15 September 2014, the State of Victoria contracted with GEO Consortium to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the new prison.

The Ravenhall Prison Project is a public private partnership (PPP) under the Victorian Government's Partnerships Victoria framework. The Partnerships Victoria model seeks to achieve better value for money by capturing the expertise and efficiencies of the private sector in designing, financing, building and maintaining infrastructure projects and providing services on a whole-of-life basis, where appropriate.

The new men's prison will play an important role in the broader Victorian corrections system, increasing the capacity of metropolitan prison facilities and forensic mental health services.

The prison will be located within the existing Department of Justice and Regulation precinct at Ravenhall, in Melbourne's west, which includes the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Metropolitan Remand Centre. The new prison will generate significant benefits to the local economy, creating over 700 jobs during the construction period and more than 600 permanent jobs once the prison is operational.

Project objectives and areas of focus

The State's Project objectives are to:

- provide additional capacity in the Victorian prison system
- provide additional forensic mental health services to prisoners
- provide additional capability in reducing reoffending
- encourage innovative practices and operational efficiencies that support value for money.

Table 1 sets out the areas of focus identified by the State for the prison.

Table 1: Areas of focus

Area of focus	Description
New approaches to reducing the risk of reoffending	The prison presents an opportunity to strengthen existing services and develop new approaches to reducing reoffending.
An integrated and holistic model of care for prisoners with a mental illness	The specialist services provided by the prison's forensic mental health services will significantly increase capacity for the treatment of prisoners with a mental illness in the men's prison system. These services are intended to provide flexible treatment options, including integrated levels of care incorporating a range of 'step up' and 'step down' services and greater opportunities for follow-up care. The services provided at the prison will integrate with existing forensic mental health services across the Victorian prison system.
A targeted approach for prisoners with challenging behaviours	The prison system requires targeted management strategies and placement options for a small but very complex group of prisoners with particularly challenging behaviours. Such an approach could provide prevention and early intervention services to minimise the risk of prisoners' behaviours escalating.
Aboriginal prisoners	There is a need to respond to the ongoing overrepresentation of Aboriginal prisoners in the Victorian prison system. In particular, younger Aboriginal prisoners, those serving shorter sentences and those with high transitional needs require access to targeted and culturally appropriate services.
Improved responsiveness to the complexities of younger prisoners	There is a system need to respond to the growing number of young offenders, particularly those who present with violent or challenging behaviours. Research shows there are particularly effective ways to work with young people, and that youth-specific programs can help younger prisoners desist from crime.
Programs and services for prisoners serving shorter sentences	Short-term prisoners require access to programs and services appropriate to their risks, needs and sentence length. The management of this group could be enhanced by coordinating programs and services that support prisoners in custody and the community, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offence-specific and personal development programs tailored to meet individuals' needs and appropriate to their sentence length • effective release preparation and post-release programs.
Pre and post-release services	Effective release preparation, transitional planning and 'through-the-gate' post-release programs in the community will facilitate effective reintegration by supporting prisoners' access to housing, education and training, and employment. These services are also important for prisoners who have a history of non-compliance with community-based supervision or whose parole has been cancelled.