Client: NSW Government

Contract term: 20 years plus 3 year build

Capex value: A$710M

Northern Pathways consortium: John Laing (80%), Serco (10%), John Holland (10%)

Construction period: 2017-2020

Our role: Finance / Design / Build / Construct / Operate

Clarence Correctional Centre, Grafton, NSW, Australia

Building Australia’s largest-ever correctional centre

Located just over 12 miles outside Grafton in New South Wales, and situated on a site that’s bigger than 180 football fields, the state-of-the-art Clarence Correctional Centre will be the largest such facility in Australia when it is completed. Housing 1,700 inmates in modern cells with unbarred windows, the facility uses the Serco Responsible Prisoner Model to create a safe, secure environment that promotes rehabilitation and reduces re-offending.

The new Clarence Correctional Centre will supplement the much smaller existing Grafton Jail built in 1864. The integrated nature of the facility means that prisoners can serve out an entire sentence as they move from maximum to minimum security, and then to shared living. This has a stabilising effect on prisoners, and is a better all-round solution for families who have to date had their family members transferred hundreds of miles between maximum and minimum facilities – something that is highly disruptive and destabilising for everyone involved.

A bold approach to corrections challenge

John Laing holds an 80% interest in the Northern Pathways consortium which is responsible for the financing, design, build and operation of this innovative corrections project, which will result in a forward-thinking, world-class prison facility where the focus is on giving prisoners the opportunity to rehabilitate, learn new skills, achieve qualifications and build the relationships and behaviours that will allow them to give back to society at the end of their sentence.

The centre will house 1000 male and 300 female maximum security prisoners, and 400 male minimum security prisoners. The ideal prisoner journey would see a maximum security prisoner qualify for privileges throughout the sentence, using the technology and practical workshops provided to improve qualifications, learn new skills and complete target courses. As rehabilitation progresses, so the prisoner moves physically from one building to another, eventually living in a shared-house environment.
where they can improve general life skills such as cooking and take further responsibility for themselves. This means that prisoners will leave the facilities with the skills and qualifications they need to get a job and integrate back into wider society – making it far less likely that they will re-enter the prison system in the future.

**The Better Prisons programme**

‘Better Prisons’ is a dedicated programme designed by the NSW government to improve performance, reduce offending and increase efficiency. The government wants to deliver a correctional system that accommodates more inmates and focuses on rehabilitation as a measurement of success.

Better Prisons is committed to introducing significant operational benefits to NSW correctional facilities. These include:

- Performance reporting against set targets
- Additional bed capacity
- Benchmarked budgets for NSW correctional centres
- Changes to centre operations that improve productivity
- Increased competition between private and public organisations for centre management

It’s against this background that the NorthernPathways consortium was awarded the contract to finance, design, build and operate the Clarence Correctional Centre. The NorthernPathways partners have a blend of expertise and experience in large infrastructure projects, including correctional facilities, and are all committed to working with the NSW Government to implement best-practice programmes, including:

- Vocational Education and Training programmes and industries that develop inmates’ work ethos and employment skills, with a focus on in-demand skills within the community. For Clarence, this includes industry relationships and training in carpentry, joinery, heavy, medium and light steel fabrication, sandblasting and coating, textiles, general assembly and small engineering mechanics.

- A rehabilitation and reintegration approach that develops capable citizens and facilitates successful community reintegration.

- Integrating local NGOs into case planning from the beginning of the inmate journey.

- On-site service delivery partner to ensure inmates can access reintegration services immediately upon their release from Clarence Correctional Centre.

- The Serco Foundation and John Holland, this community investment amounts to more than A$500,000.

Our support allows projects to offer practical opportunities including formal work experience, training in sustainable and transferrable skills, creating long-term community benefits and providing dedicated and long-term support for young people and those in society who struggle more than most. This in turn helps to reduce the number of people turning to crime and facing prison as well as offering positive and useful skills, support and guidance within the local community.

The projects that benefitted from this funding were:

- **New Neighbourhood School of Arts:** Employ a youth worker for 12 months for a programme on mental health and well-being, suicide and self-harm, and renovation of amenities for homeless persons

- **Clarence River Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services:** Redevelopment of a community centre playground

- **Gurehlgam Corporation:** Indigenous programmes and services

- **Police Citizens Youth Club:** Establish a series of youth-based programmes in conjunction with NSW Police

- **Nungerra Co-op:** Renovations to a community building in Maclean

- **Grafton Ngerrie Aboriginal Lands Council:** Renovations to a community centre in South Grafton.

**Size:** 195 hectares  
**Capacity:** 1,700 beds  
**Category:** High, Medium and Minimum  
**Local workforce:** more than 1,250, with 30% apprentices  
**Value to local community:** A$560m  
**Anticipated permanent workforce:** 600