

# Woman of conviction

Alex Bernard interviews our first candidate for *bmag's* 2012 Brisbane Person of the Year

When Queensland's new Corrective Services Commissioner Marlene Morison commits to doing something, she is not easily deterred. In 2008, two days in to walking the Kokoda Track she severely injured her ankle and had to be evacuated. "I was so disappointed and frustrated," explains Morison, "I said to myself 'Right! I've got unfinished business with this track' and I vowed I would go back." In December 2011 she did.

The story is one that says a lot about the commissioner. According to her colleagues, commitment and determination are very much her calling card as demonstrated by her rise to the top of the tree in Corrective Services.

Growing up in the small Victorian town of Kaniva, Morison was the youngest of three children to a teacher mum and a dad who built windmills. At 18 she left small town life behind and studied psychology at Monash University and she has spent nearly 30 years in a breadth of roles in the Corrections industry.

Morison is both proud and daunted by her appointment. "If you'd asked me as an 18-year-old there's no way I would have envisioned I

would end up in this role," she says.

"I absolutely love my job. I've only been in the hot seat for five weeks but acting Commissioner is very different to having the responsibility in a permanent capacity.

There's so much to do. The community expects that Corrections does a lot with the period of time that we're responsible for an individual. [In] the past three decades there have been significant changes in practices in prisons, probation and parole to reduce the probability of people reoffending, and we want to work further on that."

Rod Wise is the Deputy Commissioner of Operations for Corrections Victoria and has worked closely with Morison for almost 20 years. He says Queensland is lucky to have her. "Marlene has a really clear vision about how a correctional system ought to run, how to manage offenders. She is as well-placed as anyone I know to work out how to translate that into a workable model. That's her strength, to put into practice a model that will keep offenders from returning to prison."

Morison moved to Brisbane at the end of 2009 to take up the position of Deputy Commissioner

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