



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3

MEDIA RELEASE

MONDAY 5 JUNE 2006

INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO THE OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES

The Hon Amanda Fazio MLC, Chair of the NSW Parliament's General Purpose Standing Committee No 3, today tabled the Committee's report into *Issues Relating to the Operations and Management of the Department of Corrective Services*.

The Committee inquired into the impact of Corrective Services Industries on domestic businesses, the management of high risk prisoners by the Department of Corrective Services, including prisoners housed at the High Risk Management Unit at Goulburn Correctional Centre, and the operation of the parole and prisoner transfer schemes.

The report contains a total of 16 recommendations.

'Corrective Services Industries has a range of mechanisms in place to ensure that it does not compete unfairly with domestic businesses by using cheap prison labour', Ms Fazio said.

Ms Fazio also said that 'the evidence received by the Committee does not indicate that there are any systemic issues with over-crowding or staffing levels in NSW prisons.'

In respect of the HRMU, Ms Fazio said 'the HRMU appears to have had a positive impact on the NSW correctional system. Analysis by the Department indicates that inmates housed in the HRMU commit significantly fewer assaults and other correctional offences than would be expected, based on the offence history of those inmates.'

The interstate parole transfer system has recently been subject of significant changes. Ms Fazio said 'the Committee endorses further reform proposals designed to ensure that prospective parolees are able to transfer between jurisdictions as soon as possible after they are eligible for release from custody.'

Attached is a copy of the Committee's recommendations, the Terms of Reference for this inquiry and the committee membership.

The Hon Amanda Fazio MLC
Committee Chair

For further information, contact the Chair of the Committee, the Hon Amanda Fazio MLC on (02) 9230 3593

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the Department of Corrective Services and Corrective Services Industries, in consultation with the Correctional Industries Consultative Council, develop and publish a guide to the operation of Corrective Services Industries with regard to the avoidance of unfair competition with existing businesses, including:

- the obligations of CSI with regard to the avoidance of unfair competition with existing businesses, and
- comprehensive information about the complaint resolution process.

Recommendation 2

That, in order to assist industry groups, businesses and the wider community to better understand the role and operations of Corrective Services Industries, Corrective Services Industries list on its webpage all current and future Corrective Services Industries publications and make them available to download from the webpage free of charge.

Recommendation 3

That the Department of Corrective Services produce information outlining the key aspects of the security classification system, the high security and extreme high security designations, and segregated and protective custody, for both serious offenders and prisoners other than serious offenders, and that the Department publish this information on its website and otherwise make the information available to members of the public.

Recommendation 4

That the Minister for Justice review the application of the AA/5 classification to remandees.

Recommendation 5

That the Department of Corrective Services investigate the merits and feasibility of implementing a rehabilitation program for sex offenders who are in denial of their offence.

Recommendation 6

That, in order to better inform the public as to the link between High Risk Management Unit (HRMU) correctional philosophy and improvements in the behaviour of HRMU inmates, the Department of Corrective Services publish a paper on its study of assaults and other correctional centre offences committed by HRMU inmates upon completion of the study.

Recommendation 7

That the Commissioner of Corrective Services ensure that segregated custody directions are issued in respect of all prisoners housed in the High Risk Management Unit at Goulburn Correctional Centre who do not have association privileges.

Recommendation 8

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That the Department of Corrective Services and Justice Health monitor their practices in respect of the referral of mentally ill persons to the High Risk Management Unit at Goulburn Correctional Centre, and the release of mentally ill persons from the High Risk Management Unit to other facilities within the correctional system.

Recommendation 9

That the Department of Corrective Services continue to work towards the development of guidelines regarding the security screening of persons wearing items of cultural and/or religious significance, and that it continue to consult with interested stakeholders on this issue.

Recommendation 10

That the Department of Corrective Services and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care investigate extending the pilot project between the Community Justice Support Network and the Disability Services Unit to identify possible solutions to barriers to access for persons providing support to intellectually disabled prisoners.

Recommendation 11

That the Department of Corrective Services continue to work towards the provision of suitable facilities for legal visits for prisoners on protective custody at Parklea Correctional Centre.

Recommendation 12

That the Department of Corrective Services continue consultation with the Legal Aid Commission, and consult with the NSW Law Society and the NSW Bar Association, to determine the extent of difficulties experienced by legal representatives caused by restrictions on visiting hours at NSW correctional centres, and to develop appropriate solutions.

Recommendation 13

That the Department of Corrective Services develop an information strategy to ensure that prospective parole transferees are made aware of the need to initiate the parole transfer process at least three months prior to their likely release date, and that the Department provide assistance to prospective parolees to enable them to make their applications in good time.

Recommendation 14

That the Department of Corrective Services continue to work towards the adoption by all states and territories of standard national guidelines regarding the administration of the parole transfer system, and that the guidelines incorporate appropriate arrangements for the short term transfer of parolees required to move regularly across jurisdictional boundaries, including parolees resident in border regions and Indigenous parolees.

Recommendation 15

That the Department of Corrective Services monitor the impact of recent and proposed changes to the parole transfer scheme on the case management of parole transferees.

Recommendation 16

That the Attorney General and the Minister for Justice monitor the operation of the prisoner transfer scheme to determine the extent of any delays in the scheme and to identify and assess proposals to reduce delays.



INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO THE OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES

TERMS OF REFERENCE

That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 inquire into and report on issues relating to the following areas of the operations and management of the Department of Corrective Services and other relevant agencies:

1. The operations and management of Corrective Services Industries (CSI) with regard to:
 - a. The observance of the Charter to avoid unfair competition through the use of prisoner labour to compete with existing businesses
 - b. Claims that certain manufacture by CSI is replicating work previously done by other NSW businesses and costing jobs
 - c. Other businesses that may be unfairly disadvantaged by CSI.
2. The management of high risk prisoners by the Department of Corrective Services with regard to:
 - a. Access and contact by non-correctional persons including their security screening
 - b. The effectiveness of the High Risk Management Unit (HRMU) at Goulburn Gaol
 - c. The objectivity of the prisoner classification system
 - d. Staffing levels and over-crowding.
3. The inter-state transfer of Offenders and Parolees with regard to:
 - a. Communication and agreement between Authorities
 - b. Ministerial sign-off under the Acts and informal arrangements made between jurisdictions.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS*

The Hon Amanda Fazio MLC
(Chair) (Australian Labor Party)

The Hon Greg Pearce MLC
(Deputy Chair) (Liberal Party)

The Hon Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans MLC
(Australian Democrats)

The Hon Charlie Lynn MLC
(Liberal Party)

The Hon Eddie Obeid MLC
(Australian Labor Party)

The Hon Ian West MLC
(Australian Labor Party)

* The Hon Peter Breen MLC was a member of the Committee until 5 May 2006.