

Submission
No 352

**INQUIRY INTO THE PRIVATISATION OF PRISONS AND
PRISON-RELATED SERVICES**

Organisation: Social Issues Executive of the Anglican Church,
Diocese of Sydney

Date received: 2/03/2009

**THE PRIVATISATION OF PRISONS AND PRISON RELATED SERVICES
INQUIRY**

General Purpose Standing Committee No.3

**Submission from the Social Issues Executive
of the Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney**

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. The Social Issues Executive is an advisory group within the Anglican Church in Sydney on matters relating to public policy, social and bioethical issues.

The issue of privatization is highly contested and we note that the views of those with an interest in prisons are often quite polarized on this matter. While much of the detail of this discussion is beyond our expertise, we observe that there does not appear to be compelling evidence for or against the benefits of privatization and indeed some have argued that "there are few detailed studies on the effects that privatization has on running costs, recidivism, prisoner safety and conditions of confinement".□

There is an inherent complexity to making comparisons between privately and publicly run prison services and according to a recent Productivity Commission report "efficiency indicators are difficult to interpret in isolation and should be considered in conjunction with effectiveness indicators. A low cost per prisoner, for example, may reflect less emphasis on providing prisoner programs to address the risk of re-offending".□ While it is commendable that the Government is seeking to make the prison system more 'efficient', we are concerned that this may be at the expense of insuring the 'effectiveness' of the system.

We note the Government's priority in the State Plan□ to 'Reduce re-offending' (Priority R2) and we urge the Committee as a matter of priority, to give close consideration to whether privatizing prison services will adequately address the serious and ongoing problem of recidivism. Similarly we are concerned whether the enormous growth in the number of prisoners and the overcrowding of prisons (which in some ways has been the impetus to privatise), will in fact address the complex reasons why this is occurring in the first place.

We acknowledge that the current system is not entirely Government run and that there are already some services that are privately provided, and that this may be quite justifiable on the grounds of efficiency. However we wish to express concern about the ethics of a prison system being based on a profit making model and the potential that there could be for the downgrading of conditions, in the interests of cutting costs across the system.

If a decision is made to privatise any further aspect of the prison system, we urge the government to build in a rigorous system of accountability and review, and to insure that standards are not only met, but improved.

Finally we particularly urge the government to insure that prison chaplains and other Christian groups continue to have access to prisoners and that consideration be given to the ways in which faith based programs might be integrated into prisoner rehabilitation programs.

We thank you once again for giving consideration to our views on this important issue.

Social Issues Executive
Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney

2 March, 2009

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1. NSW Parliamentary Research Service – Privatisation of Prisons Update, March 2009
[http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/publications.nsf/0/F9FBA87227C35AD5CA25756A00151636/\\$File/E%20brief%20Privatisation%20of%20prisons%20update.pdf](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/publications.nsf/0/F9FBA87227C35AD5CA25756A00151636/$File/E%20brief%20Privatisation%20of%20prisons%20update.pdf)
 2. Ibid, p.5
 3. NSW Government, State Plan: A New Direction for NSW
<http://www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan/index.aspx?id=f0481402-e9f1-47d0-af2c-021114eae1b4>