

Submission  
No 153

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

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Partially Confidential

To the Honourable Members of  
The General Purpose Standing Committee No 3

The Privatisation of Prisons & Related Services ( Inquiry )

Honourable Members,

I have been a proud frontline member of The Department of Corrective Services for over 15 years and during my tenure have been part of and whole heartedly embraced Departmental initiatives to more efficiently operate and manage our prisons. Initiatives that were designed to make our working environment safer for all stakeholders eg Correctional Officers, Ancillary staff, Visitors, Civilian contractors and inmates.

Being placed into a custodial setting for some members of our community holds no fears and they see it as a way of life. A sad reflection upon today's societal values, while others see it as the lowest point in their lives. Incarceration is the punishment for transgressing the laws of civilised society, however also being seen as a means to make a profit for a private company or conglomerate reduces a persons worth to the level of goods and chattels compounding the already low sense of worth.

Correctional Officers in the Public arena are :

Highly motivated.  
Highly skilled.  
Highly professional.  
Highly competent.

SERVENTS OF THE PUBLIC.

As servants of the public we:

1. Daily, work in a negative environment.
2. Enforce the orders of the court.
3. Manage often violent offenders.
4. Manage offenders with varying degrees of mental illness.
5. Spend more time with those society has chosen to forget than our own families.
6. Given in some cases our lives in the performance of OUR DUTY.
7. Be compassionate to those who would show us none.
8. Face on a DAILY basis those whom society fear.

We have a proud and long history going back to the First Fleet, an unbroken line of commitment to the citizens of this state, a level of commitment our own Commissioner was proud to acknowledge in a recent edition of the Department's Bulletin Magazine.

The Way Forwrd was first mooted in 2004 to address issues to the introduction of " A planned program of correctional workplace reform that achieves best practice through flexible use of resources and cost efficient management" This in itself is common sense as we all have a responsibility to the public to utilise all resources efficiently and effectively. This concept applies to ALL llevels of management and ALL staff. Staff were to be consulted and included in the process yet we were told to submit management plans for the operation of our respective centres implementing the "Way Forward" reforms. We were told that our locally negotiated "Operational Agreements" were null and void and new " Management Plans" were to be introduced and NO NEGOTIATIONS would be entered into. There was NO mention of privatising any area within Corrective Services. What has changed? I will quote two passages from our 2005 version of the " Guide to conduct and ethics"

1. " Our prime responsibility is to place the public interest above

- our own and demonstrate leadership"
2. " All members of the Department of Corrective Services are public servants"

I ask what cost saving initiatives have been adopted by those in Head and Regional offices. Lead by example not by word. ( I did note in a recent broadcast E Mail that yoga classes were being re-introduced for the staff at the Henry Deane Building. This can be seen by some as largesse without justification. )

The provision of Correctional Services has been successful due to the commitment, drive, loyalty and professionalism of it's frontline managers and staff to the citizens of NSW. Private enterprise on the other hand simply owes it's loyalty to it's shareholders, the parent company and is purely profit driven. Prisons are not designed to make money they are a mechanism to address societies "misfits" for want of another term.

The current plan to not only privatise but to close centres shows utter contempt for those men and women who have gallantly served and those who continue to serve the people of NSW.

Senior Management must take some measure of responsibility for the crisis we now face. The possibility of families being dismantled, marriages shattered and dare I say it lives lost. All of these scenarios are very real. To inform people that privatisation is a reality is arrogant to say the least. I was of the opinion I lived in a democracy where the will of the people was valued and listened too not just given lip service. Isn't the charter of this committee to investigate the issue? What happens next do we privatise the Police Service, Judicial System or even Parliament and not be subject to the public but to multi national corporations. I have seen first hand the private system in Queensland and the attitude of the staff was arrogant, blase' and dangerous compared to the high standards in the NSW public sphere. One cannot serve two masters . I firmly believe that if the Department had entered into meaningful dialogue when the " Way Forward " was first proposed we would not be in the situation we are in today.

I do not have an issue with Casual Correctional Officers per se as long as they are competent and able to carry out the duties assigned, and I agree we must make sacrifices, but I do not agree with the contemptuous manner in which correctional officers and their families and communities are being treated. I am a member of the public and I expect my tax dollars to be spent by the state of NSW in a responsible manner yet I see all manner of fiscal mis-management by government with private providers of services. I do see however my dollars well invested in the men and women of NSW Corrective Services and I would never collectively denounce them as " rorters" particularly in light of previous statements made as to the cost effectiveness of using overtime to manage prisons. Parramatta Correctional Centre, possibly the oldest of our centres was re-opened after a short closure and funded totally on overtime.

Incidents were highlighted of staff not being vigilant and devoting there entire attention to duty when an escape resulted at Parklea Correctional Centre. What happened to those staff ? I fully agree ther are some who would seek to take the opportunity to be remise in their duties, and when discovered should be fully investigated, punished and if need be dismissed. To infer collectively to us all as manipulating overtime is an insult. To a large degree bugetry constraints/outcomes and overtime allocations are not controlled locally but at Regional / Corporate level.

Absenteeism is a problem that must be addressed not with threats or sanctions but by finding out why it is so eg Morale and or rewarding those with excellent attendance records. We sometimes get a letter once a year for good attendance what if a staff member has not been absent from duty for 5 or 10 or more years. There is no recognition for loyalty yet loyalty or some may say fealty is expected from our senior managers. If employees are given ownership of issues encouraged and supported to help solve them then a harmonious relationship built on mutual respect is achieved. Autocratic rule breeds contempt, mistrust and lack of respect.

We are people with hopes, dreams and aspirations and for some of us a belief that we are doing something for the community not many others would or could. Privatisation strips away that belief and places public assets in the hands of foreign owners not interested in programs to reduce recidivism or address criminogenic needs but to simply warehouse inmates provide very basic services leaving them when released no option but to turn against the very community they were a part of and so the cycle begins again.

The privatisation of prisons or any other public asset is a retrograde step and not in the best interests of the general public, those staff displaced, inmates or their families.

" Care, Control and Custody " are what we do and we are very good at it because we see it as our duty/vocation not just a 9 to 5 job.

Our Mission: Reducing re-offending through secure, safe and humane management of offenders.

Our Vision: Contributing to a safer community through excellence.

NSW Correctional Officers encapsulate these two statements. We have a responsibility to the communities in which we work and the public of NSW. A responsibility we take very seriously. Privateers do not, they are responsible for ensuring a healthy bottomline for a parent company who is dis-associated with the community at large.

I do not wish to sound presumptuous but each and every publically elected official including the members of this committee is a public servant and is accountable to only one master, not the Premier or Treasurer or any other bureaucrat but to the people of NSW and must act in the best interests of the public and be prepared to personally validate any decisions made on their behalf. I hope and trust that this document is read in the spirit it is written and all members vote as their conscience allows.

It may be relevant for committee members to visit some of our correctional centres, speak to staff and listen to their concerns and see what we face every day.

Thankyou for giving me leave to offer my submission.