

**Submission
No 28**

**INQUIRY INTO THE CLOSURE OR DOWNSIZING OF
CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW FACILITIES**

Name: Ms Wendy Kachel

Date received: 6/11/2012

Attached is a submission for the hearing into the closure of Grafton Correctional Centre. I have written the submission as an employee, manager and citizen

SUBJECT: Submission – Downsizing Grafton Correctional Centre.

I am currently an employee of Corrective Services NSW and have been impacted by the downsizing of Grafton Correctional Centre which was announced on the 29 June 2012. I have been fortunate due to the position that I held to be able to retain employment for a longer period than some employees. My end date for employment with CSNSW is 9/11/2012. I have many concerns and issues in response to the announcement on as a Manager, on a personal level and as a citizen.

As a Manager (Administration Manager Clerk 7/8) I have witnessed many staff members going through enormous pain and grievance processes which has not only affected them but their families also. It is one thing to make an announcement but to continually change the goal posts is devastating. I was responsible for 11 staff at Grafton Correctional Centre with only 3 positions remaining. With the original announcement there was only to be one Clerk ½ position to remain with the new establishment. Two of my team members were told with the announcement that their positions were to be deleted along with the other positions and when they had given their 3 choices they would end up with a Volunteer Redundancy as their only option. It took these team members 2 to 3 weeks to go through the grieving process and then commence the acceptance process, then only to be informed that Volunteer Redundancy would be no longer an option as their positions now remain. As satisfying as it is to know that your job is retained, the mind games through the entire process have been quite unforgiving as it affects the entire family through these processes. When questions were raised by the team members involved, there were no answers for some months. There were questions raised about what roles would be performed with the remaining positions but no answers could be found. I find it extremely unprofessional to make announcements prior to a whole package being considered. There were no Standard Operating Procedures, there were no duties announced for the remaining staff, there was no communication between hierarchy and those left at the local level. It is also unfortunate that the team members who certainly are not team members retain positions and team members that have excellent work ethics are the redundant employees simply due to equivalent grading regardless of the duties involved. I do not feel that there were sufficient processes to attempt to place redundant employees into other agencies even if it be on a temporary basis still giving them the option of a VR if needed. When employees were interviewed by HR, they were requested to give their 3 options. Naturally the first option was retain their existing position, 2nd option was transfer to another government agency and 3rd option VR. Of course option 1 was the reason they were there so not an option, Option 2 staff were immediately told that this would not be an option as every government agency is going through the same process and consequently you are left with option 3. There was not one instance with my Administration staff that they were informed of any available position in another department. I inform you even in my own position that I requested a list and was given a list but told not to distribute the list due to the inaccuracy of the list. Positions listed as vacant were actually substantively occupied and vacated due to EOI's and secondments.

In the custodial environment I have also witnessed extremely unfair situations. The original announcement provided a Management Plan with a proposed staffing structure. Even though this structure was still undertaking review, interviews still took place between HR and staff to determine their future. Consequently these interviews were requiring staff to make their choices by the same 3 options as above. One example I will give you has affected 2, possibly 3 Assistant Superintendents. In the original Management Plan for the downsizing, the centre would have no AS positions. The

existing AS Officers were interviewed with their preferences and consequently decisions were made by some. 2 AS's opted for VR and 1 AS was on a secondment to another location until February. The Officer's taking the VR were both unsettled about this decision however it appeared to be the only option for them. The other AS on secondment was informed at interview that if he needed to return from secondment he would have to take what ever position is remaining around the state. Following further negotiations with unions etc.(some weeks on since the announcement,) the Management Plan was amended and 2 AS positions would remain at the Centre. The 2 AS's that were indecisive with their decisions ended up being offered these 2 positions without consultation to any of the other 3 AS Officers. One of the Officers that took the VR inquired about reverting the decision of his VR now that the positions had been reappointed to the establishment but he was informed that this was not an option as he had signed the VR paperwork and the positions had been offered and accepted by the 2 remaining Officers. I know that the Officer on secondment still has not yet been informed of the 2 AS positions being reinstated into the establishment and has not been given the opportunity of competitive selection. I find this extremely unprofessional and certainly not a fair and equal process that Officers of the same rank could not contend for these positions in consideration of the changes that were made to the Management Plan following the initial the announcement and option process that took place.

The Overseers are another circumstance that I find disturbing. These Officers were not given the entitlement to competitively apply for custodial positions that remained at the Centre. I have also found it to be quite offensive that there are options out there for retraining of staff having to take VR, however staff have had to find this information out themselves as it was not offered when interviews were given.

My position involved budgeting and expenditure for the centre and I do know the figures disclosed to the media were not consistent with the expenditure that I had been dealing with in terms of maintenance and cost per inmate per day. It is virtually impossible to attain an accurate cost per inmate per day and adherence to budget controls when Head Office have the power to process journals to any Cost Centre Budget without any authorisation by Centre Management. There was a particular error by Head Office in the Grafton CC 2010-2011 budget on the cusp of the new financial year processed at the end of the year but too late to be reversed in that year and consequently the Centre had to carry that error in the financial status report. This consequently affected the end result of cost per inmate per day for that year.

On a personal level, I have been affected as well as my husband who is also an employee with CSNSW at Grafton CC. I was given the 3 options as above. My options were to remain in my position, transfer to either CSNSW or another government position with a preference to Tamworth area due to family located there and I of course ended up with VR. I was not given any information by HR about any other options either in Grafton, around the state or in Tamworth. I was informed by the Regional Business Manager that I could have gone to John Moroney CC as she was recruiting at the same grade for that position. I was not given this information by HR.

I have since found out that there has been an Administration Manager position at an equivalent grade with New England Health Services and this position has been vacant for quite some time however I have not been informed of this by HR. I don't believe there was a sufficient process in place to review all options for staff and I have determined that staff were in some way being pushed into the decision making process without being granted all their options.

I found it to be extremely disturbing to receive a standard template letter via email from the Commissioner making statement that the staff and their families are his major priority. I am sure the then Commissioner would have shown great remorse for the fact that I have firstly lost my job, my husband has also lost his position at Grafton CC and now is struggling to remain at his seconded

position due to yet another restructure. I accepted this position 3 years ago and relocated leaving my family, friends and home willing to achieve and strive for success for not only myself but CSNSW and hopefully a few more years than I was given. Consequently we purchased a home and have spent a lot more money on this home than what we are going to achieve in return as we are now forced to sell our home in a market that is even tighter than it has been due to the effects of all the closures in Grafton with no further industry to replace the losses. I have to relocate back to Tamworth where I have family and friends for support and at my own expense which is where I joined CSNSW. I do not believe at any point staff and family are taken into consideration and all this exercise was aimed at was removing the "culture" that existed at Grafton CC. Unfortunately there were a lot more good employees affected rather than those that gave the label of "cultured" and the minority have caused this for the majority.

I find it extremely disheartening that the Government come into play with announcements of the possibility of further Government employment that may come to the area but must ask the question , how does this help the employees and family of the staff that have lost their jobs with the downsize . They cannot apply for these positions unless they repay the redundancies already given to them which some may have possibly paid off their mortgages and debts simply to have the ability to survive now that they are unemployed and consequently not have the funds to repay. And not to mention the staff that have had to forcibly sell their homes and remove their children from their schooling, partners from other employment in the region to relocate to other locations that are in most situations forced to outlay a far greater expense for property or rent along with their spouses having to attain new employment.

The words "Volunteer Redundancy" certainly give me a false perception due to the fact that if this downsize was not announced there would be minimal staff taking up this option. The staff that have accepted a VR have only accepted this option due to the first 2 options not being available. I would hardly call this "Volunteer".

There are still so many unanswered questions and issues that continue to prevail with the whole process that may well have been avoided if the process was handled with much more professionalism and planning.

Wendy Kachel
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Grafton Correctional Centre