

**Submission  
No 85**

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

**Name:** Mrs Lisa Driscoll

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I have been a Correctional officer with the NSW Department of Corrective Services for 12 years. I have worked at Long Bay, MRRC, Mulawa, Berrima and currently Court Escort Security Unit. It upsets me to be labeled a "rotter" in the media. In my opinion the management of the Corrective Services have used the overtime blowout as a way to discredit Correctional Officers and gain public approval in privatising aspects of the prison system in NSW.

Lisa Driscoll

Date 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009

**The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3  
Parliament House  
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Sydney NSW 2000  
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## **SUBJECT- The privatisation of prisons and prison-related services**

I am a Correctional Officer employed by the Department of Corrective Services since 1997. I have worked at Correctional Centres at Long Bay, MRRC, Mulawa, Berrima and currently Court Escort Security Unit.

Since being employed as a Correctional officer I have gained friendships and experienced comradeship unlike any other employment. This is due to the nature of the work and due to the risks and exposure to potential dangerous situations everyday. The frontline Correctional Officers are professional, skilled and courageous staff of the Department who get very little recognition for the hard work they provide to the community every day.

It is upsetting to be labeled a "rotter" in the media. It is upsetting when an inmate assaults a fellow officer and nothing is heard about the incident in the media. It is extremely upsetting when a fellow officer is brutally beaten and murdered whilst on duty and the media show little interest. The work of Correctional Officers should be recognized for all the right reasons. Televisions programs on Australian television portray the Police Force, Customs, Fire and Ambulance Service however very little is heard about the real issues inside NSW Correctional Centres.

In my 12 years working for the department I have never worked a lot of overtime however if I want to work additional hours the opportunity is always there. When I

applied for the position as a Correctional Officer I was responding to an advertisement in the newspaper that stated that there was opportunity to work overtime. When I questioned my Stepfather about this career opportunity he stated that he was employed as a Prison Officer for 17 years and he managed to purchase a house and pay it off at a very early age. I know a lot of Correctional Officers choose to work overtime and accept overtime when it is offered to them. Why should an officer be labeled a “rotter” because they say yes to work additional shifts? I also know a lot of officers do not work overtime however they still get offered the overtime just like anyone else. In 12 years as a Correctional Officer there has always been overtime. When I worked at the MRRC between 1997 and 2002 I could have worked everyday of the year if I wanted to and most of those would be double shifts. Why now does the Management of the Corrective Service publicize the blow out in the overtime budget?

**In my opinion the Management of the Department of Corrective Services have used the overtime blowout as a way to discredit Correctional Officers in the eyes of the general public. By discrediting Correctional Officers and labeling them “rotters” the management will get the general public on side when they raise the subject of privatising prisons to save the tax payers money.**

Privatising prisons has to be morally wrong. A private company is in the business of making money. Isn't it morally wrong to make money from the incarceration of people and to treat the incarceration of people as a profit making business? Profits from private prisons will go offshore affecting Australia's wealth and credibility. In the USA private prisons make billions from the incarceration of US citizens. I don't think Australia should take the example of the US in a lot of things and especially not the privatising of prisons. Privatised prisons amount to nothing less than economic exploitation. From a business point of view they need to encourage recidivism, stimulate the prison population by non-rehabilitation and maintain inmate numbers to keep profits up, look after the shareholders and expand. More inmates equal more money.

Page 87 of the NSW ALP Policy book

## **11. Corrective Services**

### **11.1 Introduction**

The principles of the prison system are deterrence, maintenance of public safety and the rehabilitation of the prisoner.

Will this principle be maintained and adhered to by the private prison?

In the 2006 Ombudsman Report I will quote directly; “Unfortunately there are continuing high numbers of complaints from inmates at Junee Correctional Centre, which is operated

by GEO Pty Ltd. We receive significantly more complaints from Junee than any other centre.” In the 2008 Ombudsman Report it again states that inmate complaints at Junee Correctional Centre has been high for several years. Maybe Junee Correctional Centre has a high number of Ombudsman complaints because they do not have the same principles of the Corrective Services.

**The function of prisons is not only to remove an offender from their community as punishment for their crimes but to also rehabilitate them to reduce the recidivism rate. This would not be the case in a privately run prison as their sole aim is to make a profit. Rehabilitation of inmates and reducing recidivism will reduce the moneymaking abilities of a privately run prison.**

One final point I would like to make involves the Departments introduction of Case Management in the late 1990s'. Correctional Officers where involved in writing reports and case notes on the behavior and attitude of inmates. Discretionary notes were recorded which contributed to decisions in regards to the inmates classifications, parole, remissions, works release, weekend leave and other judgments on the part of Correctional Officers. The staff I know and work with are professional and unbiased in their report writing and recommendations and I have seen genuine concern for inmates and their future. I doubt that a privately employed security guard would have the same dedication to duty and unbiased input into the future of these inmates. The state of NSW should not trust the unscrupulous private contractor in contributing to the decision making process of an inmates future.

I am proud to work in such a position where I can contribute to the safety of my community and assist in providing a safe environment for staff and inmates. The possibility of an inmate escaping from custody and harming a member of the community or worse is unthinkable for anyone. I have seen the way private security companies run and treat their staff in the country and I do not want to risk this community for the sake of saving a few dollars for the taxpayer. There are other ways that we can reduce the overtime budget than by exposing the community to potential risk.

Thank you for allowing me to contribute my opinion to this inquiry.

Kind regards

Lisa Driscoll