

Submission
No 452

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 9/04/2009

Partially Confidential

Dear Madam,

I have been asked by the Hon Sylvia Hale to submit a late submission. I have been reluctant to state my concerns in this forum as I have found being outspoken against the Department, is detrimental to one's career. I therefore, would please request that my name be withheld and my document is tabled without my name.

I read in one of the inquiries' transcripts where M/s Sylvia Hale asked Ron Woodham: "What sort of show, are you running here?" His answer was. "A good one"

Ron Woodham (RW) has led this Department for many years. I have been in the Department for over 25 years and RW was always very influential and a big voice when he was in the Metropolitan Emergency Unit and later he set up the Metropolitan Security Unit. Officers who have any length of service know exactly how RW operates and he is a great visionary and tactician and more importantly, a very powerful man.

Ian McLean was given the task of doing the Way Forward road show. I understand RW was on sick leave at the time. **McLean visited each gaol and told officers that our job as we know it was going to change and was out of our hands because we need to compete with the private gaol sector (Junee).** DCS could no long justify high wages and conditions as we know it. He expounded that staff need to come up with strategies to cut costs and avoid having more gaols turned over to private companies. I now believe that before this road show the decision to privatize Parklea and Cessnock was already a done deal.

I am critical and angry because I know that the Junee running costs, so often pushed into our faces, are not correct. **The setup; the training of staff and many other administration functions were and still are hidden and paid by DCS.** Also, the inmates picked to be managed there, are very compliant. During the set up of Junee many inmates picked had non-association issues and if they complained, they were told they would be returned and housed with the general population inmate. (Threat to their safety) A Junee inmate who becomes 'high-need' or problematic, due to behavioral issues or illness, or whatever, is moved from Junee quickly. It is expounded that Junee CC is a showcase and very successful. How is this so? GEO has had to pay large fines and General Managers have disappeared.

After the Way Forward road show officers, mid management, general managers and union members came to the party and new gaol management plans were eventually put forward.

RW appeared to be very hostile in relation to Parklea and Cessnock negotiations and even aggravated situations by moving inmates into the gaol at Parklea hoping that staff would walk out in retaliation. The POVB Executive has his substantial position at Parklea and I believe staff over the last three years have been placed at Parklea and Cessnock, knowing that they would be privatized and moved out of these gaols

What I need to tell this enquiry is that prison officers have to be paid well because it is not a popular career choice. The shift work and environment is difficult. Correctional officers have to be good communicators, assertive and quick thinking. The anticipation that you may get assaulted is always at the back of your mind. The working conditions for coal face (operational) middle management are not good and even worse for the officers on the ground. Officers have rarely instigated industrial action because of wages it is always due to safety issues.

Due to the Way Forward philosophy I put forward and documented some cost saving issues. Some of the problems I will touch on. This is only a few main issues as I wish to keep this document brief.

DCS has never asked for funding from either NSW Police or Treasury to pay for the resources that we had to use since 2000 in our involvement of the Forensic Procedures (Crimes) Act 2001. Part 7. DCS since 2001 has been responsible having in excess of 26,000 DNA profiles put on the NSW DNA data base. (Since this enquire, I have been contacted due to a flurry to try and get my figures and case and return answers to the Minister).

DCS has spent considerable resources on assisting the police with this procedure. Our inmate management computer module had to be re-engineered to identify and record when and where inmates had been tested. The process was highly political and closely scrutinized by the NSW Ombudsman and Attorney General. DCS had to ensure all procedures and protocols were met. A funding application was being put together (due to the Way Forward strategy), but the DNA Coordinator was removed from the position as RW wanted to put Mick Hovey in the position of MOS Security and needed to give him the rank of Senior Assistant Superintendent. There was never any intention to have Mr Hovey do the position of DNA Coordinator. The funding case was never completed. However, funding for DCS involvement should have been discussed from the onset of the DNA gathering.

DCS with its Through Care, Officer Multi-skilling philosophies and inter-departmental agreements/MOU has never successfully factored in the actual costs of having staff do the necessary screenings, referrals and associated paperwork.

DCS is not adequately funded in many non-core DCS functions.

The staffing formula the Department uses is not correct. This has been an issue for years. Leave entitlements, planned or unplanned are not correctly factored in. DCS has to rely on Commissioned officers selling back 10 days of their leave to balance the books.

There costing formula for moving inmates throughout the state is incorrect. DCS has never factored in the fact that there are so many non-association inmates. We have Special Management inmates, Limited Association inmates and Non-association inmates and other various high security inmates. Transport trucks have to transport these inmates separately from main stream inmates and so more trucks and staff, have to be on the road. The movement of inmates outside the gaol is dangerous, convoluted and needs skilled, confident staff to plan and operate these movements.

The DNA database has resulted in many hits with crime scene DNA and this has resulted in a big increase in inmate movements to various police stations and the MRRC Police Area. **These resources are absorbed into DCS budget and blow out the budget.**

I will abbreviate the following issues to keep this document brief.

~ The promotional process is not transparent. RW insists on approving all promotions. There is evidence of manipulation. The incumbent is not the person with the skills to do the job effectively.

~ Staffing new positions and vacant positions is very slow due to the fact that RW insists on overseeing all promotions. It takes years sometimes to have a business case approved for a new position and then that position will be utilized as RW designates. This creates over-time somewhere down the line.

~ Promotion eligibility lists are not used correctly – merit and efficiency is not used when putting a person in a position – cronyism is rife. Jobs are advertised again to ensure criteria is used to give a chosen person the job.

~ There is no formal staff appraisal system in place to address an officer's performance, or issues and often problematic officers are promoted out of an area. There is just a hit and miss P file and more often than not, a Security & Intelligence dossier that is RW pride and joy.

~ RW spends a considerable amount of resources on intelligence, in relation to monitoring some staff's day to day activities. He has stopped the informal discussions on the Department's email and the monitoring of staff correspondence is obsessive.

~ RW has known for years that staff are using computers to play games and this should have been stopped years ago.

~ Staff moral is an issue and poor moral links to sick leave

~ The Department's budget does not forecast or incorporate non-core functions.

~ The budget put forward each period and received is not adequate to run the Department effectively. This is explained away by the fact that officers do too much overtime because of sick leave and abuse their leave entitlements.

I have many years experience as a custodial officer both operational and administrative. I have done many specialist jobs and I am currently at the coal face so to speak.

I have seen the Department go through some pretty bad periods. Rex Jackson, our Commissioner, who became an inmate. The use of illegal entrapment to remove officers from gaols when RW was in the MEU. The media portraying prison guards negatively.

However, DCS has evolved and the current practice of using multi-skilled teams to manage inmates appears to have improved the numbers of serious incidents, such as deaths, escapes and assaults and given custodial officers some credibility and more job satisfaction. The use of these specialists and teams is costly.

How can a private company provide suitable skilled staff to run Parklea and Cessnock?

Obviously these gaols will have a lower inmate population than they currently house now and inmates deemed compliant and settled in gaol life.

They will have problems finding licensed people from the security industry as there is a shortage of qualified security personnel in NSW. Many could not renew their license due to having a police record. To use mums and dads who are used to packing supermarkets is a disastrous concept. Inmates are not in gaol due to one misfortune, many are career criminals and very good at it. If they cannot function and be law abiding in the community the odds are high that they do not function lawfully whilst incarcerated. Inmates are skilled at stand-over, violence/intimidation, contraband dealing. It takes a strong, confident person to manage these inmates and sometimes their visitors.

The older officer with years of life skills under their belt, who has seen it all and can sniff out trouble as soon as he/she walks into a unit is the officer needed. However, RW believes this officer is the cause of his budget blow out and is using it as his premise for privatizing Cessnock, Parklea and what ever gaol he deems suitable next.

No Uncle Ron! Your show should be better. It is blatant mismanagement from your top end!

Thank you for this enquiry for officers to be able to speak up.

Date: 9th April 2009