

Submission  
No 32

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

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Many of the people who are in our prison system here in Australia are imprisoned because of deficiencies in our other systems. When prisons are run for profit there's an incentive to keep people coming back.

Private prison populations are used to bring down the cost to corporations. This undermines working conditions for the non-prison population while cost savings in private prisons rely on technology and non-union labour.

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations produced a report that concluded that international human rights standards require that prisons be directly operated by public officials.

I am a registered nurse who has worked in the prison system and with many people who have been in the prison system, as employees or as prisoners. I have also lived in America and the UK and seen the changes wrought by the privatisation of the prison system.

Many of the people who are in our prison system here in Australia are imprisoned because of deficiencies in our other systems. The health system fails people with mental illnesses, and some end up in gaol. The education system fails those who don't profit from didactic learning, kids with ADD, kids with emotional problems, and some of those end up in prison. Drug and alcohol use lead to others being incarcerated for what are often minor or victimless crimes. All in all, most people who end up in our prison system are losers already. It seems almost cruel to allow others to profit from their misery.

Speaking of the profit motive further, our current correctional system is designed to dissuade people from returning to prison, give them reasonable options and hopefully the skills to pursue their dreams. That's our job as a society, helping people lead productive lives without hurting others. When prisons are run for profit there's an incentive to keep people coming back, just as we see elective and cosmetic surgery being primarily practiced in private hospitals.

In America, private prison populations are used to bring down the cost to corporations, no longer just making number plates and sewing post bags but running call centres and doing data entry for big business. This undermines working conditions for the non-prison population more than exporting manufacturing jobs to Asia. It's happening in Australia and it's Australian prisoners who are competing! The argument for cost savings in private prisons relies on the use of technology and non-union labour, once again undercutting workers' positions in the general economy.

Finally, in 1993 The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations produced a report that reviewed the international human rights norms deemed relevant to the issue of prison privatization. The author, Claire Palley, concluded that international standards require that prisons must be directly operated by public officials.

Thank you for your consideration of the matter and I trust you consider our particular history here in Oz ... we simply SHOULDN'T profit from prisoners!

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