

**Submission
No 11**

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

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Date received: 9/10/2012

Inquiry into the Closure or Downsizing of Corrective Services NSW Facilities Community Impact Survey



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What is your connection to the Grafton Gaol? (eg, employee, town resident)

Over a 40 year period I supplied goods to the inmates of Grafton Gaol on their fortnightly Activities Buyup. These goods were sourced from numerous local businesses.

Why is Grafton Gaol important to the community of Grafton?

Sydney has its harbour, the bridge and the Opera House. Grafton has the river, Jacarandas and its history. High on the list of historic buildings is the Grafton Gaol of which the Hoof Street facade is a classic example of its time and is a constant reminder of the history of the city .

More importantly it provided a high level of employment directly through the departmental payroll but equally through the myriad of contractors and suppliers who supported the facility.

During the community protest which followed the announcement that the government would close the gaol people realised how much it was a part of their economic and social life.

Neighbours were to lose their jobs, team members of sporting groups would no longer be available for matches and the many volunteer groups supported financially and numerically by the gaol personnel would lose income and members.

The sheer scale of the gaol in the Grafton community was ignored by the decision makers. The job losses following the closure may seem minimal in a city the size of Sydney but in Grafton they have a huge impact. Similarly, because the officers losing their jobs were known to or at least recognised by the community the closure took on a very personal nature which would not apply in Sydney.

Perhaps the most disappointing aspect was the total refusal by the government to even consider discussing the matter or considering an alternative proposed by the staff.

A complete loss of trust in government has resulted. Tragic !

How will the closure or downsizing of Grafton Gaol affect employment opportunities in your community?

In an economy the size of Grafton each and every job is precious. The loss of over 100 highly paid jobs had an immediate impact on spending behaviour not just of the prison officers but the remainder of the community who rightly were concerned about the effect it would have on their own employment and income.

Anecdotal evidence is that real estate sales virtually ceased, rents came under downward pressure. No chance of a job in that market.

Mean while building and renovation work stopped dead. Tradies were laid off, apprenticeships put on hold and any suggestion of work opportunities ceased

Retail sales, already struggling, took another hit which has forced employers to reduce staff numbers and hours.

Most of the many subcontractors to the gaol had employees specifically for gaol work. Their challenge is not to increase jobs but rather to retain those employees on a even a part time basis.

We need to look beyond the direct employment reduction by the department, which is serious in itself, and look at the flow on effect which is at least as serious. Politicians constantly remind us of the economist's "Multiplier Effect" of increased economic activity. Sadly it works downwards too

How will the closure or downsizing of Grafton Gaol affect local business and the local economy of Grafton?

I first started the buying service for inmates in 1980 when the Department decided that it was too time consuming & too expensive to have a Prison Officer buy goods for them. They announced they intended to source the goods from Sydney and deliver them whenever a Prison van was available. My own hardware businesses at that time was one of many regular local suppliers and as I was loathe to see the gaol's purchases leave Grafton I approached the Governor and offered to provide the service at no cost to the Department. I would interview the inmates every second Tuesday, buy the goods requested from Grafton businesses on Wednesday and deliver them on Thursday. My costs plus a small profit margin would be met by a commission paid by way of a discount from the suppliers plus a 5% delivery fee paid by the inmates.

At the time of the closure I was suppling over \$100,000.00 worth of goods per year to the inmates. All of these goods were supplied to me by Grafton businesses. I am told that I was the largest customer at Retravisation, Sanity Music and Grafton Sportspower.

In a city the size of Grafton, businesses already under pressure cannot afford to lose that sort of sales volume without taking a serious hit on their profitability. I fear for their future.

My business has been terminated and at my age, 69, it is unlikely that I will find any form of work.

The entire downsizing was handled in a bungling, heavy handed fashion which has negatively impacted on the social and economic fabric of Grafton without achieving any benefit for us or the government.