

Submission
No 184

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

I would like to outline the concerns I have with the Privatisation of Cessnock Correctional and any other Correctional Centre for that matter.

I have lived in Cessnock and its surrounding areas for the 37 years of my life. My family has also lived in the Cessnock area for close to 60 years and their families as well.

I have worked at Cessnock Correctional Centre for the last 14 years.

It must be noted that a lot of people who grow up in Cessnock, often leave for work opportunities and yet inevitably they nearly always return to live in Cessnock. I am not sure of the reasoning but something pulls them back, I can assure you that it is not the condition of the roads.

I have worked at the Demountable Business unit for the past 9-10 years as an overseer. Through CSI (Corrective Services Industries) we have a contract with The Department of Education and Training (DET) to refurbish school demountables. This CSI Business Unit offers inmates the following

1. Occupation Health and Safety Training
2. Practical experience in areas of Metal/Timber/Electrical/Painting/Detailing and Plumbing trades
3. TAFE course in Certificate 11 Building & Construction
4. TAFE Accredited course in Painting and Decorating which is recognised and can be completed upon release
5. TAFE Accredited course in welding which is recognised and can be completed upon release.
6. TAFE course in Bonded Asbestos removal – A large percentage of the States older Demountable Buildings contain bonded asbestos in their ceilings and walls
7. TAFE Course in Electrical Tag and Testing
8. Access to Forklift license
9. Access to Mobile Crane License and Riggers License

I went to Demountables in 1999 when we had a contract to provide 32 Media Accommodation buildings for the Sydney Olympic Games Committee; this work was for \$4 million and employed approximately 80-90 inmates with meaningful work that developed employable skills. I believe this money went back into the Centres budget. I also believe that if a public company had been contracted to do the work then it would have cost the taxpayers of NSW considerable more money. We also provided other buildings which were used for the Olympic Games media facilities.

What will happen to our contract with The Department of Education and Training when we are privatised? Will the private provider continue to perform our role or will the Department of Education have to outsource our work to another private firm, therefore increasing the costs of providing school buildings to needy areas. I would assume the major reasons we have the contract with DET are

1. We offer a cheaper alternative than private organisations thus saving money for the tax payers of NSW and
2. As listed above all the opportunities in training and employment we offer inmates to help with the rates of employment upon release and subsequent lower rates of recidivism

In 2008/2009 our turnover will be \$2million and all profits go back into the Correctional Centres budget, last year our turnover was above \$1.5 million. Where will all this work go and where will the DET find the extra money for Private companies to perform the work come from.

Until this week I believed that maybe the Department would come back to the employees of Cessnock and Parklea and offer the chance to switch to a way forward goal with altered working conditions and not Privatisation.

This week we received a letter dated 17th February from the Commissioner of the Department of Corrective Services guaranteeing that Cessnock will be Privatised and everything is on course for a 5/6 months timeframe.

I find this staggering and totally bewildering that this announcement be made 10 days before a Parliamentary Enquiry begins into the Privatisation of Prisons and Prison-Related Services. Is the Commissioner above the Parliamentary Enquiry? Or is he simply just treating us with contempt?

It has been stated that the one of the reasons for Privatisation is to reduce the amount of money spent on overtime. Is it not true that overtime is controlled by management; they have the final say if the overtime is to be filled and worked?

It has also been mentioned that the overtime is rorted that some people are working more than others. If one person earns \$100000 and another earns \$60000 is that not the same as 2 people earning \$80000 each. Yes but management then claim that working more overtime means officers have more sick leave, does the department not have a sick leave policy which should stop this from occurring; Once again I ask who implements this policy? "Management". This is the only place I have worked where a person's sick leave record is considered better to have 3 occasions with 2 days off sick than a person who has 4 occasions off with 1 day. Where is the logic in that?

What I would like asked is why the Parliament, Minister for Corrective Services, Commissioner of the Department of Corrective Services or whoever made the decision to Privatised. Why they chose Cessnock and Parklea for Privatisation. Cessnock is different in that there is no other correctional centre in close proximity.

My options at present are

1. Transfer to another Public Correctional Centre (who's to say that it won't be privatised in the next few years) – I will be required to either move my family, thus my young children will have to transfer schools, and my wife will also have to find another job. This will totally disrupt my current family lifestyle. Or live away from my home away from my young family - This is totally unacceptable. This Department does not pay me enough money to do this to my family. My family has and always will come first.
2. Work for the Private Organisation – Accept lower pay rates, increased exposure to officer assaults, larger ratios of inmates to officers, lower security in workforce. – Again not acceptable – Not providing Full redundancy with this offer.
3. Take voluntary redundancy – At 38 years old I feel that this Department would be doing everything it could to keep its younger members of staff. This appears to be the only option at present even though we are entering possibly the worst economic slowdown we have seen in my life, with monetary uncertainty, mortgage payments all in area which can hardly be described as an employment boom area-Cessnock, Unemployment is only going to rise.

Can it be guaranteed that a private firm can maintain our high levels of "Duty of Care" to the inmates and family members? Remember Private Companies serve their shareholders first, and profit is their only motivating factor. To achieve this they have to reduce numbers of staff, house additional inmates in already crowded areas and pay their workers minimal wages. So can they produce the quality and duty of care, that we do as Public owned correctional officers and support staff?

When will the state government stop selling off all our (NSW) assets? Fortunately the Electricity sell off was defeated. We keep hearing that QLD and Victoria are returning the Private Correctional Centres back to Public Correctional Centres; surely we need to learn through the mistakes of other states in Australia and not replicate their mistakes

Does this NSW Government with their track record honestly believe that they can do what no other Government in the World has done and that is to privatise a correctional centre which is already open and operational?

This NSW Labour Government does not have a mandate from the People of NSW to introduce this Privatisation, nor do I believe they ever will get. If they ran an election with this as their mandate then I believe they would find themselves making a very good opposition.

In closing; what do Cessnock and Cessnock Correctional Centre mean to me?
Cessnock is where I was born, is where I have always lived is more than likely where I will always live. It is where I have worked and is where I hope to always work. If you have never lived in Cessnock or worked in Cessnock you will never understand Cessnock, ask anyone from Cessnock and you will get the same response.
Working at Cessnock Correctional Centre has afforded me to meet many interesting and diverse people, all of whom share a common goal of ensuring security of the community, duty of care to fellow officers and inmates.

The people of Head Office see us as differently, no we do not buckle to their every whim, we do have a different way of doing things but at the end of the day we do the best job we can with what we are given

Thank you for the chance to voice my opinion and objection to the Privatisation of NSW Correctional Centres.