

Submission  
No 274

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

**Name:** Mr Frank Darcy

**Date received:** 27/02/2009

---

Sir

I have been a correctional officer for almost 10 years. I performed my duties in the metropolitan area for 3 years the remainder have been at Cessnock.

I like many other citizens in NSW have accepted the decisions of the government of the day and been part of the silent majority. However it has now become time to voice my displeasure with the Government's decision to privatise both Cessnock and Parklea correctional centres.

It is an insult to both the men and women who have served the correctional department with distinction and integrity. These men and women daily face the threat of both physical and verbal abuse from some of the worst offenders in the state. If only the general public were aware of some of the situations we face daily. The assaults on both officers and inmates, drug overdoses, inmates self harming, standover tactics, gang warfare, the list goes on.

Since that fateful decision was made in November 08 I have noticed the devastating effects it has made on the moral of the officers based at Cessnock. I know of at least 2 couples are experiencing marital problems and there could be many more between now and August. Many are resorting to alcohol to deal with their depression. We should not forget that many will have financial difficulties and that will present problems ahead. I know from experience being retrenched from BHP in 1999 that it is not a pleasant experience and that all family members will suffer one way or another.

It is all very well to say that no one will lose their position. The reality is that to remain with corrective services you must travel or relocate. The nearest correctional centre is St Helliers which for most is a 2 hour drive for those who live in the Lake Macquarie or Central coast at least 3 hours. To expect officers to travel those distances on a daily basis is not only unsafe but expensive as well. Most of the officers at Cessnock are over 40 years of age to ask them to relocate at their stage in life is unacceptable. The department is asking these officers to leave family and friends behind and virtually begin again. One can only imagine the grief this would cause.

We must not underestimate inmate involvement. They are sitting back quietly letting all unfold. Not all inmates are unintelligent, they read, watch TV, listen and observe. They will probe for weaknesses and take advantage if they can. Dealing with inmates is not only a physical presence but a man management skill as well. I have spoken to a number of inmates and there will be trouble. They totally reject the idea of being told what to do by what they regard as security guards. We know them their ways and habits and have the experience and knowledge to deal with any situation should it arise.

In conclusion I find it hard to believe that any Labour government state or Federal would endorse the privatisation of any correctional centre. I sure previous labour governments would find the decision as abhorrent to privatise an essential service.