

Submission  
No 17

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

**Name:** Name Suppressed  
**Date received:** 15/02/2009

---

*Partially Confidential*

Sir/Maam,

This submission generally seeks to highlight that the outsourcing to private contractors of the Government's obligation to provide quality services and care to inmates, and security to the community will most certainly be compromised, as history has shown that whenever government pursues this cheap and nasty option, eventually the taxpayer foots the bill.

As a taxpayer, I am concerned by the impact on both the Department and staff, considering some relocated staff's potentially negative attitude and resentment to a Department whose mismanagement has caused them and their families to suffer unduly. The Commissioner however, ultimately responsible for this budget blowout and subsequent loss of operation of public assets retains his position. This perceived act of injustice could cause disruption and disharmony amongst staff and may hinder the Department from operating to its full potential.

I am also concerned that no information seems available detailing the outcome of a rural impact study regarding the private operation of Cessnock Correctional Centre and all rural court complexes and the obvious effect on the staff, community and business, as is required before any State Government major restructure [if one has been done at all?]

While the Government's priority is to rightly operate the state's goals more efficiently, this is only achieved by a private operator by using cheap labour and maintaining a lessened supervisory role due to a much higher inmate to officer ratio than public goals and providing only minimal services to address offending behaviour. It is only logical, that to these organisations, repeat offenders equates to repeat business.

Some issues relating to this inquiry regarding private operations which may be seldom acknowledged are:

- \* Privately contracted staff are more likely to subsidise their low wages through corrupt activity.
- \* Higher rates of assault on inmates in privately operated goals due to reduced supervision and therefore subsequent burden on local hospitals already dealing with overcrowding etc.
- \* Current private organisations have Australian operations but most are foreign owned, therefore the lions share of profits are headed offshore to shareholders in the U.S or U.K etc.
- \* Private operation of public assets sends a damaging message to the public that a Government who should be setting the benchmark, has through mismanagement or otherwise deemed it too difficult to effectively manage an asset, and embarrassingly discarded it to the 'too hard basket'.
- \* No asset is being sold, only staffing is being outsourced, and when you compare the savings after existing public staff are relocated, retrained or paid redundancy, one has to ask if the motivation really is to try to balance the books before the next election, or rather to disrupt a union committed to maintaining safe work practices in a depressing, potentially hostile environment.

Publicly, however the Department of Corrective Services maintains its motivation to privatise these goals and other non core operations is due to an unacceptable increase in overtime expenditure, which the Commissioner has stated is due to staff rosters.

I would call on this committee to challenge the Commissioner to state how many taxpayers dollars were wasted due to rosters and how many staff were dismissed or prosecuted due to these findings. The real answer lies in the fact that goals have been running understaffed for years, and the inmate population has exploded, with very few new goals built to accommodate these increased numbers. It's time that management take responsibility and we move forward in a positive, professional manner with a core component of the Justice system retained in public hands. Again no assets are being sold, so there will be no benefit to the taxpayer, and we can only hope that one day the private operators don't hand back to us our publicly owned goals in broken little pieces.

Thank you for the opportunity to convey my concerns through this submission. I would be available if required to address the committee/council during the inquiry process.

Regards