

Submission  
No 332

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

**Organisation:**

**Name:** Mr Daniel Marshall

**Telephone:**

**Date received:** 24/02/2009

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Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: Privatisation of Parklea Correctional Facility.

I am writing to make you and your government aware of our opposition to the recently announced privatisation of the Parklea Correctional Centre. As custodial and ISP staff, we have grave concerns regarding the effect such a move will have upon the administration of justice in NSW, upon the welfare of inmates and upon the maintenance of order at Parklea.

I feel strongly that the possible termination of employment of so many people with such extensive collective experience in corrections over so many years is a reckless waste of a valuable public resource developed at a considerable expense to NSW tax payers.

The management of a maximum security facility presents highly specialised challenges that require constant vigilance and a level of expertise that can only be applied through years of training and practical experience. In a remand facility such as Parklea this is particularly so, with the hundreds of weekly movements of inmates newly arrived in custody, being escorted to and from dozens of courts each day and moving to other correctional facilities to commence their sentences; at such times inmates require especially intense supervision owing to the highly emotional conditions induced by the judicial process.

We note that the private Junee Correctional Centre was downgraded from Maximum Security when the maintenance of order proved impossible. Such situations developing at Parklea would not only present dangers to staff and inmates, but would severely disrupt the court systems at all levels if inmate movements became affected.

Some of the most dangerous men in the state are detained at Parklea. Many of them have spent more time in custody than out of it and have disturbingly well developed and deliberately cultivated notions of how to manipulate and coerce prison administrators and staff, both as individuals and as a group. They anticipate the removal of experienced prison officers and management with glee, imagining the advantage that will be able to be taken of what they essentially perceive as glorified private security guards or contracted parking inspectors. Without the clear weight of lawful authority behind them, custodial staff under private contract will be viewed with contempt by experienced and dangerous inmates who will act both individually and in unison to take advantage of a system for which they will have no respect. This has been the experience elsewhere, and we dread the consequence of such an action here.

Premier, be assured that with the issuing of an invitation to tender immediately prior to Christmas, inmates are acutely aware of their impending change of circumstances. It is now common for the privatisation to be referred to by the inmates subject to discipline by prison officers doing their duty. Inmates know that Junee Correctional centre offers Playstations, access to explicit pornography and greater freedom to engage in all manner of activities that are not possible in any other correctional centre in New South Wales. Inmates are aware that security is made lighter at Junee and that drugs and other prohibited items can be smuggled into that facility with much greater ease than at Parklea. They are aware that Junee is essentially just a warehouse for criminals where, as long as inmates are not neither escaping or dying, management will tolerate activities impossible under the intense supervision of comprehensively trained, highly experienced prison officers representing the unmistakable authority of the state. In short, Junee is the most popular gaol in New South Wales from the inmates point of view and surely the reasons why must be clear. To allow the proliferation of such a situation throughout the other gaols in our state is detrimental to the maintenance of good order, harmful to the safety and prospects of rehabilitation of inmates and contrary to the expectations of the people of New South Wales.

I and many others in the prison system are appalled that the choice of Parklea and Cessnock, the two largest industrial prisons, are the ones first chosen to be privatised. Where does the profits of these prisons go at the moment, back into the running of the prisons, but what will happen if a

private company takes over, the profits go to share holders from a company based overseas. The private sector will make its money by under paying inmates making products effectively undercutting small business that may reside in your electorate sending them out of business adding to the unemployment lines. This type of slave labour is not supposed to happen in this great country.

We are all aware that our state is facing financial crisis, and of the need to reduce spending in a responsible way. Contrary to some radical statements designed to manipulate public opinion, prison officers are not leading lives of luxury courtesy of improper overtime arrangements. As you are aware, overtime is strictly allocated according to rosters devised and administered by senior management, with all overtime subject to intense scrutiny and auditing. As you are aware, the only reason why prison officers undertake so much overtime is that the government will not employ sufficient staff, in spite of many years of representations from both management and the union for this to occur. Safety and security procedures are a matter of law, either directly through legislation or through Commissioner's instructions (issued under statute and with the force of the law) and cannot be neglected; the duties must be performed by someone and if insufficient prison officers are on staff then overtime must be done. Any other suggestion of any impropriety regarding overtime is demonstrably false.

The methadone program is run at a cost of millions of dollars. It encourages inmates to continue taking this expensive and highly addictive drug, regardless of whether they are drug addicts or not. Methadone is terrifyingly easy to "get on" and very difficult to "get off". While gaol detoxification facilities are underutilised, a re-examination of the Methadone Programme will yield savings and should be seriously considered before anything so dangerous as privatisation.

We ask you to examine alternative means of resolving our State's financial problems. We acknowledge that a case may be made for privatisation of certain government services, but the administration of justice is not one of them. It is damaging to the good order of gaols, detrimental to the safety and welfare of inmates and contrary to the expectations of the people of our state.

We will do all that we can to give effect to alternative measures and we are always available to discuss ways of working together to resolve their issues appropriately.

Yours faithfully