

Submission  
No 409

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

**Organisation:**

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*Partially Confidential*

1/3/2009

To the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Privatization of Prisons

I make this late submission to raise points others may not have raised.

My name is ..... I have been a Corrective Services employee for ...years. I work in the field of Alcohol and Other Drugs counseling and running programs. I have a degree .....

..... During my post graduate diploma in the early 1990's I wrote an essay about the prison system becoming the new long stay hospitals for the mentally ill replacing the shrinking institutions the health department was divesting in the name of supposed better care. The recognition of this fact has finally resulted in the construction of forensic units at Long Bay. I can affirm that the general gaol population contains enough candidates to fill the new facilities many times over. The point being missed is that prison officers over the last couple of decades have become the new mental health workers following the 1980's Richmond Implementations. In short the skills that many have developed are under appreciated and not credited in their humane professionalism. We are about to lose much of this with a switch to lesser trained lesser paid "security" staff.

Prisons run on people management skills. The general offender population is many and varied. From the utterly antisocial to the brain impaired, from intellectually disabled to sufferers of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. In reality those that find their way into specialized units are only a few. Prison officers deal with the rest daily. Don't be fooled and think that screening processes select out these problems at point of entry. And then there is the devastation wrought by drug use that also fills our mental health facilities.

Regarding budgetary difficulties, the excuse of overtime scams justifying the need to privatize gaols is an insult to any thinking person. I have been amused to watch over the years the proliferation of psychologists in the upper echelons of the system, many with little or no real clinical experience in mental health, with just one mental health nurse working for Justice Health (at least at Cessnock) to oversee perhaps a quarter of the inmate population (450) on psychiatric medications. In recent years those echelons have bought and designed programs requiring university level literacy they have been made mandatory to our clients with usually barely a year 9 education. Recently I was given instruction in how to prepare a job application for my new career by two psychologists who will never deal with an inmate. Such middle management is where the budget has blown out. There has been no appreciable increase in coal face workers among either the prison officers or the program staff over the last decade. The Program Staff are also facing privatization when we receive NO overtime payments. The Justice Health staff face an equally uncertain future.

At a time when billions of dollars are being injected to stimulate the Australian economy to ward off the effects of the global economic downturn it seems bizarre to send millions of dollars off shore to pay a company to manage our gaols. The successful tender is most likely a company with an overseas parent company. I would ask what is being imported for the export of taxpayer's money? If the answer is the 'expertise' of managing our Correctional facilities isn't that a slight against the current management not the coal face workers? The role of depriving its' citizens of their liberty is a state responsibility, not a business. The need to follow American (or other) style private models of incarceration needs to be questioned at depth before we take this step. I remember the riot in the early days of Junee and had dealings with the inmate who lost an eye in that incident. It was the expertise that was injected from NSW Corrective Services that ultimately managed that problem.

Finally, current employees are being told that no-one need lose their job from the privatization of the Parklea and Cessnock facilities. Where then are the budgetary savings? Absorbing current staff and then paying for new staffing through the successful tender plus their profit seems an absurd way of saving money. It only makes sense if it is a fundamentally political decision.