

Submission
No 262

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000
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Friday, 27th February, 2009

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am taking the time to write to you to express my opposition to the privatisation of New South Wales Correctional Centers.

I am an employee of the Department of Corrective Service, a tax payer of New South Wales and a resident of Grafton in regional New South Wales.

The thought of State Government Correctional Centers being handed to multinational corporations raises many complex questions that will need to be answered and public assurances provided before any correctional centre, current or planned, be handed over to a private operator.

I have laid out just some of the questions and concerns that need to be suitably addressed below.

- Will the private operator purchase the facilities outright or pay the New South Wales Government rent on the government owned facilities at an acceptable rate for the area concerned?
- Will the private operator be financially accountable for the maintenance of the correctional centres involved? Taking into account the age of Cessnock and Grafton Correctional Centre in particular.
- Will the private operator be held accountable for escapes, deaths in custody, inmate disturbances? What assurances does the community have in regard to the following; will the communities surrounding Parklea and Cessnock correctional centres be put in jeopardy?
- Who will be responsible to respond to any inmate disturbance (riot)?
- Will the private operator have an emergency unit or will they rely on the State emergency unit (DCS staffed and trained) to respond to any inmate disturbance? If so will the private operator be held financially accountable for the costs of the State emergency unit to respond?
- What assurances does the public have that the private operator is ultimately committed to reducing the recidivism of offenders in New South Wales?

- How do the offender rehabilitation programs and employment opportunities compare to Department of Corrective Services?
- How will the Departments' strict key performance indicators be monitored in regard to the private operators? Will there be two standards of offender and correctional centre management?
- Will the private operator enforce the thorough standard of case management that is currently being performed by the custodial officers of the Department currently?
- Does the private operator subscribe to the thorough care principals?
- How will the private operator address the growing levels of mental illness in the offender population?
- What standards will be enforced in treating mental illness? Will mentally ill offenders be warehoused and returned to the community in the same or worse state than when they came into the system? Or will mentally ill offenders be simply returned to the custody of the Department of Corrective Services for care and treatment? Resulting in a more unstable and volatile environment for the offenders and staff of the Department of Corrective Services?
- Will offenders who become violent, dangerous and difficult to manage be housed in a privately run facility or will they just be transferred back to the department for management? Ultimately resulting in a more violent and volatile environment for both offenders and staff of the Department of Corrective Services?
- Will the private operator have access to and contribute to the intelligence currently gathered by the Department? Will the private operator have to contribute financially to the intelligence gathering process? Or will it be handed to them freely?
- What assurances do the offenders and the public have that information gathered by the private operator will be held in strict confidence and not used for financial gain of the private operator?
- Will staff and offender security be assured by the private operator? How do the assault rates compare with government correctional centers for both staff and offenders?
- What is the current cost per inmate per day at Juneau correctional centre? How does this compare to a modern government correctional centre (i.e. Mid North Coast Correctional Centre) with particular attention given to offender rehabilitation programs, employment training and job skills and education?
- Who will be providing the health care to the offender population held in a privately run facility? Or will sick or injured offenders simply be moved back to a government run correctional center where departmental officers will take the sick or injured offender to hospital for treatment?

- Will the private operators use the current computer software Offender Integrated Management System (OIMS)? If so will the private operator be financially contributing to the maintenance and upgrades of this vital software data base?

There are many compelling arguments against privatisation of such a valuable and volatile part of the judicial system. Numerous studies have been undertaken in regard to privatisation of these essential services world wide. This current privatization push is no doubt an attempt to cost cut in a time of financial uncertainty.

I feel a full Parliamentary inquiry or Royal Commission should be carried out on the Department as a whole to see where all the inefficiencies are taking place. The prison population has grown by 60% in the last 10 years and as such the number of correctional officers has not reflected this growth on the other hand the number of top level executive staff has ballooned to unmanageable levels .

The Commissioner of Corrective Services Mr. Ron Woodham and the upper echelons of his management team waste no time in degrading and devaluing the many hard working correctional officers over manipulation of over time. It is my understanding that it is management who is responsible to the tax payers for the public purse. It was in fact the mismanagement of the department over many years that has led to the budget blowouts which are leading to this current push for privatization.

The tax payers of New South Wales should be asking why the commissioner Mr. Ron Woodham wastes no time in degrading his hard working staff in every public forum he sees fit including the media. When was the last time you saw the police commissioner degrading his front line police? When was the last time you saw a general in the army degrading the soldiers under his command? The answer is never. The reason for this is that both these high end managers know and understand that the buck stops with them and the senior management teams for the successes and failures of the organisations they command. Apparently this is not so in the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services.

It is well understood that the public do not support the privatisation of the states gaols. It is the constant bad press generated by the senior management of the Department in a bid to gain public support that leaves a bad taste in every Correctional Officers mouth. Each dollar of over time money is earned by an officer working more than their award hours, spending increased time away from their families and

leisure in a bid to keep the gaols operating and inmates and staff safe. The majority of the staff within the Department is committed to cost saving and meeting efficiencies targets, however, to do this at the expense of public, offender or staff safety is both irresponsible and unprofessional. There needs to be a Departmental approach to cost cutting with the entire Department placed under the microscope to maximise the budget and ensure the tax payer gets the most professional correctional service at the best value.

It is also well known the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services is one of the world leaders in correctional services in regards to management, minimization and prevention of escapes, assaults, and disturbances. Senior management will have you believe that this is their doing and not the hard work and diligence of the front line staff that man the posts of the gaols twenty four hours a day seven days a week rain hail or shine in often difficult and dangerous conditions.

I submit this for your honest consideration and debate and trust that the enquiry will see through the paper thin argument that the senior members of the Department of Corrective Services will present to the committee.

Yours sincerely