

Submission
No 209

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

Name: Ms Eleanor Cardwell

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To the Member,

I have reason to be concerned with the State's consideration in broadening its base of privatised prisons. Most of these concerns relate directly to the welfare of the inmates, as well as the State's continuing responsibility of care towards them.

I am aware that the 'privatisation' of a prison can extend from a simple outsourcing of certain sectors, (like laundry,) to being a 'Built, Owned, Operated, Transfer' (BOOT) system. Both ends of this spectrum are of concern, though the more remote State control there is, the more concern it warrants.

If the main reason for pursuing the privatisation or outsourcing of a prison is to save money, then a concern about the possible tender process must be voiced. In looking for a suitable contractor, one of the cheapest offers must be chosen if using the motive of financial responsibility. With such a conclusion, my concerns fall directly towards the inmates and quality of life and services they would receive on such a budget. The quality of food, environment, counselling, retraining, activities, de-institutionalizing, security, maintenance, staff, etc, all depend on the how much or little a contractor is offered, and the conditions on how the payment is determined. With a smaller budget determined by the contract, the contractor must find cheaper ways to do things; quality and price must be low somewhere, and surely not towards the employees.

A lower quality of services for people in the prisons for a shorter stay (6 – 12 months) may, while not an unforgettable stay, be not not emotionally or physically changing. A longer sentence however, could be extreme. For is prolonged neglect simply another means of torture? Also, once conditions reach a certain point, there is little worse you could do for additional punishment without taking possibly extreme and morally wrong measures.

One potential result of private management of a prison is that the contractor will take the responsibility for the inmates' welfare that is otherwise entrusted to the State. This removes much liability from the State of the welfare – both physical and emotional, as well as the quality of work towards a person's rehabilitation or retraining for life back within this modern Australian culture.