

Submission  
No 245

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

**Organisation:** Prisoners' Aid Association of New South Wales Inc.  
**Name:** Mr Craig Baird  
**Position:** Manager  
**Telephone:** (02) 9281 7582  
**Date received:** 27/02/2009

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# **PRISONERS' AID ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES Inc.**

Founded 1901 - Registered under the Charitable Collections Act, 1934

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## **Reference**

Address all Correspondence to:  
The Managing-Secretary  
P.O Box 91  
BROADWAY NSW 2007

174 Broadway  
BROADWAY NSW 2007  
**Telephone:** 9281 7582  
9281 8863  
**Fax:** 9211 6518

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## **SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO THE PRIVATISATION OF PRISONS AND PRISON RELATED SERVICES**

**To:** General Purpose Standing Committee No.3

**Re:** Inquiry into the privatisation of prisons and prison related services

Dear Committee,

The Prisoners' Aid Association of NSW has been involved in the provision of services to inmates of NSW Correctional Centres for over 100 years. As such we have a keen interest in trying to ensure that the best possible services are provided so that the best interests of the general community and inmates are served. In relation to the issue of privatisation of prisons and prison related services the Association has a number of concerns that would suggest that privatisation not proceed.

The Association is of the belief that the operation of the correctional system is a core government responsibility best left to the elected government of the day to administer. We are of the view that the privatisation of prisons can only dilute their core objectives and that it can only reduce or obscure the focus on rehabilitation and community safety when profit is added to the mix.

## **1. Rehabilitation**

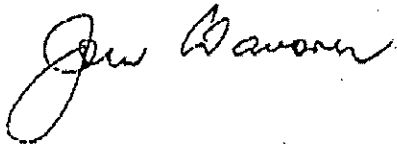
Of the goals of correctional services rehabilitation is clearly vital and it is difficult to see how privatisation would not reduce its effectiveness further. It can only result in diverting the focus of administration from rehabilitation if it is not identified as being profitable. While the prison system is operated by the government there is a clear financial interest in ensuring effective rehabilitation as it has the potential of reducing the cost to the public. This is in contrast to a private company with less interest in public safety and costs, and a clear interest in ensuring prison beds are full so that its profit is maximised.

## **2. Changed Role of NGOs**

Community organisations such as ours play an important role in service provision within the correctional system. Our access to centres is currently coordinated through and funded by the Department of Corrective Services. We are concerned about how we would be required to operate were the Centres to be privatised. Would funding continue to be provided by the Department of Corrective Services or would we be required to negotiate with the private contractor? Would access for our workers to correctional centres become more difficult?

### 3. Accountability and Transparency

Correctional Centres operated by the government have clear accountability mechanisms through the minister and the parliament. We are concerned that a move towards privatised prisons would reduce accountability and transparency. The withholding of information due to "commercial in confidence" clauses now apparently inherent in all government contracts with private contractors is of special concern here.



Yours faithfully  
John Davoren  
President  
26/2/09