

Supplementary
Submission
No 409a

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

Organisation:

Name: Name suppressed

Telephone:

Date received: 4/03/2009

Partially Confidential

4/3/2009

Supplementary submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Privatization of Cessnock and Parklea.

Following a phone discussion today I wish to submit some additional information for the Parliamentary Inquiry to consider.

Over the past three days I have had conversations with officers and other staff expressing that they believe the privatization of Cessnock is a foregone conclusion. Others have said that they did not put in a submission because they believe it would be pointless for the same reason. Already officers have transferred to other facilities on that belief and a psychologist and education officer are transferred to Bathurst this week. This is because of the emphatic language and information that has been passed on to the staff since the announcement of the privatization of Cessnock. In a letter to staff the commissioner has made it clear that Cessnock "will" be privatized and staff have been encouraged to submit their preferences for redeployment for several months now. The Parliamentary Inquiry it seems will not be able to reverse this decision and people have been acting accordingly. Also over the last three days, while we have been undertaking our duties, there has been a succession of representatives of tendering companies escorted by senior staff touring Cessnock, adding to the sense of resignation for the current remaining staff.

In my original submission I pointed to a wealth of experience and skills not accounted for inside the gaol that is being broken up. I can say from my experience there are many staff that are not likely to be easily relocated. For those of us who have children at school or for other reasons don't take the option to relocate we are being given very few options. The subject of the loss of social capital for the area does not seem to have been valued or properly discussed. Prison officers and other staff live in Cessnock and surrounding communities. They are part of the fabric of the community. From the volunteer bushfire brigades to sporting clubs some will be lost due to relocation. I suspect the privatization will change the fabric of the community even for those who do not relocate. Personally, I have been volunteering my time to talk to groups of traffic offenders at the Maitland PCYC since 2001 and am I currently reconsidering my standing in doing so. Although volunteering, I view this as part of my role as a prevention or diversionary program. At the moment I describe my role, give alcohol education and talk with some authority about the outcomes for those who continue to drink and drive or otherwise offend on the roads. After the privatization that professional authority will end. Already I am questioning the value of my community contribution when my years of service to the department can be so easily devalued.

From a different perspective, the television program 'Underbelly' has been screening recently. Along with the range of mental problems prison staff have to manage are the real life equivalents to dramatized characters chillingly portrayed to the public. Many years ago I had the late Dr Nick Paltos point to me and suggest I looked like the policeman that arrested him. Over the years I have worked with some of the highest

profile offenders in the state of NSW if not Australia. My point is that the public should know that working with inmates has dimensions not easily described in a short submission like this. If I were to stay on with the successful tender I would most likely ultimately be paid less for my expertise. I would not accept that.