

Submission
No 196

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

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I want to protest against prisons being run for profit.

There are services to the public which should not be run by government and services which should always be.

Where competition brings about improved service and greater efficiency the government should not be directly involved.

But the government must be where public safety, justice and criminal-correction are concerned. These fundamentals of a democratic society must remain robust; they need to be open to public scrutiny and the decision makers must be accountable to the people.

Prisons do not provide a better service or greater efficiency when run primarily for profit instead of primarily for the good of the people.

The services of a prison include keeping the public safe from crime; providing a safe, humane living environment for inmates; providing a safe working environment for prison staff; providing educational and other services to rehabilitate criminals; and, thereby, reducing the crime rate.

These services are best delivered by the government of the people coordinating, overseeing and funding the relevant agencies: police, juvenile justice, DOCS, the courts, and of course correctional centres.

The profit motive is more likely to erode these essential services because (1) the services are expensive, (2) the services do not benefit the company, and (3) the company is its own profit making entity, rather than part of a service delivery network of stakeholders.

Prisons should remain under government control because (1) it is in the long term benefit of the government and the people to spend the necessary money on these expensive services: it's cheaper than the cost of the crimes they prevent; and (2) it is more efficient to deliver these services through cooperation and coordination with other relevant bodies.

But there's an even more fundamental reason why prisons should not be run for profit. Prisons do not merely house prisoners. The core function of their various services is to prevent crime.

Businesses work for growth.

The profit motive works contrary to society's wish for fewer prisons. But the government shares this wish.

It is a morally poor society that encourages profit from crime.

It is an inept government that abrogates a key element of its crime prevention responsibility, saving money in the short term only to foster the expense of increased crime in the longer term.