

Submission  
No 122

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

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**The Director**

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3  
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INQUIRY INTO THE PRIVATISATION OF NSW CORRECTIVE SERVICES

I have been with the Department for just over Fifteen (15) years. In this time I have worked in a number of different locations, being Maximum Security to Periodic Detention. I have also worked in the courts and prisoner escort unit.

The privatisation of the Court Escort Security Unit (CESU) is where I will try to explain its role and to highlight the need to keep these units within the public sector. My wish is to publish an unbiased view gathered from my own experience.

The Court Escort Security Unit is made up of two (2) parts. The Courts and Transport. In some locations, those that are in the country and not attached to a Correctional Centre, are operated as one of the same, that is they must do both courts and escorts.

Transport is a very expensive operation. It does not mean that a private company could do it any cheaper unless there were trade offs in the way it was run. Inmates travelling to court have various needs and these needs must be taken into account for safety or health reasons.

1. There is an inmate who due to health reasons must travel to court who requires a van\car escort. This takes a rostered crew out of the daily running and that crew must be replaced so that the CESU can take all inmates to court. Notwithstanding the van will also take other inmates in their vehicle so long as all inmates that go in the same compartment are of the same classification.
2. If an escort is done in a car, the regulations state depending on their classification, they must have a minimum of two (2) officers, and a maximum of three (3). This is for safety and security.

Rostering for transport is at times very difficult as the Metropolitan CESU also does

interstate escorts and at times overseas repatriation of prisoners back to NSW.

It should be noted that officers are entitled to flying allowance and overtime on these escorts. This could mean working beyond eight hours and as I have seen up to twenty (20) hours. This means overtime has been worked. No correctional officer has asked for flying allowance or to be paid for the overtime. These are legal entitlements which we have not sought.

One of the biggest problems facing any business is cost overruns. In the departments case it is overtime. The transport units role is to service the courts and correctional centres.

These transport units are unique, they must move a large number of inmates to and from court on time or has happened on a number of occasions face the court to explain why the defendant is late.

The metropolitan CESU covers an area from Sydney to Newcastle, Wollongong and as far west as Katoomba for courts. On some of these vehicles there may be only one (1) inmate. Logistically it is a nightmare, but through the hard work and the need to ensure the inmates have their day in court, officers at times are required to do overtime.

When the police have a prisoner in their custody in a hospital, and they have been bail refused in a bed side hearing, the CESU will take over that escort until a Correctional Centre can take over. I believe the CESU will do the first thirty-six (36) hours. This is achieved by officers doing overtime as the taking off the road to facilitate the escort would have ramifications further down the line. On every escort there are two (2) officers per shift for three (3) shifts each day. This adds up to quite a large cost. When there are a large number of escorts like this then yes overtime is high.

To send in private security to do this role, because it is not budgeted for would cost the Department a lot more, due to the fact they could charge what they like, and the guards knowledge in security procedures would not be at a level of a correctional officers.

Currently all inmates who go on a transport vehicle must be searched by the vehicle crew. My understanding is if private security were to do the role of CESU then the Gaol officers would search all inmates for escort and the private guards would turn up and have their vehicles loaded by the Gaol staff, thereby lessening their running costs but placing the offset against the Correctional Centre. If a correctional officer were to load the vehicle who is responsible until the inmates are unloaded?

The CESU have a duty of care to all inmates they carry. If there is an altercation on the vehicle, then it is the crews responsibility for the inmates safety, will this be the same for any private organisation if we were to be replaced?

Fluctuating numbers within the court system means everything runs on a day to day basis and forecasting running costs can be hard to measure, so how can the private industry do it any cheaper.

The twenty-four (24) hour holding cells around the state are constantly full, and inmates must be looked after. Their needs can vary from requiring protection, self harm awareness strategies (these inmates need an officer solely to stop them self harming or committing suicide) and this adds to the overtime. It is not that the department wants to keep these inmates in these locations, but the lack of beds means the court cell complexes are used as mini prisons.

The media, be that radio or newspapers have published much in the way that officers have been able to "rot" overtime. I have heard of instances where this may have happened and the officers are still within the department. My belief is if this was so bad then this should have been handed to the Police and the matter dealt with in a court of law. Since they have not, one can only come to the conclusion that the facts were not as described in the newspapers.

The most greatest problem facing the NSW Corrective Services we are led to believe is that of overtime caused by "sickies". The question needs to be asked. Why are these both so high?

When one reads about the exhorbirant number of sick days taken, do these figures also take into account;

1. Workers Compensation (We are abused mentally and physically)
2. Sick as carers ( The need to look after our famillies)
3. Epidemics can be rife within our system due to the close daily contact with people who turn up to work with an illnes, or a new prisoner who is ill.

Have we just been shown the total number of sickies to digest and think, these officers who go sick are lazy.

We must not forget that officers come into contact with inmates who are HIV positive Various types of hepatitis, Tuberculosus, and a whole host of other illnesses. The problem is not so bad when it is diversified throughout the community, but when it is collected into a small environment it does cause problems.

The medical history is also kept private from officers if an inmate assaults them, the officer AND his family must wait many months before they know thereults and if they are clear of any deadly diseases like AIDS or hepatitis.

In summary I wonder about the workings of a private gaol. Do they charge on a per bed basis? If the bed is empty they still charge for it? Their costs for all escorts, be that fot court or medical, are they met by the public purse? Would this not show that their costs will always be lower?

I thank the Committee for allowing me to have some input.