

**Submission
No 7**

**INQUIRY INTO THE CLOSURE OR DOWNSIZING OF
CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW FACILITIES**

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Date received: 27/10/2012

Inquiry into the Closure or Downsizing of Corrective Services NSW Facilities Community Impact Survey



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31 OCT 2012
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Name:

Email:

Postcode:

Phone:

What is your connection to the Grafton Gaol? (eg, employee, town resident)

I was employed at the Grafton Gaol for the last 15 years as the Senior Overseer of Building Maintenance, supervising and training Inmates in Carpentry, Welding, Steel Fabrication, Plumbing, Cleaning, Gardening and Lawn maintenance skills. These skills were then used as a cost effective way of maintaining the Gaol.

Why is Grafton Gaol important to the community of Grafton?

The Gaol has been a very important part of the Grafton community since being built in 1893. In the sixties and the seventies, the large market garden that was run by Inmates of the Grafton Gaol supplied a large majority of the fresh vegetables to the Grafton Community.

The Minimum section of the Gaol was completed in 1988, with the Industry section evolving in order to train Inmates in real life work skills. These skills together with Literacy and Numeracy education were key elements in their rehabilitation program to prevent re-offending.

The Grafton community and the Northern region of N.S.W. has also benefited in times of extreme natural disasters, by Industry Overseers taking Inmates out into the community to help with flood and storm relief work. They have also performed a variety of ground maintenance work throughout the community, as part of the Mobile Outreach Program.

The historical aspect of the Gaol is also highly valued by the local community and tourists visiting the Clarence Valley.

The Gaol staff had settled in the valley, raising their families, supporting schools, supporting local businesses and community charities as an integral part of this regional society. The damage done to the Clarence Valley by this city centric thinking government is a catastrophe, and the community will take many years to recover, if it ever does.

How will the closure or downsizing of Grafton Gaol affect employment opportunities in your community?

The downsizing of the Grafton Gaol would have a huge affect on employment opportunities in the local community, as small businesses that would be directly affected will now also lay off staff, or not employ new staff due to future loss of business.

Grafton already has higher than average unemployment statistics compared to the N.S.W. State average, and this will now be exacerbated , as these retrenched workers attempt to join the queue to find stable employment within the Clarence Valley. Also, a large section of these Gaol workers had specialist training and skills, that may handicap them in obtaining any of the available limited local jobs.

The State Government reversed a decision to privatise Cessnock Correctional Centre due to pressure from the local community, even though there were good job prospects in the Coal Mining industry and it is relatively close to the City of Newcastle. They then expanded the Cessnock facility at a huge cost to taxpayers, and now are closing regional centres like Grafton to balance the books. Unfortunately it seems more evident than ever, that N.S.W. only stands for Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong.

How will the closure or downsizing of Grafton Gaol affect local business and the local economy of Grafton?

The closure or downsizing of the Grafton Gaol will directly affect over 50 local businesses and contractors who directly supplied goods and services to the Gaol. Indirectly it also affected many more businesses outside the Clarence Valley, but still located in the Northern Rivers Regional area.

Also, all businesses in Grafton will suffer a loss of business, due to the retrenched or relocated worker's families and the families of inmates having to leave the area and therefore not spending their money on local goods and services. This estimated loss of income to the Grafton local and regional community could conservatively be estimated at six to ten million dollars annually.

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