

Submission  
No 34

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

**Name:** Mr Guy Eagleton

**Date received:** 24/02/2009

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Dear Members

The following is in response to comments made by Ron Woodham to the Committee on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2009.

Overtime Surry Hills

I was the POVB delegate for over five years at Surry Hills.

The Dept has always refused to staff Surry Hills to its required establishment on the maximum number of inmates. It is only staffed on the minimum number of inmates. This continually causes officers to be called in on overtime as the state fluctuates day and night. The staffing formula for this area is the Depts. If the centre was correctly staffed and funded the instance of overtime would be greatly reduced, probably by more than ninety per cent.

One of the biggest challenges to Prison Officers at Surry Hills and 24 hour court locations is the management of inmates at risk of self harm or suicide. It is, and always has been, the position of the POVB that these inmates should be taken to Correctional Centres where they can be cared for properly. The Dept took the POVB to the Industrial Commission in 2002 to force the Prison Officers to keep the "at risk" inmates at Surry Hills and other 24 hour court cells. It was decided in the Commission that extra staff should be on hand to look after these inmates. Again the Dept. has chosen leave these inmates in unsafe conditions and deal with this problem by throwing overtime dollars at it. Again, this is their strategy not that of the POVB.

About two years ago the Dept. started to operate an Audio Visual Link Bail Court at Surry Hills on weekend and public holidays. This requires an extra three officers per operating day. After three months the Dept. was going to re-assess this procedure, this never happened. These posts are still filled everyday on overtime costing NSW taxpayers close to \$200,000 a year. Again, this is their strategy not that of the POVB.

Mr Woodham also alluded to officers at Surry Hills not allowing staff from outside to work there. This is simply not true. Staff from many other locations work at Surry Hills. I will though concede that there was a time that the branch only wanted trained staff in court cell reception procedures to work there on overtime. This had nothing to do with greed; it was simply for ease of operations at the centre. A lot of inmates upon reception at Surry Hills and other court locations display very challenging behaviour for myriad of reasons, and it is not best practice to have Officers who are unfamiliar with not only the practical side of operations but, the nature of the inmates being received there.

As for the "inflexible" union members I would remind the Committee that the only time the Dept has come to us as a group and asked for help in saving money and changed work practices was when the consent awards were put on the table. The union agreed unanimously to accept these awards. To the best of my knowledge they have not come back since with any other proposals.

Mr Woodham stated that he did not have a problem with unions, only people and those people happen to be those who are advocates of workers rights and safe systems of work.

I would be glad to answer any questions or enquiries the committee may have on any of the above.

Guy Eagleton  
24/02/2009