

**Submission  
No 31**

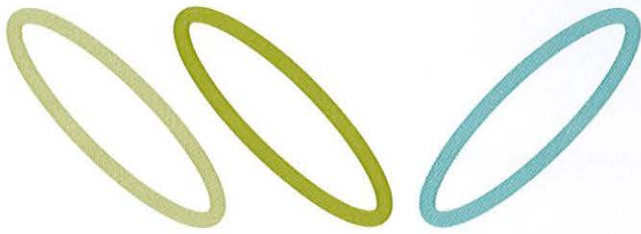
**INQUIRY INTO THE CLOSURE OR DOWNSIZING OF  
CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW FACILITIES**

**Organisation:** Clarence Valley Council

**Name:** Cr Richie Williamson

**Date received:** 7/11/2012

---



6 November 2012

Reference: CVC:  
Contact: Richie Williamson

The Director  
Select Committee on the Closure or Downsizing of  
Corrective Services NSW Facilities  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

**Clarence Valley Council Submission into the Closure or Downsizing of  
Corrective Services Facilities**

The terms of reference to the Committee highlight many of the questions Clarence Valley Council has also been asking. How could one of the largest, highest paying employers be taken away from our community without a full economic, social and financial analysis, a Rural Impact Statement and without consultation?

Obviously the community as a whole agrees, given the extent of community outrage, and the week long blockade of the jail which is well documented in the media.

The loss of over 100 jobs has a huge impact in a regional area of high socio-economic disadvantage (the Clarence Valley ranks on the Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage index near the bottom at 934 out of 2,000, compared to Sydney which has indexes well over 1,000) and an average wage income only two thirds of the state average. Input/output modelling conducted by Council shows for every 1 person employed directly by Corrective Services in Grafton, another job was created indirectly. Therefore the loss of 100 employees has a result of losing 200 jobs from the Clarence Valley economy.

The Valley also has a higher than average unemployment rate of 6.6% compared to the state average of around 5%, and a low participation rate of around 50% compared with the NSW average of over 62%. This further accentuates these effects.

The economic impact of over 100 jobs lost in Sydney may hardly be noticed, however in a rural community the effects are much more pronounced. In addition those losing jobs have very few options available and cannot just get the train or bus to the next suburb to find a job. In general they will have to move towns and this is obviously very dramatic for parents and their kids.

Prisoners have been moved a minimum 200 kilometres (2.5 hours car travel) to Kempsey or even worse, to Cessnock or Sydney (7 to 10 hours travel from Grafton by car). This is especially significant as many of the families come from the lowest socio-economic sector and have less ability to afford a move to areas with very high house and rent prices as occurs in mining towns like Cessnock and obviously Sydney. It also

means families from surrounding towns in a radius from Tweed to Moree to Armidale have lost their local corrective centre.

The impacts are even more pronounced on the indigenous population who not only suffer from poor finances but also have to leave country. The Clarence Valley and north coast have an indigenous population of around 5% of the population.

In summary, the downsizing of the Grafton Correctional Centre had no consultation, no account of socio-economic impacts to an already disadvantaged community, no sympathy to impacts on corrective centre staff who in general will be forced to leave Grafton for employment, and definitely no account of the important role this centre had for families of prisoners, who obviously have little or no financial ability to move with their loved ones.

If you require further information please contact me on telephone 02 6643 0245.

Yours faithfully

**Richie Williamson**  
**Mayor**