

Submission
No 97

INQUIRY INTO THE PRIVATISATION OF PRISONS AND PRISON-RELATED SERVICES

Organisation: Community Relations Commission
Name: Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian AM
Position: Chairperson
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Community Relations Commission

For a multicultural NSW

Your Ref:
Our Ref: GD x6801
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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3
NSW Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Head Office
Level 8
175-183 Castlereagh Street
Sydney NSW 2000
PO Box A2618
Sydney South NSW 1235
Tel: (02) 8255 6767
TTY: (02) 8255 6758
Fax: (02) 8255 6868

Wollongong Office
84 Crown Street
Wollongong NSW 2500
PO Box 363
Wollongong NSW 2520
Tel: (02) 4224 9922
Fax: (02) 4224 9933

Newcastle Office
Government Office Block
117 Bull Street
Newcastle NSW 2300
Tel: (02) 4929 4191
Fax: (02) 4929 7369

Website
www.crc.nsw.gov.au
ABN 79 863 510 875

Dear Director

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to the Inquiry by the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 into the privatisation of prisons and prison-related services. The Community Relations Commission has restricted its comment to the impact of privatisation on rehabilitation programs, mental health support services and recidivism rates (Point 1. (f) in Terms of Reference).

The Commission understands that the meaning of privatisation, in this instance, is the outsourcing of the management of correctional facilities, with the ultimate responsibility remaining with the public sector.

The Commission notes that there is currently only one privately managed correctional facility in New South Wales, located in Junee. The Commission has no comment to make on the operation of this facility. However, it would suggest that any agreement made by the New South Wales Government with the private operators of prisons be consistent with the vision and mission of the Department of Corrective Services.

The Commission also notes that, during the 2006-07 financial year, 21.5% of the prison population was overseas-born, with a significant proportion being of non-English speaking background.

The Department of Community Services, through its corporate objectives and Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) has particular strategies in place for people, from culturally religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to have access to rehabilitation programs and support services, with the ultimate aim of reducing re-offending by prisoners. With this aim in mind, the Department:

- modifies and targets programs and services to offenders from particular culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- utilises language services when required as part of case management of prisoners;
- provides cross-cultural training to prison staff and managers to ensure they have the skills and professional knowledge to work with prisoners from culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families;
- employs chaplains / religious personnel from different cultures and religions to provide religious services and guidance to offenders within custody;
- has policies in place to address the dietary requirements of inmates from specific cultural and religious groups;
- addresses issues of inter-ethnic rivalry or conflict should it arise within the prison population;



- works with other government, non-government and community groups to ensure the provision of support options for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds when released from prisons, with the aim of reducing recidivism in New South Wales.

In order to ensure the continued access of prisoners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the Community Relations Commission request that the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 recommend that agreements between the NSW Government and private operators of prisons specify that operations be consistent with the vision and mission of the Department of Corrective Services.

Finally, the Commission recommends that contract arrangements with private correctional facilities match the same standards of performance and compliance, in terms of cultural diversity, as those employed by the State. This requirement should also apply where contracts are further sub-contracted out to other operators. The New South Wales Government would maintain responsibility for monitoring compliance under such contract arrangements.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Rosa Droescher, Director, Government Relations Division on 8255 6790.

Yours faithfully



Stepan Kerkyasharian AM
Chairperson

26 FEB 2009