

**Submission
No 3**

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

Name: Mrs Margaret and Mr Jeff Ashenden

Date received: 9/10/2012

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



Name: **JEFF AND MARGARET ASHENDEN.**

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

TOWN RESIDENTS.

Why is Grafton Gaol important to the community of Grafton?

Grafton Gaol has been an icon in Grafton for many years. It is a series of stately buildings sited on an entire block opposite the hospital. As such it has been a significant employer with close links to other government agencies and support services in town.

Grafton Gaol had the capacity to receive inmates from our locality and others who could be transported there for various reasons. It was important that their families and friends were able to support them during their custodial sentences. Inmates have now been withdrawn from their local communities and support services for no apparent reason in a very high handed way.

Grafton Gaol existed in harmony with the rest of the community. Internal matters were dealt with discreetly and some inmates were able to undertake supervised work outside the gaol precinct. The demise of this institution was sudden and unnecessary given the premium placed on the availability of prison places.

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

A large number of efficient, loyal and experienced prison workers (warders, medical and teaching staff, catering and cleaning staff) have suddenly been told that they no longer have work in Grafton. Some opted for redundancies, others were trapped because of housing and family concerns. This meant that even if positions were available in other gaols it was economically impossible to move. Because of the sudden and secretive nature of this closure, many workers were caught unawares and now rely on social services as they hope that the gaol will reopen. They have to compete for scarce jobs in Grafton with other unemployed. "New" government jobs also have restrictions placed upon them that make it hard for gaol workers to access. *We have the facilities, the networks and the trained personnel. It is very hard to see Grafton Gaol lying largely idle.

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

The closure / downsizing of Grafton Gaol is another huge blow for Grafton. We lost a Telstra Call Centre and an abattoir. This has taken a huge amount of spending power out of the community as many wages are not being spent in town. The impact is felt by many small businesses that had supply contracts with the gaol and retail shops in general. Local morale is severely dampened by the sight of Grafton Gaol and its surrounds adopting an abandoned and neglected demeanour where once it was a cornerstone of Grafton's identity. It is hard to believe that an institution as large and complex in its service offerings for the North Coast region could suddenly be no longer needed. Business confidence has been shattered.

Clarence Valley Community Unions Contact: Sharryn Usher 0417 497 701

or email to clarencevalleycommunityu@gmail.com subject line: submission