

Submission
No 23

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date received: 18/02/2009

Partially Confidential

I have been a Prison Officer for 8 years and currently posted at Parklea and the Privatisation of this and other centres within the Department of Corrective Services personally affect myself, my family and my peers.

Today the 18th February I and every employee at Parklea received this email from our Commissioner Mr Woodham.

LETTER TO PARKLEA STAFF

Dear Staff Member

I am writing to every individual staff member of Parklea Correctional Centre. I can understand the uncertainty that staff at Parklea may be experiencing. I can assure you Parklea will be contracted out, despite claims circulating in some workplaces to the contrary.

The Government has approved the entire Way Forward Workplace Reform Package which includes the contracting out of Cessnock and Parklea Correctional Centres. I quote from a recent interview on ABC Radio between our new Minister, the Honourable John Robertson MLC and announcer Richard Glover -John Robertson: ... "I'm simply going to tell you that in Corrective Services there are a whole series of reforms that needed to be implemented, one of which is private sector involvement at two out of 30 gaols in NSW." ... "This isn't about some union strategy or just breaking the union strategy, it's about implementing reforms that need to be implemented in these two prisons." ... "and one of the first questions I asked the Commissioner was about jobs, because the Government is committed to protecting jobs and the Commissioner has assured me that any prison officer who wants to retain a job in Corrective Services will have the opportunity of doing so – or, alternately, if they want to transfer across they will be given that option as well." The tendering process is on track and I expect that Parklea will come under contract in July/August 2009. If you elect to remain with the Department the guarantee that no staff member need lose their job still stands.

I repeat, your options are:

- move to another location within the Department.
- apply for a position with the successful contractor - with salary maintenance for twelve months. Note: If you elect this option, you will be required to resign from the Department and you will be paid out any recreation and long service leave entitlements.
- apply for a Voluntary Redundancy.

I can assure you I will approve any reasonable request for officers' entitlements under the Transferred Officers' Award. I can also assure some staff, especially those staff with children at school, that they can start moving earlier rather than later.

Please take advantage of the buses being provided by the Department to visit preferred locations. You can email me personally if you think you have a special case for consideration. You will receive a prompt response. Changes are continuing with a plan to shortly open the Outer Metropolitan Multi-Purpose Correctional Centre at Windsor. This Centre will initially hold 250 minimum security inmates, however the profile will change as demand requires.

I will continue to keep you informed personally on a regular basis.

Yours sincerely
RON WOODHAM
Commissioner
17 February 2009

My questions to you are;

How can what has been stated in this letter be true?

Is this inquiry into the prisons privatisation a pointless exercise?
Are we being fed lies to demoralise us?
Is the privatisation of Parklea and Cessnock a done deal?
Will there be anything done about the miss management of the Department of Corrective Services?

I and many of my peers believe that correspondence such as this letter is the Department of Corrective Services bullying and harassing its staff. It's putting us under a great deal of stress because of these uncertain times.

While Mr Woodham states in his letter that he will personally keep us informed any questions that are asked of him or the Department of Corrective Services the standard answer is "don't know".

The dept has stated that these reforms are because of us Prison Officers rotting overtime. Who approves overtime? We can't give it to ourselves. We are understaffed the way the system is managed it can't run without overtime and this is because of upper managements lack of for sight with recruitment, their incompetence and the fact that Mr Woodham has stated many times that its cheaper to run the dept with overtime rather than employ a realistic amount of fulltime staff.

Some things this enquiry needs to look at are the amount of upper management and bureaucratic positions that have been created over the past several years and the total miss management of the Department of Corrective Services.

The private sector doesn't have the transparency or the scrutiny as the public sector has. Therefore how can the private sector be totally compared with the public sector?

The Prisons purpose is to safely and humanely house and rehabilitate offenders. A prison is NOT FOR PROFIT.

Prison Officers, We Face What You Fear.

First Class Correctional Officer
Parklea Correctional Complex
18/02/2009