

**INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO THE OPERATIONS  
AND MANAGEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
CORRECTIVE SERVICES**

**Organisation:** Community Relations Commission  
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**Date Received:** 6/02/2006

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**Subject:**

**Summary**

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Hon Amanda Fazio MLC  
Committee Chair  
Parliament House,  
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SYDNEY NSW 2000

Legislative Council  
GENERAL PURPOSE  
STANDING COMMITTEES  
6 FEB 2006  
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Dear Ms Fazio

**Inquiry into Issues Relating to the Operations and Management of the Department of Corrective Services.**

Thank you for providing the Community Relations Commission For multicultural NSW with the opportunity to provide input for the Inquiry into Operations and Management of the Department of Corrective Services and related agencies.

The Commission would like to make the following comments that should be considered under the Inquiry's terms of references.

Staffing Levels and Over-Crowding

- In the past decade New South Wales has had a major increase in prison populations. This increase has seen an over-representation of persons: 1. from Non-English Speaking Background (16.9%)<sup>1</sup> and 2. born in another country other than Australia (22.5%)<sup>2</sup>. Due to this reason, persons from culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds have a major impact on the operations and management of the Department of Corrective Services.
- This impact should be taken into consideration when planning and implementing Department of Corrective Services policy. This includes the migrant women in corrective services facilities. It has been noted that, the Department has commenced ongoing process to revise training within the organisation, including cultural diversity training. It is recommended that the Department continues with this commitment and allows all levels of staff to participate in cultural diversity training.
- Increasing numbers of people with mental illness are being over-represented in prison. Following the de-institutionalisation of mental health and the lack of alternative services, prisons are increasingly being used by courts. Prisons are

<sup>1</sup> NSW inmate Census 2004 Statistical Publication.

<sup>2</sup> NSW inmate Census 2004 Statistical Publication.



# Community Relations Commission

For a multicultural NSW

not appropriate places for mental illness persons and do not provide effective rehabilitation services.

- Overall 1/3 of prisoners offer no threat to society. Issues of the mental health population group urgently need addressing through early intervention, designated mental health services, community correction service and other strategies to reduce length of stay in prison.<sup>3</sup> Victoria has made considerable inroads in providing a range of services and reducing population and recidivism.<sup>4</sup> Other options like community based sentencing may be more effective for persons that are on short sentences for certain categories.
- The increasing number of inmates from culturally diverse backgrounds has lead to an ethnic 'clustering of prisoners'. This 'clustering' of prisoners for staffing management has lead to unequal access of English and Education. As Goodstone states that "the lack of adequate access to programs and poor physical conditions in which inmates groups are forced to spend their days, is a recipe for tension and the festering of internecine STG rivalry (2001: 67)<sup>5</sup>". The Department of Corrective Services needs to provide equal access to education and English language classes for inmate from culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## Access and contact by non-correctional persons including their security screenings.

- It is highly important that the Department of Corrective Services provides services and information for non-correctional persons of Non-English Speaking Background. The Department of Corrective Services has a responsibility to inform visitors of the rules and regulations for entering corrective services centres. This information needs to be accessible to persons of culturally diverse backgrounds.
- It is essential that the Department of Corrective Services provides support to religious organisations. This includes providing information about the regulations and the responsibilities of entering into corrective service facilities and connecting religious organisations with individual inmates.
- It is important that security screenings are sensitive to the searching of Muslim women head dresses (hijab) and Sheikh men wearing turbans. As there are no formal rule and regulations regarding the search of head dresses, the Department needs to explore this issue further.

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<sup>3</sup> Criminal Justice forum-reducing reliance on incarceration, hosted by the Department of Corrective Services (9-10 May 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Criminal Justice forum-reducing reliance on incarceration, hosted by the Department of Corrective Services (9-10 May 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Gangs in New South Wales Correctional System: Clarifying the Assertion.

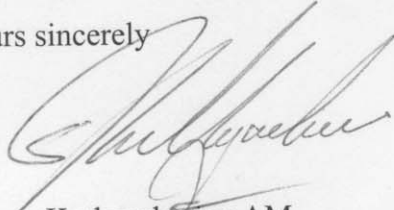


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I trust that these comments have been useful to enhance the Legislative Councils inquiry and I look forwards outcome of the inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Stepan Kerkyasharian AM  
Chairperson

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