

Submission  
No 12

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

Name: Name suppressed  
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*Partially Confidential*

This submission is in regard to the proposed privatisation of Cessnock Correctional Centre in NSW.

This proposal by the current State Labor Government has impacted negatively in professional and personal ways, which should be conveyed to relevant bodies. My husband is a correctional officer who has been with the department for approximately        years. He has been a proud and diligent member of the service who has a good work record and is held in high regard by his seniors and peers alike. It was a wonderful day when he was given a transfer from        to Cessnock part way through        . Not only did this mean a move closer to home where we live and raise our daughters, but he was pleased at the prospect of working in a gaol which offered a variety of working situations and challenges he hadn't experienced at        . The news as of consequence was devastating as the possibility that employment at Cessnock was in doubt. We as a family have had months of uncertainty and this continues to be the case.

We do not know what our future holds. We rely on staying where we are to continue to maintain both our jobs as I also work in the public sector in education. My mother lives with us and is in poor health. Our daughters are in high school in the public system enjoying the opportunities it has to offer. We live in a community, which is semi rural, and enjoy the priveleges all this has to offer. We are active in our local community and have made many friends and lifelong associates, which we cherish. What right does Mr Woodham have in deciding our future?

This of course does not extend to our family alone. Many men and women and their different families are facing an uncertain future. For some, the underhanded tactics exhibited by Ron Woodham in a recent email advising workers that they had a limited amount of time to submit expressions of interest to be relocated to another gaol, was designed to unsettle the employees. In fact, when the union was alerted to this email, it was rescinded less than an hour later. Unfortunately, some people were placed at other gaols in the state due to this. As of consequence, this has contributed to more uncertainty within Cessnock and has created a sense of division in some ways. If this was the aim of this email, then Mr Woodham succeeded! This is only one example of the subversive antics of this current government to exert an agenda, which has not been made transparent throughout this whole saga.

Politically, this move to privatise a public service and resource is at odds with what essentially is a philosophical and fundamental belief of Labor principles. It is an outrage! Residents and constituents of a state which has witnessed an attempt to privatise the electricity commission are now subjected to this abhorrent move to privatise a system which will suffer at the hands of individuals who seek to make economic profits from the misery and displacement of individuals who have for whatever reason have found themselves incarcerated. Research shows the numerous problems associated with integrating such companies as Wackenhut and Serco continue to transcend the safety and welfare of the inmates, those who guard them and those in the greater community. This is an immoral state of affairs when a company can dictate a risk assessment where they will be exempt from the scrutiny and chagrin of a community (and government!) should statistically deaths in custody, escapes and the like are not the responsibility of these organisations! The scrutiny that the NSW Correctiove Services is under is for the protection of those in custody. We, one would hope and pray, have come a long way since the days of Xavier Herbert's 'For the Term of His Natural Life'. Well, most certainly since the days when Ron Woodham was an officer in the days before coronial enquiries became accepted as a means of dealing with corrupt and illegal behaviors by officers in gaols.

Finally, the need for transparency and honesty with the officers at Cessnock Correctional Centre is needed - now. Give the officers the opportunity to know what the real agenda is. Let them have a say in their futures and the future of their place of employment.