

Submission
No 21

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 17/02/2009

Partially Confidential

Ms Rachel Simpson
Director GPSC 3
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Rachel,

Please find following a list of my concerns as a wife of a Cessnock Correctional Centre Employee and a concerned citizen.

Cessnock Correctional Centre is surrounded on all 4 sides by residential estates, rural land, vineyards and a nursing home. If escapes are to increase (and history has shown in privately run prisons that it does) this would have a wide reaching and detrimental effect on the Cessnock and Surrounding areas including effects on one of NSW largest tourism areas, Pokolbin.

Cessnock currently has a high unemployment rate and the privatisation of the gaol will only add to this, the expansion of Cessnock Correctional Centre should be creating more jobs. Instead the department has decided it would rather privatise and inconvenience hundreds of families that have established themselves in the area. My husband waited 9 years to receive a transfer to Cessnock from Sydney and commuted to Sydney from the Central Coast for 6 years. The only gaols that officers can be transferred to with any possible hope of residing at their current address are Muswellbrook or Kariong, both of which are at least an hours commute (Muswellbrook driving on a treacherous road, with coal trucks etc, especially dangerous after doing night shift when they are tired). Both of these Gaols together will probably only accept up to 20 staff, so what happens to the rest of them? Ron Woodham has stated in newspapers that no one will lose their job, but they have not been told what gaols will be taking staff, and he has stated that staff will not be declared excess employees and therefore are not entitled to redeployment to other Government agencies or retraining opportunities. So what is going to happen to all of the staff from Parklea and Cessnock? How can this be cost effective for the Corrective Services or the NSW Government. Nowra Correctional Centre is due for completion in 2010 and has been offered as a gaol for displaced staff to relocate to, why not privatise it and leave Parklea and Cessnock alone if privatisation is the only answer this Government can find to reign in managements budget woes. No families will need to suffer and private companies can source their staff locally. The reason for this not happening is the Government looking for a quick way to attempt to balance the budget before the next election.

I do not see how the corrective services can in all honesty make this cheaper to run when the initial costs of redundancies and transferred officers packages (which could cost up to \$50,000 in each case) and the ongoing cost that they will pay to the private contractors are taken into account. Perhaps if they are all about saving money they should look at relocating

their head office, there is no reason why they need to be located in Sydney when they have gaols across NSW and the government is all about decentralisation, this government moved the Infringement Processing Bureau to Maitland from Parramatta to save money.

Currently the Union has a say in staffing levels for the safety of Prison Officers. Privatisation will not allow for this to happen and therefore Private staff lives will be placed at greater risk. They work in a highly volatile and dangerous occupation, however the Union ensures that they are not put at greater risk by maintaining accurate staffing levels so that officers rarely work alone. Overtime is done on a rotational basis, there have been occasions where my Husband has been called in for overtime and declined, and only to be called again as they have gone through the overtime list and cannot fill the positions and are desperate for staff. He is then required to give up his day off with his family to help out the Corrective Services.

Are the NSW Government prepared for the cost of workers compensation claims that will arise from the stress that this is putting on Prison Officers of Parklea and Cessnock Gaols. Are they prepared to compensate families when officers commit suicide because they can't handle the stress that this has put on themselves and most importantly their families? A lot of Officers at Cessnock came from Maitland when it was closed in 1998, now 10 years later they are being put through it again, how much stress can officers and their families endure. (Suicides will happen). This time around they can't relocate to a gaol that is only half an hour away as the government want to privatise Cessnock Gaol, one of Cessnocks largest employers.

Criminals have cash and assets seized, as it is illegal to profit from crime. However it is okay for the Government to privatise gaols in an effort to raise revenue and in effect profit from crime. What precedent does this set for criminals in the future?

Thank you for your time, I hope that the NSW Government can see sense and realise that this is only a short term solution and a very costly one at that. Maybe they should be looking at the amount of executive staff employed by the Corrective Service and leave the frontline staff to do their jobs.