

Submission  
No 149

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

**Name:** Name suppressed  
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*Partially Confidential*

Dear Members

I am forwarding this submission in regards to the privatisation of NSW Prison related services.

It has been portrayed in the media by the Commissioner Ron Woodham on numerous occasions that this privatisation is occurring due to the overtime bill of \$40+ million that the NSW Corrective Services operates with. I believe that Mr Woodham has misled everyone regarding this overtime and the reasons which it has been used. Mr Woodham has used this overtime as a tool to scare the people of NSW into thinking that Prison Officers are fraudulently claiming this money, when it is in fact money earned by staff for completing shifts at their workplace in which management has had to approve, and if some staff have been claiming overtime wrongly than Management should have taken action against them. I think that Mr Woodham has discredited himself and all Prison Officers by spreading these vicious statements and attempting to discredit all staff in the eyes of the public. Your committee members should not believe for a second that all staff have rorted this overtime. Yes staff have worked this overtime, and Yes some staff have worked lots of it and as there can always be a bad egg in any fridge, all staff don't have to be tainted because of this. But I know that the staff that have worked overtime in this location have done so to ensure that the job gets done and to fulfil the duties required of us, which is to provide a service to the people of NSW, the police, the courts and who ever else requests that we deliver or detain inmates for them. And because of this have spent far less time with their families than they could have to assist this department in the running of services. It has been my experience here that a very large proportion of overtime is spent due to the travel time between locations, sometimes up to 2.5 hrs each way to a court location and then you have to sit there and service the court, which could be for up to 8 hours, which makes it a very big day and a very high cost. A lot of this overtime is also forced onto the staff as they are not relieved at these locations and are stuck out there until the courts are finished with their custodies. I know in this location we are far under strength to what we should be but with numerous requests over the last 5 years for a staffing profile review nothing has been done. And it seems to me that management of this department didn't want to know what staffing was required for many locations. Upon constant request to have vacancies filled or staffing profiles reviewed and conducted we were always told that it was cheaper to do the job on overtime than it was to recruit and replace the staff that either left or were required due to staff vacancies. It is with this view that I believe that Management have caused a great lot of this overtime blow-out due to their head in the sand attitude with replacing required staff within locations. By doing the work on overtime there is no need to have leave entitlements credited, (annual, sick and long service) no superannuation paid and many other benefits that have to be paid to a full time position. The Departmental view has always been to do it on overtime it's cheaper in the long run. Until of course the Commissioner wants to use it as a tool to expand privatisation within the state.

I was always of the belief that we provided a service to the state of NSW. And yes it does cost money to provide this service, but it is a professional service and the staff are very good at it. We don't provide this service after we have looked after our share holders with their dividends (like the private contractors or companies will do), the provision of service is given to our shareholders, the residents of NSW, and that

service always comes first. Safety of the residents of NSW and other states should not put at risk so that other parties can profit from the services that should be supplied by the Government using government employees. You have to remember that the Government is still going to have to pay the private contracted company, and if the boom gate security advertisements are anything to go by it'll cost about the same amount. A base wages for a Senior Correctional Officer is \$60,000 and for a first class officer is around \$57,000 and when you add on some penalties and if you get some over time it can increase. But when you see that the private security company advertise for positions from \$65,000 to \$75,000, you have to think how they get such a large wage if saving money is what the government is after. Don't think for a second that a private contractor won't cut corners to make a dollar; because that is the business they are in making profit from providing the service. And if to make a profit you have to cut something what is the NSW Government prepared to cut or risk in order for this company to profit. Is it security or staff numbers or is it staff training? Or in regards to Court escort duties is it vehicle maintenance that will suffer. What will be cut to enable the private contractor to save money and increase profit? I will use Junee Correctional Centre for an example. This centre is the only privately run centre in NSW and this centre has been dangled like a carrot to attempt to use it as a cheaper comparison than the public run centres, and this Correctional Centre does not supply a welfare service to inmates. This in itself is cost cutting, as a welfare service is very important to ensuring that inmates have their needs met and assistance with these matters are handled by a professional staff member who specialises in this field. Junee CC uses the chaplaincy to take care of this component. It has been my experience and I have 19 years of it in the prison system that a Welfare officer can assist the running of a centre greatly and by just having access to one welfare officer enables the inmates to know that they have someone to run to if their need requires, and assists with keeping the tension within a centre to a minimum. This is not possible at Junee CC as they have no professionally trained welfare service; this has saved them money and allowed them to obviously pass on profits to their shareholders by deleting a much needed service within a correctional environment. What else will a private company delete to save money? It is my experience dealing with the private correctional centre and their parent company that anything that can be cut and not used is a bonus, whether it be security or OH&S concerns. I have seen on numerous occasions that staff on night shifts have called in sick and are not replaced. This decreases security as a post has to remain unfilled and increases the risk of escape or injury to staff and inmates should an incident occur. In the Correctional Centres that I have seen that are run by the Government, I have always founds there to be a major issue that has to be maintained, and that is security. This at times is lacking at the private facility at Junee, as it is only at this centre that I have seen the main keys to the gate kept inside the gaol and the gatehouse remained unmanned all night. And if you attend the centre after say 7pm it can be an extended wait before you actually find anyone to let you in. I was always of the belief that the weakest point in any gaol is the gatehouse. And when it's not manned it would have to be an even weaker point. This is another cut that a private company will make to ensure that they make a profit to pass onto their shareholders. It has always been a very big NO NO to even walk into the centre with the gate keys as this greatly increases the risk of these keys being taken by an inmate and giving them access to an exit point and to freedom. How many cuts and risks are the people of NSW prepared to take?

Over the past number of years staff at this location have put forward many different ideas to assist and streamline our operation to make them more cost effective. One of these ideas was operating under 12 hour shifts. This idea was worked out by a few staff and a roster was made to show that it would work and could be implemented. When this idea was put to management, the response was that "it would work, but if I do it here I'd have to do it everywhere, and it's too much trouble", so it was ignored by management. This is the hurdle we have been put behind, when we do come up with ideas we are laughed at or ridiculed and ignored. But once privatisation is raised we are accused of excessive overtime and not being conducive to better work practices. Has the management of this Department seriously attempted to offer fair across the board changes to our operations, or have they just started to massacre the front line troops to achieve their goals. Have they offered to cut their own salaries in an attempt to cut costs? How can the management be taken seriously about cost cutting and fiscal management when managers attend locations to inform staff about the need to cut overtime, and then in the same sentence brag about staying at the 5 start motel for the previous night up the road and the amount it cost for this manager to book dinner and drinks to the tab.

From A Court Escort Security Unit view of things if the private contractor decides that they are not going to supply the same service that is currently supplied by the NSW Corrective Services, this will mean there will have to be police taken off the streets so that they can undertake the duties of the court and escort officer. From my experience I can see no other option than to not supply the complete service so that money can be saved and a profit made to pass on to the shareholders. It would be an unacceptable option for the tax payers of NSW, to remove police from their regular duties to cover the shortfalls of a contracted court escort supplier just so that private contractor can make a profit. Yet again this will mean that the tax payers of NSW are again paying twice for 1 service, as happens currently.

From my experiences with the private contracted company at Junee CC, I have seen that costs have been reduced by them in their daily operations. After all they have a lot of things supplied to them by the department. We supply all their transport ( except for local escorts to hospital and funerals etc) and their Probation and Paroles services, when their inmates are sent out to court we still supply all their meals, yet Junee CC are paid to supply these meals as part of their per inmate pricings. This enables them to save even more money to pass on to their shareholders. Why should this department have to pay for some things twice just so the private contractor can make a profit? How many millions of dollars need to be passed to the shareholders before the NSW government sits up and realises that it costs a similar amount when all services and costs are included.

Mr Woodham made comments this week about escapes from Parklea CC, and the reasons why this had occurred. He mentioned that staff were watching cricket on the television, if this is so where is the investigation reports into it, and how many staff were sacked because of this. He also stated that it was these instances if they occurred in the private run facility, that would mean that the contract would be cancelled and returned to Government hands. Well this did happen at Junee CC. Whilst on a hospital escort from Junee CC the private company staff became hungry, so the inmate was left at the hospital whilst the staff went to McDonalds for a feed, and YES the inmate

escaped. I didn't see the commissioner bringing that incident up to discredit the company who has Junee CC which is GEO.

The risks of making all these services privately run centres and locations poses too much of a risk to the public of NSW. How much cutting of services are the decision makers of this state prepared to accept to make it look like things run cheaper? There are always better options to look at before privatisation, some of these may be to have a look how many displaced executive staff are floating around the department filling jobs that have been invented to give them a position. How many Deputy Governors and Governors are there that don't have Correctional Centres to Govern, how many extra executive staff are floating around doing jobs that are able to be done by others at a lower pay structure. Possibly the top heavy structure of the department needs to be evened out a bit before they start chopping at the feet that make the pedals turn each day. Possibly the public needs to know just how much money the NSW Government and the Department of Corrective Services give the private company at Junee CC and how many millions of dollars are passed through the back door so as to make the running costs look cheaper.

In the end the state still has to pay for the incarceration of inmates. Smoke and mirrors can't hide the fact that the government isn't in the most positive financial position at this time, but privatisation is not the answer to all your questions. Make the Senior Executive Staff accountable for their inactions of the past and remove them from the system and replace them with Managers who can do the job fiscally and fairly, allow the front line staff to do their jobs without the threats, bullying tactics and intimidation of privatisation. The public servants who wake up every morning to wear the uniform of this department, who are abused, spat on, assaulted, threatened and at times murdered by the lowlife criminals of society would love the support of the NSW parliament in reforming the prison system, not only financially but to bring the system out of the archaic dinosaur era and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It has been shown that this department relies on overtime to operate. I say this as when certain locations put in place overtime and acting up bans, the Department took it straight to the industrial relations court to have the decision ruled upon. On one hand they are saying that the Correctional Officers are getting too much overtime and the next minute they are saying you have to do the overtime because we want you to do it as we need the staff to do the job. This shows that at times there are not enough staff to do what is required to supply the services for which we are trained, shouldn't it be the responsibility of the government to supply the staff to protect the people of NSW.

Just remember that Junee Correctional Centre is the most complained about Centre in the state to the Ombudsman. Something must be read from this, just because it seems to be a cheaper option, doesn't mean it's the better option.

This is my opinion of which I am allowed to express, in this inquiry and should not be taken and used against me by the management of this department at a later date.