

**INQUIRY INTO INQUIRY INTO THE CLOSURE OR  
DOWNSIZING OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW  
FACILITIES**

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date received:** 16/10/2012

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Partially Confidential

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16 OCT 2012

LEGISLATIVE  
COUNCIL



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11 OCT 2012

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE  
CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW

Inquiry into the Closure or Downsizing of Corrective Services  
NSW Facilities  
Community Impact Survey



**What is your connection to the Grafton Gaol? (eg, employee, town resident)**

**Town Resident relying on local businesses to stay in business. People and family members do not want to travel and should not be forced to travel to other nearby large towns if more businesses close (we live on the worst section of the Pacific Highway still not upgraded and unlikely to be, following the release of Infrastructure NSW's report). I am the mother of a daughter who has a family business in the hospitality industry in the Clarence Valley. I am also a grandmother concerned for the job opportunities available to her grandchildren (3) who live in the Clarence Valley. My grandson went to live in Sydney whilst undertaking an Apprenticeship, he was extremely homesick and his parents had to supplement his rent to enable him to stay in Sydney. After completing 3 years of his apprenticeship, the cost of living there, mean't that he could not afford to complete his final year as his parents were no longer able to**

supplement his rent and an Apprentice salary is extremely low. He left to come back to the Clarence Valley and wanted to complete his theory at TAFE but has been advised that he is unable to do so, unless he has employment. There are no opportunities in the Clarence Valley for employment in his field. As a resident I am concerned at the future economic prospects of the town and the successive State Governments who have pork barrelled other towns over the years including the current NSW government (Taree and Port Macquarie Electorates), to the detriment of the Clarence Valley.

Why is Grafton Gaol important to the community of Grafton?

The Grafton Gaol was one of the last larger employers remaining in the Clarence Valley.

The Clarence Valley have lost the Dairy Farmers Factory, Tooheys Brewery, the Abbottoirs (2011) the Match Factory the Agricultural Research Station and other large businesses over the years. The NSW government continues to reduce the number of public sector jobs in the town. The future for employment in the town is bleak and unemployment is one of the highest in NSW. The employees at the gaol who have children and who may have to leave the town to obtain employment or transfer to other gaols will have to withdraw their children from schools. This has an impact on class sizes and potential closures of local schools. The loss of income to the local economy impacts on the potential earning capacity and viability of small to medium size businesses in the valley. Many small business shops are already vacant and an increase in vacant shops in the only major shopping centre in town has occurred since the gaol was downsized. Any employees who lived out of town such as Coffs Harbour and worked at the gaol still spent money in the Clarence Valley, which also supported local business, now they will not be doing that. I fear for the mental health of our youth because of the lack of job opportunities, and what impacts this even further is that the Clarence Valley has no Mental Health Services. The nearest mental health facility is in Lismore which is a 270 km, 3 hour round trip away, via the treacherous Pacific Highway or the isolated Summerland Way. Furthermore, I have empathy for our indigenous population, who will be transferred from the Grafton Gaol away from their family support group. The loss of having family close by will only add to their despair of being incarcerated. Families of indigenous prisoners would not have the financial means to travel long distances for

visiting their loved ones.

How will the closure or downsizing of Grafton Gaol affect employment opportunities in your community?

The Clarence Valley has one the highest unemployment rates in NSW, the downsizing of not only the gaol but other public sector jobs by the NSW government will only add to the growing list of unemployment. Young people need job opportunities, not only for their self esteem but in order to remain near their families for support. Older gaol employees face employer bias against employing persons over the age of 45 years. The nearest major towns for employment are Coffs Harbour and Lismore. Coffs Harbour is a 2 hour round trip of 167 kms. Lismore is 3 hour round trip of 270 kms.

How will the closure or downsizing of Grafton Gaol affect local business and the local economy of Grafton?

The impact on my daughters business which operates seven days per week 12 hours per day has already seen a reduction in hours for employees, due to a slowdown in business. Any hospitality or service industry in the town will be severely impacted and the first businesses and jobs to go. If that is extrapolated throughout the valley it means that there will be even higher unemployment. If certain shops close due to economical loss, of course people will have to travel from Grafton to either Lismore or Coffs Harbour for certain shopping needs. The elderly will not travel on the Pacific Highway between those major towns because it is the worst stretch of the Highway unfinished with no sign of it being completed any time soon. The other major road is the Summerland Way to Lismore which is extremely isolated in the event of a breakdown and bear in mind a large number of elderly people shun technology, like mobile phones and there is limited reception on that road. Further loss of jobs in this community mean that our youth have no job opportunities and lowers the already socio economics of our town. Youth become increasingly bored and disaffected from the rest of the community which may increase crime rates. There is a high level of indigenous youth in the Clarence Valley and it was difficult enough for those youth to compete for jobs prior to the gaol downsizing it will now become even harder for them due to the larger numbers of people vying for the smaller number of job vacancies. The sorry state of empty shops will ensure that people who may be looking to move to the North Coast will by

pass the Clarence Valley for a town with better economic credentials.

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback, the residents in the Clarence Valley need help. All the residents want is the Australian "fair go" principle and a slice of the NSW government taxation pie that they help create and that other centres already receive.

Clarence Valley Community Unions Contact: Sharryn Usher 0417 497 701  
or email to [clarencevalleycommunity@gmail.com](mailto:clarencevalleycommunity@gmail.com) subject line: submission

Please return your completed survey by:

- 1. The Director  
Select Committee on the Closure or Downsizing of Corrective Services  
NSW Facilities  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Fax: 9250 2981
- 2. Stewart Smith, phone 9250 2798,  
[csclosureinquiry@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:csclosureinquiry@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

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