

Submission  
No 110

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

**Name:** Mr Wayne Oates

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*Partially Confidential*

Wayne Oates  
Senior Correctional Officer  
Wollongong Court Escort Security Unit

The Chairman,  
GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No3

Sir,

I am writing this submission to the Committee in an attempt to shed some light on the operation of the Department of Corrective Services in one of the specialised area's it is responsible for and attempting to privatise.

I have been employed as a Prison Officer for twenty five years having joined the service in 1984, I currently hold the rank of Senior Correctional Officer. I have had the opportunity to work in both maximum security institutions as well as many specialised areas within this Department i.e. Long Bay Correctional Complex, Parramatta Correctional Centre, DCS Special Response Units (Transport and Emergency units), Corrective Services Academy (Prison law, Prison procedures, and Weapons instruction) Corrections Intelligence Unit, Malabar Emergency Unit Taskforce STED(Strategy to Eliminate Drugs) and the Court Escort Security Unit where I am currently stationed.

Our Commissioner whom I used to have a great deal of respect for, has chosen to attack and label all Prison Officers as Overtime Rorters and Manipulators of sick leave entitlements. **This is clearly not true.** A great deal of sick leave is created through workers compensation and illnesses contracted through working in an environment such as ours.

Through the constant bashing we receive by our Commissioner in the Media, we have attempted to place bans on overtime and higher capacity, only to be put before the Industrial Relations Commission by the Department and ordered to work additional shifts and Higher duties. The Department should feel proud that it has managed to destroy the moral of its staff through these **misleading media campaigns.** It is time the Departmental Heads admitted that the Department cannot function without their staff working excessive hours.

The Department appears to have arrived at a situation whereby the **Upper Management** feel that **in order to cover up their mismanagement** they will pass the blame onto the very staff that has supported a failing system. The overtime incurred within the Department is all scrutinised by Senior Executive Staff no Prison Officer calls himself to duty.

The Department of Corrective Services has always had a culture of overtime, in fact it was part of their recruiting campaign in the late 80's and it is true that the Department considers it cheaper to run area's on overtime than create a permanent position where it is clearly needed.

## The privatisation of prisons and prison-related services

This Department appears to be extremely top heavy I am not aware of any Govt Department with only 7000 staff requiring 17 SES position 5 regional offices with associated Regional Superintendents, Tacticians (Deputy Superintendent) and clerical support staff, surely a huge cost saving can be made by the deletion of these out stations alone.

I Currently work at Wollongong Court Escort Security Unit. We are responsible for the secure escort of both remand prisoners from gaol and fresh custody prisoners to and from Court, the unit performs all functions of a Correctional Centre as well as executing Orders of the Court in relation to releasing prisoners to Bail, Parole, Time served, Custodial Sentence or periods of Remand. The unit also operates the Wollongong Police Cell Complex on a 24hr 7day per week receiving prisoners from police at the completion of the charging process, our catchment area extends from Helenburgh in the north to Gerringong in the south. The prisoners are held in a safe and secure environment prior to their court appearance.

These prisoners are received into custody with various problems both medical and psychological, they have committed all nature of crimes Murder, Child sex offences, drug related offences, Domestic violence offences, serious assaults, e.t.c. . the management of these prisoners requires a great deal of skill and training, the experience required to manage these inmates **cannot** be gained on an 11week training course. Officers working at locations such as this have gained a huge amount of knowledge and experience working with inmates at Correctional Centres prior to transfer to positions within the Court Escort Security Unit.

The Commissioner also clearly stated that there was no shortage of prison beds making the statement that there were 450 beds available, if this is the case why are we consistently used as a Remand facility where prisoners are brought down on a regular basis from Sydney Courts at the completion of their court matters, we are forced to house prisoners in an underground cell complex with limited exercise, no natural light, no family visits, no cigarettes and no phone calls. Prisoners are housed here for periods of up to 10 days. We are told that it is because there are **no remand beds** available to move them too. (see attached nominal rolls).

When operations commenced at this location in 1993 the location was staffed 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday with a compliment of 9 officers we were expected to man 1 x Local Court and 1 x District Court with approx 1200 prisoners passing through per year, at present we are a 24hr 7day per week operation with a complement of 17 front line Officers we are expected to service up to 4 x local courts, 2 x District Courts and a circuit Supreme Court, approx 5900 prisoners a year now pass through this location with a Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm staff of 7 officers. The staffing ratio obviously has not increased to meet the demands placed upon this Unit, overtime and TCSO's(casuals) are used at an addition expense in order to meet the demands of the judiciary.

The staff at this location, in keeping within the law, do all that is within their power, to make these inmates comfortable. As mentioned previously prisoners are received from police with various medical and psychiatric conditions, we have a Justice Health Nurse assigned to us of an afternoon for four hours per day only, the Officers

are responsible for recognising and arranging treatment for prisoners outside these hours. When prisoners take ill we have had to maintain secure escort (on overtime) at Wollongong Hospital for protracted periods of time (3 days) this could be avoided in most cases if the prisoners were moved to a Correctional Centre within an acceptable period of time(24hrs). We are the Welfare Officers, we liaise with prisoners families, friends and legal representatives. Many critical incidents caused by the long term housing of prisoners at court cell locations have been defused by staff working at this location.

In order to manage these inmates in a humane manner the housing of these inmates requires us to man two separate areas i.e Police Cells and Court Cells (Mon to Fri) additional staff are required to be on duty. The majority of overtime incurred at this locations is a direct result of the Departments inability to move these inmates to a Correctional Centre . I could not imagine a private operator going to the extent that the current staff do, to make the prisoners comfortable whilst housed in these draconian conditions. Alternatives have been presented to management however they fell on deaf ears and the current structure and method of operation remains.

At times we have had to refuse to accept prisoners from Police, due to the fact that we were full with prisoners from other locations, as a result the Police have had to use cells at a location not manned by DCS Officers and supervise the prisoners themselves this has the effect of removing a car crew from it patrol duties, this is a ludicrous situation as our primary purpose was to free up police from cells duty and put more police on the street.

Magistrates at this location have granted prisoners bail purely because of the conditions and length of time that they would be housed in the Police cells. This has been reported on numerous occasions in the Illawarra Mercury.

As a member of the crew working in the engine room I find it difficult to understand how I can be held responsible when the ship runs aground. Surely the captain and navigator are responsible.

Privatisation is not the answer to **BLATANT MISMANAGEMENT**, the same people will be responsible for the overseeing of the private operators.



Wayne Dates  
Senior Correctional Officer  
Wollongong Court Escort Security Unit  
25/02/09

mercury

# Court cells house men up to 9 days

By VERONICA APAP

FIVE people held in Wollongong's cramped courthouse cells for up to nine days were finally moved yesterday when beds were found for them in the prison system.

The men were moved to Parklea and Silverwater jails after one of them had spent nine days in the holding cells below the court.

The four other men had each been held for more than six days.

Wollongong's cells have no natural light and no spaces for detainees to exercise.

A Department of Corrective Services spokesman said the men were held in Wollongong because there were no beds available in other jails designed for prisoners on remand.

"It's an occasional problem we get at Wollongong," he said. "It's the whole reason for building the jail down at Nowra."

The spokesman said now the detainees had been moved to prisons, they would have more time out of their cells for exercise and could opt to work.

Justice Action spokesman Brett

Collins described police and court cells as: "Without a doubt the most stressful places to be held."

"People are constantly moving in and out, they're dirty, there's limited access to mental health (services) or general facilities that would be available to people held under sentence."

"If they are held it should be in a place that doesn't exacerbate their problems," Mr Collins said.

Because remand detainees are awaiting trial, Mr Collins said many would later be given bail, have charges against them withdrawn, be acquitted or eventually given a non-custodial sentence.

Prison bed shortages have been an ongoing problem across the state, often leaving remand prisoners in the Illawarra to languish in Wollongong's court cells.

In August, a lack of space at jails meant prisoners had to wait up to a week at Wollongong for beds to become available.

Overcrowding at the cells was reported to have occurred at least three times in the 18 months before that.



A little brightness to life: The Campbell family's Red Ash

## A family creates a

NOT all Illawarra residents have a happy, family-filled Christmas to look forward to.

But by decking their home in lights and decorations, Neil and Jenny Campbell hope to make the festive season a little brighter for those in need this Christmas.

An entrant in the 2008 Mercury-Wave FM Light Up The Illawarra Competition, Mrs Campbell said many visitors to the street could help those less fortunate simply by digging deep.

"We have a wishing well and

we put in all the people give us what around to see the lights we pass them on to their Christmas said.

"Last year we raised that all went to Salvos and the money stays in Woonona

While the couple decorate the home, Mrs Campbell could not resist challenge and n stop.

### Introducing the new BMW 3 Series.

