

**INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO THE OPERATIONS
AND MANAGEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIVE SERVICES**

Organisation: Civil Chaplaincies Advisory Committee
Name: Rev Harry J. Herbert
Position: Secretary
Telephone:
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Subject:

Summary

Hon. Amanda Fazio,
Legislative Council,
Parliament House,
SYDNEY , NSW, 2000.

Dear Ms. Fazio,

I write as secretary of the Civil Chaplaincies Advisory Committee in regard to the enquiry you are conducting into matters pertaining to the Department of Corrective Services. One of those matters is the procedures for the admission to Correctional Centres of persons other than Departmental personnel. One of those groups would be prison chaplains.

Our Committee has been established for more than 45 years and exists for the purpose of dealing with Government Departments and other organisations in relation to chaplaincy matters. Although initially it was a committee comprised solely of Christian churches, it now includes membership of the appropriate bodies representing Buddhist, Muslim, and Jewish faiths. Most Christian churches are members.

In regard to prison chaplaincy the latest figures for the number of chaplains are:

During 2005 there were 72 Chaplains working in Correctional Centres. Of these:

- 28 were full-time Chaplains whose organisation was in receipt of a subsidy.
- 2 full-time supported by their own organisation.
- 1 half-time whose organisation received a subsidy.
- 19 sessional Chaplains supported through a Departmental payment.
- 20 sessional supported by their organisation.
- 1 Co-ordinator supported by the Department.
- 1 Administrator supported by the Department.

The Committee has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department in regard to chaplaincy matters. This is currently under review and a revised Memorandum is expected to be agreed shortly.

Chaplains are appointed by and remain employees of their respective religious organisation. The Coordinator and Administrator are appointed by our Committee but are remunerated through their religious organisation with funds provided by the Department of Corrective Services.

When a new chaplaincy is created our Committee seeks expressions of interest from member organisations. The Committee has a process whereby it determines which organisation is allocated the new subsidy. That organisation then selects an appropriate appointee [following guidelines set down by the Committee] and forwards to the Secretary of the Committee a request that the appointment is endorsed. Prior to this endorsement, the Administrator of the Chaplaincy Service, Sr. Pauline Staunton, conducts a criminal record check of the person concerned through the Departmental system. If there is any matter of concern, the matter is taken up by the Prison

Chaplaincy Coordinator, Rev. Rod Moore, with the Assistant Commissioner of Corrective Services.

Where, as in almost all cases, there is a clear criminal record check, the appointment is endorsed by the Committee and the Secretary advises the Commissioner in writing. The Committee is aware that the Commissioner has complete discretion in determining whether any particular person may serve as a prison chaplain. The Committee recognises that the current Commissioner and his predecessors have exercised that discretion with fairness. We would prefer discretion to absolute rules which may have unintended consequences. In some rare cases persons who have a criminal record have been allowed to serve as prison chaplains within the discretion of the Commissioner.

When there is a vacancy in an existing position, the same procedures are followed, except that when the subsidy has been held by the same organisation for more than 10 years, other expressions of interest are invited.

In regard to sessional chaplains, the allocation of positions is more informal, but the same procedures are followed in regard to criminal checks and endorsement.

Some people serve as assistants to chaplains. We have established rules that the number of such persons are limited and they work in close conjunction with chaplains and are supervised at all times. For instance, these may be people who come to the prison to assist in worship services.

Although there is a cordial relationship between the Prison Chaplaincy Service which is organised through our Committee and such organisations as Kairos and Prison Fellowship there are no formal links.

During November 2005 there were newspaper reports about a particular chaplain who was not accepted by the Commissioner. Much of the reporting was inaccurate. Although this person had served on a sessional basis, the Commissioner was not prepared to allow him to serve in a full-time capacity. As the Commissioner is not required to give specific reasons for his decision, the speculation in the media was most inappropriate.

Yours Sincerely,

Rev. Harry J. Herbert,
Secretary,
Civil Chaplaincies Advisory Committee.