

Submission
No 290

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

Name: Ms Jo Holder

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Dear Inquiry

I oppose the privatisation of NSW prisons.

Prisons are an essential tier of our society and should be managed with the rehabilitation and education of offenders as their paramount aim. Those in prison are usually the most disadvantaged members of our community.

I understand the current prison population as reached scandalous levels of over 10,000 people. Of this a high percentage are Aboriginal persons (entirely disproportionate to their demographic), substance abusers and the mentally ill.

This latter category of the prison population has been created by the State's disastrous decision to 'de-institutionalise' the mentally ill without building and maintaining appropriate community 'half-way' or supported house type infrastructure and support services (such as crisis care including 24-hour mental health expertise in emergency departments and community teams). Similarly drug and alcohol abusers lack appropriate rehabilitation facilities.

The government has a duty of care to all these most vulnerable and marginal groups.

For these broad reasons I protest the moves to privatise prisons and create a meat-market of the most marginal in our communities.

In particular:

- 1) There is no incentive for for profit entities to offer substantial rehabilitation and education incentives and courses (or this will be off-loaded to the state);
- 2) There will be an incentive for for-profit entities to lobby political parties and individual parliamentarians and urge the ramping up of 'law and order' election campaigns in order to generate 'business' by way of mandatory sentencing etc. (Similar to the AHA's effective niche marketing for alcohol consumption and service) ;
- 3) The government will be able to shelve even more responsibility for the treatment and management of the mentally ill. For profits will not be in a position to offer better resourcing for long-term mental health treatment.
- 4) The current financial crisis means that today's tenderer will be tomorrow's financial failure. (Just look at the ABC kindergarten debacle.) Even if there is a decision made to restrict operators to Australian only, there is a high change this will quickly change.

In conclusion, government has a core duty of care. Law and order driven election cycles have to stop and political parties must take responsibility for all its citizens not just self-interested elites represented by lobby groups and other specialists. If this means generating bonds because of difficult times, then Government debt in times like these is necessary.

Jo Holder