

Submission  
No 305

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

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

# Inquiry into the Privatisation of Prisons

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12 January 2009

GPSC 3

## **Inquiry into the privatisation of Prisons.**

Parliament House

Macquarie St

Sydney 2000

I am submitting this document as I strongly oppose the privatization of NSW prisons. This document will show how I personally will be affected by the privatisation of Cessnock Correctional Centre, and my own personal thoughts.

I am an Assistant Superintendent currently located at Cessnock Correctional Centre.

My father was a full time Correctional Officer until he retired several years ago, he is now a Temporary Correctional Officer involved with the courts. My husband is a Senior Correctional Officer based at Cessnock, My eldest sister was a Correctional Officer. My brother in law is a First Class Correctional Officer based at Cessnock, My youngest sister is a First Class Correctional Officer based with the courts.

In my family alone we have over 90 years service to this state between us, that is just with my sisters, my husband, my brother in law, my father and myself. This does not include my cousins also within the Department. Surely with this amount of service between us, we cannot all be wrong in our belief that this is a vast error of judgment by the department and the government, to suppose that privatisation is better for the holistic view for all concerned, current staff, their families, the Offenders and ultimately the community.

My husband and I have 8 children between us, we also had a daughter whom we lost 6 years ago who is buried at Morpeth. My family often goes out to the cemetery to spend time at her grave site.

My 16 year old Samantha has just started an apprenticeship on the 4 November this year. She is going to have a difficult time supporting herself on first year wages, and no driver's license, or she may have to cease her apprenticeship and relocate with us.

I am concerned about Family law court orders that are sealed documents. We cannot abide by the orders that are currently in place if / when a major move occurs for us.

My son Blade currently has regular contact with his father whom I am no longer in a relationship with. This move will mean he will not be able to spend as much time as

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he has been with his natural father, nor be able to see his friends. It upsets me that I am in the position where I will be the person that is taking him away from his father.

I accepted my current position with the condition that it was at Cessnock. I believe that I have the necessary qualifications, and can make a positive difference.

On the whole I like my profession, and believe that I am doing right by all stakeholders concerned such as;

- I am constantly up skilling myself to enhance my performance for the Department of Corrective Services.
- I am firm but fair and approachable for offenders. I assist in identifying the programs they need to consider to address their offending behaviour. Ensuring that they are given the opportunities of learning skills to assist them in life after their period of incarceration.
- I assist visitors with their concerns by answering their queries and trying to assure them that the Offenders are being looked after.
- I demonstrate a duty of care towards my immediate family, by only applying for positions that cause the least amount of instability to them.

My youngest has just started school and has only ever been looked after by ourselves and my parents. My eldest daughter was molested over 17 years ago by my then child minding husband; you may appreciate why I cannot trust other people other than my family to look after my children.

My family and I are decent members of, and actively contribute to this community. We would like to continue to be allowed to live the life that we have made for ourselves. I would support the privatisation if I honestly believed it was for the benefit of all concerned. After researching privatization for myself, IT IS NOT THE ANSWER.

My husband and 5 of our children are heavily involved with martial arts in our region. Our youngest two have only started this year and another 3 are quite high up. Our 16 year old is about to attempt her black belt and our 14 year old daughter along with our 12 year old son are only two gradings away from their black belt. The children have been involved for nearly 5 years. My husband has been involved even longer. He is currently an instructor in Australasian Defendo close quarters combat based in Maitland along with being the secretary for NSW Kombatan also based at Maitland. He instructs children in Martial Arts self defense also at the above centre. He has over 100 students at this present time, ranging from 4 to 64 years old. He is a well respected member of this community. I assist behind the scenes with things such as BBQs, Christmas stockings / Easter eggs for the children. These people will tell you, it is like an extended family. Some very special bonds have been formed with my family and other members of this club. 50% of our time involves the martial arts scene that has strong ethics for children to learn to live by.

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My children are distraught over this impending move, to the stage where one of my daughters has vomited because she has been crying so hard. Please feel free to speak to my children personally and ask them what they believe the effect of a move will be to them.

We assist the community, on a regular basis, we are good citizens. I am a Justice of the Peace. We are officers of the crown and have sworn allegiance to the state of NSW.

My Mother and Father will lose their children and grandchildren in one hit. That will be 3 daughters, 2 son in laws, and 13 grandchildren. Two other grandchildren that they see that live away, will not be coming up here to visit their grandparents, they will go to where their parents are based when they can get the time to visit. My Mother broke down yesterday in tears when she thought of this, she said she never realised that we will probably all be in different regions and not together.

Not only is the department / government causing great distress to all involved, they have severely upset my own individual family. I will not sit back and do nothing when my family is being so affected, by a decision that is wrong for all concerned. Not only is this ethically wrong is also against labors own policy on privatisation of prisons.

I am fearful of the repercussion possible from senior management due to speaking out; however I am a mother first and foremost. I have a higher duty of care towards my children and family then to anyone else.

I know we could choose to leave the department, but we have all invested a lot into our careers and found a balance with work, family and leisure activities. My honest opinion is we do have a lot to offer our employer and the community, and have been successful in our strive to accomplish this. Just as the department have on most occasions done right by us. I care for my career and family, This why I am so passionate about the decision to privatise prisons in NSW. This will not benefit anyone other than multinational companies making profit out of human misery. Any gain will be offset down the track by the results of warehousing inmates when they are released.

I personally voted Labor, as I assumed their current policies were the true stance of Labor.

**Privatising gaols is against long standing ALP policy.**

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When I sat down and thought about what effect I personally have had on my local community, I realised I have had a positive effect. I have donated every fortnight to the PCYC since July 1988. I have donated money every fortnight to the Westpac Rescue helicopter service for well over a decade. This has been through automatic salary deductions and at this stage continues to happen and amounts to thousands of dollars. Then I really thought about it and realised I was one of the Officers at Maitland gaol that arranged for Westpac Rescue to come out and speak with us and seek donations.

I have been the Officer in charge of security on SHINE (Support. Hope. Inspire. Nurture. Empower) for kids days since its introduction at Cessnock. This day incorporates St Heilers Offenders being brought down to Cessnock for the day. Offenders children are brought up to visits with their father for a day of activities and a bbq lunch without their mother or carers with them. This is to assist the fathers and children with bonding. We are not in uniform on this day, so the children do not feel threatened. I am always asked for by name and dates for these days are held around my availability. I purchase all the food / drinks for the day from an allocated budget IN MY OWN TIME. I was on the selection panel for the latest position at Cessnock Shine house. SHINE is purely for children and their employees are not departmental employee's.

I was the Officer at Cessnock that arranged for the blood bank to come out so we could donate on site. This was most staff at the centre and some family members.

I was one of the Officers at Maitland that was heavily involved in the Day In Gaol program that was designed to deter first time offenders from coming back full time. This was an 8 hours gaol sentence imposed by the courts.

For over 6 years I volunteered at Maitland PCYC for the Driver awareness program. I gave an insight into "Gaol Life". This was for about 1 ½ hours every 6 weeks. This was in my own time.

I have given lectures at schools about "Legal Detainers", and a career in Corrective Services.

I was involved in the recruitment drive held at Newcastle several years ago. I assist with school events at my son's school.

I am an accredited peer supporter, and have been since its introduction in the northern region within the department. I can tell you that over the last few weeks I

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have had copious amounts of calls for all sorts of reasons, but the common denominator is the privatisation of Cessnock Correctional Centre.

Quite a large number of Officers at Cessnock are responsible for holding fund raising events to donate to children's hospitals. This is done through sporting events and in our own time. I am a person that financial and psychically contributes to this.

The holistic effect this could pose to the community is astronomical, some examples I can cite would be the following;

- The loss of valuable volunteers such as those that are in the SES and VRA
- Fire fighters
- Defense force reserves
- Local School Volunteers, P & C members
- Local sports coaches and assistants
- Varies local committee members
- Value of homes in our electorate will be reduced.
- Security and safety is jeopardized
- Small schools could lose teachers.
- Loss of nurses
- Loss of Community carers
- Loss of shop assistants
- Loss of Mechanic's, Chef's various skilled employees
- Marriage break downs
- Children having reduced contact with other parents.
- Officers having to relocate
- Less financial support for the community
- Dramatic increase in Offenders numbers housed at Cessnock and decrease in staff numbers will increase risk across the board.
- It is a fact that the majority of staff employed by Private Prison contractors pay their employees a lower salary then government. (Less going back into the community)

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- Private Prisons are not as transparent as state run Prisons nor legally have to be.

This list could keep on flowing, the flowing effect is the increased danger to the community.

A quote from the 2007 Value for Money? Neoliberalism and New South Wales Prisons Faculty of Commerce Papers, authored by J.Andrew and D. Cahill states.

*'The actual internal operating efficiencies of the private operator are not made publicly available. The Public Accounts Committee Report states*

*"the actual operating costs for Junee are not available as GEO is a private company that is in competition with other operators in Australia and this information is commercially sensitive".*

*This statement reveals just how little evidence the government has available regarding the operational efficiencies of the private operator and what strategies it is using to meet its contractual and regulatory responsibilities, and also ensure a profit for its shareholders.'*

Offenders and their families will also be affected. The consequences of privatisation could be any or all of the following;

- Reduced dynamic security
- Reduced quality service
- Increase in assault on both staff and inmates
- Safety and security for the local communities
- More children in classes due to loss of teachers because student numbers have dropped.

The average amount of service amongst Cessnock staff is above 15 years. The Offender Services and Program, Administration, Community Offenders Services and Justice Health staff have also been there for long periods of time. This has only enhanced our dynamic security. We all work well together as a team.

I like most others have heard and read all the comments about overtime roting and reject and resent this statement. Overtime exists because of a dysfunctional roster system this department refuses to fix.

Management of each centre must verify the rosters on a regular basis. How can front line Officers be accused of this when it is over sighted generally by the Managers of Security? If this truly was the case then surely Justice Marks in the Industrial Relations Court on the 26 September 2008 would not have ordered Officers to lift their bans on overtime.

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If you check the POVB records you will see that we have spent years asking for our full quota of staff, but senior management decided it was cheaper to run on O/T. than fix the flawed current formula.

Cessnock has been operating with two Managers of Security for approximately 12 months. Yet no other staff numbers have increased. The Managers of Security at Cessnock is the second highest paid rank.

Our Manager of Industries Mr George Hunt won the 2008 Corrective Services Industries Manager of the Year Award. Surely this shows that we are meeting our objectives at Cessnock.

I was informed on Wednesday 17 December 2008 that the Upper house has agreed to launch an investigation into privatisation of prisons. I believe this will show that the state's prisons need to remain in full government control. Private prisons are not transparent to the public nor need to be due to the legalities. My husband and I have invested a lot of time and energy on researching the negatives and positives. Privatisation is not the answer.

Government allowances incorporated into other private gaol contracts in Australia state an amount permitted of death in custody's, riots, escapes before the provider is penalized will only lead to inferior programs, duty of care, increase of assaults. Is this really what labor is about!

Whatever the real reason for nominating Cessnock and Parklea Correctional Centres for privatisation is no longer the question, the question is, is Labour and its members of parliament going to go against their own policies and allow this to happen?

Yours Sincerely