

Submission
No 154

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

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Partially Confidential

I have been employed as a NSW Prison Officer for fifteen years. In that time I have seen the Dept. of Corrective Services undergo many changes for the good of the community, those in it's care, and those that it employs. These latest reforms however are a huge mistake. The impact that they will have on all stakeholders is enormous.

Private Contractors have only one reason for being in business and that is to make profits. Profits come at a cost that is borne by those everyone that has dealings with these multinational companies. Staff are paid less than Public Servants, manning levels are less than public prisons, services are reduced, inmates needs are placed lower than economic needs, and profits go off shore. Private prisons are paid per head. The more inmates in the prison the more money they get. Cells that were designed for one person will hold two, those that hold two will now hold four, and so on it goes until all spaces are filled and tensions build till they explode with assaults on both sides of the green/blue line. Inmate services will also be cut as it costs money. The Privates are in the business of warehousing inmates till their release with little programs in place to reduce recidivism.

The NSW Dept. of Corrective Services is an asset to the people of NSW and is the leader of Corrections in Australasia. Many State and International Correctional Services look to us to provide expertise in all facets of Corrections from Community Offender Services to Extreme High Security centres such as Supermax.

The success of the Department can be attributed to the professional staff that it employs. I joined the Department as fresh faced 22 year old who thought he had seen a thing or two in his short life. Nothing had prepared me for life 'on the inside' and the prison culture that exists. The the stand overs for such petty things as a 'pouch of ox' or a pair of runners, the violence between inmates and sometimes Officers, the unwritten but staunchly enforced code amongst inmates of not 'putting me on show' in front of the others, or the dreaded 'Bone yard' where the protection inmates are held and constantly live in fear of the 'Main'. This may sound like a disaster, and let me say it's no tea party, however the only reason that this world is not in complete chaos is due to the staff on the frontline that that manage this world everyday. This experience cannot be bought, instilled at the academy, or ordered online at some prisonskills.com website. Its gained by years of on the job experience and passed down by the so called 'dinosaurs' of the Dept. These people who hold all this knowledge and skill will be lost to the community if privatisation goes ahead and inexperienced security guards are thrust into the prison culture.

The privatisation issue affects me personally. I work at Cessnock Correctional Centre and have been given a few options if privatisation goes ahead. I can take a voluntary redundancy, I can transfer to another centre, or I can elect to stay and work for the contractor. None of these options are attractive to me. The nearest Correctional Centres to Cessnock are over and hours drive and nearly one hundred kilometers away which means commuting or moving away from my family for work. The voluntary redundancy is capped at 52 weeks pay which would quickly run out if I was unable to gain employment in the near future, which in this economic climate is very likely. The offer of working for the contractor is quite frankly scary. The reduced wages and condition, the inmate overcrowding, lack of job security, and the lack of frontline staff paints a gloomy and dangerous picture behind those walls.

Keep the Prisons public, professional, safe and accountable to only those that matter. The community of NSW.

Regards