

Submission  
No 46

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

**Name:** Mr John Condon

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# INQUIRY INTO THE PRIVATISATION OF PRISONS AND PRISON-RELATED SERVICES.

The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY  
NSW 2000

Monday, 23 February 2009

Dear Director,

I am a Senior Correctional Officer at Parklea Correctional Centre in my thirtieth year of service with the Department of Corrective Services.

During my service I have experienced Riots, Murders, Rapes, Escapes and Strikes, I have also experienced the Departments ever changing face.

When Parklea opened in 1983 it had 220 beds and 150 staff, today it has 850 beds and 250 staff, overtime is issued not merely because of officers going sick but also because of insufficient staff to man required posts, officers are required to fill three shifts over a 24 hr period, thus requiring strategic rostering, included in any 28 day period officers are rostered 9 days off, then one has to take into account those that are on recreation or long service leave, then the inevitable last minute emergency that incorporates sick leave.

Parklea has been open 25 and a bit years, during this time the Department has implemented several strategies to cut costs, they would be known as the "scissors gang" or the "Razor Gang" with the intention of increasing inmate numbers but not the staffing numbers, at this stage we had camera surveillance, 4 armed towers manned 24 hrs with the other 4 towers being manned on a needs basis whilst the inmates were at work and play, the inmates were allowed out of their cells between 6 am to 7 pm, to-day these inmates are only allowed out of their cells between 8am and 4pm and we only have one 24 hr tower with three others being manned from 8 am to 4 pm, with all due respect, security has not increased, cameras can only record the event they do not prevent the event from happening.

In 1984 the Department revamped the rank structure, thus creating more commissioned officers, this was so they could still operate the gaols whilst the general rank and file were out on strike, they discovered that they still had to use Police to man the armed posts and that those commissioned officers would also work 16 hour shifts incurring copious amounts of overtime, this happened early in 1984 and was Statewide for several weeks.

To-day if the general rank and file withdraws it's labour it is only for a day or two, the Commissioned Officers do not incur overtime but time in lieu, this then

means that they are taking time off and the general rank and file are acting in the higher capacity and others are incurring overtime.

This very real threat of Privatisation is not new, it has always been on the cards, through the 1980's to 1990's, we incorporated two riots one in 1987 and another in 1990, once the gaol was restored from the damage done during the last riot, the Department introduced the Young Offenders Programme into Parklea, it also introduced extensions to the gaol thus increasing the gaol population of inmates, but not staff, then mid to late 1990's the Department introduced Support Staff, ie:- Teachers, Welfare Officers, Psychologists, Alcohol and Other Drugs Counsellors, Secretarial Staff, Prisoners Aid, Classification and Probation and Parole Staff, They are not really a security risk but do however mean that those officers playing a custodial role have to be aware of their presence and concerned for their safety and security as well as their own.

In the very early 2000's the Department tried to implement "The Way Forward", again it was aimed at cutting posts and costs, it would also mean that Penalty Rates would become non existent thus making staff less likely to want to do overtime or other shifts or weekends because they lacked the monetary incentive to want to do them, they would also incur a far greater workload, also the Department couldn't offer any ideas as to what "The Way Forward" would entail or what incentives, if any, it could offer, thereby the general rank and file rejected it because they would be financially disadvantaged, the Commissioned Officers however accepted their proposal because it benefited them, when Mr McLEAN visited Parklea to introduce "The Way Forward" he threatened Privatisation then.

Over the next few years to the present day we at Parklea have heard of the so called rorting of the sick leave policy creating overtime for their mates, Officers income exceeding \$100,000 in overtime, (an Officers Wage is \$55,000 plus any Penalty rates and overtime, so in actual fact he/she would only have earned \$45,000 in overtime) it neglected to say that each gaol has it's own individual budget and that the Officer attached to that gaol is paid from that gaols budget irrespective of where that Officer works his overtime ie:- at Court complexes, Hospital Escorts or other Gaols, thus the so called blow out incurred in overtime at Parklea.

No matter what the Government wants to call it, we all know that the Corrections Industry is a non profit making organisation, Privatisation is not going to reduce the Taxpayers contribution, as has been stated to staff by the Commissioner, no Officer will become unemployed so that Officer is still going to incur his /her wages and then the Private sector will be compensated to pay the wages for it's staff, thus incurring extra expense to the taxpayer, Privatisation also means a different management strategy, to incur any profit it would mean increasing the inmate population and employing less staff, this alone means greater risk to those employee's and the other inmates, more escape potentials thus endangering the surrounding community, the irony of all this is that the Community has not been made aware of the move to Privatisise their local Institution or what the impact of such Privatisation could incur upon them.

On a personal note, I will be affected Financially, Emotionally and Security in Job Satisfaction wise, as stated earlier I am in my thirtieth year of service and am

hoping to complete 30 years in November, however should I be forced to go to another gaol I will incur extra expenses and time in travelling to and from my workplace, then should I have to move location further afield, it would mean disrupting my household and family, purchasing another property and selling the existing one, I would be disadvantaged if I moved to a remote area as I am the only breadwinner in the house and hospital care would mean travelling to the city, I don't feel that I am old enough to retire or to take voluntary redundancy just yet nor is it financially viable for me to partake of any of the other options due to ongoing financial burdens incurred in medical and other expenses for the family.

I cannot speak for others as I do not know their circumstances, however I am sure that I do not stand alone in this stance as I have heard numerous complaints re this Privatisation venue, then there is the fact that Privatisation of Gaols has failed in other States and Overseas, the only Government owned projects that have been Privatised and been successful were Profit making Industries to start with, when these projects became Private the customers/users faced increases in fees, the Government could just have easily have done this, the Government could also have been more frugal with their expenditure and management of the State and have avoided any necessity to increase Taxes or Privatised anything that was State or Nation owned.

John P. CONDON  
JP 104749