

Parklea Prison Privatisation

<http://newcastleonhunter.com/2009/parklea-prison-privatisation/>

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WRONG IN PRINCIPLE, WRONG IN PRACTICE

Sylvia Hale, Greens Spokesperson on Corrective Services today condemned the announcement that GEO Group had been awarded the Parklea Prison contract and questioned forecasts by Corrective Services Minister John Robertson that it would lead to \$60 million in savings.

The privatisation of prisons is wrong in principle. The awarding of the Parklea prison contract to GEO is equally wrong in practice," Ms Hale said.

The State consigns people to prison and it is the State that should be directly and constantly accountable for how prisoners are treated. Rather than being siphoned off into the coffers of a private company motivated solely by the desire to make a profit, any surplus should be fed back into the prison system to promote the rehabilitation of prisoners."

Parklea is an old gaol. The only way GEO will generate profits there will be by prison officers either losing their jobs or working fewer hours and by a reduction in services for prisoners."

It is shameful that a former Secretary of Unions NSW should actively promote a company such as GEO whose practice is to casualise its staff. John Robertson knows that this is a sure-fire way to erode working conditions and undermine unions."

It is equally shameful that the contract should have gone to GEO which is part of a worldwide corrections group that includes G4S and Wackenhut, companies whose record around Australia and around the world is deplorable. Only yesterday, G4S was criticised by the Perth Deaths in Custody Watch Committee over the death of prominent aboriginal elder, Mr Ward."

It is extraordinary that the State Government is employing a company that in the case of Mr Ward has been criticised by the Western Australian coroner for operating a van that was not fit for humans."

Ms Hale also called on the Minister to implement the recommendations of the Legislative Council inquiry into the privatisation of prisons and prison related services.

At the very least the private operation of Parklea must be fully accountable to the public, and must offer no lesser standards of operation than publicly operated prisons," said Ms Hale.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Inquiry into the privatisation of prisons and prison-related services xviii Report 21 – June 2009

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1 25

That any move to privatise Parklea Correctional Centre be delayed for three months to allow the Department of Corrective Services and the Prison Officers Vocational Branch of the Public Service Association to negotiate the comprehensive implementation of The Way Forward in all correctional centres.

Recommendation 2 26

That the NSW Government provide adequate assistance and/or compensation to all former Cessnock Correctional Centre employees who have been disadvantaged by accepting a voluntary redundancy or transfer as a result of the November 2008 decision to privatise the centre.

Recommendation 3 57

That the Department of Corrective Services publish details of its costing methodology, focusing on the allocation of departmental overheads to both public and private New South Wales prisons.

Recommendation 4 76

That the NSW Government introduce re-entry performance indicators at all correctional centres in New South Wales.

Recommendation 5 80

That the NSW Government provide a three-year wage guarantee for the existing staff members at Parklea Correctional Centre who secure a position with the incoming private provider.

Recommendation 6 85

That the NSW Government consider the need to have an independent health service provider at all New South Wales prisons.

Recommendation 7 92

That all private correctional centre contracts in New South Wales be made publicly available on the Department of Corrective Services website.

Recommendation 8 93

That the Department of Corrective Services report the results of all New South Wales

correctional centres against common Key Performance Indicators in the Departments Annual Report. Key Performance Indicator data should also be published on the Departments website.

Recommendation 9 94

That the NSW Government ensure that private correctional centre contracts in New South Wales are made fully accessible under the Freedom of Information Act 1989 (NSW).

Recommendation 10 97

That the position of NSW Inspector General of Prisons be reinstated to report on both public and private prisons.

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Recommendation 11 97

That the NSW Corrections Inspectorate be removed from the control of the Department of Corrective Services and placed under the authority of another government department such as the Attorney Generals Department or the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Recommendation 12 98

That the Department of Corrective Services annually conduct confidential inmate and officer surveys at all New South Wales correctional centres to assess satisfaction and identify issues with service quality.

Recommendation 13 98

That the NSW Government establish a Prisons Parliamentary Oversight Committee, with powers and authority similar to the Committee of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Recommendation 14 100

That the Department of Corrective Services employ departmental monitors on-site at all private correctional centres in New South Wales.

Recommendation 15 125

That other than Junee and Parklea Correctional Centres, the NSW Government should not privatise any existing or future correctional centres in New South Wales if they operate under The Way Forward.

Recommendation 16 125

That the NSW Government monitor the private sector management of Parklea and Junee Correctional Centres, and should they fail to meet their fundamental contractual obligations, the centres revert back to public management.

Recommendation 17 125

That the Department of Corrective Services publish details of the implementation of The Way Forward and the cost savings achieved through the implementation of The Way Forward for each correctional centre in New South Wales. Details of the implementation of The Way Forward are to be published on the Departments website biannually with the first report of progress to occur by 1 November 2009.

Recommendation 18 132

That the NSW Government give the Department of Corrective Services one year to identify \$5 million in savings per annum in the Court Escort Security Unit, before it considers privatising the Unit. The Department should provide the Government with an update after six months to advise of the actions and progress it has made toward achieving this target.

Sydney prison guards strike for 24 hours

<http://www.watoday.com.au/breaking-news-national/sydney-prison-guards-strike-for-24-hours-20090930-gcdn.html>

Nick Ralston

September 30, 2009

Prison officers have walked off the job at a western Sydney jail after the NSW government named the private firm that will take over the facility.

The action followed Corrective Services Minister John Robertson's announcement that GEO Group had been selected to operate Parklea jail, which will make it the second correctional facility in the state under private management.

GEO Group also operates the jail at Junee, in the state's south, and is expected to start operations at Parklea by the end of 2009.

The Public Service Association (PSA) said officers at Parklea Correctional Centre walked out on Wednesday afternoon for 24 hours and further industrial action was likely.

"GEO do currently operate our prison at Junee and they have successfully met or bettered their performance indicators for the time they've had that contract," Mr Robertson told reporters.

"The contract will contain requirements for them to deliver services in a similar fashion to what we currently do in the operations of Parklea jail."

Mr Robertson said moving Parklea into private control would complete a reform process within Corrective Services that would deliver \$60 million savings a year to taxpayers.

The privatisation at Parklea would contribute a "significant component" of that figure, Mr Robertson said, but he would not specify how much.

"The money is saved through efficiencies that these companies have with the way they deal with let-goes, lock-outs and how they roster their staff," Mr Robertson said.

The reform also originally included moving Cessnock jail, in the Hunter region, into private hands, but the government backed down following community backlash.

PSA general secretary John Cahill said he was disappointed the government had gone ahead with Parklea's privatisation, saying it had sold out the people of western Sydney.

He said the sell-off would save taxpayers only \$5 million a year, and the PSA had put forward a proposal that could achieve a similar outcome while keeping the prison in public hands.

"They've just ignored us," Mr Cahill told AAP.

"They've told us that by privatising Parklea jail they'll save \$5 million, and we've said if you want to save \$5 million at Parklea we'll save it for you.

"But they've said 'nah, nah we just want to do it regardless of what you can save'."

Mr Robertson said he did not expect the PSA would be pleased with the announcement but the community should be assured security at Parklea would be maintained.