



MEDIA RELEASE July 11, 2008

ICAC Inquiry on Long Bay Early Lockdown

“Forty one forensic patients at Long Bay Prison Hospital have complained to ICAC about the conduct of officials involved in the 18 hour lockdown in cells” said JA spokesperson Brett Collins.

The complaint is that the officers have made misleading and factually wrong statements to justify the diversion of 28 officer positions into other areas, so they can cut costs without regard to the mental health of the patients” said Michael Poynder.

‘Evidence of the corruption under S8(1) of the ICAC Act’ included:

- 1) Statements by an officer on the ABC TV’s Stateline program on 27 June 2008 when asked: ‘Are you seriously saying that inmates actually want to be in their cells for longer’, he answered ‘I am’. “In fact the officer had a petition from 41 patients pleading for the early lockdown to stop. He knew they were locked in bare cells with no TV, reading materials or company for 18 hours” said Mr Collins.

Similar behaviour happened in 2006 before a Parliamentary GPSC Estimates hearing when the same officer and another said that the mothers at Emu Plains Prison had requested shorter visiting hours with their children. This false justification to cut back prisoner services was exposed in subsequent evidence“ said Mr Collins.

- 2) He was then asked: ‘But inmates do have the choice of going to their cells to remove themselves from the rest of the inmate crowd’, he said ‘They can but they can’t lock their cells’. “That is also untrue. The patients can ask officers to lock them in during out of cell hours” said Mr Collins.

“Those statements were intended to confuse decision makers and the public, who felt concern for the wellbeing and rights of the patients. They were spoken with the authority of top administrators, whilst refusing patients’ requests to speak for themselves.

- 3) “The officers denied that there were any adverse health consequences for the mental patients, although all health authorities involved, and the most eminent forensic psychiatrists said it would cause mental illness. They were not authorised to make health judgements or make changes without consultation, yet suggested they were” said Mr Collins.

Justice Action has also requested Premier Iemma and Minister Hatzistergos, who have both been involved, investigate and discipline the officers concerned.

Contacts: Brett Collins 0438 705003 Michael Poynder 0401 371077