

Submission  
No 108

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

**Organisation:** Country Labor - Dubbo Office

**Name:** Mr Robert Young

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## COUNTRY LABOR - DUBBO OFFICE

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Dear Mr Robertson,  
Minister for Justice.

10<sup>th</sup> February 2009

The February meeting of the Dubbo branch of Country Labor passed a motion expressing our opposition to privatisation of government assets and services in general and prisons in particular. The branch was responding to news that the NSW Labor Government proposes to privatise Parklea and Cessnock jails.

We note that this proposal is all too reminiscent of the proposal to privatise the electricity industry and we can safely assume is similarly opposed by the vast majority of the party membership.

Older members of the branch noted that the idea of privatising prisons would, some years ago, have been considered a joke. That any aspect of justice and law and order be contracted out for private profit is bizarre and represents an abdication of the responsibilities of government. One wonders whether the next Milton Friedman absurdity, the privatisation of the court system, can be far behind.

The record of privatised prisons is hardly a recommendation for the process. As a result, there appears to be a movement away from the formerly fashionable contracting out of government services throughout the world.

As a tenderer will probably be the American-based multi national that ran Mr Howard's refugee detention facilities, it will be impossible to justify the move with anything resembling truth and logic.

The absurdity of a policy of privatisation is compounded by the antiquity of the knowledge that it does not work. After early scandals in transportation of convicts to Australia, the system came under tight government control so that for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was safer to travel to Australia as a convict than as a free immigrant. Are we to repeat the mistakes of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?

The lesson of the failure of the privately-owned pre-school chain, ABC Learning, shows that services for profit are subject to the vagaries of greed-induced speculation by multi-national conglomerates. Imagine an ABC Learning situation in a jail. What do you do when a jail shuts down because the company managing it has failed?

The betrayal of the prison officers equals the betrayal of the prisoners. The loyal service of the former is treated with contempt; the needs of the latter are ignored. This is a transparent attempt to solve the state's current financial problems in the most irresponsible way. This is clearly a case of making temporary gains at the price of lasting sacrifices.

Finally, we refer you to "Australian Labor Party (NSW Branch) 2006 - 2008 Policy" page 87: "Labor opposes the private contract management of prisons".

cc the NSW Premier the Hon A. Fazio MLC

R. Young  
Assistant Secretary