

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Riot at Goulburn prison highlights need for proper workers comp**

The riot at the maximum security Goulburn Prison over the weekend highlighted the need for proper workers compensation for the state's Prison Officers said the Public Service Association (PSA).

While no officers were injured in the disturbance which involved approximately 30 inmates, injuries to Prison Officers are common in overcrowded prisons such as Goulburn.

When violence occurs, Prison Officers have to step in and put their bodies on the line knowing that they have limited workers compensation entitlements should they be injured in what is the most violent working environment in the country.

NSW Prison Officers lost many of their workers compensation entitlements in the 2012 reform of the system by the Coalition State Government.

While Police were given an exemption from the reforms by the State Government, Prison Officers were not and face going to work each day with less of a safety net should they be injured.

Workers comp payment of medical costs for Prison Officers ceases one year after a claim unless there is 30% full body impairment, there can be no claims for pain and suffering with any lump sum requiring at least 10% full body impairment and their families cannot claim 'nervous shock'.

The growing prison population is placing the corrections system under enormous stress, not only slashing Prison Officer to inmate ratios to dangerously low levels but heightening the ever-present risk of violence by frustrated prisoners.

"Despite the media reports, this incident had nothing to do with religion," said Steve McMahon, Chair of the Prison Officers Vocational Branch of the PSA.

"It started after a small group of inmates were denied access to a BBQ that is put on for those who behave themselves in the prison. Those that were excluded retaliated."

"Goulburn actually has only a small number of Muslim inmates and the disturbance had nothing to do with religion despite the media reports."

"But the incident does highlight just how vulnerable my members are in the workplace. The slogan, 'We face what you fear' is a simple fact of life for them. They proudly stand between some of the state's most notorious criminals and the community but should not be expected to do so without adequate workers comp protection."