



FROM THE CHAIR

Inmate state and overcrowding

CSNSW wrote to the PSA General Secretary and indicated that they wished to formally commence the consultation process to increase bed numbers at various Centres throughout NSW.

This request was on the tail of a letter from the General Secretary to Premier Mike Baird requesting that the Government take urgent action to address the looming crisis of prison overcrowding.

As a result of this request, I, along with PSA industrial staff and delegates from all groups met with CSNSW on 14 January 2015.

CSNSW currently has a short and medium term solution to the issue of the ever increasing inmate population.

I made it abundantly clear to CSNSW, that the motion on the books from the POV B Management Committee still stands:

"We the POV B management committee inform CSNSW that no centre or court location will increase their inmate states until our workers compensation conditions are changed to come in line with other emergency services like but not limited to the fire brigade, police service and ambulance service".

Some of the options proposed by CSNSW fall outside of the POV B motion.

The motion does not preclude the consultation process, as such, the PSA have entered into "Without Prejudice" discussions.

The POV B Executive will be holding firm in ensuring that the terms of Management Committee motion are met.

During the initial discussions, it was put to CSNSW that this matter is an easy fix.

That being, the CSNSW could put a case in support of the POV B claim to the current Government to amend the workers compensation rights for Correctional Officers.

After all, the Government has made amendments for other agencies post the 2012 changes.

I was in a position to speak at length on the negatives of increasing inmate numbers in Centres that are designed for a specified number of occupants, i.e. design capacity with specific reference to infrastructure, plumbing, reception areas, food preparation facilities, reduction of

common space for inmates, access to professional services and visiting areas.

The POV B indicated their dissatisfaction with all the options put forward by CSNSW which lacked any true long term solutions to overcrowding.

One long term solution would be to announce the construction of at least one new Correctional Centre.

This would give us some confidence that the proposed short term solutions would be in fact short term!

Smoke free Correctional Centres

Implementation of "Smoke free Correctional Centres" is proposed for August 2015.

This has already been introduced in other states, territories and New Zealand but not all made the transition without incident.

With NSW having the largest population of prisoners of all of the states, I am very concerned about the implication and complexities surrounding this change and have indicated a preference to defer the move until the inmate population issue is resolved.

It is highly possible that implementation will result in an increase in assaults on staff and inmate on inmate violence.

With the current overcrowding of Centres we are already seeing an increase in assaults on staff. Any assaults on staff are unacceptable.

Accordingly, the POV B are seeking urgent consultation on the implementation of the Smoke free Policy.

The POV B/PSA will continue to do everything it can to have the workers compensation legislation amended to provide reasonable and fair protection for Correctional Officers who are hurt on duty.

Grafton visits

In a minor victory for the POV B, CSNSW have agreed to commence visits for inmates at Grafton.

This is in recognition of a long standing position held by the Grafton Sub-Branch and the subject of several submissions I have made to CSNSW.

Grafton Officers with right of return will be offered transfers back to fill the positions created in this upgrading of the operation.

Steven McMahon
Chairman
POVB

