

Public Service Association of New South Wales

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In reply please quote: SMcM:mb

The Hon Mike Baird, MP
Premier of New South Wales
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Premier,

Re: NSW Prison Overcrowding

I am writing to you to express grave concerns regarding an emerging issue in NSW correctional facilities.

The closure of a number of correctional centres across New South Wales in previous years has reduced the available prisoner accommodation by approximately 1,000 beds. This has resulted in New South Wales now having capacity for approximately 10,800 beds. The current inmate population is approximately 10,600 with around 100 inmates waiting for placement in Police and Court cell locations.

Current strategies being proposed by the Department to expand prison capacity by 500 beds simply create an overcrowding issue in facilities already holding inmates in excess of their original design capacity. These strategies consist primarily of making every cell in the NSW system "two-out". This practice has been shown throughout the world to have a detrimental impact on inmate programs and more importantly on staff safety.

The Public Service Association, through the Prison Officers Vocational Branch, wishes to express its concerns for not only the safety of the inmates, but the great risk to Correctional Officer safety created by running a system that is overcrowded.

The New South Wales Bureau of Crime, Statistics and Research in Issue Paper No. 95 April 2014 indicated that inmate numbers by mid-2015 are likely to reach 12,500.

There is little or no capacity within the New South Wales system to house any additional inmates who may be detained in custody following the new bail laws being implemented in early 2015.

The proposal by the Department for a further 500 beds is no answer to the projections outlined by the Bureau of Crime, Statistics and Research.

Therefore, as a matter of urgency, the Association calls on the Government to immediately release funding to open previously closed facilities at Kirkconnell and to upgrade the operations at Grafton Correctional Centre to full capacity. We further call on the Government to make plans to commission the construction of a new correctional centre with a capacity to hold 700 inmates.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Gardiner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Gardiner
General Secretary

18th December 2014