

MEDIA RELEASE

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Prisons at Breaking Point

In a gross failure to plan for the future, the Baird Government has closed three prisons and downgraded another. This is at a time when the population in NSW is increasing, there is an ice epidemic and the state is about to see the impact of new bail laws. The NSW prison system is in crisis.

Currently there are 11,020 inmates in a system with 10,800 beds. Just like hospitals, prisons are designed for a maximum capacity. Beyond that capacity there are insufficient facilities such as bathrooms and insufficient space for staff. The overflow of prisoners are currently being housed in Court cells throughout the state creating a new set of problems.

Last week In an attempt to deflect from the State Government's breathtaking mismanagement of the situation, Attorney General Brad Hazzard was quoted as saying that prisoners "doubling up" was fine adding that crooks should be doing it tough in prisons.

Today the General Secretary of the Public Service Association Anne Gardiner reacted angrily to this comment, saying:

"This Government has slashed the workers compensation protections for our members who work in prisons and now Mr Hazzard the minister responsible for the safety of prison staff thinks its ok to create an overcrowding situation which can only lead to an increase of prison staff being assaulted.

"The Public Service Association and our members have been working into the night with the Department to try and address this overcrowding crisis of the Government's making. To hear this ill informed and gratuitous comment from Mr Hazzard is like a kick in the guts."

"It's time the NSW Government stopped shuffling deck chairs on the Titanic. They need to acknowledge their mistakes and release the funding needed to reopen and upgrade the states' prisons and to properly compensate our members when they are injured protecting the people of NSW."