

From: Robert Walker
To: CSJS
Subject: Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Inquiry
Date: Monday, 20 February 2023 2:46:27 PM

The Inquiry Secretary,

I make the following submission. I am a 70 year old retired lawyer. I resigned from the Justice Department 10 years ago after 29 years of service. I am not a criminologist.

"Tough on crime", "weak on crime" and "there ^{are} no votes in prison reform" are age old slogans in this State; perhaps adopted around the time The First Fleet sailed. Whilst they remain in use it is difficult to see any change in either societal or governmental approach to crime and punishment/detention.

Ward
21 FEB 2023

Prisons are required. Some people commit serious crime and must be imprisoned. Some people who commit crimes are unwell and must be securely housed. But imprisonment / detention [and the aftermath] should be accepted as an opportunity to reduce recidivism and not be seen as providing a training ground for further crime, as Risdon Prison is.

There appear to be several significant problems at Risdon, including in the way things are done there. My own experiences of ineptitude would probably be dismissed as dated. But the media continues to report on the following;

1 The high number of worker's comp. claims, adverse union commentary about events within the prison [including lock downs and assaults on staff and inmates] and claims the roster system is rorted ; I recall past Auditor General investigations into rorting. Perhaps 20 years ago 1 of 2 Deputy Secretaries of the Justice Department was in charge of the prison, indicating Risdon was beset with issues, and the public perception is, and media reporting confirms, that has not changed.

2 Overcrowding of inmates. I recall being told the Liverpool Street Remand Centre was fully occupied the day it opened; the name indicated a need to do something about preventing "in house training" in crime of young offenders and others not yet convicted.

But the media seems to ignore other issues including;

1 What , if any, steps are being taken to rehabilitate inmates. At a visit to Risdon by JP's about 25 years ago they were, I understand, told no steps were being taken; enquiry was made by a disbelieving JP I then knew. Doubtless the current enquiry will review the present rehab programme over, say, the last 10 years to assess its worth. But absent such programmes and post release follow up why expect a change of behaviour on release? I am aware of 1 former inmate who provided instruction in computers whilst serving his sentence. I think that was a good use of a resource but it suggests to me funding for rehab was tight and the training not ongoing.

2 The impact of alcohol and other drugs on crime. I am confident the Committee will find a very high proportion of those in prison or detention committed the offence[s] whilst under the influence of 1 or more drugs. Services, including rehab, for those in prison/detention and those leaving prison/detention must address drug use and addiction. How bad must the problem get before community education begins?

3 What assistance is available on release? Plainly very little when parole has been refused because housing was not available; it's hard to believe a half- way house isn't available for at least those who have served longer terms of imprisonment.

It costs a lot of money to keep a person in prison or detention. I suspect a lot more money is spent on insurance and insurance claims, police, victims of crime and the broader criminal justice system ; crime consumes, I suspect, most of the sitting times in the Magistrates and Supreme Courts. Perhaps it's time to start investing, or investing more, in a more holistic approach to

sentencing; the rewards might be reaped by the whole community. Put another way, who thinks the current approach does not require change when the rate of recidivism suggests otherwise?
Yours faithfully,

R J Walker

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