

Simon Scott

Committee Secretary

Legislative Council Government Administration Committee 'B'

Parliament House

Dear Committee members,

My name is Jerry Fitzsimmons.

Your Inquiry into "Tasmanian Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Matters" has been brought to my attention through my on-going involvement with the Sue Neill-Fraser Support Group and the ongoing concerns that this woman has been denied from a judicial, DPP and Taspol lack of due process not to mention opportunities to explore evidence-based strategies that undeniably would have reduced not only her contact with them all but the on-going costs to the justice system as a whole in Tasmania.

I do not intend going over what many of you would already be aware of with regards to Sue Neill-Fraser's case other than to say my thoughts are with both families who were dragged through this stain on 'The Apple Isle', and the appalling costs endured by those closely involved.

I wish to provide this submission to address the first two terms of reference:

1. Factors influencing increases in Tasmania's prisoner population and associated costs.
2. The use of evidence-based strategies to reduce contact with the justice system and recidivism.

I am aware of the efforts of a number of your colleagues in both the State and Federal arena of politics who I must say have been outstanding in their advocacy for both Youth in Detention concerns in Tasmania and for Adult Incarceration concerns in Tasmania, and I feel compelled to acknowledge the Independent voices of politics as well as Dr. Rosalie Woodruffe from 'The Greens', all of whom have contributed and spoken out about matters which have been bringing immeasurable scrutiny to the justice system as a result of unnecessary financial burdens on the State. Of greater concern though are the growing public perceptions of the judiciary, the DPP and Taspol practices.

I believe that factors influencing increases in prisoner population have more to do with the image that Taspol has created over many years, none more so blatant than the recent non-independent inquiry into the secretive methods of surveillance used in the prison system which in fact brings the Corrections (prison) system into disrepute as well given it would have taken 'two to tango'. Overall though not a great image to have a police admission of wrongdoing in the Adult system investigated by a 'conflict of interest' appointee.

That for me says a lot about the influence on prisoner population and the distrust for a public service set up to provide for those convicted and not to further punish them by means of deception and mistrust. Recidivism in any institution no doubt increases when the inmates learn of those in charge of the system committing crimes also therefore instilling in them a feeling of considerable comfort in or to returning to a place where criminals are likely all around them! Think about it!

Taspol it would appear are being perceived, as in Sue Neill-Fraser's matter of being complicit in for example a wrongful arrest and unprecedented public harassment and intimidation of a legally based representative Jeff Thompson simply doing his job. Time and funding spent on this man not to mention the human cost on this episode alone is surely enough reason to have a Criminal Cases Review Commission introduced in Tasmania, which I hope this committee considers to further prevent further unnecessary increases in prisoner populations and to examine the costs in maintaining such negligent and incompetent public services.

Police forces for example across the world have seen image change for the better. Currently in the Northern Territory the scrutiny of its police force through a Coronial enquiry is bringing to notice the levels of recruitment that have been responsible for racism, for unwarranted treatment of offenders and for methods of policing that go beyond the command instruction of daily duties and responsibilities. Such an inquiry will no doubt bring about change and an inquiry into policing methods I would anticipate may assist in correcting the perceived undercurrent of policing in Tasmania also. Prevention is so much better than cure!

Another example of image change that comes to mind is the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). People with 'different' attitudes to those of the previously known Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) were employed when the whole organisation underwent significant reforms in particular with the introduction of the word "Service" into their title.

I believe Tasmania is crying out for better 'service' to the whole justice system and no longer want to be accepted as one portraying the draconian methods of an older image 'Convict State'.

Evidence based strategies to address costs and recidivism I believe are never easy and in particular in the Youth jurisdiction where the abusive mistreatment of juveniles has been well documented however I am aware that new proposed facilities and services are underway in Tasmania, no doubt thanks to the ongoing advocacy of players such as Dr. Rosalie Woodruffe and not before time, the current government modelling that appears to be 'moving'.

Again I stress, the accountability measures that are set in place can only but benefit from a similar Youth type Criminal Cases Review Panel being implemented with the appropriate professional members overseeing what has long been 'an abusive and torturous' system.

In providing the above endorsements I thought the committee may want to look beyond Tasmania and explore what I hold great hope for in the future of perceived and good policing methods elsewhere. Whichever way I have no doubt that a reputable service to the people of this desired environmental paradise would be greatly welcomed.

I believe that any change is slow and in saying that I wish you well in your inquiry and look forward to reading the final report.

Warm regards,

Jerry Fitzsimmons

27/03/2023