



# QUEENSLAND COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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*Watching Them While They're Watching You*

2 January 2019

## **MEDIA RELEASE BY TERRY O'GORMAN VICE-PRESIDENT, QUEENSLAND COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES**

Today's Courier Mail report that prison staff are copping the brunt of anger over crowded jail cells has led to a call for the establishment of an independent Prisons Inspectorate to highlight ongoing problems within Queensland prisons.

Civil Liberties Council Vice-President Terry O'Gorman said that the bashing of a Woodford jail prison officer before Christmas highlights the serious problems within Queensland Prisons which only are brought out into the open when a prison guard is bashed and there is an increased threat of industrial action by the Prison Guards Union, the Together Union.

"But there are other systemic problems which never get public attention including prisoner on prisoner bashings, excessive force by guards towards prisoners and the significant inadequacies of rehabilitation programs in Queensland jails", Mr O'Gorman said.

"In early December the QCCL highlighted harsh criticism by Supreme Court Justice Applegarth in respect of a prisoner who has been kept in jail well beyond his full time release date because he was not placed on a rehabilitation program for sexual offenders", Mr O'Gorman said.

Mr O'Gorman said that Justice Applegarth in the case of *Queensland Attorney-General v FJA*<sup>1</sup> said that "if the system had offered [FJA] a much needed (rehabilitation program) place over the last 18 months and he had completed the program satisfactorily, he probably would have been released in late 2018 on a supervision order. The system having failed [FJA] and the community in this way, regrettably he must be detained in custody for treatment". (my underlining)

Mr O'Gorman said that the overcrowding issues revealed in the Courier Mail today showing Queensland prison numbers have increased by 43% in the 5 year period between 2013 and 2018 could not be solved simply by building more and more prisons.

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<sup>1</sup> See Judgment 11/12/2018 [2018] QSC 291

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“It cost Queensland taxpayers more than \$500 million a year to house a ballooning prison population when over the last decade crime statistics show that crime generally is falling”, Mr O’Gorman said.

Mr O’Gorman said that the QCCL agrees with Together Union Secretary, Alex Scott, that the Queensland Government needs to make decisions about the long term direction of the system.

A first step is for the State Government to establish an independent Prisons Inspectorate similar to the Western Australian model.

“Unlike the current Queensland Inspectorate model which reports internally to the Corrective Services Commissioner, Peter Martin, the WA model report publicly to Parliament and is completely independent of the prison bureaucracy”, Mr O’Gorman said.

“Western Australia does not have the systemic problems in its prison system that Queensland has and this has a lot to do with unannounced prisons inspections by the independent Prisons Inspectorate”, Mr O’Gorman said.

“We cannot continue to mindlessly spend an increasing amount of taxpayers’ money on prisons”, Mr O’Gorman said.

Mr O’Gorman said that the Queensland Prisons budget is currently north of \$½ billion and climbing.

“We have to get prisoner numbers down in line with the falling crime rate and push more of the ballooning prison budget towards health and education where it can be more effectively spent to benefit Queenslanders”, Mr O’Gorman said.

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