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PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE

A PUBLICATION OF THE COMMUNITY & PUBLIC SECTOR UNION
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CUTS CASCADE TO SQUEEZE OUR SERVICES

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PUBLIC
PERSPECTIVE

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WORKCOVER TO BE PRIVATISED

Fix WorkCover
it's time WorkCover was for workers

Senior insiders say that the government has advised the WorkCover Board that they intend to privatise the insurance wing of the Authority after the November election.

The insider says that the Authority has been told to shed staff, 250 have already been cut, and the Minister responsible has decreed they must no longer use the trading name "WorkSafe" or "WorkCover" and must only use the statutory name "Victorian WorkCover Authority" in preparation for the privatisation.

This change requires millions of dollars to be spent by the Authority on rebranding.

A number of safety advertisements costing well over $600,000 have been scrapped and the multimillion dollar sponsorship of the Western Bulldogs football team is in disarray and now under review.

The refocus away from safe workplaces to business costs has seen the Authority already give their insurance agents more autonomy to manage injured workers' claims, with disputed claim numbers soaring ultimately forcing injured workers to seek federal support payments just to survive as many abandon their injury claims.

WorkSafe stopped issuing press releases whenever companies are prosecuted for safety breaches, renewing claims of a political push to make the agency less hostile to employers, and TV ads to protect workers had been scrapped partly because they were seen as too heavy-handed towards business.

Victorian budget papers also reveal that Treasury will extract over $600m in dividends from WorkCover over next 4 years as Employers premiums are being further reduced but there's nothing for injured workers.

Pending privatisation seems to be the reason.

PRIVATISING THE COMPENSATION WING OF THE VICTORIAN WORKCOVER AUTHORITY WILL BE A BOON FOR PRIVATE INSURANCE AGENCIES BUT DETRIMENTAL TO THE WELFARE OF INJURED WORKERS' AND MUST BE STOPPED.

CUTS CASCADE TO SQUEEZE OUR SERVICES

›› AFTER 3 YEARS OF BUDGET CUTS AND AUSTERITY FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT A FURTHER $80 BILLION SHORTFALL IS NOW BEING FORCED ONTO STATES BY FEDERAL BUDGET CUTS.

This will have a cascading affect across all our state delivered services.

Our National Health Reform Agreements include funding guarantees which were designed to increase the Commonwealth's contribution to hospital funding but the federal budget removed those guarantees from July 1.

[CANBERRA HAS CHOSEN COMPETITIVE OVER COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM]

The Abbott Government also announced in the budget that from July 1, 2017, it will remove the current indexation arrangements for hospital funding and will only increase it by the rate of inflation, as measured by CPI. The current indexation of hospitals is over 6 per cent, while the budget overview forecasts CPI to increase by 2.25 per cent this year.

A similar situation arises with Education spending.

The plan was to increase federal funding to schools each year by 4.7 per cent (for schools that previously received less per student than the Schooling Resource Standard level) and 3 per cent (for schools that were already beyond the SRS), until the SRS target was met.

The Government announced in the budget that from 2018, instead of these percentages, Commonwealth school funding will increase at the rate of inflation, as reflected by the CPI, with an allowance for increased enrolments.

States will bear the shortfall. Premiers met only a few weeks prior with the Prime Minister at COAG to discuss what Mr Abbott refers to as 'new federalism'.

COAG discussed budgets and taxation, funding for various program including health and education.

COAG even issued a Communique outlining the matters they agreed to work on over the next few years including developing terms of reference for white papers on 'Reform of Federation' and on 'Taxation Reform' and agreed to discuss school funding at its next meeting.

The federal budget indicates now that Canberra has chosen competitive over cooperative federalism and is re-writing the financial relationship with the States and withdrawing from funding Health and Education service delivery to justify an increase in the GST.

TRADE DEAL PUTS PUBLIC SERVICES AT RISK

'WIKI LEAKS RELEASED SECRET DRAFT TEXTS FROM THE TRADES IN SERVICES AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS THAT CONFIRM THE CONCERNS FIRST RAISED BY THE GLOBAL TRADE UNION PUBLIC SERVICES INTERNATIONAL IN THE RECENT GROUND-BREAKING REPORT 'TISA VERSUS PUBLIC SERVICES.'

Fronting themselves as the ´Really Good Friends of Services,' a group of 50 countries—representing an estimated 70 per cent share of the world's trade in services—are secretly negotiating the TISA.

This deal will open up a wide range of public services to be sold permanently for private profit.

This massive trade deal will put public health care, child care, postal, broadcasting, water, power, transport and other services at risk. The TISA will lock in the privatisations of services—even in cases where private service delivery has failed—meaning governments can never return water, energy, health, education or other services to public hands.

The TISA will also restrict a government's right to regulate stronger standards in the public's interest. For example, it will affect environmental regulations, licensing of health facilities and laboratories, waste disposal centres, power plants, school and university accreditation and broadcast licenses.

THE PROPOSED DEAL WILL ALSO RESTRICT A GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO REGULATE KEY SECTORS INCLUDING FINANCIAL, ENERGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND CROSS-BORDER DATA FLOWS

The proposed deal will also restrict a government's ability to regulate key sectors including financial, energy, telecommunications and cross-border data flows.

The TISA will specifically limit the ability of governments to regulate the financial services industry at exactly the time when the global economy is still recovering from a crisis caused by financial deregulation.

The aim of public services should not be to make profits for large multinational corporations.

Ensuring that failed privatisations can never be reversed is free market ideology gone mad.

Responding to the leaks, Public Services International General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli says, "this is a bad deal for people and our planet. We demand that the texts be released for public scrutiny now."

A new analysis by Professor Jane Kelsey, Faculty of Law, University of Auckland, shows that the TISA risks stopping governments from tightening rules on the financial sector.

Read the leaked text and Professor Kelsey's analysis at http://wikileaks.org/tisa-financial

PUBLIC HEALTH CARE, CHILD CARE, POSTAL, BROADCASTING, WATER, POWER, TRANSPORT AND OTHER SERVICES ARE AT RISK.

OMBUDSMAN LAUNCHES PRISONS INQUIRY

Rehabilitation programs will be investigated as Victoria's prison population booms after Ombudsman Deborah Glass said concerns with the rate of reoffending and the costs to Victorians had prompted her to launch an own-motion investigation.

Our prison population has skyrocketed from 4,578 prisoners in December four years ago and is expected to peak at over 7,500 by Christmas this year.

Changes to sentencing and parole laws have exacerbated the increase.

> THE OMBUDSMAN RECEIVES MORE COMPLAINTS ABOUT PRISONS THAN ANY OTHER STATE GOVERNMENT ENTITY.

"It's no secret that Victoria's increasing prison population has put stress on prisoner access to education and rehabilitation programs throughout their sentences," Ms Glass said.

"This inquiry will look closely at what this means for offenders, corrections staff and the community."
Ms Glass said more than 50 per cent of Victoria's prisoners were repeat offenders, according to the latest ABS figures.

$200,000 FOR 2 DAYS' WORK

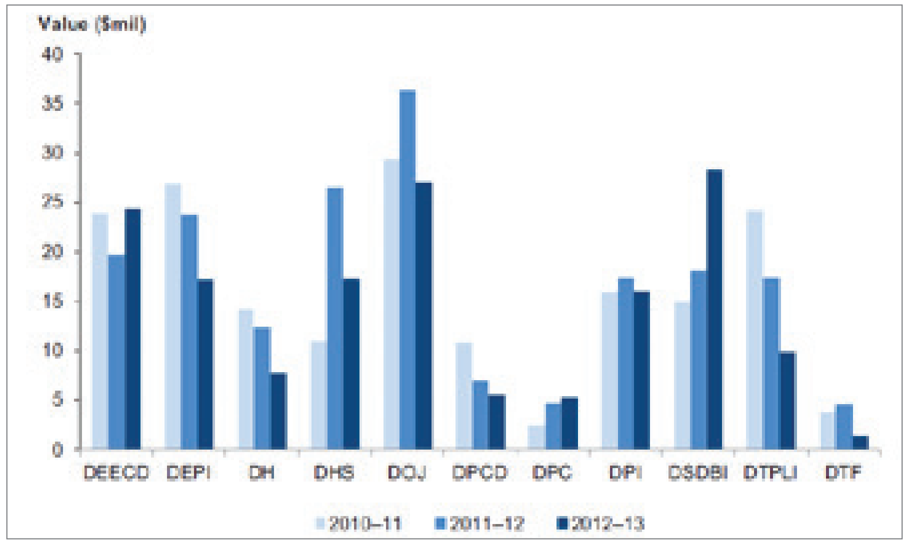
Auditor-General John Doyle has found Treasury and Finance last year paid $200,000 to a consultant that was contracted for just two days' work, and that ultimately produced a report drawn from publicly available information anyway.

The finding is included in a review of 63 appointments since the Government took office in 2010 promising to drastically cut the use of consultants.

The review by Mr Doyle audited four departments, and found none were able to demonstrate they consistently planned, managed and properly evaluated their use of highly paid consultants and advisers.

A review of 16 Education Department contracts found none of them adequately documented how planning for the spending occurred - despite 10 of the projects being worth more than $150,000.

TOTAL AMOUNTS PAID BY PORTFOLIO DEPARTMENTS TO LABOUR HIRE FIRMS, 2010-11 TO 2012-13 (VAGO SEP 13)



The report found the hiring of consultants and advisers had not been properly scrutinised and that appointments often lacked transparency.

The report found the Victorian Treasury could not provide reliable data on whether the savings were achieved.

THE REPORT ALSO FOUND:

- In 40 out of 63 appointments assessed, departments did not complete and keep conflict of interest forms.
- In 17 cases, departments received only one quote and did not properly assess it.
- Eighteen Environment Department contracts and 14 Justice Department engagements also lacked proper planning.

''I found an absence of a structured, documented and transparent approach to managing these engagements that was tantamount to maladministration," Mr Doyle wrote.

He said that, ''for the vast majority of engagements, the documentary evidence falls well short of demonstrating that these engagements achieved value for money".

The report said Treasury considered ''verbal attestations" by the department's chief financial officer to be ''adequate in the circumstances to confirm the achievement of savings".

COSTS NOT CARE IS STATES' SHARED AGENDA

Notwithstanding the nature of our Federation underpinned by the constitution emphasizing the states' right to regulate their own affairs, differences are narrowing in practice if not in rhetoric as Conservative right of centre parties take Government across Australia.

Victoria has had a history since the 1990's of wholesale privatisation of the state's infrastructure.

Other states have implemented similar programs but perhaps on a smaller scale often with greater public outcry after the excesses of Victoria's cold winds of privatisation became more evident.

With Conservative Governments now once again in the ascendency we are seeing a re-emergence of the same approach but with a defining difference.

Having learned the lessons of the '90's (that being communities like services and their infrastructure to be, by and large, in public hands) our Governments have recast their ideological model in a new framework.

The framework has been devised by Phillip Blond in the UK and was the underpinning theoretical basis for the Blair/ Brown Government and now the Cameron Governments agenda for public sector reform.

The emergence of Big Society and the use of softer language to hide harsh corporate realities have been adopted wholeheartedly not just by Australia's conservatives, but NZ, Canada, the US and the UK.

The focus is now a 2 stage one. It uses language such as Social Impact Bonds, individualised funding, pay for success contracts, public service Mutuals to start a process that is difficult to publicly criticise at the outset.

Once the Government subsidisation is withdrawn for say a school in a regional community because it is set up as a PS mutual however it becomes clear but too late to learn that these new service delivery models are not sustainable.

The community looks to outside providers for help and those providers step into the void created by the withdrawal of Government.

Prominent amongst those providers has been the emergence of multinationals.

The process in Australia, as state governments walk down this path, has been telling.

Multinational advisors have been in Australia and have commenced advocating these models of service delivery as "independent experts" talking about the freeing up of communities from "the dead hand of red tape".

The Government's couple the work of their respective Audit Commissions with a root and branch review of their respective service sectors.

The latest incantation of this has seen the emergence of Peter Shergold, former Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet under the Howard years, as a consultant to the States on service sector reform.

In tracking the surreptitious moves by different State Governments to outsource their service sector by stealth it is important to track where certain individuals turn up to undertake this work.

This is not a state specific phenomenon but a cross border attack on the largest tier, in employment numbers terms, of Government.

The same names keep coming up: Shergold, Sturgess, Harper, Vertigan, Challen to name a few.

Indeed work by the Public Services International (PSI) has identified this as a global push generated by a taskforce chaired by British PM Cameron and under the auspice of the G8.

Australia has observer status at the taskforce.

(Continued on page 14)

SALVOS HAND BACK RESIDENTIAL UNITS

Amid growing reports of increasing sexualised acts on vulnerable children in state care, organisations are handing back residential units to the state government over concerns they are funded at 'dangerous, neglectful' levels.

The Salvation Army said it can no longer afford to subsidise two residential units for six children in state care in Melbourne's east, and will return the units to the state government at the end of August.

The news comes after another welfare agency, Menzies, handed several of its residential units back to the government earlier this year, citing similar funding concerns.

A secret government report, leaked to a daily newspaper, also exposes disturbing incidents of older residents preying on younger children.

In May it was revealed that 30 to 40 children in state care had been sexually abused by gangs who had lured them into prostitution.

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare has repeatedly warned the state government that children in care are at risk due to inadequate funding.

Current government funding arrangements are at a lower level, only allowing one staff member to work with up to four traumatised children.

The Department of Human Services is now under pressure to explain why children with a history of sexualised behaviour are placed together in the same facility.

THE PRIVATISATION OF STATE PARENTING

Victorians remain largely uninformed about the shift in the child protection service delivery model that has left so many of our children in care less safe.This all began in the 90's when our Premier was the Minister.

Mandatory reporting was introduced and costs along with notifications soared.

Their answer was to start outsourcing care to lower wage community organisations but with this came less experienced and trained staff, and more casualization.

This shift has gained momentum over the last few years again. It's transformed the NFP (not for profit) sector into some pretty profitable corporations.

There's now more mini Department's (DHS) delivering care while the Department itself is stripped of resources.

Between 2011 and 2013, DHS axed 659 staff and with them, transparency and accountability was also axed.

Under the current Minister we now have no state run residential care units anymore, only 20 secure welfare beds available, foster care cut, cottage parents gone, the state run therapeutic residential farm plagued by assaults, drug use and staff retention issues, and we have an inadequate nos of child protection practitioners working without support to follow up increased notifications from an arrangement of multiple reporters.

Her model has been a failure because you can't pick winners when funding an integrated workforce.

The Minister's starve peter to feed paul approach is simplistic and leaves her culpable.

(Continued from pg 11)

As the process is sold as a review of service delivery models that seeks to remove red tape many in the Third Sector unfortunately (NGOS, charities and benevolent societies) are hopping into bed with the Governments who are using this process to cut the cost of delivering services often by transferring functions and spending from the state to the third sector.

Many staff of Government services are left out in this process and become redundant.

Unfortunately many public commentators look superficially at the rhetoric around an announcement from Government on outsourcing a function or awarding a contract and fail to see the impact on professional staff that, as a result, lose their jobs.

The classic example is the situation facing our members in Disability in NSW and WA where those state governments have announced that as part of signing up to NDIS they will withdraw completely from service delivery in this important area of social services.

In NSW alone this agreement between Governments threatens nearly 10,000 PS jobs.

The same is occurring in Victoria as the Shergold recommendations start to be rolled out which will see the State withdraw completely from service delivery in Human Services, Justice, Education and Health and only rely on privatised providers.

This will lead to a further loss of 9,000 jobs on top of the 6,000 jobs that have already been cut since 2011.

These job cuts are in complete breach of pre-election undertakings in 2010 that the Liberal Party and Leader Ted Baillieu made stating unequivocally that no public servant need fear losing their job if they were to win.

The Barnett Government in WA has also just announced the creation of Social Impact Bonds in the corrections portfolio but to date no details are forthcoming as to what aspect of the work will be outsourced using this funding model to the NGO's or to a for profit provider.

Unfortunately the South Australian Government is also flirting with these spurious funding models looking to introduce Social Impact Bonds in Health.

The model is also being looked at for Health service delivery in NSW and New Zealand.

In the US and in Canada, some State Governments are looking at introducing Bonds, with New York and Massachusetts already going live with models.

In the UK the often touted Peterborough project has been running for two years and prior to its completion the services being trialled under the SIB have been announced to be sold off.

Meaning that the push for these bonds as a model of delivering services has no independent analysis underpinning their worth but we are still witnessing the wholesale rush by Governments to embrace it.

The challenge for PS unions confronted with this wholesale destruction of social welfare infrastructure is enormous.

The denigration of our members work and the pejorative language has been occurring for a long time. It has now been joined with the chorus of front line services being vital and backroom support being expendable.

Whilst we can target some occupations to break down the apathy citizens have towards the service workforce the reality is that the concept of "picking winners" means that strategy occurs at the expense of many occupational groups.

I ask why a police officer is seen to be the only contributor to law and order when a forensic scientist, court reporter, prosecutor, public defender, corrections officer or parole officer is not also seen as part of that matrix.

Why do Governments, the media and citizens insist on bringing complex public policy debates down to the lowest common denominator?

All this and the development of targeted campaign strategies is made harder when the traditional civil society groups choose to turn their backs on the realities of the debate in the pursuit of "rivers of gold" from governments who are in the end outsourcing and privatising our members work.

The third sector need to understand they are being used by calculating Governments to participate in a process that if it was stripped back to what it is (as it was in the 1990's) they would walk away.

The movement can campaign to protect our member's jobs and the entitlements and conditions of employees when being transferred to another sector but that is not the issue.

100 years ago Governments and civil society groups including unions made a decision that society would be better if governments provided a safety net and that those who worked in the sector to provide that safety net were trained professionals who received a decent wage.

The Third Sector could compliment this work but not continue to do it to the exclusion of the state.

As this debate takes our community back to a time when the state did not supply welfare support (schools, hospitals, housing, child protection, recidivism, prisons, drug and alcohol, disability support) we need to ask ourselves what type of society do I want and what is the role of Government in that.

I for one believe in a role that is proactive, interventionist and hands on.

And I call on all to engage in that debate and let's have the debate honestly about the role of social financing in the delivery of our services.

If it was cheaper to continue to employ directly does anyone think our Government's would be vacating the field or is their determination to hand service delivery over to the third sector and the privateers driven by a desire to reduce costs ahead of providing quality care?

Extract of speech given by Karen Batt to ACTU Role of Government Conference, Sydney.

WHISTLE-BLOWER AIRS CONCERNS FOR CHILDREN

›› A CHILD PROTECTION PROFESSIONAL HAS SPOKEN OUT IN THE HOPE THE GOVERNMENT WILL ACKNOWLEDGE THE NEED FOR GREATER RESOURCES STATING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN ARE BEING PUT AT RISK BECAUSE VICTORIAN CHILD PROTECTION STAFF CANNOT COPE WITH EVER-INCREASING WORKLOADS.

The whistle-blower, who remains anonymous, said on national TV recently that caseloads for child protection staff had become unmanageable and said six months ago, a team of protective service investigators would receive about 10 reports a week from police and courts requiring investigation. Recently they have been getting 15 reports in a day.

The whistle-blower said complaints to the department were falling on deaf ears.

"What's in the back of my mind is potentially we could have a child death," she said.

"Staff had been averaging 13-hour days in the past two months but still could not manage the ever-increasing workload."

"We are constantly responding to a crisis and cannot work on our own allocated cases and do the preventative and supportive work that the families require."

"We just don't have the capacity to respond to the demand and we're not coping," she said.

PREDICTED RISE IN CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

2012-13 - 73,000 REPORTS
2013-14 - 81,000 REPORTS
2014-15 - 90,000 REPORTS

Source: DHS

PARKVILLE CENTRE - NO CAFÉ PARADISO

A TOXIC MIX OF BULLYING, OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE, UNITS SHORT STAFFED, AND PUMPED UP KIDS ON REMAND, MAKE PARKVILLE YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRE THE WORST BED IN TOWN ACCORDING TO THE DAILY INCIDENT REGISTER.

DHS recently adjusted the reporting guidelines for serious incidents at the Government's two youth correctional centres abolishing the reporting of category 3 incidents and surprise, the published figures now reflect less incident reporting.

Our secure services workforce is being placed at serious risk of injury with assaults being downplayed to minimize scrutiny, public interest and provide favorable statistics in reports.

Protecting the Government and putting politics above the safety of staff is their priority now with incident reporting Incidents are increasing and DHS has fiddled the figures and the daily register confirms this.

Over the first period between 21st March 2012 and 25th September 2012 there were approximately 120 incidents reported.

Then from the 6 months of 1st November 2013 to 29th April 2014 there have been closer to 160 incidents. The register indicates an increase of 20% not the alleged reduction of 70% as claimed by the Director in recent newspaper articles.

The actual reports may have reduced, but not the actual incidents.

DHS changed the reporting to present the opposite picture, lied about the bashings and have now been caught out.

The low staffing levels and constant exposure to assaults and injuries, abuse and threats result in increased absenteeism which is a huge issue for filling lines in the forward rosters.

This conversely results in a massive overtime bill for the Department while WorkCover claims for stress and fatigue related injuries skyrocket with 55% of DHS's WorkCover costs arising from the 400 or so staff in Secure Services.

PUBLIC SEEING BLUE OVER POLICING FUTURE

AN OVERHAUL TO FRONTLINE OFFICERS AND CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES FORM PART A VISION FOR POLICING OVER THE NEXT DECADE OUTLINED IN A POLICE BLUE PAPER RELEASED BY THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER.

Outsourcing and volunteerism unfortunately seem to be key planks as the report looks at more civilianisation of functions and recommends this path along with a concept of limited legal power positions to perform some of the functions of the full sworn role.

CC notes that Police do not have an integrated approach to information management and the reliance on LEAP is problematic while part 2 of the report looks at what VPS and specialist staff do, and what could be done by external providers, private or not for profit, and then what is best left for VPS.

It also canvasses the option of work going to other government departments where an interface exists and options for greater private sector involvement.

Heavy reference to the UK model emerges here as the report canvasses a range of functions and service delivery options for consideration including a big push to what looks like outsourcing admin and other support roles.

The report notes that there could be the development of a centre of excellence for forensic technology to service the whole of Australia.
Not surprisingly the Blue Paper has received a lukewarm response from Government Opposition and key stakeholders.

OVER-CROWDING - WHO BENEFITS?

WHILST IT IS IMPERATIVE A GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO KEEPING THEIR COMMUNITIES SAFE, THE CURRENT CRISES IN OUR PRISONS STEMS FROM A LACK OF PLANNING ON WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE THAT ARE THE TARGETS OF A "WAR ON CRIME" ONCE THEY ARE SENTENCED.

Across Australia prisons are experiencing massive overcrowding due in large part to respective State Governments' hard line policies on law and order.

Citizens demand the approach but seem ignorant of the cost or whether these Billions could be better spent.

Overcrowding in almost every jurisdiction is seeing officers placed at risk due to inappropriate facilities within the prisons, such as the use of stretcher beds in day rooms, mattresses on the floors, double and triple bunking in cells built for one or two inmates and the use of shipping containers to now house prisoners.

In **Western Australia** Casuarina is severely over-crowded with the Special Handling Unit for the worst offenders holding 732 in a facility built for 473.

In **NSW** Parklea, a privately run prison is moving to have offenders housed 3 up in cells built for 2.

In **South Australia** the union reports that the lack of suitable available beds has resulted in offenders having to be driven around in transit vans.

> ALL GOVERNMENTS HOPE THAT WHAT GOES ON BEHIND THE WALL STAYS THERE OR THAT CITIZENS WON'T CARE.

In **Victoria** the situation is dire, with the budget projections estimating that our prison population will grow to 7,000 by the end of the financial year.

The complications in Victoria arise because of the changes to sentencing which has resulted in the abolition of suspended sentences as a non-custodial option for the judiciary in both the Supreme and County Courts.

This will be exacerbated in September when the Magistrates Court also lose this sentencing option.

All jurisdictions are confronted with a situation where prisoner numbers are growing but the prison walls have not been moved out.

Prison Officers across the country report an escalation of tension inside and feel frustrated at the "lock them up and look away" mentality of State Governments.

The response by various jurisdictions has seen officers working unsafe hours to cover shifts, having threats made to their entitlements and conditions with attacks on the shift pattern applicable.

Corrections management try to "save" money by robbing the very people they rely on the make this dire situation work.

In one state, Corrections have tried to obfuscate the situation, denying that there is any overcrowding by changing the method of the count from Design Capacity to Operational Capacity.

Operational capacity is really just how many they can squeeze in to a facility and takes no notion of what it was built for.

The situation is also exacerbated by the mix of offenders behind the wall, many with acquired brain damage from drugs/alcohol or extreme violent natures not being able to be put into specialised facilities as they too are already overcrowded.

This leaves a volatile mix of offenders in mainstream who if the system was properly resourced and a sensible approach to funding it would not be there in the first place.

Prisoner on prisoner and prisoner on officer assaults are up, particularly in Victoria and Western Australia.

All Governments focus only on the external visible aspect of law and order policies being Police numbers.

All Governments hope that what goes on behind the wall stays there or that citizens won't care.

What they forget is that Prison Officers do a job that no one else will do and that this work is vital for our communities to be safe.

It's time for Governments across Australia to understand that the lock them up and look away mentality is a crime against a workforce that is genuinely committed to protecting us all.

PRIVATE PRISON SAFETY CONCERNS

INDUSTRIAL ACTION AT VICTORIA'S LARGEST MAXIMUM SECURITY JAIL IS ESCALATING OVER UNSAFE ROSTERS AMIDST INCREASING SAFETY CONCERNS OVER STAFF CUTS.

There are not enough radios or keys and Officer numbers will be reduced in the prisons units but G4S have pushed ahead with unsafe rosters.

It's a recipe for a serious incident with the private operators motives clearly just about putting profit ahead of safety.

The prison is expected to hold nearly 1500 prisoners by the end of the year.

In just the last month a parcel bomb has exploded inside a maximum security prison, a serious sex offender escaped and was on the loose as faulty monitoring bracelets are exposed, there's been a death and an overdose, and now consecutive stoppages by Officers expressing concerns over safety at Victoria's privately operated prison.

Overcrowding and increasing prisoner assaults, plus a serious overdose and death inside Port Phillip Prison, highlight the stupidity of cutting Officers with unsafe rosters.

Calls for greater safety inside the walls could go unheeded if the Minister retreats into hiding rather than taking charge and enforcing minimum staffing contractual requirements.

The crisis in Corrections has been building for some time because of overcrowding and corner cutting.

The Government must do more than just lock prisoners up and then look away.

PROTECTORS WORKLOAD REVIEW ORDERED

Department of Human Services (DHS) staff in Preston will have their workloads reviewed after WorkSafe stepped in over concerns from child protection workers struggling amid increasing reports of child abuse.

> WORKERS TOLD WORKSAFE THEY WERE STRESSED AND ANXIOUS, THAT THERE WAS A DISTRESSING LEVEL OF UNALLOCATED CASES AND SOME AT RISK CHILDREN HAD NOT BEEN SEEN FOR MONTHS.

DHS has until mid-August to undertake a risk assessment of it child protection model.

It is not the first complaint about the increasing workload.

MIND THE GAP

mindthegapvic.com.au

1994

4.456 MILLION VICTORIANS

48,359 PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS

2014

5.757 MILLION VICTORIANS

29,568 PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS

THERE ARE NOW FEWER WORKERS SERVICING MORE VICTORIANS

Victorians accounted for 22 per cent of Australia's population growth in just the last 20 years

TELL DENIS NAPTHINE CUTS SQUEEZE SERVICES

mindthegapvic.com.au

AUTHORISED BY KAREN BATT, VICTORIAN SECRETARY CPSU, 6 PALMER PARADE, CREMORNE 3121