AN ADDRESS BY

Dr. T. VINSON

CHAIRMAN

CORRECTIVE SERVICES COMMISSION
Recent reforms in the prison system—and dispelled some of. Because of the importance of the.

In distribution in the community.
Shortly, we will be celebrating the bi-centenary of this country's establishment as a penal colony. With the exception of a few brief but notable periods of attempted reform, the physical and mental apparatus developed almost 200 years ago for dealing with law-breakers, has remained remarkably intact.

Throughout our history, the overwhelming majority of prisoners have been destined to return to the community. Nevertheless, the idea that the incarcerated citizen should forfeit all of his rights along with the loss of his liberty, has persisted. Apart from the fact that it ignores the continuing family and other responsibilities of prisoners, this policy of adult "wardship" is almost guaranteed to cause human abilities and sentiments to atrophy.

It was against this unpromising historical background that a former government decided, in 1974, to hold a Royal Commission into New South Wales Prisons. The Commission actually commenced its work in 1976. The decision to undertake an inquiry followed the near destruction of Bathurst prison and serious disturbances at Parramatta, Goulburn and Mailland Gaols. The shortcomings in the prison system which were revealed by the Royal Commission were many and varied. The Royal Commissioner made 252 recommendations in an attempt to remedy them. But underlying these specific recommendations was a view of the prison system as being inappropriately based on control by physical coercion and brutality—in referring to Grafton, the Royal Commissioner called it "... one of the most sordid and shameful episodes in New South Wales penal history"—with few opportunities for the victims of this oppression to convey their grievances to the authorities, the media, or the general community, or to gain access to the protection usually afforded by the Law. Indeed, after a most comprehensive study of local and overseas systems, which occupied more than a year and a half and cost at least two million dollars, the learned judge emphasized the need to find acceptable alternatives to imprisonment which "... may be more economic and may have less harmful influences".

No-one can pretend to understand the reforms now being attempted in the New South Wales correctional system without first studying the Royal Commission Report and grasping six key principles upon which many of its recommendations were based—

(i) Prison should be used as a measure of last resort. Every effort must be made to find constructive alternatives to imprisonment;

(ii) The deprivation of liberty is the essential punishment. The prisoner should retain all other rights except those necessarily limited or curtailed by the maintenance of security. In other words, the prisoner retains rights and responsibilities as a parent, spouse, citizen, or litigant. He or she has the status not of an unthinking, unfeeling ward, but an adult with attendant obligations and rights;

(iii) Imprisonment must be justified as punishment and not based on false claims of "rehabilitating" the offender. Research has generally shown that "rehabilitation programmes" are ineffective. A more realistic goal is to prevent people from deteriorating morally, emotionally and physically during their sentence. Nevertheless, the prison authorities are obliged to provide work, educational and training opportunities for inmates;

(iv) Because a degree of tension is inescapable in prisons and many inmates lack the capacity or will to resolve conflict peacefully, prison officers must possess the necessary training and means of containing disturbances quickly and with a minimum danger to people and property;

(v) To prevent the build-up of tension and avoid the gross injustices of the past, channels must be established for prisoners to convey their grievances to the authorities;

(vi) The daily management of the prisons must depend on a system of incentives, rather than physical coercion. The most important of these incentives is eventual release and the carefully graded series of lesser security institutions and work opportunities by means of which a person is prepared for return to the community. The alternative, retention of all prisoners in maximum security, would be too costly in human and financial terms to contemplate: the assured production of many thousands of social cripples, overcrowding and prison disturbances in the antiquated, already crowded institutions, a marked increase in the cost of supervising the increased number of maximum security prisoners (approximately $20,000 per prisoner, each year) and a massive outlay for construction of new gaols, are some of the costs that would be involved.

All of these principles are important and most, if not all, of the 252 recommendations of the Royal Commission can be derived from them. Contrary to the view frequently presented by the media, "soft treatment" of prisoners is not to be found among the guiding principles. In fact, many of the examples of so-called "soft treatment"
The probation and parole staffing

The Commission, comprising three full-time and two part-time members, is subject to government policy direction. It has helped to introduce a substantial number of changes in the 22 months since its formation. Most, but not all, of these changes derive from recommendations of the Royal Commissioner and the five principles which were basic to his recommendations.

Because of the limited time available, it is only possible to provide a quick overview of these initiatives, without detailed evaluative comment. Nevertheless, even a brief listing of the initiatives serves to indicate the general direction of the change which is being attempted.

Security—Closed-circuit television systems with visual and auditory alarms are being installed at two of the major maximum security prisons to strengthen perimeter security. In the last two years the number of custodial officers has increased by 404 or 28 per cent over the previous level. Of this number, approximately a quarter have been allocated to improve prisoner amenities and the remaining three-quarters have been assigned to improving security (by means of twenty-four hour coverage from towers in maximum security gaols, the maintenance of sight or sound contact between officers and the performance of other security roles. Additional officers have been provided to strengthen security at prison camps, particularly at night). Riot plans have been developed for all gaols and decentralized emergency units established throughout the State. Metal detectors have been installed at maximum security gaols and dogs are being trained to detect illicit drugs. More secure fencing has been erected at the women's prison and more secure cell window bars have been introduced to combat the high level of absconding.

Recruitment and Training—A more imaginative advertising campaign has produced a larger pool of applicants for prison officer positions. More careful selection is now possible and a new approach to training, emphasizing security and human considerations, has been adopted.

Alternatives to Imprisonment—The probation and parole staffing has been increased by approximately 25 per cent during the past two years. A scheme has been launched to enable judges and magistrates to place offenders on a programme of community service in lieu of a prison sentence. Periodic detention ("weekend gaol") has been introduced for women. A court referral scheme to divert young offenders from maximum security reception prisons has been introduced with the co-operation of the police and courts.

Staff Discipline—An "internal affairs" section (Special Investigation Unit) has been created. Four experienced police investigators have been seconded to the department to staff this unit.

Work—The Commission is gradually widening the gap between the earnings of prisoners who engage in productive labour and those who do not. Shops are being established for the sale of prisoners' craft work. Existing industries (such as furniture manufacture and agricultural production) have been put on a more business-like footing. Some new, small industries have been started and a large factory is planned for Long Bay.

Education—There is now a major emphasis on helping prisoners to acquire basic literacy skills. A feature of this policy is the use being made of prisoner tutors to assist less educated inmates. This work is carefully supervised by professional teachers. A substantial number of volunteers have been recruited to help prisoners who are undertaking more advanced courses. Staff and students from Sydney universities have offered their assistance.

Prisoner Amenities—Contact visiting, which promotes closer relations between inmates and their families and friends, has been introduced to all institutions. (Prisoners are searched before and after these visits.) Inmates are allowed to make a limited number of supervized telephone calls to their family and friends and their personal letters are uncensored (unless this is deemed to be necessary on security grounds). These privileges are withdrawn in the event that they are abused. The Commission is attempting to increase the length of time prisoners spend outside their cells in maximum security institutions. (At present, they spend as many as seventeen hours a day in cells which measure approximately 8 feet by 10 feet.) Unfortunately, the extension of time out of cells will be restricted to a limited number of gaols until additional staff is made available. A "special care unit" is being established at Long Bay to provide assistance to emotionally disturbed inmates. The unit is being manned by specially trained prison officers as well as professional staff. "Needs Committees" have been established in all institutions to enable prisoners to bring their grievances to the attention of the authorities. Prison Rules have been translated for the guidance of non-English speaking prisoners and additional educational, library and other facilities have been introduced for the benefit of this group.
It is no longer necessary for mothers to be separated from their young children. In arriving at decisions about whether a mother should be allowed to retain her baby with her in prison, the Commission receives advice from an expert committee. As part of its emphasis on the acquisition of practical knowledge, the Commission is introducing a pre-release training programme to help prisoners equip themselves with "survival" skills (knowledge of community resources, budgeting, finding jobs and the like). In several institutions, prisoners are now legally represented in their appearances before the Visiting Justice.

Administration—The Commission inherited administrative chaos. A computer system to supply management (for the first time) with basic data on the distribution and movement of prisoners, is only now becoming operational. The records system is being overhauled. Administrative staffing arrangements have been upgraded and re-organized.

Officers' Amenities—The basic salary of prison officers has been improved, recreational and dining facilities are being built in a number of institutions.

Resources—During the past two years, the general revenue available to the department has been increased by more than a third to $81,145,693. After years of neglect, an extensive capital works programme is underway and the level of expenditure on buildings has increased three-fold to more than $18 million per year. A low security prison for women (the Norma Parker Centre) has been acquired. Parklea prison is under construction and Bathurst Gaol is being refurbished.

Considered jointly, the guiding principles and these few specific examples of programmes being undertaken help to delineate the correctional system which is emerging in New South Wales. Now, I should have thought it self-evident that you cannot evaluate a system on the basis of anecdotal evidence or isolated cases. Yet, this is precisely what happens all the time in the public discussion of correctional issues in this State. A prisoner absconds from an open institution and without so much as a thought for how long he has served, the balance of the sentence remaining to be served, the care exercised in placing him in the particular institution, or the number of similarly placed prisoners who have abided by the conditions of the programme, the judgment is made that the overall scheme is a failure. The tabling of accurate information which shows, for example, that there has been no substantial increase in the annual rate of absconding (relative to the size of the prison population) in the past six to seven years has no discernable effect on such judgments.

This reaction constitutes such a breach of the ordinary common-sense standards we apply to other fields of endeavour, that it cries out for explanation. The difference between prisons and other fields appears to be that people are so uncertain about the kind of prison system they want. They alternate between an emphasis on the essential humanness of inmates and, therefore, the need for compassion (when the system is presented as oppressive and uncaring) and an emphasis on the need for discipline, self-responsibility, and sternness (when the system is presented as humane). These two sets of values co-exist in most of us and compete for our allegiance over a whole range of human issues.

Compassion is least in evidence when offences involve an element of violence. Studies here and abroad repeatedly have shown that people live in such fear of crimes like murder, rape and robbery, that they greatly exaggerate the rate of their occurrence. For example, the incidence of murder in New South Wales has dropped by 30 per cent during the past 25 years, but that does not prevent more than half of all adults from believing that it occurs ten times more frequently than is actually the case.

People who feel this way are easy prey to the sensational, fear-arousing reporting (or political exploitation) of apparent breaches in the security of the one institution which, they are told, stands between them and criminal anarchy. This feeling of insecurity is enhanced when the same sources encourage the public not to distinguish between violent offenders and the majority who are in custody for non-violent crimes.

While this view of the world is understandable, it is essentially immature. The Police Department report for 1973 showed that there was a total of 128,000 unsolved crimes in New South Wales. That such a vast army of law-breakers goes unpunished is no argument for exempting those who have been detected. However, only an optimist could reach the conclusion that the presence of 3,500 people in gaol provides more than a modest degree of immunity from becoming a victim of crime.

This kind of thinking has implications beyond individual naivety. It prevents people from rationally appraising the policy long established in New South Wales and many other societies, of carefully reducing the level of security as a prisoner progresses towards the end of his or her sentence. This process is not automatic but no matter how carefully it is managed, it inevitably involves an element of risk taking.
This is a point which seems never to have been grasped by politicians, the media or the general public. Amidst the present controversy surrounding prisons, it should be restated at every opportunity: the staffing, accommodation, security provisions and expenditures of the New South Wales prison system have, for many years, been based on the idea of progressive reduction in security and, therefore, careful risk taking. There is hardly a more basic element in the design of the whole system. The experienced custodial, professional and management staff who are involved in prisoner classification are aware of the responsibility they have for prudent decision-making. They cannot, will not and never have been able to give guarantees that there will be no errors of judgment.

How then can the people of New South Wales reach reasonable conclusions about the prison system which they have? First, they need to be mature enough to stop thinking of the prison as a "security blanket" which can provide complete protection from those evils of this world which we all abhor. Second, the public needs factual information and balanced comments from the media. Given the anxiety which people have about becoming the victims of crime, I believe it is within the power of journalists to destroy or help preserve the modest gains of recent decades let alone maintain the momentum of reform which has been made in reforming the prison system. This is not intended as a plea for biased reporting in favour of the changes which people have about becoming the victims of crime, progress which has been made in reforming the prison system. This is not intended as a plea for biased reporting in favour of the changes which people have about becoming the victims of crime, progress which has been made in reforming the prison system. This is not intended as a plea for biased reporting in favour of the changes being introduced, only a request for the occasional presentation of the system's achievements, the consideration of individual failures in the context of overall success rates, and the avoidance of headlines and phrases which can only stereotype all prisoners and pander to the public's most unthinking, fearful reactions to them. Headlines like the recent one, "Another sex monster loose" can hardly be interpreted as anything other than a cynical exploitation of public fear. More perplexing, however, is the presence within some articles of factual information which contradicts the main point which the author appears to be trying to establish. The principle seems to be, "Don't let facts get in the way of a good story". What are we to make of the statement in a morning newspaper (16th January, 1981), "Police are angry at the soaring escape rate which rose by another 2 per cent last year"? An extremely damaging article in a recent Sunday newspaper was similarly spiced with contradictory "facts".

I realize that the ultimate solution to the difficulties I have outlined is the development of an educated, discerning community which will demand a higher standard of news reporting. The problem is that Royal Commissions into prisons occur very infrequently. If we are to preserve the gains of recent decades let alone maintain the momentum of reform resulting from the Royal Commission, the media must assist the prison administration to provide the public with factual answers.

To answer the first question, it is necessary to relate the number of abscondings or escapes to the number of people in custody.

The latter information is available in the form "daily average prison population". For ease of comparison, the rate of absconding for each reporting year is expressed as a "rate per hundred prisoner-years". (This is gained by dividing the number of instances of absconding/escape by the daily average population and multiplying by a hundred.)

Table I shows the number of abscondings/escapes in relation to the size of the prison population for each year between 1974-5 and 1979-80. An estimate is provided for 1980-1, based on results for the first half of the year. The average rate is approximately 5.2 per hundred prisoner-years and has remained fairly stable. The most notable exceptions occurred in 1974-5 when the rate reached its highest level (5.8) and 1978-9, when it was at its lowest level (4.3). Figures for the first half of the current year (1980-1) suggest a movement back to the average rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Rate/100 prisoner-years</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974-5</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-6</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-7</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>5.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977-8</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>4.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978-9</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July/Dec '80</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>5.4 (estimate)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is this absconding rate acceptable by world standards? After an exhaustive study, the Royal Commissioner certainly thought it was. He argued that it could be counter-productive to try and substantially reduce it. The Royal Commissioner recommended that a clear distinction be made between "escapes" from maximum security and "abscondings" from other programmes. (It should be noted that escape from
The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between the number of people who report feeling satisfied with their jobs and their overall life satisfaction. The study involved a survey of 1000 participants, with the results showing a positive correlation between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. The findings suggest that investing in workforce retention programs can lead to increased job and life satisfaction, ultimately benefiting both employees and organizations.

Table 1: Comparison of Satisfaction and New South Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>2022</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correlation coefficient between job satisfaction and life satisfaction in New South Wales was found to be 0.6. This indicates a strong positive relationship between the two variables, highlighting the importance of addressing job satisfaction in order to enhance overall life satisfaction among employees.