

Not my problem: Elliott side-steps employment guarantee for Parklea prison staff

Minister for Corrective Services, David Elliott, has dodged responsibility for Parklea prison staff jobs, telling the CPSU NSW that staff transfer arrangements were a matter for Corrective Services NSW.

In a recent meeting with CPSU NSW Assistant State Branch Secretary, Troy Wright and Parklea delegate, Mark Ward, the Minister insisted employment matters, including job security guarantees, were beyond his control. He suggested the union was better off discussing the issue with Commissioner for Corrective Services NSW, Peter Severin.

“With respect to the Minister, it’s difficult to take the comments seriously,” said Troy. “If we look at the NSW Government’s recent privatisation of its disability services, for instance, the government made it a condition that any company awarded a contract for the service had to take on all casual, fixed-term and permanent operational staff.

“They can’t seriously expect us to believe it’s beyond the Minister’s power to act and protect the employment of GEO’s Parklea staff.”

Following last Tuesday’s meeting with the Minister, CPSU NSW State Branch Secretary, Stewart Little, met with Commissioner Severin yesterday to clarify the Department’s role in managing the tender process on behalf of the NSW Government.

To his credit, Commissioner Severin acknowledged current Parklea staff needed certainty in relation to their employment and this would be critical to ensuring a smooth transition to a new operator.

While Commissioner Severin was unwilling to commit to an employment guarantee, he said the transitional arrangements were yet to be finalised – with an announcement expected in September. But all three of the remaining bidders had identified the CPSU NSW as the key stakeholder going forward and were eager to begin consultations with the union.

The CPSU NSW warned that unless there was reasonable certainty for all Parklea prison staff, we would fight hard for our members’ jobs.

