

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing? Severin's department pitches dud deal for GEO staff

Commissioner Peter Severin has written to all Parklea Correctional Centre staff in an effort to reassure employees that job security and a "smooth" transition are key priorities for his department and the companies vying for the lucrative Parklea government contract.

While the CPSU NSW whole-heartedly endorses the Commissioner's sentiment, we're somewhat sceptical.

In a recent meeting with GEO management representatives we advised the company that job security and staff entitlements were the top priorities for staff seeking to transfer to the centre's new operator in April 2019. We urged the company to explore all avenues to secure employment for its staff with the new operator and ensure any transferring staff were not forced to forfeit accrued entitlements, like long service and sick leave.

During these discussions it emerged that the Commissioner's department had told GEO that it cannot "legally" negotiate an enterprise agreement that would protect the entitlements of its staff post transition, and even if the company attempted to do so, it would not be binding on the new operator in any event. -NSW has sought independent legal advice and believes that the department is incorrect.

We think the department are seeking to unfairly manipulate GEO's bargaining process with its staff to improve their own negotiating position with the companies tendering for the centre. So much for Mr Nice Guy, meet Pete the Wolf!

We have assured GEO that the CPSU NSW would be prepared to challenge any attempt to terminate an enterprise agreement that protected the entitlements of transferring staff.

The union has told GEO that while our preference is for a longer three-year enterprise agreement, we would be prepared to enter into a shorter one- to two-year agreement to cover the transition phase and protect employee entitlements, while another deal is struck with the new operator. We believe this is a pragmatic and sensible proposal, that takes into consideration the interests of GEO, its staff, and the commercial interests of the new operator.

However, we are concerned the department's strategy to vaguely reassure staff on the one hand, and strong-arm GEO on the other, might work if staff are not wise to the government's tactics and unified in demanding real job security and decent post-transfer employment conditions.

The union will do everything it can to negotiate the best possible deal for Parklea staff, but we need your support to do it. If you're already a CPSU NSW member, make sure you pass this on to your non-union colleagues and ask them to join. If you're not a member, [JOIN](#) today and make our union stronger.

For more information contact:

- » Mark Ward
- » Brain Kirk
- » Sharyn Putland

United we Bargain, Divided we Beg.

