



General Media Enquires

P: (08) 9323 3800

(request Publicity Office)

F: (08) 9323 3878

E: publicity@cpsucsa.org

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Come clean on Banksia Hill privatisation plans

Corrective Services Minister Joe Francis needs to come clean on plans to privatise the Banksia Hill Detention Centre according to the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

A Cabinet in Confidence document released by Radio 6PR today shows the Barnett Government has widespread plans to privatise services in the Corrective Services portfolio.

The list raises the question of WA's only juvenile detention centre being privatised and doesn't rule out the facility being sold to the private sector in the future.

CPSU/CSA branch secretary Toni Walkington said there was conflicting information between the document (apparently prepared by senior Corrective Services staff) and what Minister Francis is saying.

"This week Mr Francis said he was unaware of any plans to privatise Banksia Hill yet this document shows the idea is being discussed at a very high level within his department.

"If the minister doesn't know what Corrective Services management are proposing then clearly he is asleep at the helm."

Ms Walkington said there was widespread community support for Corrective Services functions to remain in the hands of the government and not be privatised.

"Private companies are motivated differently to government agencies and are profit driven so outsourcing services such as these reduce the level of accountability and adds costs.

"We have already seen this year what happens when a private provider fails to meet its contract obligations in Corrective Services and how it hides behind a wall of secrecy.

"Public servants are aware that every decision they make is open to public scrutiny yet the level of accountability reduces when private companies get involved, that is why Banksia Hill should never be privatised."

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Ms Walkington challenged Mr Francis to declare the government's intentions now.

"Today the minister said the government should review all programs and services to provide the best value for taxpayers but they are already subject to annual budget reviews, mid-year reviews, functional reviews, Auditor General reviews and the occasional Audit Commission style of review.

"So the public sector is already well and truly reviewed."

Ms Walkington said the minister should apply the same process to all services currently run by the private sector to see if they are providing value of money and meeting their obligations as well.

"The government always talks about value for money with the Public Sector Comparator but the comparisons between public and private services are never publicly released for scrutiny."

FOR COMMENT:

Toni Walkington
CPSU/CSA Branch Secretary
(08) 9323 3800

FOR INFORMATION:

Darren O'Dea
CPSU/CSA Media Liaison Officer
M: 0421 934 794
P: (08) 9323 3855
E: darren.odea@cpsucsa.org

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