



PRISON TEACHERS ARE SAVING GRACE

Carmel McCallum, Greens candidate for Gilmore, has called for the State government to urgently overturn plans to sack three-quarters of prison teachers in NSW. “This will particularly affect the Aboriginal community, who are still over-represented in jail populations,” says Mrs McCallum. “This is a bitter pill during Reconciliation Week 2016.”

“Almost sixty percent of full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers have been given the sack,” says Mrs McCallum, “This will undermine the role of education in the jails of NSW, and jeopardise the future of inmates and many families who move to be near loved ones in the Nowra prison.”

“Families who decide to stay on in the area because it is such a great place to live find that, without education or skills, there are fewer prospects of worthwhile work with a secure income. Rather than saving money, this government move will cost taxpayers and the community dearly in re-offending and in social dislocation.”

There were almost 200 FTE prison teachers across NSW, but now there are only 87 FTE teachers remaining. Some are being forced to reapply for twenty positions, managed by Corrective Services, which will employ 67 non-teacher positions. Those sacked were highly skilled teachers of literacy, numeracy and job skills. Mrs McCallum has questioned whether this is a pre-emptive move by the state government towards privatisation of the prison system.

Terry O’Connell, the Director of Real Justice Australia says, “I have done lots of work in prisons, and without exception, inmates constantly tell me that teachers are their saving grace. Prison is a vital area where teachers provide the first meaningful opportunity for vulnerable people to make sense and meaning of their lives.”

Mrs McCallum adds, “Repeated research shows that education is the key to giving young people in our society, who may not have had family mentoring or support, a much better chance in life if they receive a decent education at school, TAFE, university and indeed, in prison if that is where life has found them. Education at all levels is a right for everyone, and the best investment we can make in Australia’s future.”

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