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C/- ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS)
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MAWSON ACT 2607

Community Coalition on Corrections

26 December 2008

Mr John Hargreaves
Minister for Corrections
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA, ACT 2601

Dear Mr Hargreaves,

The Corrections Coalition has written the attached letter to the Chief Minister seeking the Government's response to the 7 key recommendations contained in the Coalition's study launched in April earlier this year *Healthy or harmful? Mental health and the operational regime of the new act prison* ([correctionscoalitionact.org.au Forums /Recent/PrisonEnvironment_MentalHealth.pdf](http://correctionscoalitionact.org.au/Forums/Recent/PrisonEnvironment_MentalHealth.pdf)). We addressed the letter to the Chief Minister because it raised issues wider than your corrections portfolio or Ms Gallagher's health one.

All the advice available to the Coalition is that the Government's commendable objectives of rehabilitation and reduction of recidivism for the new prison will be unachievable unless it is run so as to promote the mental well-being of those detained. How the prison is operated is of far greater relevance to a prison environment than its building and design. The Coalition is pleased that, in the interests of promoting the reintegration of those detained into the community, the Government has stressed the need to provide programs like training and the retention and strengthening of family links.

The Government has set the bar high for the ACT prison; higher than any other State or Territory. It has also committed substantial funding to the project. To achieve its objectives without wasting resources involves more than paying lip service to human rights principles or providing bolt on programs similar to those provided by other jurisdictions. Doing things differently on the ground requires the thorough integration of all elements of how the prison is run including the disciplinary and security elements.

Yours sincerely,

(John Ley)
Chair
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www.correctionscoalitionact.org.au