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# A preliminary analysis of direct and indirect costs associated with the relocation of prison facilities to the Murray Bridge district

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# 1 Executive Summary

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In October 2007, the State Government confirmed the procurement plan for the construction of new prison facilities. These include a New Men's Maximum Security Prison (NMP), a New Women's prison (NWP), a new Pre-Release Centre (PRC), a new Secure Youth Training Centre (SYTC), and a new Forensic Mental Health Centre (FMHC). The facilities are collectively termed the New Prisons and Secure Facilities Project (NPSF).

While it is proposed that the PRC and the SYTC are to be located within the Adelaide metropolitan area, in the northern suburb of Cavan, it is proposed that the NMP, NWP and FMHC are to be located near Murray Bridge, some 80 kilometres east of Adelaide. There are no plans to reconsider the sites for the new prison (Government of SA, 2008). A key consequence of this re-location is that there will be no major adult correctional facility within the metropolitan area.

The Public Service Association of South Australia commissioned the Australian Institute for Social Research to undertake a survey of the employees of the three correctional facilities to be re-located to Murray Bridge to identify potential hidden costs associated with the proposal.

The report details the findings of a survey of staff from the three correctional facilities that the State Government proposes to re-locate from various metropolitan regions to Murray Bridge. This survey was completed by 252 employees in September 2008. It addressed various issues including respondents' current job satisfaction and future employment intentions in the context of the proposed relocations, current travel patterns to work and how the proposed relocation would affect them and perceptions about living in Murray Bridge. These issues were examined to identify what might be the likely hidden direct and indirect costs resulting from the proposed relocation borne by (a) government agencies other than the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) and (b) employees of DCS and their families.

A key finding from the survey is that less than eleven per cent of respondents are prepared to follow their current jobs to relocated facilities in Murray Bridge. The

majority indicated that they would seek employment in other government sectors, while almost 13 per cent reported that they would be forced to seek work outside the government sector, while about seven per cent indicated that they would retire.

The direct and indirect costs of the proposed relocation could amount to around \$33 million in the first year of operation. These costs comprise:

• \$0.9 million recruitment and selection costs;
• \$4.0 million indirect commuting cost of employees;
• \$8.5 million direct commuting costs of employees;
• \$2.75 million direct re-location costs of employees;
• \$1.05 million ancillary re-location costs of employees; and
• \$15.7 million direct and indirect travelling costs of the families and friends of prisoners

A further finding from this survey is that about 50 per cent of the additional costs that were identified through the survey will be borne by employees of the three correctional facilities and their families. Another 25 per cent of these costs would be borne by the families of the prisoners in the three facilities.

This report does not attempt to estimate the extent of cost shifting onto the budgets of other South Australian public sector agencies. However, some instances of cost shifting were identified which indicate the need for further investigation.

## 2 Introduction

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### 2.1 Introduction

The State Government has proposed a major upgrade of its correctional facilities infrastructure. In October 2007, the State Government confirmed the procurement proposal for the construction of its prison facilities as part of its Public Private Partnership program. The private sector partner will design, finance, build and maintain the facilities, while core services will be delivered by the public sector.

These new prison facilities include a New Men's Maximum Security Prison (NMP), a New Women's prison (NWP), a new Pre-Release Centre (PRC), a new Secure Youth Training Centre (SYTC), and a new Forensic Mental Health Centre (FMHC). These facilities are collectively termed the New Prisons and Secure Facilities Project (NPSF).

While it is proposed that the PRC and the SYTC are to be located within the Adelaide metropolitan area, in the northern suburb of Cavan, it is proposed that the NMP, NWP and FMHC are to be located near Murray Bridge, some 80 kilometres east of Adelaide. There are no plans to reconsider the sites for the new prison (Government of SA, 2008). A key consequence of this re-location is that there will be no major adult correctional facility within the metropolitan area.

This report has been prepared for the PSA by the Australian Institute for Social Research (AISR), University of Adelaide. It provides a preliminary analysis of some of the key and often hidden economic costs (direct and indirect) borne by (a) government agencies other than the Department of Correction Services (DCS) and (b) employees of DCS and their families as a result of the proposed move of these three facilities to the regional town of Murray Bridge.

The report examines these costs through an analysis of the findings generated from a survey of employees from the three correctional facilities associated with the proposed relocation to Murray Bridge as part of the NPSF project. This report is accompanied by two related papers. The first is a background paper reviewing the national literature on prison privatisation in the South Australian context, and potential social and

economic issues generated from the proposed transfer of correctional facilities to Murray Bridge. The second is an international literature review produced by the European Services Strategy Unit which considers the economic impact of prisons in rural areas, drawing upon evidence from the US and Europe.

## **3 Introduction to the survey**

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### **3.1 Introduction**

The proposed relocation of correctional services facilities to Murray Bridge from the Adelaide metropolitan area is likely to incur hidden costs and result in cost shifting. It is important to include these in impact assessments processes. A survey was undertaken to help identify some of the likely costs and consequences of the relocation upon key stakeholders, particularly the existing workforce.

### **3.2 Method**

The development of the questionnaire was informed by an examination of relevant literature. The survey sample was drawn from the PSA contact database and included 423 employees of the Department, 398 of whom were PSA members and 25 of whom are not currently members of the PSA. All those surveyed (a) work at the three correctional facilities that are proposed to be transferred to the Murray Bridge location (b) or are trainee officers that have entered into employment contracts stating that they may be required to work at this new location. Questionnaires were forwarded to respondents and voluntary confidential responses sought. Completed questionnaires were returned to the AISR in pre-paid envelopes.

In total 252 completed and usable questionnaires were returned and processed. This represented a relatively high response rate of 59.6 per cent.

### **3.3 Survey design**

The survey had two aims. The first was to estimate the hidden direct and indirect costs of the prison re-location proposal. The second was to gain an understanding of the likely impacts of the proposal on employees and employment. The questionnaire was divided into four sections.

1. Section A gathered perceptions on job satisfaction and future employment intentions of employees.
2. Section B gathered information on travel to work patterns and the location of employees in order to estimate the indirect costs associated with the proposed move to Murray Bridge.
3. Section C collected information on the perceptions of employees about living in Murray Bridge.
4. Section D gathered information about the respondents and their families. The information collected in this section was intended to provide some insights into the additional social costs that might be associated with the move of correctional services officers and their families to Murray Bridge. Moreover, the information collected in this final section was also be used to extrapolate the social effects of the families of prisoners who may move to Murray Bridge.

It was considered that these four themes would provide broad important insights into the socio-economic impact of the relocation upon DCS employees and provide a basis for better quantifying the direct and indirect economic implications of the relocation on employees. While the current analysis includes the identification of a range of hidden costs and cost shifting exercises, no attempt has been made to estimate the costs that will be shifted onto the budgets of other South Australian Government agencies and private sector organisations as a result of the relocation.

## 4 Survey results

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### 4.1 Introduction

This section outlines the key findings from the survey including estimates of some of the direct and indirect costs associated with the proposed relocation. Given the high response rate to the survey these estimates can reasonably be extrapolated to a wider population. This approach is adopted here.

### 4.2 Information about respondents and their work

#### *Skills and Education*

The aim of the first section of the questionnaire was to determine the human resource and staffing implications of the proposed relocation to Murray Bridge. Employees across all facilities are highly experienced, with an average duration of employment in the Department of a little over nine and a half years. Moreover, as Table 1 indicates the workforce is highly skilled one with over 60 per cent of employees at the three facilities having a Certificate III or higher qualification.

**Table 1: Highest level of qualification completed**

	Number	Per cent
Year 12	3	1.2
First Aid Cert / Machinery cert/license required for job	9	3.6
Trade qualification	17	6.7
Certificate I or II	11	4.4
Certificate III or IV	80	31.7
Diploma or Associate Diploma	12	4.8
Degree	35	13.9
Postgraduate qualification or MBBS	4	1.6
None or not stated	81	32.1
Total	252	100.0

## *Job Satisfaction*

Employees exhibit high levels of job satisfaction reported. Tables 2 and 3 indicate that almost 80 per cent of respondents indicated high or medium level satisfaction with their current jobs as well as their current agency.

**Table 2: Level of satisfaction with current job**

	Number	Per cent
Very satisfied	98	38.9
Satisfied	102	40.5
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	36	14.3
Dissatisfied	11	4.4
Very dissatisfied	4	1.6
Not stated	1	.4
Total	252	100.0

**Table 3: Level of satisfaction with current agency**

	Number	Per cent
Very satisfied	92	36.5
Satisfied	104	41.3
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	36	14.3
Dissatisfied	16	6.3
Very dissatisfied	4	1.6
Total	252	100.0

A key source of job satisfaction appears to be the location of the workplace. Table 4 indicates that over 44 per cent of respondents regarded the location of their workplace as one of the best thing about their job.

**Table 4: Best things about working in current job**

	Responses		Percentage of persons (N=252)
	Number	Percent	Per cent
Location, eg close to home/transport/facilities	113	23.2	44.8
Conditions of employment,	91	18.7	36.1
Security/stability of job, familiar workplace	52	10.7	20.6
Teamwork, comradeship, support from other staff	85	17.5	33.7
Challenges, variety, autonomy, interesting, enjoyable	57	11.7	22.6
Total	487	100.0	

Respondents noted that the worst things about working in their current jobs include poor management, employment relations and the proposal to re-locate the facilities they work in (Table 5).

**Table 5: Worst things about working in current job**

	Responses		Percentage of persons (N=252)
	Number.	Percent	Per cent
Unsatisfactory conditions of employment, eg pay, hours, shifts	46	11.8	18.3
Management inept, inconsistent, unsupportive, untrustworthy	69	17.7	27.4
Conflicts between staff, including bullying and harassment	23	5.9	9.1
Stress, exposure to violence and OH&S issues	34	8.7	13.5
Current uncertainty/unrest associated with new prison proposal	43	11.0	17.1
Total	390	100.0	

### *Future employment intentions*

Table 6 reveals that less than eleven per cent of respondents are prepared to follow their current jobs to Murray Bridge. The majority indicated that they would seek employment in other government sectors, while almost 13 per cent reported that they would be forced to seek work outside the government sector, while about seven per cent indicated that they would retire.

**Table 6: Future employment intentions: How relocation of job to Murray Bridge would affect employment options**

	Number	Per cent
Would follow job to Murray Bridge	27	10.7
Would seek employment in another part of the Department	74	29.4
Would seek employment in another part of the SA public sector	53	21.0
Would be forced to seek work elsewhere	32	12.7
Would retire	17	6.7
Unsure	47	18.7
Not stated	2	.8
Total	252	100.0

This observation has labour force implications on two distinct levels. First, as discussed earlier the average employee of these correctional facilities is skilled, qualified and experienced. If some 90 per cent of current employees were to act on their intention to leave their job with DCS as a result of the proposed move, this would represent a considerable loss of corporate knowledge and organisational information.

The potential loss of so many employees represents a considerable hidden cost of the proposal. For example, the direct separation costs associated with the resignation or early retirement of 19 per cent of the current workforce of these three workplaces will be substantial, but they will not be estimated here. There are further hidden costs that while they also cannot be estimated in this context, will lead to costly operational inefficiencies in the short-term as operational capacities and capabilities are lost as a result of a large number of separations and then re-acquired over time.

There are however some hidden costs associated with the employment intentions results shown in Table 6 that can be estimated using information gathered by the survey. For example, there are significant recruitment and selection costs associated with recruiting any new staff that will be required to replace the 90 per cent of employees who have indicated that they would not follow their jobs to Murray Bridge.

We assume that the recruitment costs are about \$25,000 for each Correctional Services Officer. Working on the premise that the base salary for a Correctional Services Officer is \$40,000<sup>1</sup>, then the conventional Human Resources Management wisdom (see for example Stone, 2008) is that the direct recruitment and selection costs for such employees represents about 30 per cent of the first year's annual salary, estimated to be \$12,000.

Furthermore there are direct costs of induction and training, which in this case is essentially a course of study leading to a Certificate IV. The majority of Correctional Services Officers complete the minimum Certificate III. These costs are difficult to estimate without access to confidential Departmental information. However, they can be estimated from the activities of the private sector. The numerous registered training

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<sup>1</sup> Based on estimates for Classification OPS 3.

organisations in Adelaide would charge a fee of around \$12,000 for a Certificate IV course<sup>2</sup>. So, the direct cost of recruitment is about \$25,000 per employee.

Indirect costs are more significant. For the first 12 months of employment Correctional Services Officers are not permitted to engage in the full range of custodial duties. During their first year of employment they are essentially trainees and in part are supernumeraries as they are undertaking a period of on-the-job training. Hence, the first year salary of Correctional Services Officers needs to be included as training costs or indirect recruitment costs. However, these on the job training costs, while they may be significant, are not estimated here. So, the total direct and indirect recruitment costs is at least \$25 000 per employee. A total of \$900,000 is required to replace the 360 employees that intend to further their careers in areas other than correctional services if their jobs were to be re-located to Murray Bridge.

It should be noted that this discussion is based on the assumption that all of the 360 people that need to be recruited to replace those people who will redirect their careers in response to the proposal are Correctional Services Officers. This assumption was made because in the view of the consultant these are the least expensive people to recruit. Hence, these recruitment and selection costs are under estimated.

As discussed above, a more difficult cost to estimate is the loss of corporate knowledge, skills and expertise associated with the separation of a large number of employees. These should be taken into account in a formal impact assessment study undertaken by DCS.

#### **4.5 Information about travel to work and housing**

This section of the report estimates the direct and indirect costs that the relocation would have on employees. It looks at a range of travel to work and housing costs and then estimates their value. Table 7 shows the current estimated time to commute to work. The estimated travel time is 22 minutes each way, or 44 minutes per day in total.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example the Certificate Level IV in University Foundation Studies offered by the South Australian Institute of Business and Technology, which costs \$11,960  
<http://www.saibt.com.au/index.php/how-to-apply/tuition-fees.html>.

On the other hand, Table 8 shows the estimated commuting time if these three work places are re-located to Murray Bridge. It has been divided into two parts in order to reflect the observation that about 50 employees plan to move closer to Murray Bridge when the new facilities open. A comparison of these two parts indicates the extent of the extra travel time associated with the proposal. The travel time to work rises from 44 minutes per day to 2 hours and 45 minutes per day.

**Table 7 Current travel time to work**

	Number	Per cent
Less than 15 minutes	76	30.2
Between 15 and 30 minutes	116	46.0
Between 30 and 45 minutes	37	14.7
Between 45 and 60 minutes	18	7.1
More than an hour: 65 minutes	2	.8
More than an hour: 75 minutes	1	.4
More than an hour: 80 minutes	1	.4
Not stated	1	.4
Total	252	100.0

**Table 8 Estimated time to commute to work in Murray Bridge**

	Number	Per cent
<u>If work in Murray Bridge but do not move from current home:</u>		
Between 15 and 30 minutes	1	.4
Between 30 and 45 minutes	4	1.6
Between 45 and 60 minutes	8	3.2
Between 1hr and 1hr 15mins	48	19.0
Between 1hr 15mins and 1hr 30mins	61	24.2
Between 1hr 30mins and 1hr 45mins	53	21.0
Between 1hr 45mins and 2hrs	40	15.9
More than 2 hours*	4	1.6
<u>If work in Murray Bridge and move closer to Murray Bridge:</u>		
Between 15 and 30 minutes	2	.8
Between 30 and 45 minutes	5	2.0
Between 45 and 60 minutes	3	1.2
Between 1hr and 1hr 15mins	1	.4
Not stated	22	8.7
Total	252	100.0

There is significant opportunity costs associated with extra commuting time. Let us assume that the opportunity cost of commuting is around \$20 per hour, which is the

hourly rate of a person whose income is \$40,000 per year.<sup>3</sup> Based on this assumption, the opportunity costs of an extra two hours per day commuting for 240 days per year<sup>4</sup> for 423 people, amounts to approximately \$4.0 million per year.

Extra commuting time also increases the costs associated with operating motor vehicles<sup>5</sup>. Assuming that all employees drive a three litre motor vehicle to and from work each day for 240 days per year and adopting the Australian Taxation Office tax deduction of 70 cents per kilometre for the work related use of a three litre privately owned motor vehicle we are able to gain some idea of these costs.<sup>6</sup> The cost of 423 people travelling an extra 120 kilometres per day, 240 days per year, at 70 cents per kilometre amounts to around \$8.5 million per year.

In summary the total extra direct and indirect commuting costs associated with the relocation proposal is estimated to be around \$12.5 million dollars per year.

The relocation proposal is also likely to incur direct and indirect costs associated with moving house. These costs are divided into re-location costs and the costs of new housing. These costs are likely to be borne by the 50 respondents who indicated that they plan to move closer to Murray Bridge.

The survey results indicate that all respondents who plan to move closer to Murray Bridge currently own their own homes. Hence, the costs of selling their present home, the costs of buying a replacement house and removalist costs need to be estimated. The answers to these questions indicate that that in the opinion of respondents the average value of the houses they own is a little over \$420,000. The survey also indicates that the people who plan to move closer to Murray Bridge intend to purchase similarly priced houses. That is, they also plan to spend on average about \$420,000.

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<sup>3</sup> Incomes for Prison Officers are likely to be considerably higher when overtime and penalty rates are taken into account.

<sup>4</sup> This figure is likely to understate the large amount of overtime worked by these employees.

<sup>5</sup> See for example CCH Australia, *Australian Master Tax Guide*.

<sup>6</sup> See [www.ato.gov.au/individuals/content.asp?doc=/content/33874.htm](http://www.ato.gov.au/individuals/content.asp?doc=/content/33874.htm)

The sale and purchase of a house is not a costless exercise. The stamp duty on buying a \$420,000 house is, according to Revenue SA \$17,330.<sup>7</sup> Selling a house is not quite as expensive as buying one, but there are still a number of costs that need to be considered. Discussions with a number of Adelaide based real estate agents indicate that agents fees on a \$420,000 house in the suburbs that the respondents to the survey tend to live would be 3.0 per cent, while it is recommended that vendors should budget 0.5 per cent for other selling costs, such as advertising and searches. On a \$420,000 house these costs add up to \$14,700. In addition to this removalist fees need to be taken into account. For a standard three or four bedroom house the removalist costs associated with a move from Adelaide to Murray Bridge is around \$3,100<sup>8</sup>. A total of \$35,130 per household would generate a total cost of at least \$1.75 million for all 50 households that plan to re-locate.

Furthermore, these re-location costs do not include any out of pocket expenses that employees may incur in order to prepare their house for sale. If these households outlay just five per cent of the value of their houses in order to prepare their homes for sale, that is \$21,000 per house, then these 50 employees will spend a further \$1,050,000. That is, those 50 families that who intend to move closer to Murray Bridge will incur costs that total at least \$2.75 million.

#### **4.5 Staff perceptions of living in Murray Bridge**

The third section of the survey was designed to collect information about the perspectives of the respondents to living in Murray Bridge. Their responses are overwhelmingly negative and are summarised in Table 11. Very good was scored as 1 while very poor was scored as 5. Each facet of living in Murray Bridge elicited a strong or very strong negative response. For 19 of the sub-questions the average score was about 4, that is a poor perception, with a median of value of 4, while three criteria had scores closer to 5, that is a very poor response.

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<sup>7</sup> See RevenueSA stamp duty calculator.

<sup>8</sup> The consulted obtained quotes from four removalist firms, which ranged from \$1,200 to \$7,000, with an average of \$3,100.

**Table 11: Perceptions of living in Murray Bridge.**

	Number		Statistics				
	Valid	Not applicable or Not stated	Mean	Median	Standard. Deviation	Min	Max
Perception of housing - private rental	166	86	3.99	4.00	.790	2	5
Perception of housing - public rental	151	101	4.19	4.00	.787	2	5
Perception of housing - private purchase	189	63	3.79	4.00	.860	1	5
Perception of public transport	180	72	4.39	4.00	.646	2	5
Perception of child care service	121	131	4.15	4.00	.679	3	5
Perception of primary schools	130	122	4.01	4.00	.812	2	5
Perception of secondary schools	132	120	4.12	4.00	.752	2	5
Perception of higher education	152	100	4.28	4.00	.704	2	5
Perception of health services – GPs	202	50	3.98	4.00	.788	2	5
Perception of health services - specialists	202	50	4.29	4.00	.703	2	5
Perception of health services - hospitals	200	52	4.09	4.00	.758	2	5
Perception of employment opportunities for your partner	180	72	4.54	5.00	.704	1	5
Perception of employment opportunities for adult family members	162	90	4.57	5.00	.588	3	5
Perception of employment opportunities for teenaged family members	158	94	4.55	5.00	.624	3	5
Perception of recreational and leisure facilities for adults	198	54	3.98	4.00	.872	1	5
Perception of recreational and leisure facilities for teenagers	167	85	4.22	4.00	.807	2	5
Perception of recreational and leisure facilities for children	162	90	4.12	4.00	.786	2	5
Perception of provision of community services	194	58	3.95	4.00	.787	1	5
Perception of provision of council services	195	57	3.74	4.00	.865	1	5
Perception of work/life balance	203	49	4.14	4.00	.903	1	5
Perception of public safety	202	50	4.19	4.00	.902	1	5

Broadly these poor perceptions of living and working in Murray Bridge suggest that attraction and retention of Prison Officers in the new facilities is likely to be very difficult.

#### 4.6 Information about respondents and their family

This section investigates some of the social costs associated with the re-location of the three correctional facilities. As noted earlier, only 50 respondents indicated that they were planning to move closer to Murray Bridge. Question 30 asked respondents about the demographic profile of their families and the occupations of all family members. The responses to this question indicate that the average family size for respondents is 3.4. This suggests that around 160 people are planning to move in response to the proposal to re-locate the three facilities. Very few of these people are planning to move to Murray Bridge or even Mount Barker. Rather, they are planning to move to various locations as Table 12 indicates.

**Table 12: If you followed your job to Murray Bridge where would you move to**

	Number	Per cent
Birdwood, Lobethal or Mount Pleasant	3	9.7
Stirling, Aldgate or Bridgewater	1	3.2
Adelaide Hills	1	3.2
Mannum, Purnong or Bowhill	3	9.7
Meadows or Littlehampton	1	3.2
Hahndorf or Nairne	2	6.5
Strathalbyn or Nairne	3	9.7
One Tree Hill	1	3.2
Port Elliott	1	3.2
In surrounding area but not Murray Bridge township	3	9.7
Don't know	8	25.8
Not stated	4	12.9
Total	31	100.0

However, there may be substantial social costs associated with the re-location of the families of prisoners to Murray Bridge. There is a paucity of Australian literature about the decisions of the families of prisoners to move from metropolitan areas when jails are re-located to regional cities. However research reveals that the plan to centralise the SA prison system in a regional area is unique relative to other regional prisons where metropolitan prisons still exist. Consequently while there is a

widespread assumption that prisoner families may not follow inmates because they may at some stage be moved back to a metropolitan prison, in this situation where no metropolitan prison exists the chance of prisoner families relocating is greater. Given this situation a survey of prisoners and their families would need to be conducted as part of a comprehensive economic or social analysis of this proposal.

To shed some light on this, we provide a broad scenario to illustrate the importance of taking account of prisoner family commuting time. This involves estimating the direct and indirect costs of the travel time from Adelaide to Murray Bridge of those people wishing to visit prisoners. It can be developed using the same assumptions that were used to calculate the hidden commuting costs of Departmental employees. Information provided by the PSA<sup>9</sup> indicates that on average prisoners receive 167.65 visits per year, from either friends or family members or of providers of professional services. Assuming that these visitors are based in Adelaide, then the associated indirect travelling costs would be \$5.1 million per year, while the direct costs would be \$10.6 million per year<sup>10</sup> -a total of \$15.7 million per year.

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<sup>9</sup> This information was provided by the PSA and is based visitor patterns at Yatala Labour Prison.

<sup>10</sup> Based on the assumption that 750 prisoners receiver 167.65 visits per year, with the opportunity cost of commuting assumed to be \$20 per hour with an extra two hours travel per visit.

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