



## CONFERENCE OF LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES IN NSW

Member of Catholic Church Religious Group  
ABN 52 476 362 010

The Honourable Mr Morris Iemma  
Premier of NSW  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2006

Dear Mr Premier,

I write to you on behalf of the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (NSW) a body which represents several thousand Catholic Religious women and men in this State. The CLRI (NSW) and its members are engaged in a range of community education, formal education, and advocacy programs which include issues pertaining to custodial sentencing.

Clearly the significant contribution which the CLRI and its members make to people in prison and to their families and friends, not only through the provision of welfare and pastoral services but also through public policy advocacy, is well known to you and to other members of the NSW Parliament. It is therefore deeply distressing to hear both you and the Minister for Police, Mr Carl Scully, use the same language in various media outlets last week stating that you hoped that people in prisons would “rot in gaol”.

We presume that the consistent use between your two offices of such offensive language and imagery was urged by media advisors seeking some perceived short term political gain. We believe that contrary to this current language you have articulated at other times a philosophy of the human person which recognises the innate dignity of persons regardless of their criminal behaviour. Likewise it seems to us that in the past you have also articulated a position which recognises that the function of custodial sentences serves two purposes: rehabilitation as well as punishment. It seems incongruence to us that a leader such as yourself would use language and imagery at variance with this principled

stand. It is impossible to believe in - and facilitate - the rehabilitation of offenders if the Premier's public language suggests that he is happy for prisoners to 'rot in gaol'.

The short-term gain that some media advisors imagine can be achieved from appearing 'tough on law and order' demeans politicians, the public and the prisoners whom it is our responsibility to rehabilitate.

In the coming months the CLRI (NSW) will be engaged in a range of community education campaigns which will include a focus on prisons. The policies of both Labor and the Liberal Party will be analysed and we will be advising our members, many of whom hold significant positions of influence in Catholic schools, parishes and welfare agencies, of the differences between the parties; this is one way that we can be of service to the most vulnerable in NSW. We hope that we can speak positively about the 'law and order' campaign of the Government.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Julie Morgan  
On behalf of the CLRI (NSW)