



**CONFERENCE OF LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES
IN NEW SOUTH WALES
CLRI (NSW)**

ABN: 52 476 362 010
Member of Catholic Church Religious Group

July 6 2006

NSW Director of Public Prosecutions
Mr Nicholas Cowdery QC
SYDNEY

Dear Mr Cowdery

I write on behalf of the Social Justice Committee of the above Institute. We represent the leaders of more than 3000 Catholic religious sisters and brothers. We want to congratulate and thank you for your recent public call for a more enlightened approach to crime and its prevention.

For a number of years now our committee has been involved in lobbying for reform in the prison system. We have made representations to the Government of NSW, written submissions, informed our members and their colleagues, associates and teachers of alternatives to prisons and were part of the process that led to the NSW Upper House Inquiry into Women in Prison.

Your talk was a reasoned and logical approach to this controversial issue. Like you we believe that increasing the scope and scale of punishments will never be as effective in crime prevention as the removal of its root causes. Many of our members work in the health care, mental health, education and welfare sectors and know at first hand the needs of people who are not functioning well in our society. Prison is not an appropriate response to many of them.

We are concerned at the attack made on you by spokesmen for the Government and Opposition. In particular it concerns us that the traditional separation of powers between the Executive and the Judiciary is gradually being undermined by politicians seeking populist approval especially at election times.

At a time when frank and fearless advice by public servants to the Government of the day seems less common your actions give us great heart that our political system still operates at least to some degree according to the democratic principles the Westminster system upholds.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Hinchey rsm
Social Justice Committee, CLRI NSW.

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

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