

RESPONSE TO PETITION

NORTHERN PRISON – NO MEANDER VALLEY PRISON

The petition of the undersigned residents of Tasmania draws to the attention of the house:

We, the undersigned Citizens of Tasmania, draw to the attention of the House our opposition to the construction of a prison within the Meander Valley.

Furthermore, the Prison currently proposed, for the highly visible Ashley Youth Detention Centre site, would be an inappropriate development on the scenic Meander Valley Road, surrounded by working farms and less than 2km from the historic Bowerbank Mill entrance to Deloraine.

The near neighbours and the community of Deloraine and the Meander Valley, including service providers, small business owners, tourism operators, artists, residents and farmers, believe that the negative impacts of the prison cannot be mitigated.

We propose the subsidising of transport for prison visitors from the north rather than duplicating a prison system in the north of the state, located away from the courts, services, staff and accommodation that a major city could provide.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to call on the Government to cancel the prison proposed for a site in the Meander Valley and explore other options, such as expanding the existing Risdon Prison and re-establishing a prison rehabilitation farm.

GOVERNMENT'S POSITION:

On 30 August 2024, following an extensive consultation and planning process, the Government decided not to proceed with the construction of a new correctional facility in the north of the State at this time.

The Government remains committed to reducing re-offending and ensuring the safety of the Tasmanian community. The Government is confident this can be achieved more efficiently and effectively at this time by modernising existing facilities on the Risdon Prison site, expanding rehabilitation and reintegration programs and extending successful community-based interventions, such as the electronic monitoring program.

This is why the 2024/25 Budget included an additional \$20 million to develop a new residential drug and alcohol unit at Risdon Prison, in-cell technology to help prisoners maintain regular contact with their families, and new office space for staff delivering reintegration and rehabilitation programs. This is in addition to around \$85 million already committed for correctional facilities and asset management projects at Risdon Prison including a new kitchen, new maximum-security unit and new or upgraded electronic security systems.

The Government is also supporting a number of other programs and strategies to help reduce reoffending, including Home Detention Orders, the Electronic Monitoring program and developing accommodation on the north west coast to support female prisoners transition back into the community.

Following the decision to not develop the northern correctional facility, the Government remains committed to ensuring there is a strong pipeline of work in Northern Tasmania that creates and sustains employment and boosts the local economy – particularly in the Meander Valley Region.

Following its closure and vacation by the Department of Education Children and Young People (DECYP), options for the future use of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC) site will be re-examined, including potential re-purposing of the existing facility for a minimum/low medium correctional facility.

As has happened previously, the Government will ensure any future decision regarding what the AYDC site will be used for following its closure will be made following consultation with the local community, including the near neighbours.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'M. Ogilvie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP
Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation

Date: 16-4-25