



Christians for an Ethical Society Canberra

www.ces.org.au

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Website launched: prison forums covered

Christians for an Ethical Society has now launched its website containing audios, transcripts and other information about its three recent forums on the new ACT prison and details of forthcoming forums on social inclusion and the ACT Election.

The site at http://www.ces.org.au/prison_forum.htm makes available the views of the well informed speakers who addressed the forums, namely:

- Professor Tony Vinson speaking on "Prisons – can they be human even rehabilitate?"
- Simon Corbell (Attorney General for the ACT) speaking on "*The new ACT Prison: What is planned and what it will achieve*" and Professor David Biles speaking on "*How the ACT compares: The facts and figures on prisons and prisoners in Australia*", and
- Senator Gary Humphreys, Mr Ron Cahill (ACT Chief Magistrate) and Justice Richard Refshauge speaking on "*The ACT Prison, a de facto mental institution?*"

There is also an interview with Ms Deb Wybron of the ACT Women and Prisons Group

Some quotes:

"You can have the shiniest, best prison in the world but, if we are not moving upstream to try to do something about the very readily identified factors that seem to put people on the path to breaking the law, then what's the use of the prison?" (Prof. Tony Vinson).

"I fear that the new ACT prison will outgrow its capacity within as little as 5 and almost certainly within 10 years" (Prof. David Biles).

Senator Humphries called for a prison regime to cope with the overwhelming prevalence of people with a mental health condition: *"There is no question that we are going to have to spend a lot of money to make this kind of regime work It is equally clear that the enormous cost of the criminal justice system in general and imprisonment in particular – we pay \$70,000 a year approximately for each prisoner that we sentence to full-time incarceration - is a huge cost and if we can prevent recurrence of that cost because people keep committing crimes and going back into the prison system, we save ourselves a lot of money at the end of the day"*.

"When a woman goes to prison for any length of time, she often loses her home and even her belongings. Women often have little or no money when they are remanded – possibly that is part of why some have committed a crime. Sometimes they don't even have any ID. If they do have ID on them, such as driver's license or health card, it frequently runs out before their release. So to get released with no home of her own to go to and only a bus fare and the prospect of surviving on half social security benefits for the next 3 weeks is pretty daunting for any woman" (Deb Wybron).

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MEDIA NOTIFICATION