

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Prisoners (Correctional Services) Act Part 12

I am writing to you to seek the assistance of your Society in connection with letters sent to prison inmates in the Northern Territory by their legal representatives. My concern is that cash money should not be enclosed in such letters.

As you will be aware, under part 12 of the Prisons (Correctional Services) Act Correspondence between prisoners and legal representatives is not subject to being opened and inspected at the prison in the way that most other letters to and from prisoners are. I enclose a copy of Part 12 (Copy of Part 12 is available at the Law Society).

Prisoners in the Northern Territory are not allowed to have money in their possession, regardless of whether or not they are under sentence and their security rating.

Any money they have when they enter prison, money they earn from employment in prison and money sent to them from outside prison, is held in a trust account for them.

Since they are provided with the necessities for living in reasonable comfort, prisoners do not need money except to buy items such as confectionary, soft drinks, cigarettes, magazines, recorded music and so on.

In these cases, the prison arranges purchase and delivery, having been authorised by the prisoner to draw on his or her money held in the trust account.

There are problems associated with letting prisoners handle their own money, and these are reinforced by the prison environment and close conditions under which prisoners live.

Apart from theft and a situation where some prisoners will have plenty of money while others little or none,

the main concern is that prisoners who are well-off may use their money to arrange favours by other inmates or prison staff, or for more serious bribery where prison security can then be in jeopardy.

I set this out in detail so that you will appreciate there are real grounds for asking Law Society members not to send money directly to prisoners for whom they are providing legal representation or give them money during prison visits.

There was recently a case in Darwin where a prisoner received several hundred dollars in cash in a letter from his legal representative. This came to notice when the prisoner tried to persuade a prison officer to buy drugs for him.

I would be grateful if you could endorse this approach and convey this matter to members of the Law Society.

I look forward to your help on this matter and am available to discuss this issue should you wish to do so.

DK Owston

Dept of Correctional Services

Compensation Payments for Social Security purposes

Thank you for your recent letter to the Minister for Social Security concerning the announcement in the budget about the treatment of compensation payments for social security purposes. I am replying on the Minister's behalf and apologise for the delay in responding.

Your views on the Compensation measures have been noted.

The measure which would have provided for the compensation provisions in the Social Security Act 1991 to apply to compensation lump sums

irrespective of the nature of the lump sum was not passed in the Senate. Lump sums that are legitimately for non-economic loss only and paid in isolation from economic loss payments will therefore continue to be exempt from the provisions.

The Government remains concerned with both cost-shifting by State compensation schemes and double-dipping by individuals and it was indicated in the Senate debate that the Government intended to revisit the matter and seek alternative solutions to the identified problems.

*Con Sciacca, MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister
for Social Security*

Work Wanted

My name is Angela Skillas and I am presently studying for a certificate in legal studies through the Northern Territory University by correspondence.

I have completed all my units except for the one which I am studying at the moment. As this last unit is by correspondence it enables me to pursue a full-time position in the legal field which I am currently seeking.

The positions that I mostly have an interest in are a paralegal, a rounds clerk or a typist.

If in any case none of these positions are available I would be glad to work on a voluntary basis or under any other arrangement.

Courses which I have completed are wordperfect 5.1 and office skills.

I am friendly, punctual, outgoing and reliable person.

You can contact me by phoning (089) 811480 or by post at this address 24/106 Smith Street, Tomaris Court, Darwin, NT, 0801.

I would be pleased to attend an interview at any time convenient to you.