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Privately-run Parklea prison riot inevitable after years of warnings ignored

Parklea Correctional Centre's most recent riot is proof NSW's privately-run prison experiment is failing, as the union warns lives of prison officers and inmates are at risk as prison management continues to ignore serious safety concerns. As recently as Saturday the Community Public Sector Union of NSW sought an urgent meeting with Governor Paul Baker and Parklea's management, amid a spate of officer assaults. In a July 6 meeting with the Governor the union formally raised concerns of no consistency around welfare calls, money not going into inmates accounts, lack of handcuffs, and the need for more officer training. "For more than two years the CPSU NSW has been ringing the alarm bell about safety in Parklea," said Troy Wright, assistant branch secretary of CPSU NSW. "These warnings, particularly about unsafe conditions for prison officers, have been recklessly ignored." The union first raised the issue of safety with operators MTC-Broadspectrum in 2019, when the US-based prison operator took over from GEO. Consistent efforts to improve safety and secure better conditions for prison officer have been consistently ignored since. "MTC-Broadspectrum is one of America's largest private prison operators and has a history of violent, dangerous prisons. In NSW we have no transparency about why they were selected to run Parklea - the Berejiklian government simply handed over the keys and washed their hands of the lives of those who live and work inside Parklea's walls. "Since MTC-Broadspectrum took over operations in Parklea it has become more dangerous for workers and inmates alike. This is a direct result of cost cutting decisions to squeeze every last cent out of the prison. "Our justice system should be run by the state in the public interest. It should not be operated by private providers whose sole motivation is making money. When you run a prison for profit your inclination will always be to cut corners. It means jails are understaffed and have fewer programs, which makes them more dangerous and violent."