

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition Number: 591
Petition Sponsored by: Renee Heath MP
Directed to: Minister for Corrections
Tabled on: 16 October 2024

Petition Grievance:

The Petition of the certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that all Victorian prisoners are eligible for Emergency Management Days (EMDs) while incarcerated, which can see up to four days of their sentence removed for each day they are inconvenienced due to industrial action, emergencies, disruptions and deprivations: including due to COVID-19 lockdowns.

Over the two years when Melbourne and Victoria suffered through the world's longest COVID-19 lockdowns, thousands of prisoners received more than 360,000 days off their collective sentences. This is equivalent to over 1,000 years of jail time.

Petition Action:

The Petition therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to, as a matter of urgency, remove the eligibility for violent and high-risk people in prison to access EMDs and ensure any sentence reduction from EMDs does not reduce time served to less than the minimum non-parole sentence.

Reply:

I thank the Member for the Eastern Victorian Region for sponsoring the petition. I also want to acknowledge the family of Katie Haley and other community members for their advocacy on this issue.

Emergency Management Days may be granted under the *Corrections Act 1986* to people in custody who demonstrate good behaviour during periods of disruption or deprivation such as an industrial dispute, emergency or other special or unforeseen circumstances. They are not granted where a person has demonstrated poor behaviour.

Emergency Management Days are an operational tool for maintaining good order during emergencies, as they provide a strong incentive for compliance during times when there is a significant risk of dangerous disruptions inside prison facilities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Emergency Management Days were a tool that enabled staff to manage complex and difficult circumstances. Unprecedented restrictions were imposed in prison facilities to stop the spread of COVID-19.

People in prison who experienced significant restrictions received EMDs. This assisted with the maintenance of good order in prisons and helped ensure the protection of corrections workers.

In other states, prison riots and disruptions occurred in response to similar COVID-19 restrictions, putting corrections staff at significant risk of harm.

Pandemic related rules for the application of EMD's ended in early 2023. EMDs are now being used very rarely, in line with their targeted role relating to disruptions or deprivations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Erdogan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Hon. Enver Erdogan MLC

Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Youth Justice