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FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

Brad Crouch with Meagan Dillon, Andrew Hough, Andrew Dowdell

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Family plans protests as indigenous prisoner 'left brain-dead'

THE family of a young Aboriginal inmate "left brain-dead" after a violent altercation with prison guards is planning national protests.

But Correctional Services has said the steps taken were necessary to bring a dangerous situation under control.

Wayne Morrison, 29, above, was last night in a critical condition on life support in the Royal Adelaide Hospital as a result of a fight that left five Yatala Labour Prison guards injured.

His distressed family has vowed to fight for justice for the young father. CONTINUED PAGE 4 Inmate 'brain dead': family in calls for mass protests FROM PAGE 1 Mr Morrison's sister, Latoya Rule, told the Sunday Mail she planned a series of national protests. "There definitely will be national protests - they will be happening," she said. Ms Rule said doctors had told her family that Mr Morrison was brain-dead and would not wake from the incident, which happened in the prison's admissions area.

Mr Morrison was waiting ahead of a scheduled video link appearance at Elizabeth Magistrates Court when the "critical incident" erupted about 11.30am on Friday.

It is understood he was involved in an altercation with two officers, including a young female, when he had to be restrained by other guards.

It is believed he was being taken back to the maximum security G-division - which houses some of the state's most notorious criminals - when he had a medical episode.

It is believed CCTV cameras captured the incident, which is now the subject of a police investigation. Sources suggested his alleged crimes "are not pretty". However, authorities would not reveal details of his alleged offending.

Ms Rule described her brother as a "non-violent fisherman and artist" who loved to paint and weave, play guitar and who spent most of his days outdoors fishing.

She said he had suffered health problems and claimed he was denied "the human right of healthcare" by authorities while in custody over the past six days.

Ms Rule said: "My brother's life matters and he should not be portrayed as someone he was not.

"All prison officers involved have been released from the hospital with minor to no injuries, and my brother is brain-dead and has no life left.

"We will remember him for who he is." Mr Morrison's brother, Patrick, attacked the state Correctional Services Department over the incident.

"My brother is going to die because of what they've done to him," he wrote on Facebook.

"There will be justice, I demand justice. You cannot hide what you've done." Correctional Services Department chief executive David Brown said the "critical incident" involved an alleged assault by an inmate on prison staff.

Mr Brown said of the five guards injured, two of them - a man and a woman - had received facial fractures.

"The prisoner involved in the incident was brought under control by responding staff," Mr Brown said. "In the course of the incident, a medical emergency ensued and the correctional staff applied immediate first-aid to the prisoner and sought assistance from on-site medical staff." Mr Brown said an ambulance was called a short time later and the prisoner was transferred to the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

An SA Ambulance spokesman said one man suffering a cardiac arrest was taken to hospital, along with two other people with minor injuries.

Mr Brown would not comment on whether the prisoner suffered a cardiac arrest. "I cannot comment further on the circumstances or the cause of the medical emergency," he said.

"What I can say is that, I personally, and the officers of my department, understand and take very seriously our responsibilities where a use of force is required to bring a dangerous situation under control." He said the prisoner's next of kin had been notified of the incident, adding: "I would like to pass on my thoughts to the family of the prisoner who is now in a serious condition in hospital." Mr Brown said he could not comment any further on what led to the alleged assault, the medical condition of the prisoner or whether his guards acted appropriately.

He said the five prison staff were treated for injuries - two sustained facial fractures, one had an injury to his shoulder and two others were assessed.

"I'm very concerned about the physical and mental health of my staff involved in this critical incident," he said.

He said all staff had been discharged from hospital.

"(The prison staff) are supporting each other - they're shaken up by the incident and those who have received physical injuries are in some discomfort and pain," he said.

Mr Brown said the incident happened while the prisoner was waiting in the admissions area of Yatala before his scheduled appearance via video link to court.

He said SA Police's Major Crime Investigation Branch was now investigating. "Correctional Services is co-operating fully with this investigation," Mr Brown said.

"This is clearly a very serious incident, the circumstances surrounding the incident and the medical emergency are now the subject of a police investigation." Mr Brown said any CCTV footage of the incident would be provided to police and could form part of the investigation. He said no weapons were involved.

An SA Police spokeswoman said Major Crime detectives were assisting prison authorities with the investigation.

Premier Jay Weatherill denied the violence was a symptom of a troubled and overcrowded prison system.

"No. I think it's a sign of the times and that we are dealing with people who are dangerous and that has consequences for the people who do the very difficult work of custodial care," he said.- with Meagan Dillon, Andrew Hough, Andrew Dowdell