

My background and previous work experience

My Qualifications are as follows:

I have a Dip. Child Protection, Juvenile Justice & Statutory Supervision, a Dip. Community Services (Community Work) and a Bach. Psychology (Hons).

I have worked approx. 3.5 years in a variety of settings in child protection and have most recently worked 4 years with asylum seekers and refugees in various roles, including leadership/managerial positions. For 3.5 years of this, I was employed by The Australian Red Cross, working in the Community Detention Program as a Caseworker, then Team Leader and Acting State Program Coordinator. Following this, I was employed from May-Oct 2014 as an Adult Caseworker for Save the Children. This was based in the Regional Processing Centre (RPC 3) also known as the "Families Camp" on Nauru.

Senate Inquiry Submission

- a. how the Commonwealth Government is fulfilling its obligations under the Memorandum of Understanding between The Republic of Nauru and the Commonwealth of Australia relating to the transfer to and assessment of persons in Nauru, cost and related issues;**

Based on my experiences on Nauru, below are the parts of the MOU that I have concerns about:

Noting that:

- *The Participants are State parties to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and acknowledge the importance of inter-country cooperation to undermine the People Smuggling industry;*
- *The Participants share a longstanding bilateral relationship of cooperation on migration and in combating transnational crime;*
- *Irregular Migration is a continuing challenge for the Asia-Pacific region;*
- *While border control and law enforcement measures are important, practical cooperative solutions that also address humanitarian needs are required; and*
- *The Commonwealth of Australia appreciates the acceptance by the Republic of Nauru to host Transferees in Nauru, including at one or more Regional Processing Centres or under community-based arrangements, and to provide Transferees who the Republic of Nauru determines to be in need of international protection with settlement opportunities.*

My Response: I have concerns about the interpretation of the last line written "and to provide Transferees who the Republic of Nauru determines to be in need of international protection with settlement opportunities."

While I was in Nauru, I witnessed a Tamil family receive a negative hand down for their claim to seeking asylum, based on a few vague reasons, one of which being the incorrect interpretation of a marriage certificate. This family was known to have a significant history of Torture and Trauma and one member in particular regularly displayed thoughts of suicide and self harm. They showed me the response they received with their negative outcome (to their refugee claim) and asked me to read it. Secretly I was appalled by what I read and it gave me little confidence in the Republic of Nauru's ability to properly assess claims and make determinations. It seemed like a decision had already been made and that excuses were being given as to why their claim was not accepted. It did not make logical sense to me. Even though the family had evidence of their story, the person assessing their claim sighted cultural information from a website to discredit their individual story and also believed that a particular family member was not in fact deceased as his name was listed on their marriage certificate. This family member was a parent and was already missing before the daughters wedding and is only listed on the marriage certificate as a parent, not an attendee. It was a very standard marriage certificate and the fact that the person assessing the claims considered all names recorded on it to be attendees at the wedding gave me grave concerns for their competence for such an important legal role.

When I left Nauru, the family were awaiting further documents to arrive that would verify that the parent listed on the marriage certificate was not present at the ceremony and clarify how to read a marriage certificate (that looked very similar to my own Australian Marriage Certificate and quite standard) to assist with their review.

Based on this scenario and others like it, I hold great concerns that the Republic of Nauru will "determine who is in need of international protection" based on their own desires and assumptions and not based wholly on their legal obligations or human rights.

Recalling that:

- *At the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking and Related Transnational Crime (the MCPB) held in Indonesia on 29-30 March 2011, Ministers agreed:*
 - *to a regional cooperation framework that would provide a more effective way for interested states to cooperate to reduce Irregular Migration in the region;*
 - *that the framework would be operationalized through arrangements entered into between interested participating states on a bilateral or sub-regional basis (noting the cooperation that might be available from relevant international organisations regarding implementation);*
 - *that those arrangements would be consistent with the core principles at paragraph 16 and guided by the consideration set out in paragraph 19 of the MCPB Co-Chairs' Statement;*
 - *that any arrangements should seek to undermine the People Smuggling model and create disincentives for irregular travel, including through possible transfer and readmission arrangements in appropriate circumstances; and*

- *that due to the large scale of irregular movement it would be appropriate to focus arrangements on a selected caseload or caseloads.*

My Response: I do not understand how the last point is being actioned as there have been asylum seekers from the same boat given different decisions (eg, some left on Christmas Island and some sent to Nauru or Manus) as well as members from the same family and people from all different levels of need (medically, physically, psychologically). During my time in Nauru it was often mentioned by asylum seekers that there was no logic to DIBP decision making and that it added to their level of mental distress. They reported that it was more difficult to accept knowing that their friends that sat next to them on the boat were still in Christmas Island and yet they had been sent to Nauru. During my time in Nauru, I witnessed elderly people struggle to walk the uneven rocky surface to get to the bathrooms and mess hall, I witnessed people with extreme medical conditions that saw them suffer from constant migraines and nausea from the constant heat. I saw women who had miscarried and young children covered in severe school sores and eczema. I saw people with known medical needs that were unable to be properly attended to on Nauru but prohibited to be transferred to Australia for adequate care and others who were approved to be transferred based on similar illnesses. I would agree with the comments made by asylum seekers that there does not seem to be any logic in the decisions made but rather deliberate inconsistency to ensure no assumptions are made.

Recognising:

- *The need for practical action to provide a disincentive against Irregular Migration, People Smuggling syndicates and transnational crime and intended to promote orderly migration and humanitarian solutions;*

My Response: Again as highlighted above, I failed to see any “order” in how cases were assessed and would disagree that we are offering “humanitarian solutions”, though I do believe that both are possible in offshore/regional processing centres.

- *The need to take account of the protection needs of persons who have moved irregularly and who may be seeking asylum;*

My Response: Again as mentioned above, I cannot agree that we are achieving this, based on my observations in Nauru.

Objectives

1. The Participants have determined that combating People Smuggling and Irregular Migration in the Asia-Pacific region is a shared objective. Transfer arrangements and the establishment of Regional Processing Centres are a visible deterrent to people smugglers.

My Response: Based on what I experienced, I believe the objective is to not only use Regional Processing as a deterrent, but to also run them so poorly that their original place of origin becomes appealing. Each time an asylum seeker complains about their human rights or about the conditions in the centre, they are offered an appointment with IOM to discuss voluntary return.

Guiding Principles

4. The Commonwealth of Australia will conduct all activities in respect of this MOU in accordance with its Constitution and all relevant domestic laws.

5. The Republic of Nauru will conduct all activities in respect of this MOU in accordance with its Constitution and all relevant domestic laws.

6. The Commonwealth of Australia will bear all costs incurred under and incidental to this MOU as agreed between the Participants. If this requires additional development of infrastructure or services, it is envisaged that there will be a broader benefit for communities in which those settled are initially placed.

My Response: Massive costs have gone into and continue to go into the infrastructure in Nauru. The island does not have enough water or electricity for the locals, little lone the amount of staff it takes to run the camps and the asylum seekers themselves. It was not uncommon while I was there to have water restrictions and to have showers and washing facilities on lock down forcing people to wash with bottled water for days or weeks at a time. I was informed by word of mouth that there were disagreements between who should cover the costs of a new water treatment facility and that these negotiations were causing longer delays in water being readily and adequately available. Rain water is heavily relied upon. I also have concerns about the conditions of the bottled water as it is often left out in the heat sitting wrapped in plastic on pallets. There are extensive studies that show that the consumption of water that has been contained in plastic and left in heat can cause cancer. I do not believe the water bottles are BPA free.

The Republic of Nauru does not have adequate water, electricity, housing, food, internet capability for the local population. To my knowledge, Australia is funding projects to increase ALL of these most basic areas of need. There was NO capacity established in Nauru so to say “if this requires additional development” is quite misleading.

Persons to be transferred to Nauru for processing

9. Persons to be transferred to Nauru are those persons who:

- a. have travelled irregularly by sea to Australia; or*
- b. have been intercepted by Australian authorities in the course of trying to reach Australia by irregular maritime means; and*
- c. are authorised by Australian law to be transferred to Nauru; and*
- d. have undergone short health, security and identity checks in Australia.*

My Response: As mentioned above, I find it hard to believe that everyone who is transferred to Nauru has undergone appropriate health checks. I question what they mean by “short health checks” and would ask for an estimate of costs incurred unnecessarily due to medi flights back and forth for asylum seekers who are clearly not fit to cope with the conditions on Nauru.

The sites

11. The Republic of Nauru may also host Transferees under other arrangements, such as community-based arrangements.

My Response: While this would be a more human and cost effective solution, to my knowledge no such arrangements have yet been made and all asylum seekers are either confined to held detention or are already deemed to be a genuine refugee and are residing in allocated housing within the community – but usually quite isolated in location. While the transition to an “open camp” or community based arrangement would undoubtedly minimize the current concerns of risk and harm that asylum seekers face within the camp, I hold significant concerns for the ongoing risk and harm that this arrangement would also pose due to the levels of violence towards asylum seekers and other migrants on the island.

While I was on island, I witnessed an incident of violence at a local store that was not reported. I was shopping at Capellies and saw a young Nauruan staff member pretend to punch a Chinese woman in the face every time her husband turned around. It was very intimidating and each time the husband turned around, the staff member laughed and joked with his coworker. He also pointed at the Chinese man’s face and openly laughed, teasing the man for a facial deformity. This scene went on for some minutes until I told the staff member to stop. He glared at me in a very intimidating way and I left with my coworker.

I am aware of another incident where Save the Children staff were dining one evening at the Od-n when a large and drunk Nauruan man stormed through the restaurant and into the back kitchen where he grabbed a meat cleaver and attempted to attack (possibly murder) the Chinese business owner. It was Save the Children staff who physically intervened and fought to hold the man until the police arrived. It is my understanding that the man was released by Police the following day.

While I was working on Nauru, there were a number of incidents of assault or attempted assault that staff were briefed on and reminded of strategies for safety, including pairing up whenever venturing out around the island.

I am aware that there have been several assaults against the refugees who have been released into the community and I have concerns about their safety in the community as well as in the detention facilities.

Outcomes for persons Transferred to Nauru

12. The Republic of Nauru undertakes to enable Transferees who it determines are in need of international protection to settle in Nauru, subject to agreement between Participants on arrangements and numbers. This agreement between Participants on arrangements and numbers will be subject to review on a 12 monthly basis through the Australia-Nauru Ministerial Forum.

My Response: As discussed in comments above, I have great concerns about who and how Nauru deems persons to be in need of international protection.

Status of Transferees in Nauru

16. The Republic of Nauru undertakes to enable Transferees, including those who it determines are Refugees, to be lawful during their stay in Nauru.

My Response: While I was in Nauru, I heard of peaceful protests occurring within the community from the asylum seekers who had already been granted refugee status and temporarily resettled. It is my understanding that this line (*to be lawful*) is often used against them as a form of control, by stating that they will face legal penalties for protesting and that this will look bad on their record (their refugee status) when seeking more permanent settlement.

Commitments

17. The Participants will treat Transferees with dignity and respect and in accordance with relevant human rights standards.

My Response: I believe both parties are failing to meet this commitment and there are ongoing examples of this. I have included some in other sections in my submission.

18. Special arrangements will be developed and agreed to by the Participants for vulnerable cases, including unaccompanied minors.

My Response: I have increased concerns about the safety of unaccompanied minors and single adult females within the community and would recommend 24/7 on call support and regular security checks as a minimal consideration to any special arrangement made.

b. the performance of the Commonwealth Government in connection with the Centre, including the conduct and behaviour of the staff employed at the Centre, to the extent that the Commonwealth Government is responsible;

Common issues with local (Nauruan) staff

As it has been pointed out many times, there are no child protection checks done on potential employees from Nauru. These services just do not exist; therefore they are not required to hold a Children's Commission "blue card" in order to work with minors. When I was working in Nauru, I had a few conversations with local staff members (working for Save the Children) about this and was informed that there was no way of checking a local person's background before employment and that even if they had done something, it is quite possible for there to still be no record, especially if they were related to someone in the police department or a politician and even if they went to jail, they would just pay a little money and no record would be kept. Accountability is a huge issue in Nauru.

Sexualised behavior is witnessed daily in Nauru and definitely goes under reported. I myself have had several instances that I should have reported but didn't formally as I was often overwhelmed by the fact that we were understaffed and so I verbally let other staff know to keep a closer watch, but did not do a written report.

One of these instances was when a local staff member working for Wilsons security openly instructed a 4 year old girl to give him a kiss on the cheek and then he sat her on his lap. I was walking past when I saw this and I told the little girl to go and find

her mother and I told the guard that was inappropriate. He seemed quite shocked and dazed by my response and at the time I took it for cultural differences and did not report it further.

There were other times when local staff (employed by Wilson's security) was based at checkpoints throughout the camp to use a security wand to detect any metal or electrical devices being taken into camp. Often they would wave the wand around you in a sexual manner and giggle to their coworker whenever they were around the chest or bottom areas of the body. They would be talking in their language while doing this and one even blew me a kiss while doing it. Every time this occurred, I would glare at them and tell them off and they would stop. On one occasion the local guard gave me a hostile response back by his glare and tone and I did not feel safe. I verbally reported to other guards (ex-pats) and asked them to discuss further. Again these were not formally reported. They were discussed however in our team meetings and we were given the directive to make sure we were reporting all such instances. I left the organization not long after this and no such reports were made by me.

I am ashamed that I did not report the above incidents and wish I had have as hearing DIBP suggest that such allegations are fabricated is such an insult. They are well aware of the personal safety issues on the island and often give warnings to staff about their safety with examples of incidents that have occurred. These behaviours are so common on the island in general (not just the RPC's) that they often go unreported for fear of repercussions (personally or professionally).

Another common issue with local staff is that the majority of them do not show up for work regularly. This is a typical occurrence in general on Nauru and when I was there, one of the head chefs for the RPC's told me that they generally run on an average of 30% of staff as approx. 70% would not show up on a daily basis and they had agreed to hire majority of local staff. He said that he had started driving around and picking staff up, basically begging and having to talk them into coming in.

There is a huge problem with alcohol on the island. So much so that it is included in our inductions prior to arriving in Nauru. Staff have been known to turn up at work heavily intoxicated or hang over (both local and ex-pat).

There are major discrepancies between pay rates, with most local staff being paid an average of \$4-\$5 / hour, while ex-pats receive an average of \$30+/hr
This is due to the caps on income in Nauru, set by their political leaders to address previous financial problems the country has faced (and continues to deal with). This understandably causes further friction between some staff members and also adds to the lack of motivation to attend work when feeling so devalued.

International Health and Medical Services (IHMS)

My experiences with IHMS were not very positive. On one occasion I was asked to attend an interagency meeting to discuss updates of clients with current issues. There was a female representative from DIBP, a male colleague from Transfield Services, a female staff member from IHMS and myself present. Staff each went through giving updates of clients on the list, according to their recent interactions and clients current medical status. There were a few comments made throughout the meeting that gave me the impression that the staff member from IHMS was not very concerned with the wellbeing of the asylum seekers being discussed. As the meeting was coming to a close, I mentioned that there were two asylum seekers that I was aware of that were not listed, but were both in distress with one currently being housed in supported accommodation on suicide watch and the other on a hunger strike that had already gone past 10 days. As I was new to Nauru at the time and it

was my first time at one of these meetings, it was not received well and my information was debated and initially not believed. The IHMS representative asked me who I was talking about and when I gave the first clients name (a single Iranian women with a history of torture and trauma who was in supported accommodation on suicide watch), and explained that I had seen her recently and she did not present well (she had not been eating or sleeping and was visibly exhausted and crying excessively and stating she just wanted to die), the IHMS representative made comments that she was sick of this person and that she was just an attention seeker and that Save the Children were tree huggers that just wanted to hold everybody's hand and save the world. I was quite shocked by her comments and the tone of her voice. I wanted to explain back but each time I tried to speak, she spoke over the top of me and stated that she knew who I was talking about and that she refused to discuss her with me as there were no concerns and she should just be sent back to camp and ignored as it was all just a behavioural issue.

The man from Transfield asked me about the second person I had referred to (who was a young male from RPC2 who spoke Arabic and who I had witnessed the nurses begging to give him some vitamins in a drip as he had not eaten or drank in 10 days – I was with one of my clients in the surgery at the same time and my client was speaking to him in Arabic and begging him to let the nurses help. My client stated that he replied that he was already dead and that he was just waiting for his body to join his spirit). This man was also not on the list. I recognized his face from a previous list and showed the man from Transfield services, who called his staff and confirmed my story and added the young man to the future list for further updates. Quite concerned for the man being discussed, I asked the Transfield staff member at what point would medical staff physically intervene with involuntary medical treatment to save the man's life. He replied with 30 days. I was shocked by this answer and did not respond further.

After this meeting I was quite shaken and I relayed this experience to my superior at the time, who replied that he often had the same experiences and that the relationships between agencies was very tough. I notified that I would not attend these meetings again if this was a regular occurrence.

Specialist Medical Treatment

It was common for clients to exhibit symptoms of PTSD. One female client I worked with had extreme psychological issues and a history of hospitalization in her country of origin. IHMS staff acknowledged her need for psychiatric admission, but stated that there were no such facilities on the island, so she was left in the general population with ongoing suicidality and experiences of self harm. Her husband was so exhausted from being her constant guard (against herself) and feeling that his concerns for her safety were going unanswered, that he self harmed too, in an attempt to save her from harming herself. He slashed his chest and arms and the pair were temporarily relocated to the supported accommodation area (in RPC1) where IHMS staff were obliged to pay more attention to their mental health. Within days however, they were returned to the general population in RPC3.

Dental issues are a common complaint amongst the asylum seekers, with some waiting longer than a year to receive a dental appointment and suffering from pain for that long (being treated with Panadol). One client I worked with was a young single Somali woman who had broken braces. She repeatedly complained about her braces cutting the inside of her mouth when she ate – often causing her to miss meals. There are no orthodontic dental surgeons on Nauru and she was told that there was no-one available with the necessary skills required to remove her braces. According

to the client, her braces were well overdue to be removed and she worried about them damaging her teeth and inner mouth. She was still awaiting treatment (after several medical requests were submitted) when I left Nauru in October 2014. Another client was an elder woman who had severe headaches and dental pain for some time before being taken to the Nauruan dentist to have her tooth removed. She was returned to camp with Panadol and suffering significant pain. I saw her 2 days after her appointment and she was very obviously suffering. She was unable to eat and her mouth was very swollen. She was taken back where it was revealed that her tooth had not fully been removed and she underwent further abstraction. Within a day of this she was noticeably improving and stated she was in less pain.

DIBP

I did not have much interaction with the DIBP staff on Nauru but I was quite disappointed by how the female staff members dressed when out and about on the island. We were constantly reminded of cultural appropriateness in regards to conservative clothing and also informed of safety issues on the island, however each time I went out, I would see DIBP staff members dressed as if they were attending a Brisbane nightclub, with very short dresses or shorts, little tops and plenty of make-up. Occasionally there are staff from all agencies that overstep the cultural boundaries in regards to appropriate dress attire, but it was a common occurrence with DIBP staff and I often wondered if they were not briefed the same as us or if they believed they were safe because of their employer.

CAPS

My experience with CAPS lawyers was very positive. They are approachable and always willing to assist staff from any agency to understand a process and to request an action occur. The only negative feedback I was given was in relation to clients being held in interviews over meal times and therefore missing access to food. Whenever this occurred though, staff would try to ensure something was provided. A proper process was not in place while I was there though and I am unsure of any plans to create a process for this to be remedied.

Save the Children

The majority of my co-workers were amazingly dedicated and professional people who struggle everyday with the “pecking order” on island and feeling so restricted in what can actually be done. During my time on Nauru, there were constant redundancies and restructures of teams and constant changes to workplace policies and procedures. It seemed like there was a lot of fear from management about whether they would secure their contract and whether they could then keep it. There were a lot of talks about what we COULDN'T DO and not a lot about what we COULD DO. I am unsure if this was due to internal issues or external controls, but as a staff member, it seemed very much like most things were outside of our control. Even simple requests like booking a clothing appointment for an asylum seeker was a difficult process. It seemed like STC had no decision making ability for processes and that every process in place was built with hurdles for STC to jump first resulting in further delays for client outcomes.

c. the Commonwealth Government's duty of care obligations and responsibilities with respect to the Centre;

Issues with Accommodation

In RPC3, there is no grass and only one area with a few trees where people congregate to try to escape the heat and sit in the very limited shade. The entire compound is built on white crushed sharp rocks that add to the harshness of the environment. Clients often suffer from back, foot, and knee injuries from constantly walking around on uneven jagged surfaces, mostly with cheap thongs that usually only last a few weeks before they break. Even wearing enclosed shoes, these injuries are common in staff too after long hours of walking up and down the hills and around the campsite on the rocks.

As accommodation is in canvas tents (marquee style), there is a major lack of privacy (and therefore safety). The tents capture the extreme heat and have limited (if any) cooling systems and fans available (there are often delays in receiving fans and often staff have to advocate for days or longer before fans are provided. There were several times while I was working that we took fans from our office tents to provide to clients as there were none available elsewhere. On at least one occasion, we were informed that there were boxes of fans in stock but no man power to put them together so they stayed packed up until staff were allocated to assemble them and deliver. On another occasion, I was informed by a Save the Children logistics staff member that an entire shipping container of stock (including beds, mattresses, fans and chairs) had been emptied overnight – assumed stolen by local Nauruan people. I was told that it was a common occurrence and it was definitely my experience that any food or drink or stationary etc that was left out in our office tent overnight (even though the tent was “closed up”), would be missing the following day.

Clients are also not provided with adequate storage and as their tents aren't fully enclosed, it is common for clients to find rats, crabs, spiders and scorpions crawling in their clothes and belongings. On several occasions clients requested storage boxes be provided and I (as well as many other Save the Children staff) also advocated for this, however we were informed that they were in short supply and would be given out according to priority. When I left, most families still did not have adequate storage and only the single adult females had been supplied with one for each person. I was told by Wilson's staff that it is for this reason (rodents, bugs etc) that clients are prohibited to take food back to their tents (even biscuits or fruit) which causes other complications for clients who are unable to attend the Mess tent at meal times as they then have no access to food.

Facilities and Hygiene

Limited Toilets/Shower Blocks, Limited Water, give example of Tamil client who could see toilet block but was for staff only and had to walk to block, conditions of block and her health condition.....

Lack of cleaning, watering down of soap, lack of education around toileting systems, lack of water, lack of culturally appropriate facilities, give story of little girl (city) with school sores all over her body and limited showers

Water stations, plastic bottles kept on pallets in extreme sun for hours/days on end, then poured into industrial dispensers that are out in the open and only under a tent so temperatures of water an issue, plus they are easily (and often) left not adequately closed and bugs get in.

Weather and Locality of Centre

In Nauru there is often extreme heat, causing blinding light (reflective from rocks and white tent canvas) and it is also prone to flash flooding. The camp in RPC3 where the asylum seeker families live is constructed in a ditch, so flooding is quite common as rain is quite extreme and downpours are unpredictable.

Clothing

There were often shortages in clothing and shoes available (sizes) which meant some clients (children and adults) were forced to agree to take clothing or shoes that did not fit properly or go without and keep using what they previously had (which may be limited or ripped/damaged). There was a significant amount of time where there were no maternity clothes available. Pregnant women were forced to wear oversized men's shirts and pants with draw strings. They reported this was very degrading and culturally inappropriate. For some months, pregnant clients were either left wearing clothing that was too tight (underpants and pants that were digging into their bellies and causing great discomfort), or was embarrassing and inappropriate. Staff from STC asked if they could purchase clothing from stores on the island or from Australia while on respite and bring it back, but were informed that the proper process was for it to be ordered and shipped in – though there were delays in this process even when the need was continuously voiced and other (faster) processes available.

In my opinion, hats, sunglasses and raincoats should also be automatically supplied for safety, (due to the extreme weather conditions) but are not. While I was there, there was significant rainfall and the asylum seekers would have to walk in it to access facilities and food. They were not supplied with raincoats or ponchos or umbrellas and often became sick from being wet. Requests for these items were submitted but a response given was that there were none on the island even though this is an ongoing occurrence. Staff are instructed to wear hats and sunglasses due to the extreme heat and the blinding glare that is caused from the reflection of the sun off the rocks, yet these considerations are not given to clients and only those who were lucky enough to have a parcel sent from a relative or to have brought these items on their journey with them, were seen to be in possession of such luxuries.

Food

There are differences in the quality and types of foods made available within the staff mess in RPC1 and the mess in RPC3 where clients eat. In the RPC3, repetitive foods are serviced that many clients report are not culturally familiar to them and often cause digestive problems. Lots of clients report living on biscuits and tea or coffee due to their inability to stomach the foods that they are supplied and having no access to alternatives. Access to food is only during certain time frames when the mess is open – there are many clients who miss meal times due to mental or physical health challenges affecting their sleep patterns and / or their mobility. This is often met with staff (from all multiple service providers) judgment statements like “well that's your fault – you wouldn't be able to just sleep all day in the REAL WORLD – you should get yourself up in time” Clients often state that this is nothing like the REAL WORLD and question where else they would be controlled around access to food anywhere else. It was common to see clients on the “missed meals register”, some for significant periods of time.

Water

There are often water shortages on Nauru, which result in bans on showers and laundry abilities as well as creating an inability to flush toilets. Clients have stated to me that this feels like a form of torture and that they do not understand why they would be forced to reside in a country that cannot even supply them with water – and provides extreme heat conditions to also contend with. Drinking water is left in plastic in the heat and is easily contaminated if the lids are not properly sealed on the large water dispensers.

Use of Boat IDs

It was quite saddening to see that on Nauru it is common practice for clients to be known only by their boat id and for lists to not even have a record of their names attached. This has been happening for so long that clients refer to themselves as Boat ID's now (and even sign their name as that, including on classwork or art drawings). When I would ask a guard (any guard – local or ex-pat) about a particular client using their name, they would get annoyed with me and say that they didn't know names only ID's. If I mentioned the client's boat id, most times the guards would know which client I was referring to. Their client lists did not even have a column for the client's names. Just Boat Id and corresponding tent allocation number. This was still common practice (despite conversations confirming that they had been told it must cease) in October 2014 during my last shift on the island.

d. the circumstances that precipitated the Moss Review, including allegations made regarding conditions and circumstances at the centre and the conduct and behaviour of staff employed by contracted service providers, the timing of the Commonwealth Government's knowledge of the allegations, and the appropriateness of the response of the Commonwealth Government to these allegations;

Immediately after receiving a message from Then Minister for Immigration (delivered via video link to cohorts of asylum seekers by segregated by nationality), clients started to protest. There was an instant change in the atmosphere and many clients exited the messaging tent area quite distraught. Within some days of the DIPB messaging, I submitted an information report based on one of my clients (an elderly Afgani woman) telling me of a joined suicide pact being arranged between a large number of families in the RPC3 compound. This included women and children, fathers as well as single adult males and females. My client did not disclose how this was planned to occur, but was adamant that the plans were very real and that they had decided on a location and a means but would not give me that much detail. There were several reports of suicidal ideation submitted following the delivery of the DIPB message as many clients reported having lost all hope and feeling like death was all that was left. There was talk of IOM offering further incentives to those who voluntarily returned to their country of origin. I am not aware of any asylum seekers who agreed to this however I am aware of several who believed death was a better option.

This was an extremely difficult time to be working in the camp. Clients who previously seemed to be of adequate mental health were no longer able to cope and there was

lots of talk of mass suicide and many instances of self harm. Peaceful protests were the least harmful way to display their anguish, yet even if a staff member (from Save the Children) was seen assisting an asylum seeker with their spelling or agreeing with an asylum seeker that it was the safest way to protest (as opposed to sewing their lips or attempting suicide), it was twisted to be used against staff (from Save the Children) and suggested that they were encouraging protest (anti government) behaviour and were the ones instigating any form of revolt against the messaging being received (including self harm and attempts of suicide). This was shocking beyond belief and could not have been further from the truth. I was one of these people, working with clients and desperately trying to keep them safe (even from themselves) by allowing them to discuss their anguish and just sitting and listening to their stories of hopelessness and trying to identify any protective factors that may give them reason to continue living (their children, their parents, their faith, whatever reminder could be used to switch their thinking from hopelessness to a need to resilience). THIS, however, is what our government DID NOT WANT happening. Staff reminding clients that they still had something to live for.....

In previous rotations, we had been reminded many times that handing out any Human Rights information was a sackable offence (even though it is necessary under the AASW Code of Ethics). Anyone caught speaking to clients about their human rights or providing them with information on advocacy networks etc were seen as activists campaigning against the government. It was unbelievable – and to be honest, I really didn't believe it, until I watched my work mates get escorted off the premises, then stood down and deported! The accusations and the penalties that followed were nothing more than a political scapegoat and we all knew it. It is deeply disturbing that one agency was instructed to spy on another agency and attempts to sabotage their staff. The real losers in this setting were the clients who were suddenly left without case managers with no hand over or closure of any outstanding actions. At least one client was known to have attempted suicide within the week of staff being stood down. Many clients felt that they were to blame for what happened to the Save the Children staff.

e. factors relating to the timing of the release of the Moss Review;

I find it appalling that DIBP attacked the credibility of the Human Rights Commission for their report, while they (DIBP) already had a copy of their own independent review with similar findings to previous allegations and HRC concerns. The fact that this government's response to allegations of abuse was to scapegoat the issue by slandering Save the Children staff and claimed they had fabricated stories is in itself abominable, but to then conduct your own review and hold its findings off, not until a more appropriate response could be actioned, but until another event could cast a shadow to release it under, just screams of deliberate misappropriation and an inability to adequately respond. Finally seeing the review, it is understandable why they would not want it to be revealed as they were too busy also turning Jillian Triggs into a scapegoat. I personally find all of this to be such an outrage as I know they (DIBP) were fully aware of the original allegations of sexual abuse and the accuracy of these claims and others.

f. the response of the Commonwealth Government to the recommendations of the Moss Review, including timelines for implementation; and

I am extremely concerned with the recommendation for more police presence within the camp. Already the Nauruan Police have made a name for themselves as being corrupt, above the law, incompetent and uncaring in general towards asylum seekers. My own poor view of the Police force is based on watching them on multiple occasions taking food from the mess and also on several occasions driving around the island in the Police 4WD with a 1 yr old sitting on the dashboard. There have also been several reports of violence being displayed by locals and Police releasing them without charge, creating further lack of trust in their ability or commitment to hold anyone accountable. I believe a further Police presence will likely add to tensions and fears, not alleviate them.

g. any related matters.

Conflicting Stories

While I was in Nauru, DIBP were denying allegations of sexual abuse, but at the same time we were receiving warnings to staff that it was not safe for female staff on the island to walk anywhere alone due to sexual harassment/attempted abductions of staff.

While I was on Nauru, DIBP were also denying that settlement on the island placed refugees in danger – yet there are examples of existing racial tensions on the island witnessed regularly – some examples include the incident at the Odn, and the incident at Capellies (both previously referred to in more detail in sections further above).

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions relating to information provided in this submission.