



Australian Government
Department of Immigration
and Border Protection



Australian
CUSTOMS AND
BORDER PROTECTION

YONGAH HILL COMMUNITY UPDATE — March 2015

Introduction

Message from Carlo Scasserra, Director Detention Operations, Yongah Hill

Welcome to the second Yongah Hill community update for 2015. I am currently filling in for Vicki Ludwig for a short period and will be here until Mid-April.

It has been a very busy start since my arrival in early March with continued fluctuations to the Yongah Hill population.

It is very encouraging that I was advised that the Northam and surrounding communities continue to support Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre (IDC). I would like to take this opportunity to thank community members for the support shown to date.

Keeping the Community Informed

From 1 July 2015, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service will be consolidated into a single government department which will continue to be known as the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Part of the consolidated Department of Immigration and Border Protection will include a new established Australian Border Force (ABF). The ABF will draw together the operational border, investigations, compliance, detention and enforcement functions of the two existing agencies.

As a part of this transition Steve Biddle, DIBP Regional Director West and Assistant Secretary North and West, Rod O'Donnell Australian Customs and Border Protection Service Regional Commander WA, Matt Rippon, Australian Federal Police

Commander and Peter Halliday, District Superintendent, Wheatbelt District Office – WA Police toured the facility on the 18th March, 2015. The purpose of the visit was to familiarise themselves with the infrastructure of the IDC.

Recently, you may have heard or read about various activities at the IDC. At present the IDC is in a calm and stable condition, and the DIBP continues to work with Serco to ensure that this situation remains the same. Should any issues arise, the DIBP maintains regular contact with law enforcement agencies and will always contact the WA Police and Australian Federal Police whenever any allegations of criminal activity are brought to our attention.

Activities for Detainees

Detainees have full access to religious services including travel to various religious temples, mosques and churches. They currently participate in religious excursions to a Muslim Mosque, Hindu Temple, Catholic Church, Anglican Church and a Buddhist Temple. From April, detainees will be commencing visits to a Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall.

We regularly have visits to the IDC from Religious and Community visitors including, Catholic Priests, a Buddhist Nun, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Jesuit Refugee Services and Prison Fellowship.

In addition to religious visits the detainees also receive visits from the International Red Cross and community members.

We continue to have movie nights once a month for detainees and various musicians continue to play at the IDC on a monthly basis.



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Since our last newsletter in January we have had a number of community engagement events including, a concert by Ashlee and Jennie from 2 Little Foxes. Monster Ball Activities also paid two visits to the IDC and provided much needed cool relief from the heat wave conditions.

Our detainees continue to enjoy the Men's Shed at Springhill near Northam and, following the successful silent auction last year, they are creating more projects for sale. The proceeds will go back to the community.

Each Tuesday during January Sally Bervos visited the IDC to conduct art and craft workshops with the detainees. These visits were well received and several of the detainees have continued to attend the workshops and have been making art pieces in a variety of mediums.

Other activities involving our detainees included:

- Our Cricketers played in the local league and were 3rd on the ladder.
- The local swimming pool was utilised over the summer season.
- Golfing and the Rec Centre have been utilised over the past few months.
- The Northam Bowling Club has been great and have bought a new Carpet Bowls Mat for our visits.
- There is a Coffee Club outing that goes to the Rivers Edge Café where detainees discuss current affairs. It has been a successful venture.

Community contact

Geoff Lewis is the incumbent Community Liaison Officer and works from the DIBP offices at Yongah Hill IDC. Geoff has strong links to the Wheatbelt farming community having spent 20 years in farming. He has returned from the Eastern States to enjoy his lifestyle farm of 150 acres. He is available on 0434 184 054 or you can email northam@immi.gov.au.

If you have any issues please contact us at northam@immi.gov.au or see the YHIDC webpage at:

<http://www.immi.gov.au/managing-australias-borders/detention/facilities/northam-bulletin/>