

**Incident at the Manus Island Detention Centre from 16 February to 18 February
2014
Submission**

The following submission is information from my experience on Manus through work and talking with other stakeholder staff.

I have been repeatedly made aware that any breach of confidentiality agreement in relation to releasing information on island operations is punishable.

I worked with the Salvation Army off shore humanitarian mission from 18th of September 2012 till 1st of February 2014 as a general support worker.

I began initial employment at Nauru regional processing center with no prior experience or training and received non-past basic case note making, after 6 months I received basic training on our job role and upholding Salvation Army company values. After the riots on Nauru I was flown home and then told I would resume work on Manus Island in September 2013 where I stayed till 1st February 2014 where I further received no more formal training other than aggression escalation training on island for an hour.

Upon first entering the detention center we conducted a brief walk around comprising of compound names, medical locations, then proceeded to the rear gate of the complex and proceeded to have explained to use the procedure to attend the naval officers mess in lengthy detail and that signified the end of the tour. We were given no information on clients past them staring through fences at us and greeting us, no information on sign in and out procedures for compounds, no information on codes used or processes used by security within the center by our security liaison. This was followed with a lack of training from Salvation Army staff on these points.

PHONES AND INTERNET.

Oscar, delta and Charlie compounds contained no facilities for phone or Internet in compound. Phone calls were handled by creating a rotating roster that meant clients would attend the front gate to each compound (Oscar, Delta, Charlie) and be bussed during the night to another compound area to use phones called the green zone.

During the day the compound adjacent to the green zone (Foxtrot) would be allowed to use the phones and then locked out at night. This caused issues in the form that as Oscar and Delta mealtime ran adjacent to phone calls clients often had to chose between meals and speaking to family and hope that they could enter the mess hall at a later time that was often not allowed.

Issues arose from call times due to night time calls, many clients couldn't contact there family's due to the time difference in there home countries and often no provision was made for retries.

As the roster rotated by thirty-minute increments on each night it meant that many clients would wait a week or more in-between calls before they reached a time slot when they could reach their families.

Clients in foxtrot and later mike compound were afforded one hours internet time on a rotating roster subject to presenting ID cards and staffing by G4S and Salvation Army, if clients couldn't present an id card they would be refused entry.

MEALS AND WATER.

The lockout of Foxtrot compound at night also caused issues with client residing there that could only contact family's during the night from Manus there was no provision to attend to these needs.

Meal time became an issue with larger amounts of client in Delta, Oscar and Foxtrot due to long lines that were given no shade during harsh weather, meaning many clients chose to eat only once a day.

Food provided was poor with many clients and staff registering complaints of food poisoning from the poor food preparation and from insects being found in their meals.

Meal time within foxtrot handled by a client made rotation roster of accommodation blocks devised by cultural leaders and implemented quickly and successfully abated any issues till such and point that security removed the process and issues between clients arose and quickly this issue was addressed by Salvation Army team leaders to security and process was implemented again but with tension between guards and clients.

Water allocation and cleanliness was an issue for all compounds with many clients reporting either no water, dirt drinking water, or water with the taste and smell of detergent present which salvation army staff concurred but was dismissed by security staff until it was reveled that processed for handling water by other service providers using local Papuan staff were inadequate.

LIVING ARRANGMENTS.

Client became distressed with bedding and compound allocations that forced many clients who had come with other family members to go to separate compounds.

A bed/room allotment roster was devised and updated regularly by TSA staff but this was not shared with other service providers until much later, and was inflexible in allowing clients who preferred to stay in rooms with friends.

Rubbish disposal became a problem for clients in relation to living arrangements in Foxtrot and Oscar compound with heavy rains washing rubbish into the areas around living quarters and hot temperatures causing unbearable smells, rubbish was being dumped along the Foxtrot and Oscar compound fence.

Noise pollution was an issue for many clients with large generators being places outside compounds but adjacent to accommodation blocks at some points less than a meter away in Foxtrot and forcing many clients to seek refuge and sleep during the day in other clients rooms. In Foxtrot Clients were provided with one basic fan between rooms of 4 people, and in the case of one block 'P' in which up to 120 clients were forced to live bed pushed up to bed one fan was available between as many as 4 – 8 people.

Client accommodation afforded no privacy between clients sharing rooms and clients begun hanging sheets as privacy screens around beds, which were later, deemed to be a security hazard and cut away.

Clients are not allowed to leave there assigned compounds other then in the recreation instances below, clients are not allowed to pass messages or items to friends or to visit or talk to friends from other compounds. Staff was regularly informed that transferring items or messages between clients of different compounds is punishable.

Patrolling security controlled all compounds along with internal and external fencing with access points guarded by both local and expat staff at pad locked gate checkpoints. No client is allowed to walk anywhere other then in there own compound, clients are driven to medical, interviews and phones, regardless of the distance.

During my work on both island I witnessed many self harm attempts ranging from hangings to slit wrist/necks and starvation.

During my time at Manus I experienced camp lock down and confinement to accommodation ship because of protesting locals outside the center. During one lock down locals with machetes attempted to breach perimeter fences, in which security advised us that it was safer to be inside compounds with clients and the internal fences to protect us then to be out side the compounds or in the office areas.

Compounds were plagued by the smell of raw sewage and food smells mixed together.

Toilets when cleaned involved sweeping excess sewage into the compound grounds.

Manus is an extremely hot and wet environment apart from client rooms there is very little shelter and relief from the elements.

Mosquitos are prolific on Manus; staff was told that they needed to take anti malaria medication as a precaution but to not take Mefloquine because it can cause serious side effects.

I became aware from IHMS staff Clients on Manus Island were given Mefloquine despite the warnings to staff.

During my period of work I took Doxycycline and suffered severe sunburns, mood swings, lack of sleep and night terrors. To the point that many staff and myself stopped taking medication, clients also suffered severe effects from the malaria tablets when they were administered and resulted in many refusing medication.

During my work I witnessed many clients being quarantined for malaria, typhoid, diarrhea/food poisoning, skin lesions and scabies. We were informed by senior Salvation Army staff that we should all be checked when we went off rotation for tuberculosis.

RECREATION FACILITYS.

Clients were provided with minimal stimulus/recreational material outside of proscribed activity hours and these activities depended on the level of staff Salvation Army had to run activities causing concern among clients and security.

Clients were allowed to watch one movie a night if available on a rotating compound roster. This was subject to staffing in Salvation Army and to movie and TV availability and often didn't occur.

Client gyms consisted of a few hand weights and limited weights machines in various states of disrepair and varied from compound to compound, clients were allowed access for a period of roughly 1- 2 hours a day. Gym time had to be constantly monitored by The Salvation Army staff due to injury's caused by the faulty equipment and all weights were removed from compounds after time had expired.

Clients were allowed roughly 1 – 2 hours in the afternoon for cards games and soccer these were monitored and distributed by the Salvation Army and brought out of compounds and locked away in a storage container.

We were repeatedly told that clients must under no circumstances have any games, cards or equipment such as balls outside these time due to a shortage of items and procurement problems and to report and confiscate any items, these items were shared between roughly 5 compounds during a day.

Outside excursions for clients were limited to 2 excursions one to the local field and on into town and back, clients were not allowed to leave the bus on town excursions and on field excursions were allowed to wander the field for a brief time.

The salvation army maintains a storage container full of equipment but theses items such as base balls and skipping rope etc. were deemed to dangerous by stakeholder staff and that there implementation required a large drain on security resources that could not be facilitated and thus were never used.

The recreation team of The Salvation Army regularly requested more equipment from DAIC but items were often refused or simply bumped down a list of priorities for the camp

The Salvation Army staff that worked previously on Nauru attempted numerous times to implement activity programs that DIAC allowed on Nauru, but declined on Manus for operational reasons.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Australian DIAC officials manage all decisions with regards to the center.

DIAC repeatedly told clients that they would never be resettled in Australia but gave constantly changing information of resettlement only in PNG.

DIAC informed the Salvation Army repeatedly that any breaks in confidentiality agreement would carry severe punishment and possible criminal charges.

DIAC repeatedly told salvation army that clients should be told under no circumstances are they going to Australia under any government and to “not give them that hope”

Many colleagues and myself received no formal training till around 6 months into work.

Past basic case note training I was given no further training and interacted with clients 12 hours a days, trying to relieve boredom, teach English, calm angry clients, talk depressed client into being hopeful.

Salvation army staff were told many times to inform clients that under PNG law offensive language and actions are punishable by law, also that it is permissible under PNG law that if a client offends a local female their family member are legally allowed to seek justice in any form he wishes.

During my period of work on Manus I found many male expat guards to have offensive views to both clients and to female staff, I often was engaged by guards that aired opinions that “clients were expecting to much and if they didn’t like it they should fuck off home”, “they should have all been shot like they will when there sent back” and suggesting to clients words that have offensive meaning in Australian and Papuan new Guinean culture. This resulted in many clients receiving discipline actions.

Guards expressed opinions that Salvation Army staff were bleeding hearts for helping clients and that many guards had bets and openly discussed female staff in a sexualized manners also.

Expat guards often complained about local's guards being unreliable and under trained in security matters including basic radio use. Expats also stated that many local either didn't turn up or wandered off on shift for extended periods of time.

IHMS staff presented as and under equipped and stretched thin for both staff and medical supplies.

Anti malaria medication was dispersed sporadically and caused issues, many time clients returned from medical having been told that nothing could be done for broken bones, shrapnel wounds, skin lesions and other issues saying my had received bandages and water and Panadol this resulted in many client refusing to attend medical and treating issues on there own through the opinion that medical was useless and didn't care.