

Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Version 2

Related Inquiry: Proposed Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation Project, Broadmeadows, Victoria.

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We are a part of the visiting and support community for the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation Detainees and ex Detainees.

Submission regarding

Proposed Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation Project, Broadmeadows, Victoria.

The comments relate to the Department of Immigration and Border Protections submission to the inquiry titled:

PROPOSED MELBOURNE IMMIGRATION TRANSIT ACCOMMODATION PROJECT at 120-150 CAMP ROAD, BROADMEADOWS VICTORIA

Policy Framework and Need for Works

It is understood that the intention is for the DIBP to reduce their detention facilities to three main centres. These are the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation (MITA), the Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre (YHIDC), and Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. This is due to the falling numbers of detainees, in the centers.

This submission is not opposed to the rationalisations.

From the Victorian perspective this means the closure of Maribyrnong IDC. This is not new information and has been known for some time. Maribyrnong IDC is a higher security facility accommodation with stricter visiting entry and visit room procedures. Those who visit the MITA center have seen changes in the accommodation and visit arrangements to come some way towards replicating the higher security procedures at Maribyrnong IDC. This would seem to be in preparation for the events detailed in the document. Some time ago many low risk detainees were moved to higher security areas within MITA.

This submission is not opposed to the closure of Maribyrnong and the move to MITA but has serious concerns about the security levels and separation. For example "Some facilities, such as the medical center, will be shared by lower and higher risk caseload". This means that young people seeking asylum, who have committed no crime, will come into direct contact with people accused and/or convicted of serious crimes. This has a direct cost to the people seeking asylum and the community in terms of mental health support and recovery. We have seen it already where common facilities exist.

Proposed Approach

Two statements appear in the document in relation to visiting and entry to the center.

"Repurposing of an existing recreation building to create a new visits center;"

".....security arrangements, including high risk visitor screening;"

It is not stated but it suggests that there will be a new entry and visit center and the old one near Avon will be closed. The new entry and visit area are also seen on the plans.

This higher level of security and entry and in the visit room will have a direct impact on people seeking asylum and visitors. The ability of visitors to connect and support people seeking asylum while in the center has a direct impact on the settlement and health costs to immigration and border protection.

Security is a necessary and important part of this situation. Our services do an amazing job. We have, though, to weigh up the direct cost savings of combining facilities eg Medical Centers and visit centers for all people in the center. High security processes and visit room procedures for low risk people who are seeking asylum make it difficult for the visiting community to connect and support. The visiting community save the Immigration and border protection system money. They settle people faster and they improve people's mental health thereby reducing welfare and health costs. This relies on the initial connections made in the visit rooms. One on one visits of high security centers make it so much harder to establish and maintain the connections.

Putting low risk people seeking asylum and visitors through an unnecessary high security process has costs. Therefore we submit that the detainee separation be complete with separate visit room, medical center etc. We submit that the existing visit center be maintained for low risk people seeking asylum.

Impact on the local community

The document comments about construction impacts but there will be adjustments for people visiting the different centers. On occasion people are moved to higher security for a time. Being at the one location, while difficult for the person seeking asylum, being at the same center, will make transport to the center more consistent.

Closure of other states centers (eg Brisbane) will have a large impact on the support networks and increase the load on the MITA networks. To help this there needs to be better co-operation between the visiting support networks and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. The visiting community has reached out several times to establish better collaboration. The offer is still there in the context of this project.

Level of Amenity

The statement from the document

“Accommodation standards commensurate with risk profile”

We have seen departures from this in the past where people seeking asylum are moved to higher security accommodation for some reason unrelated to an increase in their risk profile. We submit that some protections be in place to prevent people seeking asylum being moved unnecessarily to the many options that this project avails.

Overview.

Criminals and people seeking asylum should be separate in all areas.

Low risk people seeking asylum should remain in low risk areas.

Having high security common areas has impacts on low risk people seeking asylum and visitors which in turn impacts in real dollars on Immigration and Border Protection.