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MANAGEMENT OF VILLAWOOD DETENTION CENTRE

Prepared by:

Pauline Lovitt

Employed by GSL as Pastoral Care Worker March 2008-June 2008

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MY BACKGROUND AND INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT

In March I was employed by GSL at Villawood Immigration Detention Centre as a Pastoral Care Worker. I was hesitant about taking this position because I have never been sure about the detention issue. I was not informed at the interview regarding the client group. I thought that people on detention nowadays had over stayed visas and had traveled on false passports. I was told by the acting Programs Manager who persuaded me to apply for the job because of my varied qualifications and experience that this was a very important new role in the centre and that they were developing the programs department which was going to be called Community Development. The pay was exceptionally low but he felt that it was worth working there as you could do a lot to help people.

I have a Masters in Adult Education (UTS), a Licentiate in Drama (EDTA) with extensive experience in teaching Drama in private practice. I also teach singing. I am an interactive performer. I am also a qualified librarian Associate ALIA, with years of experience in librarianship focusing on youth and children's services. I have a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training and have recently completed a Masters Honours in Education at UTS. My thesis topic "Reintegrating the Stories: the impact of interactive performance using an affirmative values based approach" developed out of my interest in how people can reintegrate their personal stories which have been impacted upon through experiencing trauma, tragedy and adversity.

I resigned from this position on 5th June, 2008. I have never worked in an organization which is so unprofessional and mismanaged. If it wasn't for the interest shown by the visitors who come to Villawood, the Christian and other worship and clients holding prayer groups in the centre, the place would be I believe be totally chaotic and more dangerous than it already is for clients and staff. Focus on religious beliefs does assist the clients to remain centered in a situation which invokes extreme distress and anxiety.

STAGE 1 RESEMBLES A MAXIMUM SECURITY JAIL

I was absolutely shocked to find that tucked out of site is a maximum security prison at Villawood called Stage 1 where people who have been in prison who are not Australian citizens go after they have completed a jail term in order to challenge deportation. Stage 1 also houses other detainees in the centre who have misbehaved. If you can prove that you are not a violent criminal you may be moved to Stage 3 which houses people with behavioural issues. None of this was told to me at the interview.

The issue of working with people with criminal records is not of concern to me as I have been in the past actively involved in prison ministry and have worked at Goulburn Jail as a Librarian. What concerns me is the S501 legislation which I knew little about which leads to the deportation of children of immigrants who have not become naturalized Australian citizens. These clients have their families and supports in Australia and have been educated in Australia. I consider this to be highly irresponsible because Australia needs to account for its mistakes. What sort of people are we to want to inflict people

who may be problematical as an outcome of being brought up in Australia, on other countries?

I had been furious with the Howard Government over deporting a man who was deported to Serbia several years ago who had lived here most of his life. I followed with horror the anguish this man went through. What about people's right to redemption and the ability to turn their lives around? What about their families who have come here to contribute to the Australian workforce? Are they not worthy of consideration in this serious issue?

PASTORAL CARE THAT IS NOT PASTORAL CARE

The Pastoral Care Worker's role which was changed to Spiritual Programs Worker after I began the job proved to be a dummy role. I wasn't meant to do anything to help anyone. The job description which was on Seek. Com didn't seem to apply. I thought the job was to identify people's spiritual needs and see to it that these needs were met. The General Manager in the second interview told me he wanted me to work in groups. When I started the job I found this to be impossible because in order to attract people to a group you need to establish what group you are forming and identify an individual's need first. It made this impossible for me to know how to manage my role. **I discovered that all the staff were discouraged from helping clients because it could be seen to be helping their cases and this included the position of Pastoral Care Worker.**

I found myself being unable to develop anything for Spiritual Programs because the Acting Programs Manager kept stopping me. It was exceptionally difficult to not have clients wanting to share their stories with me as they saw this as my role. He told me that he runs around the centre in order to avoid clients asking him questions and his stock response was that he was listening to them but he couldn't help them. He also said that he didn't engage in conversations with the Detention Services Staff. This was after telling me how you could really help the clients in Villawood when he persuaded me to apply for the position.

I could not work out what I was supposed to be doing in my role. I kept asking about Policies and Procedures but I was told that they didn't have any because things changed on a daily basis at Villawood because of security and that you have to work with that. This meant that if there was a problem with a client that any programs which were arranged could be cancelled and I had to get used to this. I was given no OH&S training which I believe is mandatory nowadays. I was not given an induction until 2 months into the job. There are serious security issues in the centre. It is dangerous work environment.

Although church groups which were well attended came into the centre they were not free to give clients individual pastoral care. I was not meant to refer clients to anyone for help but I have done this as it is a duty of care. I did answer an advertisement which was for a position which in fact was about assisting clients in spiritual care. People in prison have more rights and access to pastoral care than in Villawood because they employ chaplains. The attitude that you can't do anything to help anyone as a staff member because you may be seen to be helping someone with their case is totally appalling. DIAC also does not give information to clients which can help them with their cases. The

clients who had people who visited them to help them with their cases fared better in being given visas it seemed than those that didn't. I referred clients to people who could visit them because that was what they needed. This created a huge amount of stress for me because I do have a genuine concern for duty of care towards other people. This information was on my resume.

THE GSL ATTITUDE TO MY ROLE AND ME AS A STAFF MEMBER

I had a meeting with the General Manager and the Assistant General Manager the day prior to my resignation because I had told him I wasn't happy in the position and if GSL was serious about Programs they needed to put some serious planning into place. I told him that I didn't believe that the acting Programs Manager had the skills and training he said he had for the position. The meeting ended up with me feeling further disempowered in the position. The GM told me that my position was very low on the list of importance in the organization despite telling me at the interview how important people's souls are. **The GM told me that his prime interest was to make money for GSL.**

He also told me that I would have to prove myself in this position in GSL through my performance by proving my skills and talents. I had a lot of skills I could add to the centre, which was not required on my job description but I would have to prove myself in order to be recognized in my position. The GM told me he was happy with the performance of the assistant Programs Manager because he had posters in his office which indicated that he was running programs. I stated that these were events and not programs.

The following issues were raised:

- The lack of planning around programs which included the need to employ a manager of programs who had training and experience in developing programs.
- The lack of experience in implementing and developing programs by the acting Manager of Programs. Having a barbeque and a band is not programs, they are activities.
- The need for paying staff a decent salary for their skills and training in order to retain staff programs staff.
- The need for people who are employed for programs to be able to develop and implement programs around their skills and talents.
- Not being valued as a member of the staff.
- The fact that no meetings were held regarding the planning of programs with the acting Manager Programs and programs staff and Management.
- The fact that there are no Policies and Procedures in place for Programs staff. Programs has been a part of Villawood for years.
- The fact that no support was given in relationship to the Pastoral Care role, which because of the nature of the position meant that clients shared deep concerns with me about their stories and their anxieties about their cases. No debriefing was in place, because I wasn't supposed to be taking an interest in the clients.
- No OH&S training or security training was given.

Identified Problem:

The attitude of both GSL and DIAC in relationship to failing in duty of care towards clients because any assistance other than making sure that security is maintained and clients are fed, clothed, housed and have access to a doctor may be seen to be helping their cases.

GSL is a Security Company with no expertise in Program Management. DIAC officers are Public Servants who have invariably been in their jobs for too long and are entrenched in policies and procedures which need to be updated. There is a lack of communication and mutual respect shown towards each other. This can have a detrimental effect on the management of clients. Each views the other as the enemy rather than working in partnership.

MANAGEMENT OF CLIENTS BY GSL

Villawood Detention Centre is not supposed to be a prison. People are detained against their will. They are meant to be able to carry on their lives in a normal way. This is the information given to employees when they are interviewed. Volunteers are also told this and sign an agreement that whilst conducting any sort of program which includes church worship, that they are not able to help clients with their cases. Security is the main issue which means that the centre is operated in order to contain clients but not to give them any support. The focus of the Detention Services Officer training is on security and not on implementing structured ordered programs which will occupy the clients. If a client escapes a fine of \$50,000 is incurred upon GSL who manage the centre. This issue takes precedent over client care because of the loss of revenue and bad press should this occur.

For this reason a new Housing complex with modern facilities holds 11 clients when it is able to house 70 clients is not being used to capacity. People are living in appalling conditions in a maximum security section called Stage 1, a well hidden secret from the public.

STAFF NOT ENCOURAGED TO HELP CLIENTS IN ANY WAY WHICH CAN BE SEEN TO BE BENEFITING THEIR CASES

This is the biggest problem because it leads to lack of a duty of care towards the client. It creates an enormous amount of stress for Programs staff and Detention Services Officers which are in general caring about the clients and what happens to them. Clients share their anxieties with the staff about their cases which is the predominant concern in the centre. There is good news or bad news about their cases. When there is bad news which happens on a regular basis it affects everyone because clients make friends with one another. It seems that people are randomly released and randomly deported. The success of their cases appears to depend on how their appeals are put together and whether they are able to provide positive character references. There is no logic in who stays and who goes.

Many of the DSOs have qualifications which could be utilized as part of their role to interact with clients and assist them to be occupied during the day and evenings but these are not identified by management. Therefore the majority of the staff stand around

gossiping about clients and other staff and smoking. The lack of interest shown by management to not motivate DSOs to encourage clients to attend events tends to create a malaise amongst the staff. Occasionally Programs organizes an event such as a band performing but little interest is shown by DSOs in what programs have been organized and they tend to not encourage clients to attend.

The clients are spending all day doing nothing, apart from the ones who attend church and prayer groups on a regular basis, which gives them hope. It doesn't mean that because you attend church that you will escape deportation because this is not the case. It does however give the clients something on which to build their lives and fills in the day.

The directive to Programs staff by the General Manager is that they are not allowed to become involved with clients individual needs but to work in groups. Any client requests are put on a form and addressed by Client Services management, but client's individual welfare and spiritual needs cannot be adequately addressed because this may be seen to helping people with their cases. Who is supposed to be doing what is very unclear within the centre.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN TIME TAKEN TO PROCESS CLIENT CASES

DIAC's attitude towards people who are in Detention needs to be reevaluated in the light of the fact that Australia is part of a Global Community. Australia benefits from utilizing cheap labour offshore in the banking, communications and household good and clothing industries. Australia advertises itself to the world as a humane society and contributes to national disasters overseas in the form of aid to people who are impoverished and poorly educated.

INSUFFICIENT GUIDANCE GIVEN TO CLIENTS REGARDING PREPARATION OF CASES

Clients are given little information from DIAC and none from GSL about how to put together their cases. DIAC it seems gathers information but does not fully investigate client's stories or work with them to achieve the best outcome. This is left to Migration Agents who invariably do not give clients proper advice on the likelihood of winning their cases. Migration agents who are able to assist clients with their cases are registered with the government but do are not required to have specific qualifications in advocacy, international politics or legal backgrounds. They are only required to know the Immigration laws and procedures.

Human rights visitors who visit clients in the visitors centre are able to assist clients with their cases. Some clients are given information about accessing legal advice and it seems that others are given no information at all. Bona Fide solicitors do not appear to have a sufficient interest or knowledge of putting client's cases together. If a client does not have access to a good interpreter this may affect their case application. A major problem for clients is that they do not read, write or speak English. DIAC have Case Managers and Detention Services staff who manage clients but what they actually do for the client appears to be minimalist. This means that they have to keep putting information together which could be put together clearly and concisely in the first place for presentation at the Tribunal if they employed solicitors, advocates and interpreters at the outset.

Interest in people who have come to Australia and for whatever reason have broken Australian laws in relationship to Immigration or the State is not afforded. The general attitude is that the people who are in Detention have no rights and that despite mistakes they may have made in the past, they have no right to redemption. The obvious attitude can be questioned in the light of the fact that Australia does take refugees and it is not a crime to apply for refugee status.

By investing time and effort into programs and assisting clients it could mean that if the client is released into the Australian Community they would be equipped to be part of it and if they are deported the positive input received whilst they are in detention could assist them to empower members of their own community. The clients do not stay in Detention for free. They pay a figure of around \$135 per day for the experience. If they are deported they could owe the Australian Government \$100,000 if they stay for 2 years, which means that most of the clients will not be able to pay this back and will never be able to return to Australia.

As an outcome Australian wastes millions of dollars per year in detaining people whose cases could be resolved in a much shorter time. Time and money is wasted on not affording people in Detention with adequate information which would assist their cases, not providing adequate legal advice and not putting the time into acquiring detailed information from the outset which would create a character profile which could be presented to an Immigration Tribunal. The clients are not given the duty of care by DIAC or GSL for the debt that they incur.

SOLUTION

If DIAC employed **employed solicitors, advocates and interpreters** who could get all the details of clients lives in the beginning instead of not helping clients who flounder around putting cases together without any assistance. The clients who have outside visitors who help them to do this seem to have more favourable outcomes from their Visa applications. This means that clients are continually appealing and putting more information together for the Tribunals which could be simplified by DIAC adapting a more caring, compassionate strategy of assistance at the outset. The DIAC Public Service staff could be reduced as an outcome and people who have some power and expertise to actually do something for the clients by putting together a clear and concise argument for their cases would be able to achieve results in a quarter of the time.

Clients would be briefed about their chances of receiving refugee status given the political situations of their countries eg. Indian students are not likely to receive refugee status. It needs to be reiterated to clients that the information will be checked out thoroughly and they need to be honest about the information which they provide. They need to give as much detail as they can to the solicitor and advocate if need be through an interpreter. They would be briefed that Australia can provide refugee status to clients who can demonstrate that they are interested in being part of the Australian Community, which includes showing an interest in learning English and being engaged in structured

ordered programs which are facilitated in the Centre which can be provided as a reference at the Tribunal.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS

This money which the Australian Government is wasting because they offer people the right to seek refugee status in Australia and people choose Detention as a means of achieving this end could be used to help people to become responsible global citizens. The input invested by the Australian Government to empower people in a positive way should be viewed as important, in view of the money we spend on overseas aid to third world countries. We don't want to help them if they are in Australia.

Issue identified: Lack of planning for programs by unqualified programs staff. Lack of motivation to plan and implement programs by Management of the Centre which includes Programs Manager.

Reason: Management appears to not have the skills or understanding of planning and implementing programs. Unable to distinguish between an activity and an ongoing affirming holistic program which could empower staff and clients to be actively involved in classes which for example could relate to Australian Cultural Awareness, Global Cultural Awareness, Music appreciation, Art classes, Environmental Issues, Health, Personal Development, Fitness and Learning English as a Second Language which are of benefit to clients whatever country they may live in.

Anzac Day came and went without any acknowledgment given by Villawood Management, despite the fact that there are 501 Clients who have lived in Australia for the majority of their lives and there are also New Zealand clients. If people want to stay in Australia, they need to be taught about Australian culture. I suggested that we have International Days which the whole centre could be involved with eg. International Day of Peace, International Day of the Environment, International Day of the Family, International Day for Men, International Day for Women, World Happiness Day.

The GM and acting Programs Manager gave not time to discussing these ideas. By focusing on these world events it could contribute to creating positive, caring communities in Villawood. The problem identified by GSL for focusing on Australian culture is that you may be assisting clients with their cases. The name that GSL gave to programs as "Community Development" is a farce because to develop a community you need to show care, compassion and respect for the people who live in it. I did start a Happy Song choir which was patronized by Chinese clients. Management and DSO clients need to be behind these programs in order for them to be successfully implemented.

Outcome: Clients not being actively engaged in effective, regular programs. It is evident that clients display extreme anxiety issues over being detained and the outcome of their cases. One of the reasons for this is not being given adequate, professional help. This creates a problem in that they may become unmotivated to

participate in randomly organized activities and/or programs. Boredom creates security issues. Clients need to have structured, ordered programs which can assist them to survive in Villawood and also helps them with adjusting when they are released into the community or are deported.

All Detention Services officers need to be trained in being actively involved in organizing and implementing activities and programs on a daily basis. Interaction should be aimed at encouraging clients to be “lifelong learners” who are living in a global world. **The attitude towards clients because they are stateless people that they do not have the skills and abilities to contribute to the world is irresponsible. Australia spends a lot of money providing aid to third world countries. It is very short sighted to not be empowering people whilst they are in detention to be responsible global citizens whatever country they may be living in.** There are many educated clients who are not receiving any mental stimulation in the centre and those who aren't highly educated are generally interested in world events.

There are 2 part-time qualified teachers who teach English as Second Language. One of these teachers also facilitates a Computer skills class in Stage 2 and 3 and a cooking class and sewing class for Women in the Lima section of Stage 2. The lack of signage and promotion of these classes means that they are not well patronized apart from the cooking in Lima. It is easy to notify the women that a class is being held. ESL is provided in Stage 1, 2 and 3. The lack of posters around the centre regarding these programs indicates that there is a lack of motivation by the Programs Manager to ensure that clients are aware of and are motivated to attend the classes. There appears to be no budget for resources for programs.

Villawood Programs has been managed by Detention Services Officers and staff who are not qualified to plan and implement programs. For the past 6 months the Acting Programs Manager who is not a DSO, but a former teacher in the centre has not implemented any new structured, ordered programs despite hiring new staff to do so. 7 DSOs have been part of the Programs team to facilitate activities such as sports activities, karaoke nights, the Internet Café in Stage 2 the Gymnasium for Stage 2 and 3 and bands who attend the centre. There are at least 200 DSO staff who stand around on shifts with nothing to do who could be actively engaged in programs.

A reason for the DSOs lack of motivation and interest in being involved in activities and events in the centre is a management issue. Management appears to be not aware of programming needs in the centre because of the preoccupation with security issues.

PAS points are given for being involved in activities such as church, watching TV or gardening. The PAS points give clients up to \$50 per week to spend. Facilitation of events such as sports are facilitated depending on the Security of the centre. If there is a behavioural issue with a client the activity is called off and the rest of the clients then become disadvantaged. This means that delivery of activities is random. One week there may be Volley ball in Stage 3 which Stage 2 may attend but the next week this could be

called off.

The DSOs who are used for Programs supply internet cards, organise haircuts, tools for gardening and buy extra items with client money saved by accumulating PAS points such as a TV or DVD from local suppliers. They do not plan, organise or facilitate specific programs. They are discouraged by the General Manager to become involved in clients individual needs but to encourage them to be part of groups. There is a lack of group activities which are organized by Programs Manager for clients to attend.

In /Stage 1 there is no intercom to inform clients that the guitar teacher, mass or ESL classes are on. It is an effort to get the Officers to find the clients to tell them about activities. They could be doing this instead of standing around. There is not a designated Programs Officer for Stage 1. Some staff may play a game of pool with the clients or have a game in the basketball area.

Stage 1 and Stage 3 clients who are considered to have behavioural issues are not allowed to attend any activities in Stage 2 where there are 3 classrooms which are not being used. Neither Stage 1 or Stage 3 have any programs apart from guitar lessons in Stage 1 and ESL classes. Stage 1 does not have a room which could be used as a classroom. Stage 3 has a tiny demountable for this purpose. The lack of provision for these clients is appalling.

There is a **library in Stage 2 which is fenced and full of outdated books which are library withdrawals which have been donated to Villawood.** There is no budget for books and an officer is not designated to operate the library on a daily basis and the majority of clients are not aware that it is there.

There are a number of programs on the timetable such as the Fairfield Women's group who do massage therapy who no longer attend the centre. A number of volunteer groups attend the centre such as the WOW group for women which concentrates on dying hair and painting nails and making cards once a fortnight in Lima. This is an activity not a structured program which could include a self esteem development component.

The "Next Step" program is facilitated on Wednesday afternoons by John Fry a volunteer who has been actively involved with Prison Fellowship and is attended well by Chinese clients. This program is being developed into talking about Australian culture and playing some recreational games which the clients enjoy. Apart from the Next Step program in stage 2 there are no programs offered to clients to engage clients in discussions about Australia and world events. Many of the clients were hesitant about attending this program because it was attended by the Chinese. Clients were not encouraged by GSL staff to interact with each other from different cultural backgrounds.

The Red Cross attends once a fortnight and delivers a music program on a Sunday afternoon and Chester Hill Community Group attend on a Saturday to do a craft class with the women or play volley ball and the ALIV program attends once a week in the evening to do ESL. These programs are not well patronized with only around 4 clients

attending. The Programs Manager is not aware if these groups are attending. They were on the timetable given to the General Manager. There was insufficient advertising of these programs. A volunteer guitar teacher attends Stage 1 on Thursdays. DSO staff need to be made aware of what programs are being facilitated by volunteers and encourage clients to attend. The acting Programs Manager fails to inform Programs and DSO staff of events he has organized in advance.

There were supposed to be regular meetings for Volunteer staff to attend. The acting Programs Manager organized these at random and did not inform all programs staff that they were on. Minutes were not taken at these meetings which meant that programs staff were not informed about what took place at the meeting. Ideas which were put forward at the meetings were not acted upon.

There are random activities provided which appears to impress the General Manager that Programs is in fact achieving good results. A recent example was when DIAC had an operation to inform 10 clients that they would be deported. A pancake afternoon was organized in order to divert client's attention away from the operation. Subsequently the next week the Programs Manager organized several barbeques because there was a malaise in the centre and was applauded by the General Manager for his ingenuity in creating such a good program. A female circus was also organized as a means of diversion. These activities are positive but there need to be programs in place which go on despite the news that people may be receiving. **Management do not appear to have an understanding about the difference between an activity and a structured ordered program.**

The Housing Section at Villawood has no programs for its clients which means that they do nothing also and are bored.

Another problem is that due to not having welfare staff in the centre who can deal with individual needs then the Programs Staff are approached about all issues in the centre. It makes it very difficult for the Programs Staff to not be involved in a client's individual issues, because there is nowhere else for them to go. There is a medical centre but that is focused on mental health issues. This service does not provide rehabilitation programs.

BENEFITS OF STRUCTURED ORDERED PROGRAMS FOR CLIENT CASES

Being involved in structured ordered programs which are encouraged by management and staff would improve the security of the Detention Centre because the clients would be doing something, which could assist in addressing some of the anxiety issues in the centre. **Certificates of attainment could be issued for clients who attend programs and actively participate. These Certificates could be used as part of their review process when presenting for the Tribunal.**

BENEFITS OF STRUCTURED ORDERED PROGRAMS FOR DSO STAFF

If DSOs were encouraged to interact in a more positive way with clients it would alleviate boredom which is associated with standing around on shifts smoking. Being actively involved in programs and activities needs to be incorporated as part of the DSO training program. Instead of standing around smoking outside an activity which is being

facilitated they need to be engaged in the program. This would ensure the Programs Staff safety and would give them increased job satisfaction. They have radios to be notified if there is a security issue in the centre, so there is no excuse for standing around on shifts.

An example of this is the apathy displayed by most of the Lima staff in relationship to the clients. For 2 hours whilst the Woodville Community Group visits they read the paper, smoke and gossip outside the Lima office.

A SERIOUS DRUG AND ALCOHOL ISSUE IN THE CENTRE

I have been told by staff and clients that staff and visitors are bringing in drugs to the centre. The drug taking in the centre is rife and is very obvious. The first client I saw in Stage 1 was obviously out of it on drugs. I have worked with drug addicts when working with prisoners, the homeless and with Work for the Dole. When I started the job I was told by the acting Programs Manager that Stage 1 were no longer able to come to Stage 2 visits area to attend the Hillsong Church on Sunday and by other DSO programs staff because they were doing drug deals. Over the Easter period I stayed for a Kareoke Night in Stage 2/3 Gymnasium and many of the clients were obviously on drugs.

One client in particular who was in Stage 3 expressed his concern about going to church if Stage 1 are attending. He said that he was concerned about the drug dealing which was happening. He said that because of the drug issue in the centre he felt that it was having a negative effect on him and it was making people worse than when they came in there. He was concerned about slipping back into this scene as an outcome.

I was also told by a DSO staff member who is a supervisor that if they did random testing on staff that there would be up to 60% who are drug takers which means that GSL would have very few staff which is why they don't have random drug testing. I was told by a DSO staff member that a syringe was found in the Westbridge office area which is the front entrance area of the centre where clients do not have access and this was put in the garbage bin and nothing was said.

A client in Stage 3 told me that he had seen Officers in Stage 3 on Ice whilst on their shift at night. Another client told me that an officer in Stage 3 sold him a bottle of rum for \$100. The client became drunk on this and was transferred to Stage 1 as an outcome. The officer was also drunk and assaulted the client but on his record now for his appeal to the Tribunal it claims that he assaulted the officer.

A client in Stage 1 who had been stabbed quite severely by another client in Stage 1 in November last year and has been in an isolation unit as an outcome of getting onto the roof that he survives because he has a television and because he has his drugs. He also told this to a DSO Programs Officer several days before and who said to him they hoped it was only prescription drugs.

Some clients are on methadone which is administered by the medical team. There are no drug rehabilitation or anger management or self help, self esteem building programs

offered to clients in Villawood. They have no access to the facilities which are provided in a prison for rehabilitation.

THE NEED FOR RANDOM DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING OF STAFF

GSL need to implement random drug and alcohol testing of staff and checking of bags by staff on entering the premises. The situation appears to be worse on evening shifts. All Supervisors need to be given the authority to implement these measures. Any incidents which involve clients taking drugs need to be accompanied with incident reports which are given to the GM by Supervisors and the staff on duty need to be interviewed as an outcome to ensure that they have not been the suppliers. This would assist in ensuring that clients are not put in vulnerable positions in relationship to being assaulted by staff who have been taking drugs or alcohol whilst on duty.

Despite DIACs attitude that about not helping people in any way which could assist them with their cases, drug rehabilitation programs need to be a mandatory provision of Detention Centres. This would assist in ensuring both staff and client safety and would benefit the client's mental health and self esteem.

SMOKING BY CLIENTS AND STAFF

There are no quit smoking programs offered to clients in detention. It also seems that GSL management are not addressing the health issues involved in staff chain smoking on the job. Many of the clients smoke, which is not healthy. Staff set a bad example to the clients in the centre by smoking in front of them during shifts and stubbing their butts on the ground. Clients spend a lot of money out of PAS points on cigarettes. One client in particular who didn't smoke was purchasing cigarettes out of PAS points and was doing a good trade in selling cigarettes to clients in Stage 2.

If clients are given a Protection Visa, they are not able to work during this time unless given special permission. This means that community groups are providing money to keep them. One person who regularly visits the centre to support refugees is 70 years old and spends a lot of time raising money to provide for people on Protection Visas. It is irresponsible on the part of the government to not provide adequate care of client's health issues in relationship to smoking. This can have an impact upon members of the community in having to provide money for cigarettes when they are released as part of the support process.

LACK OF PERSONAL CARE AND PASTORAL CARE

There is no avenue within the centre for clients to have individual time with any of the visiting clergy or religious visitors regarding their personal issues, which are tied up with their cases. Clergy sign an agreement to not do this as it can be seen to be helping with their cases. There are 2 nuns who are able to walk around the centre to help clients. They are the only people who are able to do anything for the clients such as write a support letter on their behalf to the Refugee Tribunal. As Pastoral Care Worker I was discouraged from interacting with the nuns to refer clients to them.

I was also was also discouraged from referring clients to people such as clergy who could visit them in visiting hours in the visitor's centre, who could give them some emotional

and spiritual support by the Programs Manager. The Pastoral Care Worker's role proved to be a farce, despite the General Manager's expression of concern about needing to take care of people's souls. Security issues impacted upon people being able to worship in groups.

At Easter 2 clients were in the Management Unit in Stage 3. They were from Stage 1. The GM told me that the Lebanese Catholic could not attend mass if he did not return to Stage 1 and to tell him this. He was given communion by the Priest in the DIAC visiting rooms. This was a management issue which I became entangled with in the first week of employment without any security training or knowledge of the security issues regarding Villawood, or knowledge of the client population.

After Easter the Christian client wanted to see me. The 2 clients in the MU were exceptionally angry about this issue and became quite aggressive over this. The officers were not in view, which meant I was with them on my own. The Programs Manager had attended the facility with me and had said I could write a statement for the client about this which did not sound professional and walked out. When I did not write exactly what the Christian client wanted me to say on the statement which was just on a piece of paper he was furious. Fortunately the Lebanese Muslim was able to placate the Lebanese Christian over the issue by insisting that this was not my fault it was a management decision.

When I requested to fill out an INCIDENT REPORT this was something which nobody seemed to do in the centre. I spoke to the Client Services manager about this. The acting Programs Manager was not happy about me requesting to do this. It is mandatory in all places of work where there are incidents with potentially dangerous clients. This should be documented on the DIAC data base.

The Muslim Lebanese client who intervened to stop the issue escalating over the Muslim Christian not being able to attend Mass at Easter was returned to Stage 1. He was not given access to worship because of security issues in 5 months. In the time he was in the Management Unit and in Stage 1 he was not given access to Friday prayers which they facilitate in groups. Praying together is an important aspect of the Muslim religion. Christians are able to have individual services with a priest or minister. Consent was given for this client to attend the prayers in Stage 3 finally when the Imam called the General Manager to ask for permission for him to attend the prayers in Stage 3 on Fridays. As the Pastoral Care worker I was not at liberty to discuss these matters with the General Manager because he only spoke with the acting Programs Manager about what was happening in programs.

At Easter a management decision was made in regards to the security of the centre, by closing the gates between Stage 2 and 3. No explanation was given to the clients which invoked their anger. As an outcome Stage 2 minimum security clients had to attend the Mosque in Stage 3 for the Friday prayers because Stage 3 weren't allowed into Stage 2. They were exceptionally aggressive about this and I was held responsible for the change by the clients which could have become a security issue for me. I referred this to the

acting Programs Manager and nothing was done in relationship to senior Management talking with the clients over the issue. It took an enormous amount of work by me to communicate effectively with the Muslim clients after this. Fortunately the Muslim Imam who was very moderate Muslim was able to persuade them to go to Stage 3. It took at least 6 weeks to resolve this issue. Management were nowhere to be seen over this.

There was no concern given in relationship to the security issues which could have arisen from either of these 2 incidents. There was also no avenue for discussion in relationship to information the clients gave about their stories. The position of Pastoral Care Worker position was important to the clients in Villawood, who saw me as somebody they could share their stories with. It was difficult to not be concerned about client's cases because invariably it was connected to their spiritual beliefs, eg. converting from being a Muslim to a Christian by one young client from Bangladesh. The Muslims gave him a hard time about this. There was nothing in place for debriefing over the clients sharing their stories because I was only supposed to be working in groups and I wasn't supposed to take an interest in their stories.

I spent a lot of time researching how Sikh worship could be facilitated in the centre, which was not allowed because the priest wears a Kirpan (dagger). The Sikh's gave me a terrible time about GSL not providing them with access to their religious worship. I did work along side them to try and provide this. I organized some community visits from non baptized Sikhs who brought them food. I was organizing Buddhist worship to be facilitated in the centre.

Clients in Stage 1 had little access to their religious worship. They are the most disadvantaged group in the centre. Because someone did a drug deal at the Hillsong Service earlier in the year in Stage 2 where they were taken to worship this was stopped. The only other worship they could attend was a Bible study with the Hillsong pastor on Wednesday and a Catholic Eucharist on a Thursday in Stage 1. Non Catholics were not terribly welcome to attend this service. Prior to my resignation I had organized the Chester Hill Baptist church to attend Stage 1 to facilitate a praise, prayer and worship session. In the first session 3 of the 9 clients were obviously on drugs.

LACK OF WELFARE SUPPORT

Clients do not have access to welfare. Programs staff are able to assist with purchase of items but welfare needs are not met. If clients need any help they are able to attend the medical centre for mental health reasons but this does not address concerns that clients may have regarding family members overseas or family issues in Australia. They are given minimal assistance regarding personal issues through their DIAC officers, but because of the culture of not giving assistance to clients because it may be seen to be helping their cases this is minimalist. If a client has issues which may result in an assault on another client they will be sent to Stage 1 the maximum security prison even if they have never been charged for a criminal offence. If a client has attempted suicide over anxiety over deportation they are placed in Stage 1.

No interest is demonstrated in what may be the cause of client's behaviour and there are no programs for anger management or rehabilitation within the centre, which

prisoners have access to in a prison. This means that detainees in Immigration Detention Centers are more disadvantaged than people who are in prison. Many clients have drug and alcohol issues which are not being addressed in the centre. Clients and officers claim that officers are bringing in drugs and alcohol into the centre for clients which can add to the security issues. Some clients who demonstrate severe mental health issues may be sent to Banks House a mental health centre.

The Red Cross attends once a fortnight and discusses with clients their personal issues. This job needs to be done as part of duty of care by GSL as part of their contract to DIAC. It is difficult for volunteers to be able to assist with client's needs and to ensure that these needs are followed up. **Clients stating their needs does not address client's needs.** What the Red Cross achieves is not clear. Staff are not encouraged to refer clients to them because helping them may be seen to be assisting them with their cases. Client welfare should not be the responsibility of NGOs in a country where government funds are provided for the Management of Detention Centres. Australia is not a third world country.

There are client meetings to discuss food and their needs with Client Services Management, but the standard type of response is "that we hear what you are saying" but nothing is done to make any changes. The Ombudsman attends client meetings but it is difficult to determine whether their voices are heard in relationship to client concerns.

CLIENTS WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS TREATED AS CRIMINALS

Although clients who have completed a prison sentence are released into the community, prisoners who aren't Australian citizens, including migrant's children who have not been naturalized are put in a maximum security prison Stage 1 in Villawood. The classification which they held in prison is not binding and they are all treated as though they have not rehabilitated whilst in prison and they are all considered to be potential risks. After a period of time they may be moved to Stage 3 and in very rare circumstances to Stage 2.

Despite the fact that Villawood is not a prison, Stage 1 clients are handcuffed when they are taken out of the centre to go for medical treatment and to court. If they were in the community having been released from prison they would not be attending appointments in handcuffs. It is so extreme that one client who went to court has reported to me since I have left Villawood, that on June 18th. 2008 he wanted to go to the toilet, the DSO would not take off his handcuffs, undid his fly for him and undressed him so he could sit on the toilet. He was unable to wipe himself because of the handcuffs. The officer had to dress him again. He had to go into court without wiping himself. He was totally demoralized by the experience.

TREATMENT OF S501 CLIENTS BY DIAC- A Human Rights Abuse Issue

Clients who have served prison sentences are classified as S501. There are a number of clients in detention who have lived in Australia since they were children or teenagers who are migrants' children who are going to be deported. They have family who visit them, some of whom are quite elderly. There are also a number of clients from other countries eg. China and Singapore, who are seeking refugee status who have for reasons committed

a crime whilst in Australia. If they are deported to countries such as China they are facing the prospect of being resentenced or disappearing without trace.

STAFF AND CLIENT SAFETY

In the time I was working at Villawood in 10 weeks, someone stabbed himself in Stage 2 and someone set fire to his room in Stage 2. Several clients were on the roof in Stage 2 for several days because they were being deported. Many clients were under observation because of threatened suicides particularly over pending deportation. A client was stabbed in Stage 1 in November. He had been on the roof for a week and as an outcome had been in a segregated unit in the whole time I was there. He showed me the stab wounds. Apparently the person who stabbed him was deported to Vietnam because he was offered money by DIAC and no charges were laid over this. Someone set Stage 1 bathroom area alight. There was also an attempted stabbing in Stage 1.

The client who set his room alight in Stage 2 remains a mystery. He was from Zambia and said to me that he had put himself into Immigration because he wanted to return home. After 5 weeks he was still there. He set the room alight apparently because he had a bad tooth ache which was not being addressed by the Medical Centre. He was then sent to stage 1. He then started to display mental health issues and was sent to Banks House.

On his return whilst I was having the meeting with the General Manager prior to resigning the medical unit rang and said that they did not feel that Stage 1 was suitable for him to return to. The GM insisted that he had to be placed there because he might set his room alight. This client was charged for Arson and now has a criminal record against his name as an outcome of sitting around doing nothing whilst in Villawood. He was an educated person with a university degree.

INTERACTION BETWEEN DIAC AND GSL INDICATES POOR COMMUNICATION

The role of DIAC officers and what they are doing for the clients is not made clear to GSL staff. It appears that they are only able to assist clients in minimal ways. **Clients are not given sufficient information as to where they can obtain legal advice, interpreters etc. as this may be seen to be helping their cases.** Because of this clients may be detained for long periods of time because of the appeal process. If they were given the right advice and assistance in preparing their cases, it would not be left to community groups who visit the visitors centre and the process would be faster.

DIAC officers appear to be notified and give advice on security issues within the centre. They contribute to the anxiety which clients face if they are not coping with their situation and become aggressive. Instead of working out the cause of aggressive behaviour clients immediately are moved for security reasons.

There is a lack of communication between GSL and DIAC in relationship to directives given in relationship to policies to DSOs and Programs Staff. Their roles are not explained to staff. GSL staff are told by the GM that they are not to communicate with DIAC.

An example of this is the facilitating of weddings where proper procedures and guidelines are not in place which invariably upsets the client to a point that one S501 client ended up in the Management Unit for almost a week over not being allowed to have wedding photos. DIAC suddenly made a ruling that photos of weddings with clients were not allowed because of confidentiality issues. The client was not informed of this prior to the wedding. The bridesmaid was a client and a lot of clients had attended the wedding. It seems that they make up policies on the run in the same way that GSL does.

On the occasion of this wedding DIAC told the client that she could not have the wedding outside the centre, after it seems they said she could. Then they said she could have anything she wanted. Then they said that she would have to provide the food and everything, that GSL could only provide the venue, which included a Marquis which was purchased from Bunnings. A community group provided the client with the dress. GSL staff really stretched themselves to make it a good day.

No information was given to the DSO Programs staff member who took the photos as to what he could take. He was left to break the news that she couldn't have the photos until DIAC had decided which ones she could have. This was a management issue, but it was left to the DSO to sort out. Because of the GSL and DIAC issue about helping the clients in anyway with their cases it made it extremely difficult to organise this wedding. It all had to be left to the client and then because they had made promises which they didn't keep the client became hostile to revealing what she had organized. I had to develop a plan B to ensure that everything was in place for the day even though the acting Programs Manager told me I wasn't to do anything to help because getting married could be seen to help her with her case. The client was 28 years old and had lived in Australia since she was 3 months old.

The biggest concern for clients is the lack of and withholding of information about any issues which they may be anxious about. They apply to be moved between stages and not given definite times for this movement by either DIAC or GSL which causes extreme anxiety. For example there are couples who are living in Stage 2 who requested being moved to housing where they are set up for couples, but this does not seem to eventuate. **There are continual management meetings happening which can include DIAC which occupies 70% of management time, but outcomes of meetings are not relayed to staff and improvements are not implemented. There is never any feedback to Programs or DSOs as to what is being discussed in these meetings.**

DIAC officers attitude to clients needs to be investigated. The way that 2 Senior DIAC officers talked about having a Stage 1 client who was getting married and his friend in the Visitors Centre in Stage 2 on June 7th for the wedding, as though they had to be convicted psychopathic pedophiles who could do something dreadful to other visitors was totally appalling. The people in Stage 1 have served their prison sentences. If they were not being deported they would be in the community.

**LACK OF PLANNING FOR EMPLOYING PROGRAMS STAFF
ADVERTISING FOR PROGRAMS STAFF BY GSL**

GSL has made a decision to employ Programs Staff who are not DSOs in order to fulfill the obligations of their tender. They have advertised for a number of positions for sport and programs staff on Seek.Com. The acting Programs Manager did not inform the DSOs that they would no longer be required to work as part of the Programs Team until after they had interviewed for the positions. The wages they offered are well below industry standards which means they will attract staff who will use this as a stop gap measure only which will impact upon the clients in a negative way because of lack of consistency.

The Pastoral Care Worker position changed when I started the job. GSL didn't seem to have the Job Description which they had advertised on Seek.com. There was no discussion about the development and implementation of effective programming. The new staff had no idea of what they were supposed to be doing. Any ideas are not pursued because the acting Programs Manager did not appear to have the qualifications and training in design and implementation of programs. One new staff member a qualified teacher in PDHPE was not doing anything in relationship to implementing and developing structured order programs using his skills and abilities but spent his day entering PAS points.

The directive from management was to not work with individuals but groups but nothing was planned to form groups which clients could be involved with. I did start a Happy Song choir but was not given encouragement by Programs Manager to do this. To really implement groups in Villawood with the serious lack of motivation and anxiety clients experience the management and DSO staff need to be briefed and motivated to encourage clients to attend.

LACK OF TRAINING IN RELATIONSHIP TO OH&S, SECURITY ISSUES AND CLIENT MANAGEMENT FOR NEW PROGRAMS STAFF

DSOs are given six weeks training in security prior to commencing work with the clients. Programs staff who are not DSOs are not given any training in security, despite the fact that there is such talk amongst DSOs about the dangerous nature of some of the clients. OH&S issues are not discussed and Programs staff are not invited to attend OH&S meetings and not informed of when they are held. DSOs are given radios but most of the programs staff are expected to wander around the centre without any security training or strategies for dealing with potential emergencies eg. clients attempting suicide.

LACK OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND MANAGEMENT ATTITUDE TO NOT HAVING ANY FOR PROGRAMS STAFF

Management have made it clear to programs staff that there are no policies and procedures for programs staff and there aren't going to be any. The reason for this is because the centre is based on Security and programs are stopped because one person may choose to misbehave. The staff members, who are employed for programs have to get used to working in this sort of environment where there is no consistency and things change on a daily basis. If someone in Stage 1 misbehaves the football match in Stage 2 will be called off.

ABSENCE OF TEAM MEETINGS WITH PROGRAMS STAFF AND PROGRAMS MANAGER

There were no meetings with the General Manager and acting Programs Manager and programs staff regarding the design and implementation of programs. Any programs which were suggested were good ideas and plans were not put into place for their implementation. The acting Programs Manager held random meetings with Volunteers who attend the centre, but none of their ideas or concerns were addressed either. Minutes were not taken of these meetings and discussions were not followed up.

LACK OF PLANNING AND MISINFORMATION GIVEN IN JOB INTERVIEW IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE ROLE OR PASTORAL CARE WORKER

The Pastoral Care Role was talked about as an important role within the centre at the interview. Stage 1 was not discussed. Client's spirituality is very much tied up with their faith in God helping them to stay in Australia which means that it is difficult to not become entangled in their issues. There was a strong directive that you could only work in Groups and being involved in any way with people's stories may be seen to assist with their cases. This made the position inoperable because there was no planning in place to be able to formulate group activities.

LACK OF ONGOING TRAINING FOR MANAGERS AND STAFF LACK OF TRAINING FOR MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS IN FRONT LINE MANAGEMENT

DSO Supervisors are not given formal management training. Professional workplaces now require Supervisory staff to undertake Certificate IV in Front Line Management. The DSO staff can be quite rude to the Programs Staff, which is not satisfactory in a team situation. Supervision of staff is about people motivation and not simply security issues.

LACK OF TRAINING FOR CLIENT SERVICE OFFICERS IN ANY OTHER AREA OTHER THAN SECURITY

DSO staff are only trained by GSL in Security. Training in Certificate IV Assessment and Workplace Training or Certificate TAA would be useful to staff who are actively involved in implementing programs. It would help them to be able to assist in the design of programs and assist them to motivate clients to attend. Certificates of attainment for attendance and participation in programs could be used by clients as a reference for their Tribunal applications. If clients are going to stay in Australia they need to be able to substantiate that they are able to work. It is now a requisite of receiving Dole payments to attend English Literacy and Numeracy courses or Work for the Dole programs. If clients have been doing nothing for 2 years it is difficult for them to reengage as part of a community when they are released.

LACK OF TRAINING FOR STAFF IN RELATIONSHIP TO RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIAC OFFICERS AND GSL STAFF

There is an unwillingness of Management of DIAC and GSL to communicate effectively between each other. Not being informed of meeting outcomes, client needs provision and dialogue between departments is an issue for clients and staff. **It would be beneficial to both GSL and DIAC if there was a liaison officer who communicated between the 2 departments. Nobody knows who to send information to at DIAC because they are not sure of what their roles are. Then GSL staff are not allowed to communicate with DIAC.**

ABSENCE OF MEETINGS WITH STAFF CREATES COMMUNICATION ISSUES BETWEEN MANAGEMENT, DSO AND PROGRAMS STAFF

The General Manager and the Deputy General Manager need to be available for individual dialogue with staff. Regular meetings where staff concerns are discussed, need to be implemented by the GM and DGM and evidence needs to be shown that they are not only listening to staff concerns but acting on them. The Chain of Command method of communication needs to be modified to include dialogue with individual staff members. Not dialoguing with staff is an outmoded method of staff management in the 21st century. Staff need to be valued and heard regarding issues related to the position. The feeling amongst staff is that the General Manager is unapproachable and it is not a good idea to air any grievances to him. The amount of time which is spent by management in meetings on a daily basis and the lack of outcomes for both staff and clients is an indication that management are over meeting. The poor management and lack of policies and procedures or intention to develop any for Programs staff is an indication that Villawood is not being managed effectively.

LACK OF MOTIVATION BY DSO STAFF IN RELATIONSHIP TO INTERACTING WITH CLIENTS WITH ACTIVITIES – NOT ENCOURAGED BY MANAGEMENT

Management need to take a proactive approach to encouraging both staff and clients to engage in programs and to attend activities. These programs need to be advertised through the announcement system and colourful posters placed on noticeboards. All staff need to have access to emails where they can be notified daily of what is happening in Villawood. Clients need to be given a handout with a program timetable and a timetable of spiritual worship when they arrive at the centre. This information needs to be kept up to date on central notice boards.

HEALTH ISSUES IN RELATIONSHIP TO CHAIN SMOKING BY OFFICERS WHILST WORKING

Staff need to be given designated smoking times and designated smoking areas. It is a bad example to be setting to clients who want to be Australian citizens to observe staff wandering around the centre dropping their cigarette butts on the ground. It is an OH&S issue for staff to be smoking on the job anywhere on the complex.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

GSL have an environmental policy, which does not contain any information about waste within the centre. There need to be recycling bins for waste paper around the centre. Staff and clients need to be educated through Programs about recycling. They need to be educated in not wasting water and turning off lights and heaters in order to conserve energy. This is now a need in Australian society.

The amount of plastic plates and cutlery which is thrown out on a daily basis is outrageous. At each meal time each client may have up to 5 plastic bowls and/or plates. These plates are recyclable and so is the cutlery. Clients need to be given a set of bowls and plates for the day and need to be washing these plates up and drying them after each meal which is what they would be doing in the community. There needs to be a designated area for washing dishes which could be supervised by DSO staff.

TIMETABLES FOR REQUESTS CLIENTS

Programs staff should be available at specified times only for clients to discuss Pas Point Buy Ups and to receive telephone cards. The clients need to be adhering to timetables in the same way that people live in the community. Timelessness is not a good habit for clients to be into as they will make it harder to adjust to life when they are released into the community or deported.

STRICT AUDITS ON PROGRAMS NEED TO BE CONDUCTED BY DIAC

DIAC does not have the strict requirements which DEWR have about design and implementation of programs. In order for private tenders to receive funding for projects such as WFD they must substantiate what programs they are going to be implementing. DEWR are rigid about the auditing process. Client records of attendance are checked in order to ascertain that they have attended. Every interaction made by the staff with the client has to be recorded on Smart Client the DEWR data base. Every project for WFD is audited and clients and staff are interviewed in relationship to their effectiveness.

Strict audits would ensure that management of the centre is diligent about the programs they are implementing. Saying they have employed staff and then only offering the odd activity in relationship to the security of the centre at the time would not be adequate for justification for funding purposes. Participation in WFD projects gives clients an avenue for receiving references when they are applying for jobs. Programs staff need to be recording interactions with clients on the ISIS data base. The information on the data base needs to be included as part of the client's application for Refugee status. Participation in programs can give DIAC an indication of whether the client will be a responsible Australian citizen.

LIVING CONDITIONS

STAGE 1 RESEMBLES MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON

It has up to 6 people in shared rooms whilst single rooms are empty. There is no classroom or access to up to date books. There isn't a relaxation area where people can sit and talk with each other and watch TV. There isn't a playing field.

STAGE 3 does not have a proper classroom. There isn't an enclosed area for people to sit and talk with each other. The TV room and billiards room is basic.

There isn't an enclosed area for visits for Stage 2 and 3 visitors. It is very cold in winter to be sitting outside. Some clients have babies and children who visit them and there is no provision for them.

There isn't any provision for private pastoral care visitors in the centre. There isn't a worship centre, despite the fact that these are the only really positive ongoing structured events being facilitated in the centre.

NEW HOUSING COMPLEX NOT BEING UTILISED

Why is there a new housing complex which could accommodate 70 minimum risk clients not being used to its best advantage? There are only 10 clients there. They do not have any structured programs. This was an initiative of the Howard Government which the

Rudd government has omitted to continue. The clients in housing are able to go food shopping but nothing else is offered to occupy their time.

It appears that conditions for clients have not improved with the Rudd government to date because Stage 1 at Villawood continues to operate despite a visit and concerns expressed by the Immigration Minister Senator Chris Evans. Plenty of clients are being deported and the S501 legislation still exists which causes extreme anxiety to families who are immigrants, let alone the client.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE REFUGEE REVIEW TRIBUNAL

There appears to be no information on the internet which documents what the qualifications and experience of the Refugee Review Tribunal hold. It is an independent body. I am concerned about the lack of sensitivity shown towards clients by the Tribunal.

An example is a client being vague about the events of his childhood. It is obvious that the client has had a traumatic childhood living in the Highlands of New Guinea. How he has survived is quite miraculous. Why he has to justify to the Refugee Tribunal why he is still alive is outrageous. **It would be in the interests of the community that DIAC and members of the Refugee Tribunal treat client stories in a compassionate manner. It should be mandatory for them to read academic literature and attend personal trauma related workshops which substantiates that childhood trauma can cause traumatized memories.** Many people who have been traumatized as children blank out the memories altogether.

It seems that the Tribunal members are insufficiently informed about the countries from which clients are seeking refugee status. An example is that they appear to have no idea of the dangers which people experience living in Port Moresby in relationship to kidnappings by tribes. Members of Highland tribes have the mobility to go to Port Moresby. No research was instigated to ascertain the client's father's identity as a pastor in the United Church of New Guinea which could have been ascertained, as this is an established church in New Guinea. Instead the client was treated as though he must have been making up the information that his whole family had been killed in tribal wars in the Highlands and he was the only one left.

It is painful for people to have to talk about the traumatic events that happen in their life, let alone having to justify your life story to people who are only interested in achieving a negative outcome for people who have ended up in Villawood Detention Centre. **It is not a crime to claim Refugee Status in Australia, it has been part of our law I believe since the 1950s.** After reading the Tribunal transcript in relationship to the client from New Guinea, you would have to have the confidence of Kevin Rudd to stand before obviously intimidating officers of the Tribunal to justify your existence. Even Kevin Rudd would no doubt find being questioned about the loss of his father as a child to be very painful, let alone having to talk about losing his whole family in a tribal war and then justifying why you were the fortunate one to survive. Why does the Tribunal assume that people have to be lying about their lives because they have confused events because of trauma? Not everyone in the world has had the privilege of being born in Australia.

A PROTECTION VISA GRANTED TO A CLIENT IN 2 WEEKS WHO WAS UNAUTHORISED AIR ARRIVAL

I worked at Villawood for 10 weeks and in that time I shared client's anxiety about the length of time they had been in the centre and the issues they experienced by not having professional assistance in preparing their cases. One young Chinese woman's case was quite puzzling. She came to the Next Step program one afternoon and was in tears. The other clients were comforting her. She had limited English so I took her to Lima and spoke to one of the DSOs who spoke limited Chinese. She managed to find out that she had got off the plane in Sydney as an unauthorized arrival. She was supposed to be going to Malaysia as a student. She initially was supposed to be being turned around but she said she was applying for a Protection Visa which seemed rather odd as she was a student. I had found out if she was a member of Falong Gong or a professing Christian which can be grounds for claiming protection in order to refer her to something she could do in the centre, but she appeared to not be seeking Protection on these grounds.

One of the English as second language teachers mentioned to me in passing that she had been given a Bridging Protection Visa. This was within 2 weeks. There had been an older man visiting her in the visitor's centre on a regular basis. I would question why someone who is a student who arrives unlawfully as a student, who has purposely alighted from a plane in Sydney when she is registered to attend university in Malaysia was given a Visa in such a short period of time, whilst other clients who have also broken the law are fighting their cases for 2 years.

GENUINE CONVERSIONS AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES IN THE CENTRE

Some clients do have genuine conversions in the centre to Christianity and some join the Falun Gong after being detained. The Christian worship in the centre is very strong and clients find comfort in attending church and the positive support given to them by Christian believers who come to the centre on a daily basis, which gives them hope for their lives. In view of the fact that the worship being offered gives positive assistance to client's emotional needs which is neglected by both DIAC and GSL, priests and pastoral workers who attend the centre, should not have to sign a disclaimer that they will not assist client's with their cases. Their spiritual beliefs become entangled with their cases. They can provide important information about a client which can be crucial to their cases.

People's conversions need to be considered in relationship to their cases because it can be dangerous to worship as Christians in many countries. There is plenty of literature which substantiates evidence of the persecuted church in both Muslim and Communist Countries. There is a genuine interest being shown in China and other countries towards Christianity. People can have genuine conversions to Christianity. **DIAC and GSL do not have any recourse for genuine conversions in the centre because they neglect their duty of care towards clients which makes people turn to God for comfort.** Faith in God can provide comfort and relief from anxiety in a situation whereby they are considered to be worthless.

A genuine conversion to Christianity by a Muslim can have dire consequences for them if they are deported to a Muslim country. I had an experience of this happening whilst working with a young client from Bangladesh, who had an interest in Christianity before attending the centre but was in the process of converting whilst he was there. I had to conduct a clandestine operation in Australia to help this client not be persecuted by the Muslims in the centre and to organise some Christian clergy to come visit him in the Visitor's Centre. If he gets deported his life is at risk. The client needs to be able to provide evidence that they have been converted whilst in Detention through the ministers who attend the centre for worship and this should be an important aspect of their Visa applications. The world has a history of people being converted to Christianity. Villawood Detention centre is not unique in this.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CLIENTS AND STAFF

My experience as a Pastoral Care Worker at Villawood Immigration Centre, enlightened me on a subject which I had not previously had an firm opinion about. My report highlights many issues in relationship to the management of the centre which indicate a situation which is covertly a human rights violation issue which has been personally disturbing to me. I am making a number of suggestions which could be implemented with minimal alteration to the Centre which would improve the life of clients. It would also be in the interests of clients in the centre if DIAC employ full time solicitors, interpreters and advocates on site who can assist clients to put together their Visa applications. This would save an enormous amount of time and money for DIAC.

One of my concerns is the absence of a human face on the Refugee Review Tribunal membership. All members of the Tribunal need to be assessed according to strict character guidelines in relationship to how they perceive the clients in view of the fact that Australia does offer refugee status to people and not according to how they can successfully oppose their cases. They need to be educated in understanding that experiencing trauma, tragedy and adversity can have a negative impact upon people's emotions and memories of events which have happened to them in the past. They also need to have an academic understanding of the political issues which are current in the countries which clients are from. This could include consulting with experts from the country which the detainees come from. For the number of years which the Tribunal has been meeting to access cases an information file should be established. Information about who comprises the Refugee Review Tribunal needs to be accessible to the public through the internet. Membership of the Tribunal should be for a limited time of 2 years to prevent members acting in a cynical manner about client cases.

Some clients are obviously not going to be given a Protection Visa because they do not have grounds to claim. They need to be informed at the outset, instead of being encouraged by Migration agents who have no concern about them apart from making money. The use of Migration agents for assisting clients with their cases needs to be reviewed. They need to be replaced by government employed advocates, interpreters and solicitors who are based at the centre. Reducing the number of public service DIAC staff who are entrenched in the not helping clients mentality would assist the management of the Centre. Serious audits on DIAC and GSL performance need to be conducted regularly

which includes the content and delivery of structured ordered programs and attendance at these programs. Introducing random drug and alcohol testing on staff and spot checks on bags of staff would assist in eliminating the drug and alcohol abuse issues in the centre.

- An immediate solution to the issues at Villawood would be to immediately close stage 1, move those clients into Stage 3 and move low risk clients and the women in Lima into the housing complex which is grossly under utilized.
- Close the MU unit which is in Stage 3 and use it for accommodation.
- Move lower risk clients into Stage 2.
- Fence off the classroom and recreation area and Lima area and create an Educational Centre, which can be accessed under strict timetable conditions by Stage 2, Stage 3 and clients in the housing complex.
- Use the present prayer rooms which the clients have created in the centre for accommodation and convert Lima accommodation for this purpose into a worship area for the different religions. This would provide clients with access to a quiet place for worship and prayer during the day with designated prayer times for the different stages in the centre. This needs to be supervised by DSO staff who have an interest in supporting clients in their religious beliefs. There could be walls removed inside this area to make the worship areas sizeable areas.
- Develop and implement a holistic educational program which all clients are able to attend which is advertised on a Daily basis through the PA system and through advertisement on central notice boards throughout the centre.
- Make the Lima offices into a Music Centre.
- Use the present recreational room as a Library and purchase new books which reflect geographical and cultural diversity, plus new fiction paperbacks and magazines.
- Issue clients with certificates of attainment and attendance for participating in organized structured programs which could be used to assist them with their applications to the Tribunal. This would give an indication of their interest in measures they are taking in becoming responsible Australian citizens who are interested in participating in a multicultural society. Ensure that programs have access to interpreters from within the centre ie. use staff and clients as interpreters. Encourage and stress the importance to clients of the need to learn English not only for their Visa applications but as part of being part of Australian society, or the benefits it can be to them in their own countries.
- Train DSO officers to participate in programs and ensure that the educational program complex is staffed by DSO officers. Officers with tertiary qualifications in different fields who could assist in the motivation of clients to attend programs.
- Ensure that all Programs staff who are not employed as DSOs are qualified and have experience in implementing values based programming which will assist the clients to be empowered whether they remain in Australia or are deported overseas. This could include staff having qualifications in Adult Education/Primary Teaching/PDHPE who could offer a holistic approach to encourage clients to be “lifelong learners”.
- Ensure that Volunteer Programs are incorporated into the timetable.

- Ensure that all programs are advertised on a central noticeboard are translated in different languages.
- Ensure that the day's programs are announced each day over the centre PA.
- Stage 1 could be reused with the absence of the security gates and with a reception area at the front door into a rehabilitation and mental health unit with structured ordered programs for drug and alcohol abuse, anger management and general counselling.
- Private visit rooms need to be provided for clients who want to speak to a member of the clergy in private regarding personal and spiritual issues.
- The main under cover area in the Visitors Centre needs to be enclosed which would provide a more convenient worship area and shelter in the winter for visitors.