

Thank you for the opportunity to relay some of my experiences as a supporter of asylum seekers to this Senate Inquiry. I have been involved in the Circle of Friends refugee support movement in South Australia since July 2002. I have extensive documentation to back up my experiences. What I saw and experienced makes the detention of Cornelia Rau look like a picnic. I was shocked by the way DIMIA and its ACM/GSL servants abused women and children, let alone the men. Their detention was punitive, harsh, unnecessary and hugely wasteful of taxpayers' money.

#### Case 2 Dumping a family

The second case regards a woman who fled domestic violence in Iran with her 3 young daughters (one was a toddler at the time). They were incarcerated in Woomera for two and a half years; it took 6 months after their TPV had been granted for the family to be released, another abject failure of DIMIA and then Minister Ruddock in its duty of care. The family witnessed terrible things in Woomera, including attempted suicides. The eldest daughter repeatedly engaged in self-harm. There were limited schooling opportunities, at best. When the family was released and taken to Adelaide, they were left to fend for themselves without any contacts or money. A charity organisation came to their aid.

#### Case 3 DIMIA management by crisis

..... is a young Iranian man who could no longer cope with indefinite detention in Woomera/Baxter. His way out was to stop eating and die. In February, 2003, after about 2 weeks of not eating, he was brought from Baxter to the Royal Adelaide Hospital by air ambulance. I visited him in hospital and found that he had a guard posted inside his hospital room, 24 hours a day, with the lights on all the time 'so that he could be observed'. The guard was reading a pornographic magazine. Senator Andrew Bartlett visited ..... in hospital and negotiated that the guard(s) move out of the room to afford some privacy. ....'s condition deteriorated to the extent that his doctor wrote to the Prime Minister to advise that his patient was about to be moved to a hospice to die as the cause of his 'illness' was indefinite detention. .... received a TPV within a few days. The case highlights the arbitrariness of 'decision making' in DIMIA and how something gets done only when a crisis point is reached, most likely to avoid the political embarrassment of a detainee dying while under the 'care' of DIMIA and the Minister.

#### Case 4 Inadequate medical care resulting in near death of a detainee

..... is a 32 year old Iranian man who, at the time of writing, is still in Baxter after five and a half years in detention. .... is an Ahwaz Arab, a persecuted minority in Iran which is currently being subjected to 'ethnic cleansing'. I first met ..... in Baxter in July, 2003 when he was recovering from acute peritonitis. .... had been complaining of severe abdominal pains to medical staff in Baxter for some time; their response was to give him Panadol (the Baxter cure-all) and deny proper medical examination or attention. His pain became so acute that his fellow detainees held a sit-down strike until ACM//DIMIA started to take notice and eventually had ..... assessed

medically. He was flown to Adelaide by air ambulance and sent to the Queen Elizabeth hospital where an emergency operation was necessary to treat his burst appendix. He was close to death. No visitors were allowed by the guards and he was not permitted to talk to the nursing staff. .... also suffers from a back injury inflicted by a guard. He has been seen in the orthopaedic department at the Royal Adelaide Hospital who recommended follow up treatment and hydrotherapy, none of which was given by DIMIA. The Commonwealth Ombudsman has been involved in his case, but always comes up against the DIMIA brick wall.

I trust that the cases documented above will add to the body of evidence that must lead to a change in the way people seeking refugee asylum in Australia are treated; they are not criminals but have been treated worse than animals. This happens while Minister Vanstone's mantra is that detainees are treated with 'dignity and respect' at all times. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I would be pleased to give further evidence under oath or as an affidavit. Thank you again for the opportunity to tell the Senate Committee what I have observed during these dark days in Australia.

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