

Submission to the Inquiry into the provisions of the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill 2006

This submission contains photos of refugees. I give permission for this submission to be made available to the public on the proviso that the faces of all adults in the photos be obscured, to ensure their anonymity. Refugees and their families may face threats and danger if identified. Submissions on the internet can be viewed by their enemies around the world, and these people have been proven to be in danger.

Summary

It appears that the purpose of the proposed legislation is to hold people outside Australia's area of legal responsibility.

When choosing Nauru (or Manus) as a place for refugees, Australia seems to consider its isolation, easily pressured government, and desperate circumstances rather than choose a place where

- * people could have a fair and prompt examination of their case
- * have a safe environment in which to recover from trauma and persecution
- * where they could look after their children and hold together as a family unit
- * where they could get psychiatric help, psychological help, medical treatment,
- * where children can go to school, and live in a free, non damaging environment
- * where there is adequate water, food, toilets, housing
- * where there is adequate communication for refugees and officials to be able to process cases, handle negotiations, and obtain necessary documents
- * where there is access to the officials and departments so questions can be answered and matters resolved.

This submission describes Nauru as detainees saw it. Over 100 detainees wrote to me while they were on Nauru between 2002 and 2005. They described their feelings and their living conditions, and they sent many photographs.

For them Nauru was a hot desolate prison where they were constantly told there was no hope of being accepted as refugees and they should go home. Many knew this was a very dangerous option and so they stayed in the 'prison camp' on a tiny isolated hot dot called Nauru. Eventually some were accepted by Australia and by New Zealand as refugees.

Isolation on Nauru meant no contact with journalists or lawyers for years. It meant extreme heat, poor conditions and constantly being told there was no hope. People suffered mental and physical damage which went virtually untreated.

Australia is a country well able to act responsibly to asylum seekers. It should not resort to bribing a destitute, isolated country like Nauru to hide away these people, where Australians can forget about them.

Holding vulnerable people in isolation allows for the possibility of unfettered coercion and manipulation.

Last time Australia used Nauru I corresponded with many of those detained there, over a hundred people. I received many letters, emails and phone calls. I also spoke with Cy Winter, (the IOM chief of mission,) a number of times. I talked with other IOM staff and with the Nauru hospital. Since then I have also spoken with the Nauru police. I am still in contact with people who were returned to Afghanistan, as well as people who were sent to Australia and New Zealand.

From all this I have hundreds of letters and photos. It was my aim to support them as a friend but not a legal adviser. I never asked about their cases and mostly they never told me of their individual traumas. Occasionally one or another has said a little, so I know there is a great depth of suffering in each person's story.

From our friendship I have gradually learned about the detention of refugees in Nauru. I am horrified that this should all begin again.

Nauru is a bankrupt state that relies on Australia for its survival. Food, water, and salaries of public servants all come from Australia. It is not able to say 'no' to any request of the Australian government.

It is a tiny island lying close to the equator. It is 21 sq km, a ring of sand/rock beaches rising to a mined out, rugged plateau in the centre.



Here is a picture of Topside Camp, on the plateau. Topside Camp was originally a sports field.

The phosphate originally there was the source of the wealth of Nauru but it is now virtually exhausted. There is basically no arable land and no permanent crops. Food is largely imported. People catch fish and eat them immediately, without any cooking. Fresh fruit and vegetables are rare. Shops are bare. People have no money. Civil servants have gone unpaid, but now I believe are paid by Australia. There is insufficient water. Fresh water is imported for overseas staff to drink, or provided by desalination plants that often fail. Electricity is provided intermittently by generators.



This picture shows the type of rocky terrain that is on the island and even the beach.

The roads and buildings, and old machinery are falling to pieces. The schools are falling to pieces; the hospital is run down and poorly staffed. I will include quotes (in italics), from refugees in my submission. I have not identified the authors because they are refugees.

"I don't know that you have ever been in this island? I want to tell little bit about our living condition. If you never been here you might heard about goodness and badness of this island. I think it's the smallest island in the world and also dry as much as the fire heat and it self has nothing even single things provide from outside. Now you think that which kind of island is it" (young detainee; email 24.3.03).

Out of Sight, Out of Public View. Anything can Happen.

1. Lack of legal rights and assistance.

People will be held in a place such as Nauru where they will have very limited legal rights.

The previous group on Nauru had interviews without any legal advisers. They were brought to Nauru after being treated badly on Australian ships and after many promises were made to them. They had been used to bad treatment in the countries they came from. Because they had no people they could trust they had no way to know how to respond in the interviews. The officers wanted to know about their problems with the Taliban, and little else. The refugees had very complicated histories that were beyond the time limits of the interviews and beyond the comprehension of the interviewing officers. There was ignorance, lack of care, lack of suitable interpreters for each cultural group, an attitude of disbelief in the interviews. Truth and fairness were lost, but no one was there to notice.

Without legal advisers this will happen again to the Papuans and any future refugees. Australia has already set a climate of distrust by its proposal to deny them proper legal rights. How will the people be able to respond fully and openly to interviewers? Will they feel safe to disclose information about Indonesia when we see how Australia is prepared to bend all rules to appease Indonesia?

When Australia detained Afghans, Iraqis and others on Nauru there were miscarriages of justice. People were unfairly detained for long periods of time even though they had valid cases. Others with similar cases gave way to despair and returned to an uncertain fate. This is because they did not have any legal advice, support or protection from manipulation.

Some are living in danger now, some have mental illness, some have escaped again, some have disappeared and the lucky ones have made a safe home. Australia made no attempt to ensure returned people would be safe or check if this is so. There was a reckless indifference to their fate.

In places such as Nauru, people will be effectively isolated from contact with Australia and the outside world.

This allows them to be intimidated, manipulated and pressured by Australian officials.

Last time, people were treated badly on the navy ships. They lived in the hold of ships such as the Manoora and Tobruk. People in the Manoora were held there for about a month in primitive conditions, without adequate toilet facilities, privacy and food. People had to wait in long lines to go to the toilet and take their children to the toilet. They were given enough food to survive but not enough to ease their hunger. One young friend told me how he dreamed each night about food, even bread, he said. They felt they were being starved into submission. They were driven by hunger to get off the boat at Nauru. I would be pleased if there could be an examination of the amount of food provided to the Manoora per person before the refugees were held on board and during the time they were held there. It is easy for food to be airlifted.

To keep these people out of sight in a hold, for a month, in cramped conditions, with little sanitation, privacy , inadequate food, little access to daylight, is an example of what our nation will do when it is out of the sight of journalists and human rights advocates.

The people report that they were called terrorists by boat crew.

It is dangerous to imprison vulnerable people out of sight, in the power of those who are ignorant or hostile. Many forms of overt and subtle intimidation occur.

Australia then expected these people to feel confident in an interview and disclose stories that could get them killed. Another instance of intimidation occurred when three men were transferred from Christmas Island. These men were taken unexpectedly and by force to Nauru.

' 15.4.03 Everytime they are saying all the cases have been closed and here you people have not any future, so go back. We heard that the camp will be finished . And by force we will be send back.

Three people were brought from Christmas Island. Their hands were tied and send here forcefully."

This was unnecessary and shocking for the men themselves and also for all those in Nauru, who got the message very clearly, that Australia could force people in this way. It lent credibility to the carefully worded messages that Australia had been giving to the Nauru camp. Many people wrote to me about this. It had the desired effect. They were frightened and there was no reliable person to advise them that Australia was not deporting by force, to Afghanistan.

"The DIMIA come every week and said to us, you write your name for deport and don't give us any opportunity that we send you by force, and to this reason they made my difficulties for us. My friend if we are not refugee so why we escaped from our country, why we feared our every thing even that I don't know where is my parents, they are still alive or not. I can't go back because I am afraid that if I go back maybe I kill."

"Last week IOM and DIMIA warned those detainees who have not prepared to return, that they must take a decision to return voluntary before the government take any action to repatriate them by force and they should not think that the government would allow them to enter in Australia."

"I want to tell you that I can't go back. I am a lone person in this world my all family had been killed in Afghanistan during the war. In any cost I wouldn't go back. I have suffered a lot of sacrifices and torture over there after a month of prisonment I escaped from there and now don't have any reason to go back. I hope



you understand my problem and I am only eighteen years old boy.

One of my friend that went Afghanistan couple months ago he sent a fax to me. There he wrote in Afghanistan still now no one can go from one place to another place by himself. There is no peace. There is no law. Only there are some police in Kabul and in some cities in Afghanistan.”

Weekly meetings were also held by Australian officials to urge people to go home. This message was given time and again. When people asked questions, they were told that these questions could be answered by another section, and that they should write to the appropriate person. The officials on Nauru could not answer such questions.



Of course each meeting increased anxiety levels. It was impossible for them to express themselves in a letter that was effective. They did not know where to send it, and those that were sent did not achieve anything. They were powerless and harassed. Some tolerated this for a year, some for two years, others buckled under pressure and became mentally unstable, depressed, ill and returned to their homeland.

“Everyday DIMIA pushing people by different way sometime giving paper news and some time telling some thing bad news in meeting with block leaders and some time telling England send people by force and showing maybe they are will send us by force, but people not have any way and some is cannot go they are losing they are mind and some is going to Afghanistan and after that with \$2000 which get from DIMIA and IOM again going out of Afghanistan, and from here every day people changing their mind because of many talking and showing force to them, accepting to going back, but from on there going out of Afghanistan again and cannot live there, so it is the matter we couldn’t life in Afghanistan”



Today one hundred and twenty people were deported by the IOM and you know most of them were from TAMPA ship which went back to Afghanistan. Today was a very tense day for everyone. Everyone was crying for his friend because they were good friends of everyone and we spend good time with each other in this very bad conditions. Almost five hundred people have given their name for deportation and I am one of this people.

First eight months we were not having power even you know the temperature of Nauru which always around 40-45 degrees and it is very hot I think. Because our country is a cold country. We have been using the rainwater for drinking and after a month we have a good food. I am telling you life is very difficult here. At first it was not bothering us because we were thinking that this dark night one day will finish and one day we will be accepted by Australian government. But now every day is equal to one year. The Immigration department has told us that you go back by your own will of not by force we get you back to Afghanistan. This is the condition and the situation in Nauru."

"When the ladies go to the doctor for check-up and the doctor tells them to go back. "

19.4.03

"The DIMIA told to Iraqi people to go back because now Saddam Hussain is not remain. And there is peace and prosperity in their country."

7.03.2003

"Every week the IOM and DIMIA call us for meeting. And told us to go back. As you know that our life is in danger in Afghanistan. So we cannot go. We would prefer to die here. They do not know what is going on in Afghanistan."



2.9.03

'Most of the people have signed returning papers. I have signed too. Because of some problem that we have in Afghanistan we couldn't go back and now IOM and DIMIA told us if you don't go back we will act by force because we have your signature. So we have decided to return back. Lastly I would like to say that you are always in my heart. We will never forget.'

It will be the same for the Papuans and other refugees if they are held in Nauru.

On paper everything can look satisfactory, but the actual situation is vulnerable people being intimidated and coerced, out of sight of the world.

When trouble occurred in one of the two camps on Nauru, staff left the people without anything. They policed the perimeter. I received the following letter.

"You people were told by IOM that everything is provided. But they are telling lies. The people who still in State House camp were arrested and most of the people were beaten. There was no food, water, medicine, doctor, no body was there to help with them and the same situation is going on in Topside camp."

Because an SBS reporter filmed a little of their situation, I am able to visualise this. This is the sort of trouble that happens when you lock oppressed people up without rights and away from view.

I wonder what will happen if Australia holds more refugees in these camps?

2. Isolation and lack of communication.

Because Nauru is physically isolated and impoverished, communication can become impossible.

I think that Nauru is an unsuitable place for refugees to be held. They need to be able to communicate with the outside world, family, legal advisers, Red Cross, UNHCR. Communication needs to be prompt and reliable. It is like putting them in a 'black hole' to detain them on Nauru

Post

In the past there have been breakdowns in mail deliveries for longer than a month at a time.

Postal staff were not paid and did not work.

Planes did not have room for mail.

Bags of mail were stolen by locals.

Phone

Public phones were too expensive (eg \$1/minute to Australia, more to other places) for refugees. They had access to public phones only when escorted out of the camp, maybe once every two weeks.

Finally phones were installed in the camp but were the same price. Refugees could not receive phone calls.

Lines came down often.

Telstra cut services when Nauru did not pay its account. There were weeks when we could not send a fax or phone Nauru.

There were maybe 2 or 3 phones in the camp and no privacy.

Email

The internet café became available, but once again the equipment was in disrepair, very slow and required the user to know how to use it, and be good at English and fast at typing. It was used only when there was a guard to escort them, and no privacy. Many times they failed and had to return to camp.

The refugees found it almost impossible to communicate reliably to get information, or support.

"we have many problems to use internet in here, because one hour is 5\$ and we have 3 hours time on there and the Nauru internet is working very slow and take a time and some time unusable because of line is no good."

Today the problem continues

This is a problem for the Island of Nauru in general. A couple of months ago I needed to contact the police in Nauru. After much difficulty I got the number but found they did not have the money to return my call or send a fax. They could post a letter but could not guarantee how many days or weeks for delivery.

3. Lack of Medical and Psychological Care

Nauru is a singularly unsuitable place to house refugees.

Besides the lack of legal rights and support, and the impossible communication, the Island cannot provide the medical, psychological, and basic needs of the refugees.

People were left with illnesses untreated. One person went to the IOM doctor with severe abdominal pain, was given only paracetamol. The next night his appendix burst and his friends struggled to get help for him. He was finally sent to the hospital where the local doctor asked him why he had waited so long before getting treatment. The doctor then argued with IOM about doing the operation because he had not been paid for previous operations. The young man was finally operated on and found himself in a dirty room, with dirty floor, and lying on a smelly, blood stained sheet. He had brought his clean bedding with him from the camp, but it was nowhere to be found. His friend stayed beside him, attended to his needs, cleaned up as

much as he could, took him to the toilet, slept in the chair beside him and tried to get him appropriate food. IOM sent meals but these were not suitable for him in the days after the operation. He was told to have a light diet. His friend tried to buy him some fruit juice but was threatened with Nauru gaol. The sick man said that he would have to be kept in the gaol also, because his friend was the person looking after him. This is an example of how an acute illness is handled.

Chronic conditions were badly treated also. People struggled with blindness, back injuries, heart problems, diabetes and others.

"I am an Asylum seeker on Nauru detention. I struck in both my eyes with disease and that is during my detention in Nauru Island and now I am blind and mother for two children. My husband is struck in his back and diabetes and we are in need for anything."

Their condition grew worse but it seemed action did not take place unless there was danger of death.

This woman had a back injury and spent her time in pain, lying on the floor or bed for about three years.



This man had lost a leg. He had an old damaged prosthesis with him but it was not usable. After a great deal of pressure from Australians, the government asked IOM to approach other countries such as Sweden and Fiji to give him medical treatment and a new leg. Other countries did not offer so finally he was allowed to come to Australia to get a new leg, but he was returned to Nauru before it could be fitted. So he was returned to the camp, this time with a second unusable leg. Here is a picture of him washing blood from part of the appliance that is supposed to fit his leg.

His artificial leg was easily fixed, but not til he was recognised as a refugee and came to Australia after about three years. If he had been sent back to Afghanistan, then he would have had to go back with one leg. Australia did not care about this. Other refugees were sent back with illnesses and injuries untreated.



This is an example of the lack of care of the refugees. It cannot be thought of as cost saving because the government was prepared to send him to other countries, and that would cost more.

"Medical care

The level of medical care is too low. Some patients need serious medical treatment such as waist pain, leg pain and so forth. Eye allergy is aggravating. Some people have lost their eyesight and need to see any eye specialist. They have been waiting to have their eyes checked since they arrived in Nauru. There are over 60 persons who need to see dentist but the dentist only see two patients in a week in Nauru hospital/ Once anyone gets dental problem should wait for 8 months to see the dentist."

"We have access to dentist to Nauru hospital just to pull out our teeth. Whenever anybody gets toothache he is compelled to pull out his tooth because there is no other way of treatment for us".

"75 persan (%) of people they got mental disease we can not ask for something for example I asked for a sleeper . they did not give me. There are many people hands legs and shoulder had been broken. My shoulder was come out. We got no doctors to show them. If we ask them they will say that doctor for bone he will come next month. Most of people they got nervous. The doctors that we have they just give us B complex and nothings. We have two doctors and mental nurses and interpreters. This two doctors are working Topside and State House too. The people who need psychological help, the interpreter he is giving him sleeping pells"

There was a lack of effective care for mental illness. The Dutch psychiatrist who worked there left, disheartened because he felt he could do no good for people who were detained and under pressure. The situation in Nauru was causing mental breakdown and it was impossible to turn this around while the people were still held there. Many told me they were suffering mentally and were taking medication. A number left Nauru because they feared for their mental health.

"The darkness of the future, the attitude of IOM, UNHCR and Australian government have made the people entirely hopeless. They compel refugees to go back, they do it indirectly and sometimes directly. Most of us are suffering psychological problems now. Some have got nervous problems. No one is allowed to go outside the camp. The police have surrounded the camp. They are so much strict to refugees." (Reported within first few months of arrival).

"....people like us cannot sleep. And the most of people are consulting with mental doctor. And so am I. The doctor give us too much tablets of sleeping. But they does not work."

"Two weeks ago a detainee tried to commit suicide. He hit his body with a blade in his room. Some one had seen blood on his abdomen while he was going to bathroom. When we went to bathroom the door was closed, we knocked at the door but we could not hear any thing. After a few minutes we opened the door and found him lying on the flour and the blood was coming from his body. The security guards also arrived and we took him to the main gate of detention for medication. The security guards took him to hospital. He is still in IOM's clinic in State House detention center. At the moment he is feeling better. He has been suffering psychological pressure for the last one year and has been under medical treatment."



"Nauru is not a camp for human, it is a jail just like a hell. Believe me I am not remaining the same boy when I used to be. Here I have lost my confidence/courage and tolerance. Sometimes I think why God create me in this world. From my childhood till now I am facing troubles/hardships/hurdles. Sometimes I think why I should not commit suicide. I am fed up of this life. I am 22 years old and still I am a useless man in this world. Who am I? Why the world is killing me? Elaine, is there any place in the world where I can find peace/prosperity/justice/no differentiate among the people. But I think except to die there is no any place remaining in the world."

"Just only one breath of life is remaining and they are my parents. Just because of them I am surviving in this world."

"I am so sorry to make your heart sad but what should I do, these are the voice of my heart." (above quotes written by the artist, who signed for return)

Some people attempted suicide, and then a number of them saw no option but to go on a hunger strike.

I have been told about others who have returned and suffer mental illness. Some wander the streets. One, who was my friend, sent me an email. Previously, he had been tortured in Afghanistan and has an injured back.

"when i left nauro for Afghanistan on (date given) and reached in kabul on (date given), the Australian government told me that if i go to Afghanistan i will

not have any difficulty there. i was happy to be back to my home land but when i went to my village i was really shocked and disturbed because my father had died and my family had moved from there and the people of my area had taken my land and home by saying that my father had taken loan from them, but in reality my father had not taken anything and they snatched the land by force and the Australian government is responsible for the death of my father and for everything that happened to my family. my cousin told me that when i was in Nauru under the control of Australian govt my father had mental problems and due to this he died. and my cousin took care of my family after his death and in my absence. but after few months he took my wife and three children to Pakistan to her aunts home, who lives in Quetta(Pakistan). because the conditions were worse for them there. and when i reached in my area i claimed for my home and land but as there is no sign of govt yet and there is no law, killing a person is much easier than killing a hen, they threatened me to go away or they would kill me and then i thought if they do something with me then what will happen to my family. where they will go? that is why i escaped from there and came to Pakistan and found my family.

now dear ALAINE, this was something that happened to me from Nauru to (name of town) my place in Afghanistan, and now something from here, i mean from Quetta(Pakistan), we live in my wife's relative home in a room which is 4 by 6 size and very small for five people, my wife cooks, washes and cleans the home that is why her aunty does not take rent from us, and my wife sews the clothes of the people with a machine that her aunty has given. this is the source of income i do not work because now i have few mental problems and the money that (IOM) gave to me has been spent on my treatment and medicine and my son Ali does not go to school, he goes to bazaar area and sells shopping bags and earns a few Rupees, otherwise we have nothing else, my condition is worse than ever before and i have nothing. I wish to finish my life because there is nothing left."

The experience of the detention and the aftermath cause mental problems. It does not seem reasonable to cause harm to people already fleeing persecution. People who have suffered threats and violence need to be in a safe environment to recover. **Nauru is no place to give adequate medical and psychological care to vulnerable people.**

4. Water Supply Problems

Because there was no secure supply of water there was fresh water in the camp for a few hours a day (maybe two hours), and salty water for maybe 6 hours. The desalination plant was used to fill the tank. People had to line up to collect drinking water and mostly they had to wash in salty water. During the hours of no water it was not possible to flush the toilets. The local Nauru people struggled to get enough water also. Nauru is not a suitable place to house numbers of refugees.



"We are in a bad location. As well as we are living like birds in a cage which doesn't has anything to eat. We are face with lots of problems. From one side the lack of water and the other side is no suitable food. In 24 hours we have only one hour water not more which saltish water so we cannot to take a shower with saltish water. And we are wait for water of rain, when rain comes we take shower. If rain doesn't come we cannot take shower. Otherwise we don't have any permission to go out from this cage. So most of the people faced with psychological difficulties."

"Topside detention:

We are still suffering water shortage. We have salty water just for two hours in a day. Even some days we don't have salty water too. There are almost 500 detainees in Topside detention at the moment. If the number of detainees reduce the IOM reduces the water too. The health care is getting worse day by day. The Australian Police come inside detention in large number. The number of security guards are decreasing. The IOM has warned us to make friendly relations with APS from now."

. The condition of food and water is getting worse. Sometimes we have to stand in queue for drinking water. For washing we use salty water of the sea. The salty water is also for some hours in a day. Most of the time the toilets and the bathrooms are without water. Sometimes it gets very difficult to enter in bathrooms and toilets because of bad smells and bees and mosquitoes.



This is the women's bathroom.



*It is the toilets for men. Eight in it. There are some toilets for women like this. A bit salty water is there for **flushing only six hours in 24 hours**. Sometime it clean when the water is open. After it gets treated and purified in*



underground tanks.



Still we are not provided enough water for washing. There is salty water in bathrooms just for four or six hours a day which runs in 8 small taps. That is not enough for 400 people and even sometimes it is hard to brush our teeth because it is hard to get chance to fill up the bottles and buckets

We drink rain water collected from the tennis court that is why we are suffering different sicknesses such as stomach ache, sore throat and so forth.

- (15/4/03)

We have not fresh water. It is a blessing of god that some times rain and we wash and take a bath. Otherwise they don't give us water.



There is no water from this tap.



This is the place where the people wash their clothes. The water is salty, some time it become a little bit salty. And fresh water come only 6 hours in 24 hours but in some where else and we bring fresh water with bucket and some time we use those water which collected from rain.



People wait to get water because we have soft water for very short time in a day. We store in bucket for washing hands and body. In the picture a little girl is holding a bucket in her hand. She wants to get water. She is with her mother. Her father is in Australia.

5 Damage to Families

People were damaged in the Nauru camps. Men who were away from wives, young men and teenagers away from families, women and especially young children are damaged by detention. Families try to hold together and nurture

their children, but living in a camp without freedom is not natural. It changes human beings. It is not enough to allow children to attend school in the day, and think that means they are not in detention.

The children who were held in Nauru before were allowed to go to school, but their parents could not make decisions for them or protect them. They could not set family rules and routines. Gradually parents fell into hopelessness and this passed on to children. After being in the camp for three years many parents could not cope. Little children were left to wander in the camp. Some children stayed in their room.



Some primary school children became the 'responsible adult' for families that were falling apart.

"I escaped and start dangerous journey towards Australia with my daughters. To reach Australia I sold my homeland.

Before I had a dream that my daughters are happy and save from danger but when I got the result of our case my dreams breaks into pieces. And I can feel the danger that we feel in Afghanistan. I know Afghanistan very well. If I return back I have many enemies without Taliban. The Emigration is saying that your country is free now you must return back Taliban is finished now. But I know Afghanistan and Taliban better that Emigration. We are locked in here. They build up fences around the camp just like zoo.

John Howard abuse us and said that refugees are terrorist to win the election. Thank you for your \$10. My children became very happy."

6. Living Conditions in Topside Camp, Nauru

This is a picture of Topside Camp.



This is the living area. There are double rows of 'containers' with a walkway in between.



This is outside the sleeping areas.



"We can not talk about our rights whenever we put pressure on IOM for the fulfilment of our any legal demands, IOM send us directly to prison. We must follow what ever IOM and DIMIA tell us other wise we are put in Nauru prison. The detainees are treated in a very affrontive and inhumane ways when they are put in Nauru prison. When a detainee is sent to prison first Nauruan police make him naked and take all his clothes then lock him in prison. A detainee was affected with dengue fever while he was in prison. Journalists are not allowed to come to Nauru. If any journalist gets a chance to come to Nauru then it is difficult to visit detention. No one is allowed to enter in detention except government agencies and IOM. So we don't have access to any journalist to speak about our situation and convey our messages to the people."

People were kept in the Nauru camp and allowed out with a guard. When there were a large number of detainees, a person had a turn to go out of the camp maybe every two or three weeks. There were a variety of security measures. There were Chubb guards in the camp to protect individuals from any disputes, remembering there were many people of different nationalities, religions, backgrounds, ages and sex, all confined in a small area. There were AFP policing the perimeter of the camp. There were Nauruan 'lifeguards' who escorted detainees out of the camp. There were Nauru police who gaoled people if they left the camp without a guard.

Now there are two refugees still remaining in Nauru, waiting for that 'third' country to accept them. Because there are only two, they have more freedom of movement.

Cy Winter, the IOM, chief of mission told me that the security measures were for the detainee's protection because there was some hostility amongst the Nauruan people. The refugees were seen to have better food and housing than some of the locals, so there was jealousy. Nauruan people were mostly

ignorant of history of the refugees. There was also concern that the camp held many single young men and friendships could develop with local women, leading to violence from the local men. So, mostly there were strict rules to prevent free movement of refugees. If they went outside the camp, they were arrested by the police, stripped and imprisoned.

I imagine that any new groups of refugees would be subject to similar treatment. For people to suggest that being held in Nauru is not detention, is merely to play with words. What ever it is called, the reality will be 'detention'.

"Australian government and UN must take some responsibilities to not force these helpless and desperate refugees into the fire in Afghanistan, do not deprive them of human rights, do not detain them any more and give them chance to live in security with other people. Some of us have already lost our mental control in detention. If 'human rights' is not only slogan, why you don't take care of these refugees who have been knocking at your door from the last 18 months. If you don't want to push these innocent children, men and women into the fire, why you don't release them from detentions? I appeal all the humanitarian people and organisations to raise these questions wherever they are."

"The science taught us how to swim in the water like a fish and how to fly in the sky like a bird. Now the people must learn how to live like a human being."

Elaine Smith
West Haven
NSW