

30th November 2015

Submission to the Senate inquiry into the conditions and treatment of asylum seekers and refugees at the regional processing centres in the Republic of Nauru and Papua New Guinea.

I was employed by Transfield Services as a case manager at the Nauru Regional Processing Centre (RPC) from March 2014 to February 2015. I worked with single adult men accommodated in RPC2. During my work at the RPC, I witnessed the poor living conditions endured by asylum seekers. The men were housed in tents in cramped conditions. The tents would become very hot during the day and the overhead fans provided were ineffective in reducing the heat. Mould grew on the inside of the accommodation tents due to humid conditions and an inability to make the tents water tight when it rained. I witnessed mice in the accommodation and mess tents on multiple occasions. Water shortages were common, resulting in restrictions on toilets and shower facilities.

Approximately twenty men were housed in each tent. They slept on bunk beds and there were no partitions within the tents, which resulted in a complete lack of privacy and personal space. No alternative accommodation was available for vulnerable men who experienced bullying or harassment by other asylum seekers. A separate area with three rooms was available for temporary respite, however vulnerable men would be returned to the general population after a few days.

The medical facilities were inadequate. Asylum seekers often complained that they did not receive their medical appointment slips within the 72 hour time frame. They would then need to submit another written request for an appointment, resulting in long waits for medical attention. A lack of buses (or bus drivers) to transport asylum seekers to the IHMS clinic for appointments also caused delays. Asylum seekers would often have to wait hours for a bus, both to and from the clinic. If the bus was delayed, asylum seekers may miss their appointment or the assigned interpreter may no longer be available. Appointments would then need to be rescheduled, further delaying access to medical attention.

The Republic of Nauru Hospital did not have adequate facilities to treat many serious medical conditions. Asylum seekers would be medically evacuated to Australia for surgery or to give birth. Asylum seekers were also sent to Australia for specialist medical consultations, as these services were unavailable in Nauru. Dental facilities in Nauru were extremely limited, leading to lengthy waiting times for urgent dental treatment.

There was a lack of information and transparency surrounding the immigration process. No time frames were provided to asylum seekers regarding the length of their detention. The poor living conditions and confinement of detention contributed to asylum seekers' mental health concerns. While working at the RPC I witnessed multiple incidents of self-harm, hunger strikes and suicide attempts by asylum seekers.

I have worked in Immigration detention facilities in both Australia and Nauru. It is evident to me that the standard of accommodation and health facilities at the RPC in Nauru do not meet the same standard of those provided in Australian immigration detention facilities.