



PART 2: Urban Centres



Perth

Immigration Detention Centre

- 6.1 Perth Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) can accommodate a maximum of 34 males when the separate dormitory for eight females is full. There is no dedicated family accommodation. Actual occupancy fluctuates, with sometimes fewer than 20 detainees and at other times as many as 40. At the time of the Committee's visit it accommodated 38 males and no females or children.

Management and Staffing

- 6.2 ACM provides the administration, catering, security, escort, transport, counselling and medical facilities at the centre. The Committee noted that these services were formerly provided by the Australian Protective Services.

Detention

- 6.3 In general the Perth IDC provides short-term accommodation for individuals refused admission to Australia at Perth airport and for

overstayers who are apprehended in the community. The Committee was assured that if, in exceptional cases, children were kept at the IDC, it would be only for a short period and in company with their parents.

- 6.4 Most detainees had been at the centre for fewer than six months although some detainees had been at the centre for more than 100 days. When the Committee visited, one detainee had been in residence for in excess of 145 days. The long-term detainees had refused the opportunity to transfer to Pt Hedland so that they could remain near their family and/or their legal representatives.
- 6.5 The Committee noted that the Department's ability to speedily transfer detainees to Pt Hedland was reduced by the pressure on all detention facilities from increased arrivals.

Amenities

- 6.6 The Perth IDC had three showers and five toilets for the 38 males in detention when the Committee visited. However, the Committee observed that most of the detainees had access only to three toilets and two showers because those in a small dormitory (1 shower, two toilets), which housed only a few detainees, were separated from the rest of the quarters.
- 6.7 The Committee was advised that the recent detention of a woman had necessitated taking over the nurse's toilet. The small dormitory used from time to time in the past as women's accommodation was unavailable because it was required to house men who could not be accommodated elsewhere in the centre.
- 6.8 The Committee understood that part of the building, formerly occupied by the Department of Transport, is now vacant. Negotiations were occurring to acquire this area to provide new offices for staff and better interviewing rooms with the aim of speeding up the processing of detainees. It was proposed that some of the existing office space be used for increased detainee accommodation.

Interpreting Services

- 6.9 Languages available on-site during the Committee's visit were Mandarin, French and Arabic. Interpreters for other languages were provided as needed.

Health

- 6.10 A registered nurse is at the IDC from 8 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday, and is on call 24 hours per day. The nurse also works as a counsellor to assist detainees to cope with their detention and deal with trauma. The Committee was told that massage therapy was provided.
- 6.11 A medical practitioner visits during the week and is also on call. The Committee was told that tranquillisers may be provided on the detainee's first night at the centre to ease the transition to new surroundings, but was not given any indication of the actual scale of use. Small doses of anti-depressants are permitted, but only as prescribed by the medical practitioner. The staff liaise with appropriate professionals in the case of detainees with drug or alcohol problems.

Education

- 6.12 The Committee did not receive any briefing on education facilities at the centre.

Cultural

- 6.13 The Committee was advised that the frequent changes in the detainee nationality profile, and the small numbers of each nationality, rendered it difficult to make specialised culturally sensitive arrangements.
- 6.14 At the time of the Committee's visit the detainees were Sri Lankan (9), Algerian (6), and Indian (4), but by mid February 2000 the main nationalities were Iraqi (6), and Iranian (6), and Indian (3). Asian, Middle-eastern and kosher food was made available in addition to the four weekly rotation of the menu.

Recreation

- 6.15 Much of the outside recreation area is covered with shadecloth awnings or solid roofing to provide shade from the sun. The ground is asphalt with no greenery at all. Detainees use the basketball rings in the courtyard and can kick a soccer ball within its confines. An arrangement for off-site indoor football had lapsed with the departure of the staff member who had organised it.
- 6.16 Inside the building the detainees have use of a pool table, computers with games, Foxtel, and video cassette players.
- 6.17 All detainees are also involved in the cleaning of the centre, both to provide them with meaningful activity, and to familiarise them with Australian expectations and standards.

Security

- 6.18 The building has limited access points. The recreation courtyard is bounded on two sides by the building and on the other two by high walls topped with razor wire.

Conclusion

- 6.19 The Committee noted that the IDC was operating at its effective design capacity. This produced the challenge of accommodating people of differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds with a minimum of friction in a restricted amount of space.
- 6.20 The Committee considered that there had been some improvement in the recreational facilities since its previous visit, particularly better shading of the outdoor area. Nevertheless the Committee concluded that the small outdoor recreation area makes the IDC unsuitable for accommodating detainees for long periods of time.
- 6.21 Overall, the Committee considered the IDC to be overcrowded at the time of its visit. As it operates at capacity most of the time there is a need for additional space at the facility.

- 6.22 The Committee observed that the current configuration of the centre did not provide adequate toilet facilities for all detainees. This deficiency also needs to be addressed.
- 6.23 The Committee noted the arrangements for the use of tranquillisers and anti-depressants, and wanted appropriate protocols to be followed.
- 6.24 The Committee was concerned that provision of massage therapy would be misinterpreted both by the Australian public and the detainees.
- 6.25 As a consequence of these conclusions the Committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 7

- 6.26 **The Committee recommends that the IDC pursue acquisition of the adjoining areas in its current building to:**
- **expand the interviewing capacity to expedite processing of detainees; and**
 - **provide more space for accommodation.**

Recommendation 8

- 6.27 **The Committee recommends that the centre be used only for short-term detention.**

Recommendation 9

- 6.28 **The Committee recommends that the provision of toilet and ablution facilities be increased.**

Recommendation 10

- 6.29 **The Committee recommends that, in relation to tranquillisers and anti-depressant medication, DIMA ensure that:**
- **detainees provide informed consent; and**
 - **clear documentation of such treatments is kept for each individual.**

Recommendation 11

- 6.30 **The Committee recommends that the practice of providing massage to detainees on a regular basis is discontinued, and that massage is only provided when recommended by a doctor for substantial medical reasons.**