

To The Secretariat

I write as a long time visitor and befriender of the even longer term detainees in Baxter Detention Centre. I am a retired social worker, a mother and grandmother and Australian by birth. As an Australian I have shocked and shamed by what our detention policies are doing to these men, women and children over the long term.

I have witnessed the gradual deterioration of the energetic, lively, optimistic and intelligent men and women to the point where some are barely able to function at all. All of course show signs of deep depression and lethargy and feelings of hopelessness. Up until the changes argued so forcibly and morally by Mr Petro Georgiou there seemed no hope for them. Now there is hope of a sort but none feel positive about the Government's real motives and plans for them.

However, I wish to say how disturbed I have been over the years to see the way the Centre is run. It is worse than a prison because of course the refugees consider they have committed no crime, and have no idea when they will be released (until lately) - and even now there is piecemeal releases with some leaving and some staying, some gaining Permanency and some (mostly) TPV's.

The detainees were treated badly, incompetent staff with seeming no training in how to treat these unfortunate victims of our politics with rudeness, curtness, lack of manners and courtesy accorded to them on a regular basis. The food provided by GSL was poor according to the refugees with little credence given to the different ethnic backgrounds and needs. Two young women I have known - one still in Baxter - have been pregnant while there and found it difficult to obtain the food they needed. If it was not for the wonderful care provided mainly by the various religious sisters living in Pt Augusta and the midwife in particular, they would have found it harder.

The electric fences, the high fences, the barrenness of the place - the inadequacy of the Visitors' Centre, the lack of humanity in general has been a great shock and given those of us who visit regularly a feeling of depression and frustration - goodness knows what it must be like to be inside on a permanent basis.

I wish to complain in the strongest possible terms of what we as Australians have allowed to occur in the Detention Centres - speaking only from my own experience of Baxter - and hope this Enquiry will be taken account of by those we can change things.

Yours sincerely

Margaret McGregor
Kensington
SA
23rd July 05