Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network

I once worked as a compliance officer for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) in Sydney. My job was to detain unlawful non-citizens (UNCs, non-Australians who do not hold a valid visa) located in the community and, if necessary, take UNCs to the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre (VIDC). The VIDC is usually referred to as simply 'Villawood' and all UNCs seem to know it by that name, as do most Australians.

In November 2010 I took a stand and advised my supervisors that I no longer wanted to go anywhere near Villawood. There were a number of incidents at Villawood that made me doubt that those people responsible for the care of UNCs (people employed by the UK for-profit corporation, Serco) were doing an effective job (these incidents are recorded in the public domain and that is how I received such information). I felt Villawood was not safe, for either me or those people incarcerated in it.

I could no longer take UNCs to Villawood in good conscience. I became somewhat of a conscientious objector to taking UNCs to Villawood. I could no longer take UNCs (the vast majority of UNCs are not, and have never been, criminals) to a place I considered unsafe, physically and mentally.

I continued to detain UNCs in the community but I did not transport them to Villawood. I repressed thoughts about my involvement in the greater scheme of immigration detention and I put my head down and went about daily business. It was pointless in raising concerns to who was actually responsible for the day-to-day welfare of UNCs in immigration detention in Australia because who was responsible

was a faceless, secretive corporation based in another country that owes no accountability to me or any other member of the Australian public.

I don't know what goes on inside Serco, a for-profit company. No one in DIAC knows what goes on inside Serco, a for-profit company. Serco has a contract with DIAC, the details of which can never be known by me or anyone in the general public (few people outside of a select few at DIAC, the Department of Finance and Deregulation and Serco know the contract details.) Serco may be financially accountable to DIAC if people die in their care; that is what has been represented by DIAC. I don't have access to the contract, so I don't know for sure. But monetary fines appear to be the only accountability directed at them. They are not morally accountable to the Australian government, DIAC, or anyone else in Australia. Serco is in no way required to behave in a manner that people would call right. Serco is a corporation and its only responsibility is to spend as little money as possible while obtaining as much income as possible (and they are very good at that).

I understand Serco do not owe any kind of moral accountability to the Australian public or me, a lowly DIAC employee. That is their right after they negotiated a business deal on detention services with non-business minded public servants in Canberra on pure economic terms. But such lack of moral accountability in regards to the tragic incidents at Villawood, I believe, is a problem. To me, it's a horrifying scenario: what is in effect at Villawood is a morally unaccountable system. Perhaps what is even worse (and the possibility fills me with dread): such an unaccountable system could easily have been purposely designed.

There is little doubt that moral hazard exists in the Immigration Detention Network: Serco (the agent) acts on behalf of DIAC (the principal). The agent has more

information about their actions or intentions than the principal does, because the principal cannot completely monitor the agent. The agent may have an incentive to act inappropriately (from the viewpoint of the principal) if the interests of the agent and the principal are not aligned.

Therefore, the only scenario in which moral hazard does not exist in the Immigration Detention Network is if DIAC's and Serco's interests are aligned. That is, DIAC and Serco have very little consideration for human welfare. That possible scenario fills me with horror.

Robin Reich