11 August 2011

Dear Committee Members,

Please find attached two (2) separate documents outlining the observations garnered from visits to Leonora Alternative Place of Detention (15 August 2010 & 22-23 January 2011) & Port Augusta Immigration Residential Housing (20 September 2010).

In addition, I would like to make the following statement regarding every detention facility I have visited (Leonora APOD, Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation, Port Augusta IRH, Perth IDC and Inverbrackie APOD):

Not a single immigration detention facility across the detention network has an officially designated area to accommodate visits between detainees and their visitors from the community at large. Given the previously acknowledged importance of visitors to the wellbeing of clients from Serco and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (now strangely withdrawn from visit forms), this inability to provide areas for this purpose seems antithetical to the humane and dignified treatment of clients conducive to their best interests.

Areas for visits at immigration detention facilities are either one or a combination of the following:

a) de facto buildings that are not officially designated for that purpose, subject to change at any moment; e.g. interview rooms at Inverbrackie and Leonora APODs
b) inappropriate for the number of visitors; e.g. small rooms for a high number of visitors with limited seating
c) inappropriately exposed to the elements; e.g. non-walled structures in very hot or very cold weather

An explanation of why this is the case and appropriate remedies would be appreciated. If DIAC is sincere about treating its clients with respect, it will ensure that this appalling situation is remedied at once. It is recommended that if the Government can find endless amounts of money constructing and maintaining detention facilties across the nation, it should be relatively easy at the very least provide appropriate, designated visit areas for detainees and their visitors. It is especially concerning when noticeable increases in seemingly unnecessary security infrastructure comes at the expense of designated visit areas.

I appreciate your consideration of my submission.

Yours sincerely

Todd McCarthy
Refugee Rights Action Network
Eastern States Representative