# Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network

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

**About Us**

Darwin Asylum Seekers Support and Advocacy Network (DASSAN) was established in mid-2010 in response to growing concerns about asylum seekers in immigration detention in Darwin. DASSAN now has over 300 members who provide voluntary support to people in detention through various activities, including visiting individuals in detention, letter writing, coordinating community donations and running community education events. DASSAN members also advocate on behalf of individuals in detention when requested and against mandatory detention in general.

DASSAN's membership is made up of people from a wide range of backgrounds with varied political views and religious beliefs. They are ordinary people in the community who are genuinely concerned about the inhumanity of prolonged mandatory detention and feel a compulsion to act. Members visit severely depressed, and at times suicidal, men, women and children in detention centres in the Darwin region. They know that they can often do little more for the people they visit than offer a sympathetic ear and a shoulder to cry on. They experience vicarious trauma and depression from the stories they hear from the people they meet, but they continue to go back week after week knowing that if they don't those in detention will suffer alone and in silence.

We urge the government to appreciate the burden being borne by these compassionate members of the community as a result of prolonged mandatory detention.

**DASSAN's Submission**

While DASSAN believes that there is much that could be done to improve the immigration detention network, we strongly believe that no system of mandatory detention can be implemented that will meet the needs of asylum seekers and will not breach their rights. No matter what reforms are made, locking up innocent people for prolonged and indeterminate periods of time in prison like facilities will continue to cause severe mental illness and suffering among asylum seekers, many of whom will, eventually, be found to be refugees entitled to Australia's protection.

Below are DASSAN's responses to some of the terms of reference of this inquiry. Our responses are informed by the observations of our members who visit asylum seekers in detention and the stories we have been told by those asylum seekers. Throughout this submission, DASSAN will comment on deficiencies in services in detention centres in the Darwin region and provide recommendations for how these could be improved.

**(a) any reforms needed to the current Immigration Detention Network in Australia.**

DASSAN strongly opposes the current Immigration Detention Network in Australia. As we will outline in this submission, the current system of prolonged mandatory detention for irregular maritime arrivals (IMAs) is grossly inhumane and a waste of government resources.

DASSAN, like Amnesty International, The Refugee Council of Australia, The Human Rights Commissioner, religious leaders and many in the Labor party believes that:

- mandatory detention is wrong and breaches international human rights obligations, including the right against arbitrary detention;1
- no children should be in detention;
- the 'Malaysian Solution' is unethical and should be abolished;
- all people seeking asylum in Australia should be processed 'onshore' in mainland Australia.

DASSAN supports the reforms to the Immigration Detention Network recommended by the Refugee Council of Australia in its press release of 24 June 2011 (**attached**).These reforms include:

- Restricting detention of asylum seekers to a maximum of 30 days, in which time an analysis of identity, health and security risks can be undertaken.
- For those asylum seekers posing no risks, granting an appropriate bridging visa and providing adequate support to live in the community.
- Ensuring that anyone not released within 30 days has their case for continued detention reviewed independently.
- Presuming against the detention of children and families and working to develop a practical model that sees families undergo prompt health, security and identity checks.

**(b) the impact of length of detention and the appropriateness of facilities and services for asylum seekers; and**

**(q) the length of time detainees have been held in the detention network, the reasons for their length of stay and the impact on the detention network.**

> *"This place is a prison for crazy people. People don't come in here crazy, but after 6 months, one year, two years they become crazy."* 18 year old Iraqi man detained at NIDC.
>
> *"Sane men are going mad. The system makes this happen."* DASSAN visitor
>
> *"I see men with skills and ability and a willingness to work. But they have no opportunity to do this behind the wire. And as the months and years roll by they lose faith, hope and confidence in their ability."* DASSAN visitor.

<u>The negative impact of prolonged detention</u>

DASSAN members visit asylum seekers who have been in immigration detention for up to 2 years. They include people who are still awaiting decisions on their claims for protection as well as those who have been rejected but are too fearful to return to their country of origin, instead living in limbo in detention. In many instances detainees have been granted protection visas are waiting excessive periods of time for security clearances from ASIO.

*Case Example*

In one of the worst examples, an asylum seeker currently detained at the Northern Immigration Detention Centre (NIDC) was accepted as a refugee in May 2010 but is still awaiting a security clearance. The prolonged nature of this process has caused considerable distress and anxiety to this man and in June 2011 he embarked on a 5 day hunger strike on the roof of NIDC. There are many other cases similar to this.

[1] See *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966) (ICCPR), art 9(1), at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm (viewed 26 June 2011)

DASSAN does not accept the Government's claim that people need to be held in detention while awaiting their security clearance from ASIO. DASSAN has faith in the ability of ASIO to track down asylum seekers who receive negative security clearances, as they would for any other member of the Australian community about whom they had security concerns.

A lack of facilities and services to assist with a positive transition

Currently the immigration detention system appears to treat people as people on their way out of Australia and as such, the facilities resemble prisons rather than facilities that will help people integrate into Australian society. DASSAN members have visited many people who have been in detention centres for prolonged periods of time and who have low literacy skills and limited English. There appears to have been little effort to change this situation. In light of the fact that the majority of IMAs in detention receive protection visas and go on to live in the Australian community, it would make more sense to work on the presumption that a detainee will be staying and develop facilities and systems that support a positive transition to Australian life.[2]
DASSAN visitors have been told that there are never enough computers for the men at NIDC to use, both for personal use and when attending English and other classes. Similarly there is a lack of resources for people trying to learn English. One DASSAN visitor has been in contact with a young man in NIDC who is very keen to learn English and who works hard to help the other men learn English. For 6 months he repeatedly asked DIAC and Serco for an English language dictionary to no avail. Dismayed by DIAC and Serco's inability to respond to such a basic request, his DASSAN visitor gave him a dictionary. Although there is a small library at NIDC, much of the reading material is inappropriate. Many detainees have only basic English language skills and require access to books that reflect this skill level.

Inadequacies in mental health services

DASSAN members regularly visit detainees who are suffering severe depression and other forms of mental illness as a result of prolonged detention. Many of these people have suffered torture and trauma prior to coming to Australia and are therefore already vulnerable to mental illness. Far too many have attempted suicide and self-harmed whilst in detention.

*Case Example*

A DASSAN member recently reported visiting a man detained at NIDC who has developed a condition that causes his legs to shake uncontrollably. This condition is a result of being accidentally detained in the Red Compound for a period of time whilst on Christmas Island, approximately 9 months ago. The man had been accidently detained in an isolation cell in the Red Compound when suspected of being involved in riots that were occurring at the time. Whilst being in the cell he was offered a meal to eat that contained a jelly like dessert. The dessert was later found to have a sedative / tranquilizer which caused the man to sleep for a long period (after he had previously had great difficulty in getting to sleep). The man was held in the isolation cell for an approximate period of 6-7 hours before he was removed and given an apology from Serco staff for accidently mistaking him for one of the men responsible for causing the trouble. While in the Red Compound he experienced flashbacks of trauma suffered during his time in prison in his home country. Since being in the Red Compound he has developed this shaking condition which has been diagnosed by a doctor as a physical reaction to, and manifestation of, severe stress and anxiety. The DASSAN member who visits this man has described the shaking as being constant, similar to someone suffering from Parkinson's Disease. He has had several appointments with IHMS psychologists in NIDC however, despite numerous requests over a period of months was not able to get access to an external torture and trauma psychologist or psychiatrist. It was not until his visiting DASSAN member advocated on

[2] For latest statistics on IMA acceptance rates see Bi–annual asylum statistics, Section 2 Refugee Status determination statistics for IMA's, accessed at http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/asylum/_files/asylum-stats-2010-11-section2.pdf on 8 August 2011

his behalf to DIAC and the external mental health provider that he was given an external appointment. To date the man has only received one appointment and is waiting to receive further help from the external mental health provider and waiting to hear on an outcome for his application into community detention.

The above is a clear example of the psychological injury that Australia's immigration detention network is causing detainees and the corresponding inadequacy of mental health facilities and support services in the detention network.

DASSAN has been informed that there are only two psychologists and four mental health nurses provided by IHMS for asylum seekers detained in the NIDC. Considering that NIDC has a capacity of over 500, which it regularly reaches, we consider that the Government needs to drastically increase the contracted number of IHMS mental health staff in detention centres. Asylum seekers at NIDC have complained to DASSAN volunteers of having to wait several days to see mental health nurses. Often, when an asylum seeker seeks to speak to a mental health nurse it is because they have a pressing concern, which requires immediate assistance. Asylum seekers have complained that mental health nurses simply prescribe anti-depressants, sleeping tablets and anti-anxiety tablets, which they don't want to take, rather than seeking to engage with the mental health issues affecting them.

DASSAN believes that the need for an increase in mental health staff is particularly relevant in Darwin, as the only regular provider of external psychologists is currently Melaleuca Refugee Centre, who provide torture and trauma counselors on request. There are waiting periods of up to ten weeks to see an external psychologist for detainees at NIDC. In light of the high rates of self-harm and attempted suicide amongst detainees, this is simply unacceptable.

General environment at NIDC

The NIDC's open areas do not offer much shade for detainees. This means that during the day they are often forced to stay in their rooms because of the heat. The construction of shade over the open/outdoor areas would encourage people to sit outside during the day and perhaps participate in activities.

The centre's grounds are made up of dirt and gravel. There are no grassy areas for people to sit and spend time outside. Improving the aesthetics of the centre, i.e. grass, levelled soccer playing field, plants/shrubbery, benches under shade, would make the centre seem less like a prison and assist with mental well being of detainees.

Lack of recreational facilities and external excursions

More recreational facilities should be made available at all detention facilities in Darwin. At the NIDC there is a small patch of dirt in the North compound in which detainees can play soccer. There are no such facilities in South 1 compound. DASSAN has been informed that 10 detainees per night from South 1 compound are allowed to go in to North compound to take advantage of the 'soccer field' and the relatively larger amount of space. There are regularly over 180 men detained in South 1 compound, making these visits to North compound few and far between. The other main source of recreation comes from a few old billiards tables.

It is a disgrace that DIAC and Serco, with immense resources their disposal, have not provided more sports and recreational facilities in detention centres, particularly when traumatised individuals are spending many months and years in these environments. An increase in gym equipment and the conducting of well resourced sport and exercise classes and games is required to improve mental and physical wellbeing within the centre. While there are activity timetables on notice boards within the NIDC, detainees have reported that these activities are nonexistent. Detainees have expressed their interest in activities being run. In the absence of activities, detainees often spend their days sleeping or sitting around doing nothing.

Until recently, external excursions from NIDC were limited to intermittent visits to places of worship for a relatively small number of asylum seekers. While there has recently been a slight increase in

external excursions for asylum seekers, it is reported that there are not enough to cater for the number of detainees. Many people wait weeks to go on an excursion and some never get the opportunity. DASSAN supports recent calls for members of the community to be approved to take detainees on excursions without supervision. However, we also believe that Serco and DIAC could easily invest more resources to significantly increase the number of excursions that they run for detainees. A number of detainees have complained to DASSAN visitors that longer term detainees are less likely to be allowed to go on excursions. Excursion should be offered to all detainees, regardless of their period of time in detention or any other factors.

General lack of assistance and support for asylum seekers in Darwin

There is generally less support for asylum seekers in detention in Darwin compared to other cities in Australia. Outside of Melaleuca, there are no services dedicated to counselling and social work support for people in detention. This leaves asylum seekers detained in Darwin with few formal support networks for their mental health and social needs.

Due to Darwin's smaller population and community sector, it is essential that SERCO and DIAC provide proper and meaningful assistance to facilitate community involvement and support for asylum seekers.

Obviously, access to support networks and the community is even rarer at the Curtin and Scherger detention centres. We urge the Government to close these detention centres and ensure that all asylum seekers are located in places where they are able to access reliable and well-resourced legal, counselling and social work services.

Transfer of asylum seekers between detention centres in different States

There have been several instances of detainees being moved to detention centres in different States for unexplained reasons. These transfers have occurred seemingly without consideration of the impact they have on the mental health of the asylum seeker being transferred. There also appears to be little concern for the effected individual's ability to access legal advice and support networks. When asylum seekers are moved from one detention centre to another, they are separated from friends and support networks, as well as regular visitors from the community. These transfers also negatively affect detainees' access to their IAAS service providers, as well as any other legal assistance they may have been receiving.

*Case Example*

In one instance an asylum seeker was transferred from MITA to NIDC soon after a negative decision on his claim for protection. The detainee had lodged an application for Independent Merits Review (IMR) through his IAAS service provider but was unable to properly follow up on this due to his transfer. He lost contact with his IAAS service provider and seemed to be unaware of the status of his claim for protection. The move from MITA to NIDC had a negative effect on the detainee's mental health as he became distressed at being moved away from friends he had in the detention centre and in the community. He claimed to have established a good relationship with the guards at MITA, only to be treated poorly by those at NIDC. These events led to him attempting suicide about one month after being transferred to NIDC.

**(c) the resources, support and training for employees of Commonwealth agencies and/or their agents or contractors in performing their duties; and**

**(f) the effectiveness and long-term viability of outsourcing immigration detention centre contracts to private providers.**

NIDC and other detention centres are run like prison facilities. Serco has contracts with prisons around the world, however running an immigration detention centre serves a fundamentally different service, and the conditions in immigration detention should reflect this. As a starting point, immigration detention should be run in a more humane manner. Many officers come from a security or prison background and DASSAN members have reported that their attitudes towards detainees mirror the attitude they would expect to see displayed towards prisoners in jails. Serco staff should undergo training that encourages them to see their role as more of a humanitarian role with a security aspect to it, rather than a prison officer role. Treating detainees with respect will assist in the building of more positive relationships between detainees and officers, which should ultimately assist officers when having to de-escalate stressful incidents in the centre.

DASSAN considers it essential that all Serco staff undergo comprehensive torture and trauma training in order to give them a better understanding of the experiences and state of mind of the people that they work with. DASSAN further believes that Serco guards require additional training under the Psychological Support Program for the Prevention of Self Harm in Immigration Detention (PSP), and related mental health training, to ensure that they have a better understanding of the impact of torture and trauma on people.

Some DASSAN members have expressed concerns about negative and disrespectful conduct of Serco officers. Below are some of those complaints:

- Asylum seekers greeting officers and not receiving a response from the officer. The officer either looks away or totally ignores the individual. The majority of officers do not engage with asylum seekers rather they sit and "guard" or stand around with other officers.

- Asylum seekers placing complaints against certain officers in the centre for negative behaviour do not seem to be addressed by management. An example of this is an officer who was seen by other detainees holding a man by the throat (in a choking manner) during a heated discussion. Asylum seekers reported the incident to management and the officer was simply moved to another compound to work.

- Asylum seekers have commented on how some officers, when assigned to go and look for some individuals early in the morning, will often just open the bedroom door and shine a torch in their faces.

DASSAN members also report that many Serco staff are helpful and sympathetic to the detainees but some are not well trained in dealing with people from different cultures. Serco staff require extensive cross cultural training to deal with the challenges of working with asylum seekers from varied cultural backgrounds. DASSAN members report that a number of the Serco guards worry about the detainees and the system. They feel helpless and inadequate and lacking in the necessary skills to deal with the complex situations they encounter.

DASSAN members note the Comcare report on Detention Centres[3], in particular inadequate training, underreporting of incidents, and poor handling of cultural and religious needs.

**(d) the health, safety and wellbeing of asylum seekers, including specifically children, detained within the detention network.**

In the two week period over June/July 2011 at NIDC there were at least five suicide attempts, several asylum seekers sewed their lips together and large numbers self-harmed in other ways.

Below is a small sample of emails sent to DASSAN over that period by asylum seekers in NIDC and the people who visit them:

[3] http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-08-11/comcare-criticises-detention-system-working/2835840

*"I have just been told that there has been another suicide attempt at NIDC. At around 10:00 pm tonight an Afghan man detained for 18 months deliberately smashed his head against a sharp bit of concrete and split his head open to the extent that the insides of his skull were visible. He has been taken to Royal Darwin Hospital by ambulance. The person who informed me said that the injuries were so bad that people inside NIDC do not know doubt he will live. He had been on a hunger strike for a number of days."*

*"An Afgani Mr  who are now in 16 months attempted self harm by taking medic pills in South-1. We don't when he taken pills but we found him flattened in his room at 6:30pm. An ambulance arrived after 20 min and now taken to hospital..."*

*"One man hanged himself yesterday evening -30 June- and is now in Darwin Hospital."*

*"Most of the people has been detained for about 15 to 22 months since they arrived in side the Australia. Between this long, hard and harsh able period they have been faced many things which can not be described. Most of them has lost their sense of humour, most of them has lost their feelings, most of them has lost their mean of life that why are they alive and for what purpose have they chosen the most risky and dangerous journey"*

*"There is no more hope for me. I am now a destroyed person. I am in a prison of silence and despair. After so many many months I have no more family in my home country. I am waiting for death."*

**(e) impact of detention on children and families, and viable alternatives.**

DASSAN is opposed to the detention of children under any circumstances. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and s 4AA of the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) both stipulate that a minor should only be detained as a measure of last resort[4]. The mandatory detention of child asylum seekers, often for extended periods of time, is clearly in contravention of these obligations. More importantly, the detention of children has significant adverse affects on their mental health and development.

We note that the Minister stated that the majority of children would be out of detention by the end of June 2011. As at 3 August 2011, figures provided by DIAC indicated that there were 160 children detained in Darwin. This is a significant increase on the approximately 100 children who were detained as at 30 June 2011.

In 2008 the Labor Government stated that one of its key immigration values was that, 'children, including juvenile foreign fishers and, where possible, their families, will not be detained in an immigration detention centre.'[5] DASSAN calls on the government to recommit to these previously held values.

DASSAN considers that allowing children and families to live in the community is a viable alternative. The government appears to view living in the community as a viable alternative for asylum seekers who arrive by plane or otherwise with a valid visa. We do not understand how this viability is changed for those who arrive by boat.

**(h) the reasons for and nature of riots and disturbances in detention facilities.**

There have been several protests and hunger strikes in the NIDC throughout 2011. **Appendix 1** contains a message from Afghan Hazara's who recently engaged in a hunger strike and protest on the roof of the NIDC. As they outline in their message, the reasons for this action include frustration at the amount of time spent in detention and the uncertainty about their future, with which they live every day. Similar sentiments are expressed in **Appendix 2,** which is a statement released by detainees at

[4] CRC, art 37(b). *Migration Act 1958* (Cth), s 4AA
[5] http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/speeches/2008/ce080729.htm

Scherger Detention Centre during a recent hunger strike. Despite repeated assurances from DIAC that caseworkers have regular contact with asylum seekers, many people have complained to DASSAN visitors of sporadic contact with caseworkers and confusion about the status of their protection visa claim. DASSAN believes that riots, protests and hunger strikes are the inevitable, and very human, response of people detained for prolonged and indefinite periods of time for no purpose.

*Case Example*

A DASSAN visitor recently met with a man who had been transferred from North 1 to South 1 in NIDC because he had been protesting on the roof. He tried to explain to the DASSAN visitor that after being detained for so long and feeling so frustrated and helpless he went up on the roof as a form of protest and maybe to express his boredom. He said he did not think of himself as a hell raiser or a bad person.

**(g) the impact, effectiveness and cost of mandatory detention and any alternatives, including community release; and**

**(p) the expansion of the immigration detention network, including the cost and process adopted to establish new facilities.**

> *"Labor rejects the notion that dehumanising and punishing unauthorised arrivals with long-term detention is an effective or civilised response. Desperate people are not deterred by the threat of harsh detention – they are often fleeing much worse circumstances."*[6] Minister for Immigration, 29 July 2008.

DASSAN shares the former Minister for Immigration's belief that immigration detention is ineffectual as a deterrent to desperate people who seek asylum in Australia as IMA's.

What then is the purpose of the Government's mandatory detention policy? If we accept that it is ineffectual as a deterrent, then what purpose is served in continuing to subject IMA's to prolonged mandatory detention? It is costly. It causes immeasurable suffering and hardship to those detained. It does not affect the percentage of people ultimately granted protection visas. It is not applied to people who seek asylum by plane or arrive by other means on an Australian visa. How can we measure the effectiveness of a policy which has no identifiable purpose?

Wickham Point

DASSAN is strongly opposed to the construction of the detention centre in Wickham Point. The detention centre will cost the government $74 million over 3 years to lease the land, plus capital costs of $9.2 million.[7] It would cost the Government considerably less money to provide for asylum seekers to live in the community and make the transition to life in Australia.

Furthermore, the site is not fit for human habitation. A Northern Territory Health Department report has found that there is a possible 'severe and unbearable' insect problem in the area with a moderate risk of Ross River virus. This finding prompted Japanese gas company INPEX to reject the site as a workers camp for its employees.[8]

Wickham Point is located 35km south-east of Darwin. Due to Darwin's comparatively small population, support networks and community visitors for asylum seekers are already less than those available to asylum seekers detained in major urban centres. Due to its location, asylum seekers

[6] http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/speeches/2008/ce080729.htm (viewed 26 June 2011)
[7] http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/03/08/3158576.htm (Viewed 26 June 2011)
[8] http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/03/15/3164172.htm

detained at Wickham Point will have even less access to support networks and community visitors than those detained elsewhere in Darwin.

Why is the government investing in an expensive, inhospitable and inaccessible detention centre instead of directing money towards supporting asylum seekers to live in the community?

**(r) processes for assessment of protection claims made by irregular maritime arrivals and other persons and the impact on the detention network.**

*'DIAC and ASIO need to lift their game and process these people faster'.* DASSAN member

The Government's decision in April 2010 to "freeze" the processing of protection claims by Afghani and Sri Lankan asylum seekers had, and continues to have, a negative impact on the detention network and caused considerable suffering to those IMA's affected. [9] One DASSAN member visits four Hazara men who arrived just before the policy change. Processing didn't start again until about October 2010, by which time there was a backlog of 1200 claims to process.[10] As at August 2011, these four men had been in detention for over 18 months. This is a common story for many affected by the April 2010 decision.

As stated above, prolonged detention is causing severe mental illness and resulting in detainees taking drastic measures out of desperation, including rioting and self-harm. If mandatory detention is to continue, it is not in the interests of a well functioning detention network to have people detained for such excessive periods of time.

DASSAN visitors regularly meet with detainees who are confused about whether or not they have a legal representative and, if so, what the representative is doing for them. They are often uncertain about what stage claims are at and what their options are for appealing adverse decisions. The very act of locking people up in detention severely restricts their ability to access legal resources and representation. It leads to confusion and makes detainees reliant on DASSAN visitors to chase up their case managers and IAAS service providers to explain to them what is happening with their case.

**(k) the level, adequacy and effectiveness of reporting incidents and the response to incidents within the immigration detention network, including relevant policies, procedures, authorities and protocols.**

[9] See http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2010/s2869126.htm

[10] http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/processing-ban-on-asylum-lifted/story-fn59niix-1225932583358

**Appendix 1**

**Message from Afghan Hazara's protesting on the roof of NIDC in July 2011:**

"Humble submission for paying a best and warm wishes to you from Afghan Hazara Asylum seekers, Darwin Detention Centre, NORTH-I. As the protest has been started since Sunday morning at 1:30 on 23rd July, 2011 for this hope that some one will hear their voices and say some thing for their rights that they deserve but Alas! Still there is no process, no one came and made assure them what ever they are requesting about. They are on the roof and having no eats and drinks since that time. They are from Afghanistan. They are requesting for justice and fair process. They are waiting for some one who comes and convey their request to those resources who believes in Humanity, in Justice, in peace, in Democracy, in equality. They are on protest and their protest is peaceful and very humble. As they said before that we the people of Afghan will protest peacefully and never let any one to damage the properties which belong to Australian Nation, Never let any one to destroy the prosperity which belongs to Australian Nation. We respect the Immigration, We respect the People of Australia, and The Government of Australia. We came here and believed on Australian people that they of course protect us. As we believe in you, please believe in us. We are waiting for you, for your kind assistance.

There are now on protest 15 people and the protest has been started since 23rd July, Sunday morning at 1:30. The people on the protest are on the roof and are on hunger strike as well. There are more than 60 people who are on hunger strike while they are not on the roof. They are requesting for fair process. They are requesting for the justice and requesting for the freedom. They are on peaceful protest. They are requesting from you people to come and support for get them out of the cage. So please, please forward our voice to those resource who works for Humanity and believe in Humanity. They Want "Freedom" They have written on the banner many things as like,

1. We need help from Humanitarian nation, we are Human. We came here for peace and safety not being in the Cage.
2. We are Human like you.
3. 19 Months process not fair.
4. We believe on God, on you. (On their Shirts written)
5. Awaiting for your help. (On their Shirts written)
6. Freedom, Freedom
7. Will I be free one day. (On their Shirts written)"

**Appendix 2**

**Message from the asylum seekers in Scherger detention center who have been on a Hunger strike**

**"In the Name of Merciful God'**

This HUNGER STRIKE is a response to the continued pressure exercised by the Australian Immigration Department on us.

The participants in this hunger strike have been denied protection and robbed of their liberty for periods of time extending over a year, even up to 20 months. This punitive action and arbitrary jailing, has destroyed our physical and mental health.

Our families – including our children – living outside detention and overseas have suffered additionally from the terror of Taliban, and the tyrannies of other dictators and regimes.

Daily sadness and additional trauma that we are exposed to remains unknown to certain officers and Immigration Merit Review members. These members are neglecting our claims, the reasons for our claims, the arguments that we have supplied, and the documents available to them, they have consequently failed to reach a comprehensive human and just decision.

We are locked in "NO MAN'S LAND" inside a military base where average people and the media have no access to us.

Our friends and relatives cannot reach us and we have to accept the blame of officials, and the suggestion that "you are not looking after your case!"

Our treatment in this way is very hideous and painful. They are melting us in a bureaucratic oven, and pushing us through cracks in the law, all the while, money-makers are making their money and we have to suffer indefinitely and infinite trauma.

We have to suffer for such a long time, because you want to send messages to the opportunistic smugglers. You have punished us more than enough and the smugglers will have received your messages. Be happy!

SUGGESTION:

1. All rejected cases have to be reviewed by positive and reputable IMR members within a month.
2. Well known IMR members, who have, prolonged the detention of Asylum Seekers with their arbitrary and unjust decisions, have to step aside until the completion of this process.
3. All detainees who have been in the detention more than three months and have completed health checks should be released under the "Community Detention Program".
4. Media must be permitted to see and report our condition to the people of Australia and the world.

Finally we are asking that all freedom-loving people of Australia and International Organisations would support our cause and our struggle

for justice. Be assured we are peace loving people and we do respect the traditional owners of the land in Australia, and all peoples of Australian and their magnificent cultures.

We are Law abiding people and we have been calm and quiet for many months. We have reached the end of our resilience and we cannot cope anymore.

This Hunger Strike action we are undertaking is fully peaceful and our demands are all just and fare. We are happy to negotiate, but our freedom is not negotiable.

Many thanks for your attention.
Signatures of Hunger Strikers”