



NT Detention Operations community update

Assistant Secretary's report

Happy New Year to all our readers.

Since the last update, we have opened the first stage of the new facility at Wickham Point. It was pleasing that so many community representatives were able to tour the site before the arrival of clients. The second and third stages will come on stream progressively over the coming months.

December saw a hive of planning activity around the potential arrival of Cyclone Grant just before Christmas. These preparations were a great opportunity for us to work closely with Commonwealth and NT agencies and community organisations to ensure that our facilities in Darwin were ready for any adverse weather events.

We were pleased to welcome members of the Council for Immigration Services and Status Resolution (CISSR) who visited all four facilities and talked to clients during the period 15-17 January. CISSR provides the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship with independent advice on the development of policies, processes, services and programs necessary to achieve the timely, fair and effective resolution of immigration status for people seeking asylum or other migration outcomes in Australia.

The next Community Consultative Group (CCG) meeting is scheduled for Wednesday February 8. Invitations have been sent to CCG members. The meeting will once again be chaired by Air Marshal Ray Funnell (Ret), Deputy Chair of CISSR.

Arrangements for visiting detention facilities in Darwin continue to be streamlined. Thank you for working with us as we have sought to simplify processes, against the background of national DIAC protocols. Please contact me if you believe there are ways to enhance visiting arrangements even further.

Details on how to visit clients at Wickham Point can be found at <http://www.immi.gov.au/managing-australias-borders/detention/visiting/visiting.htm>

Finally, I trust that you have a rewarding 2012 and look forward to working with you as we seek to provide the best possible services for all our clients in detention in the Northern Territory.

Allan Davis
Regional Manager (North)

Everyone loves a barbecue



Serco staff regularly facilitate barbecues for clients, and sometimes these are quite large events. On November 23, Darwin Airport Lodge (DAL) clients enjoyed a barbecue with live music and a water slide.

Playgroup excursions

Charles Darwin University (CDU) Lecturer Saraswathi Griffiths-Chandran and other CDU staff have continued their active involvement with clients in the DAL. From October through December, with much-appreciated assistance from NAPCAN, they helped facilitate off-site excursions designed to enhance the quality of life for families with young children. Participants in the company of CDU staff and Serco officers have visited sites like the beach, water park and wildlife park to play in relaxed, natural surroundings.

Directed Persons Pilot

St Vincent de Paul and Catholic Care are managing this scheme, whereby trained volunteers can take low-risk clients from the DAL on excursions into the community. Both organisations have conducted initial training courses and the first excursion is planned for February 4. If interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact David Folkes from St Vincent de Paul on 0400 981 202 or Lara Totham or Karina Susan from Catholic Care on (08) 8944 2033.

“Rights on Show” – Human Rights art exhibition

On December 8, a sizeable crowd attended the opening of the “Rights on Show” art exhibition in the Supreme Court Foyer. Contributions from local artists sat side-by-side with entries from asylum seekers.



Part of the crowd at the exhibition

After much negotiating and hard work, volunteer Vikki Riley has arranged for the asylum seeker art exhibition *Footprints of my Heart* to be seen in Hobart from February 20 to 25. This exhibition ran very successfully in Darwin in August, and will now be enjoyed by audiences in Tasmania.

Human Rights Day event at Charles Darwin University

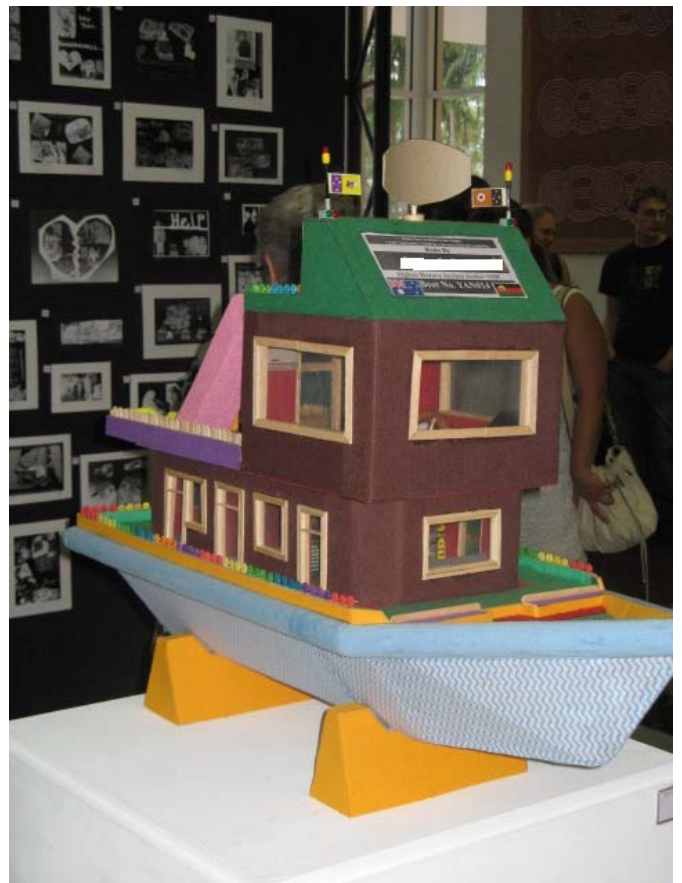
On Saturday 10 December, a group of 10 children aged 12 to 16 years from the Darwin Airport Lodge attended a Human Rights Day event at CDU, organised by the NT Multicultural Council, the NT Committee for Human Rights Education and other stakeholders.

Attendees were treated to traditional dancing and singing from various parts of the world, along with speeches and activities. One member of the group received an award for his literary contribution, while another gave a speech written collectively by classmates about their personal experiences of human rights abuses in their countries of origin.

This colourful and entertaining event was a powerful reminder of what freedom means, and what enormous contributions have been made by refugees in Australia.

NT Human Rights Arts Award

This year, for the first time, a Hazara asylum seeker was awarded first prize in the NT Human Rights Art Award. His exhibits were a meticulously crafted boat and house, both cleverly constructed from balsa wood, dishcloths, felt, icy pole sticks, matchsticks and plastic. An extraordinary eye for detail and amazing patience are obvious in all his work, and his boat (pictured below) was a popular winner. He has become a prolific and accomplished artist and model-maker with astonishing skill. His ornamentation is legendary and his work could be enjoyed by all age groups as they exude a timeless beauty and sense of adventure and wonder.



The winning entry

Religious needs

DIAC and Serco continue to try to provide for clients' religious needs. In addition to regular visits from local religious leaders representing various faiths, visits by Shi'a Muslim clerics were mostly recently arranged to all NT detention facilities from 14 November to 16 November and from 17 December to 22 December.

Sanderson Night School program

At the end of the 2011 school year, students from the DAL played host to visitors to the school. The students offered invited guests traditional national foods at the event which has become a regular feature of the school program. Students designed the recipes, shopped for the ingredients and cooked the foods. The program included a performance of a song from the students' countries of origin. Guests were impressed by their rendition of *I am Australian* with adaptations developed at school on Christmas Island.

Excursions have been a pivotal part of the Sanderson Night School program and provide both recreational and educational opportunities for our senior school-aged students. Supported by visits to the Darwin City Council and Parliament House, Sanderson Night School students learned about the three tiers of government in Australia. They also participated in a mock election which demonstrated the preferential voting system used in Australia. Students observed Parliament in session and were welcomed to the house by the Speaker, the Hon. Jane Aagaard. One popular excursion took students to four art exhibitions during the Darwin Festival.

While the focus is always on the development of English language skills, students are also offered a range of activities including first aid lessons with St John's Ambulance in term three and learning to swim through a series of lessons in term four.



Students shopping

School holiday program –Sanderson Middle School campus

Students from the DAL were actively involved in a holiday program, from January 3 to 20 at the Sanderson Middle School campus. There were about 50 students, from five to 15 years of age, involved in the program.

In week one, students went to the movies, 'giant' games from Darwin City Council Fun and enjoyed the Games Equipment store, including chess, building blocks, towers, Connect Four and snakes and ladders. Students also used team skis and stilts to try out their sense of balance and teamwork. These games proved very popular with all age groups.

HelpNT was a great supporter of the program, providing opportunities for students to try rock climbing at their city site and later bringing their mobile rock vehicle to school for students to have a go at it and also experience archery.

In week two, the students visited Lake Leanyer Recreation Park, where they could swim, using the three slides (if they were over 1.2m tall), play in the water playground, or on the traditional playground equipment. They also had opportunities to play badminton and enjoy a traditional Aussie sausage sizzle. Ten-pin bowling was very popular and younger students also loved the opportunity to play in the adventure playground at the Nightcliff Tenpin Bowling Centre.



Students at the Darwin Botanic Gardens

A trip to Crocodylus Park took place on a hot, humid day, but was also very exciting for most students, as they got up close and personal with crocodiles and other animals. They delighted in being able to hold a baby crocodile, with its mouth taped closed.

The following day the students went fish feeding at Aquascene, near the centre of Darwin. Students and staff enjoyed being close to wild fish and hand feeding them. The groups participated in other activities including team skipping, basketball, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, running races, sing-alongs, drawing, braiding and team problem solving and co-operation challenges. The older students also asked for and were given, some formal English lessons.



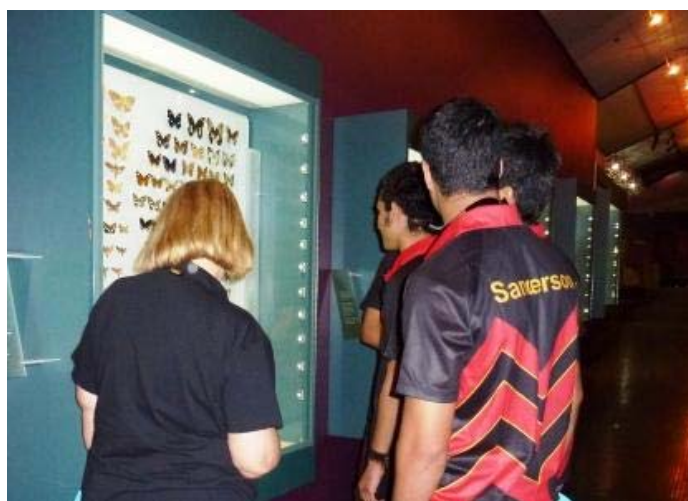
Students playing soccer



Students at Aquascene

The final day was centred around group activities, followed by a lunch organised by the students. The younger students presented a song. A very popular activity was viewing a slide show of the activities they had managed to squeeze into a very busy three weeks.

Staff from Serco and Life Without Barriers were great supporters and participants in this program. They have made a huge effort to establish good relationships with these young people. All the staff enjoyed the program and talked about the joy that they saw on the faces of the young children and teenagers involved.



Students at the Darwin Museum

DIAC stakeholder engagement

If you would like any information about the department or its operations, or have any suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact us via email at: nt.corporate.nidc@immi.gov.au, and mark to the attention of the Executive Officer to the Regional Manager.