

# DASSAN update 13/1/12

Dear friends

Happy 2012 !

Welcome to new members of the [DASSAN](#) mailing list. We look forward to working together for justice and human rights. The DASSAN update comes out once a week. If you would like more frequent updates you can join the dassalert email list where we send out information more regularly. ( email [dassan2011@gmail.com](mailto:dassan2011@gmail.com) with ' join dassalret' in the subject line)

## In todays update

- Christmas ( or not) at the DAL
- Visiting people in detention
- Support for people on Bridging VIAs
- seeking a soccer coordinator!
- What can I do
- News update
- DASSAN 2012 - what do you think we should do?

## Presents for Children in detention

Many thanks again to those who donated time, money and presents for the nearly 200 children who were here in detention over the holiday period. Many of you would have seen the media reports about the debacle which occurred. On Christmas day, when DASSAN members arrived to give the gifts, as pre arranged with Serco, Serco staff informed DASSAN volunteers that the gifts could not be handed out as they were wrapped and needed to be checked to ensure that no contraband was contained in the gifts. As a result the DASSAN volunteers, which included three children who had given up their Christmas morning to show children in detention they cared about them, spent their time unwrapping the gifts they had wrapped the previous day. Volunteers were also informed that no children were to be given crayons or textas as “children might draw on the walls”. Serco staff also informed volunteers that the gifts would have to be given to children based on their boat number and not their names as “they are easier to tick off that way”. The presents were only handed out to the children nearly 2 weekss after Christmas, after Serco was instructed to do so by the Department of Immigration, following pressure from DASSAN.

We would also like to thank generous people in our community including business owners who responded to media reports by offering donations for ' our newly arrived friends'.

Serco have now apologised both locally and nationally, including stating that " *it is explicit in our policy to always address clients by their names*" and that ' *there is no national or regional policy preventing children from having crayons, textas or paints*'.

While we are glad that the children have now received their gifts and that this issue has raised some awareness of how children ( and others) are treated in detention, we all know the real issue is not access to textas but locking children ( and adults) up. The damaging effects of detention are well documented. Children should not be in detention where their care is dictated by poorly trained security guards. The Christmas gift giving fiasco is just a small example of this. Children should be living in the community so they can begin to recover from the trauma they have fled from - detention centres only inflict further trauma

Join with us in continuing to work for an Australia where we do not lock children up. Many of the presents were bought by [Chilout](#), a national advocacy group - find more about them [here](#).

See our DASSAN media statement [here](#) and some of the media coverage [here](#)

If you would like to donate gifts to people in detention, contact Fernanda, DASSAN Gifts Coordinator at [dassan2011@gmail.com](mailto:dassan2011@gmail.com). Gift ideas might include, books, ( especially english language books and dictionaries) magazine, games & toys and tshirts.

## Visiting people in detention

DASSAN will be holding another visitor training session soon. If you are interested in visiting people in detention or would like to know more please contact [dassanvisits@gmail.com](mailto:dassanvisits@gmail.com).

## Support for people on Bridging Visas

Australian Red Cross is currently working with clients that are being released from Detention with Bridging Visas. While this is a great opportunity for these clients it is also a very challenging time.

A Bridging Visa does include the right to work which is great although many of our clients are still learning English which acts as a barrier for applications and interviews. The initial support offered by the Red Cross includes 4-6 weeks transitional accommodation and income support at which time they are expected to have found their own accommodation and begun the search for work in the community. Income support can continue until the client is able to support themselves but its dependent on the client's individual circumstances.

With little to moderate English skills and no formal work experience this will be a very difficult time for all our clients. Challenges regarding suitable housing in a city and country they have never lived in before is proving to be a daunting task. While we are hoping for the clients to facilitate these opportunities themselves Red Cross is happy to act as contact point for anyone who would like to offer assistance to them.

If there is anyone who has an **available room to rent in their house, a granny flat or a unit/house they are looking to rent** this would be an incredible help. Anyone who would like to offer **positions of employment** would also be greatly appreciated.

We have had a few donations of bicycles which have been a great way for the clients to get about town, exercise and learn about the city. Any **donations of old mobile phones, bicycles** (we are happy to fix them up if they are in reasonable condition), **phone cards or other useful items** would be appreciated by both Red Cross and our clients.

We will also be looking for **volunteers in the coming months** for help with orientation to the area as more clients are expected to be released and to stay in Darwin.

If anyone has any ideas or would like to offer assistance please contact either Sarah Kavanagh on 8924 3989 [skavanagh@redcross.org.au](mailto:skavanagh@redcross.org.au) or Kerry Barber on 8924 3990 [kbarber2@redcross.org.au](mailto:kbarber2@redcross.org.au) and we will be happy to put you in touch with clients or discuss ideas with you.

For volunteer enquiries please contact Kimberly Jonsson on 8924 3988 or [kjonsson@redcross.org.au](mailto:kjonsson@redcross.org.au)

## **SOCCKER coordinator!**

Multicultural Youth NT have been organising **weekly soccer matches with young people in detention** and are looking for a new person to coordinate this. It is pretty simple to run - everything is set up. For more information contact Meri : [meri.mynt@gmail.com](mailto:meri.mynt@gmail.com)

## **Taking Action - what can I do?**

[Visiting people in detention](#)

[Writing letters to people in detention](#)

[Writing to politicians](#)

Glfts for people in detention - contact Fernanda at [dassan2011@gmail.com](mailto:dassan2011@gmail.com)

contribute to our [website](#) - contact David at [dassan2011@gmail.com](mailto:dassan2011@gmail.com)

[Get involved with DASSAN](#) - all people who support asylum seekers are welcome to join us

Help with organising a **national refugee advocate convergence** on Darwin next Easter - contact Emma for more information at [dassan2011@gmail.com](mailto:dassan2011@gmail.com)

[learn more](#) about the issues

## DASSAN 2012

Please **let us know** what you think DASSAN should focus on for 2012 and how you would like to contribute. Email [dassan2011@gmail.com](mailto:dassan2011@gmail.com) with your ideas

## Next DASSAN meeting

DASSAN meetings are a chance to meet other people in the network, and to share ideas and information. DASSAN meets fortnightly on Monday nights - our first meeting for the year will be on MONDAY 23rd January from 530 to 7pm, at Melaleuca Refugee Centre ( in Rapid Creek Business Village). All welcome - for more information contact [dassan2011@gmail.com](mailto:dassan2011@gmail.com)

## News Update

### [Keeping asylum seekers in line](#)

THE company that runs immigration detention is using a system of punishment and reward for misbehaving detainees, according to a document obtained by The Age. The document conflicts with Immigration Department denials that such a system exists

### [Detention officer suspended over Facebook comments](#)

An officer at an immigration detention centre in Darwin has been suspended for allegedly making offensive comments about **asylum seekers** on Facebook

### [Anwar Ibrahim slams Australian \*\*asylum-seeker\*\* plan to Malaysia](#)

MALAYSIA's opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has slammed the Australian government's proposal to send **asylum-seekers** to his country for processing, claiming Kuala Lumpur has a "notorious" human rights record

### [Journalists bag union on \*\*asylum\*\*](#)

THE journalists' union has been condemned for failing to represent members over strict Department of Immigration guidelines on reporting on **asylum-seekers**

### [Julia Gillard denies tough \*\*asylum seeker\*\* punishment move](#)

AN **asylum seeker** at a detention centre near Weipa has been taken to Christmas Island and put in solitary confinement under a new Immigration Department punishment regime, a refugee advocate claims.

### [ASIO blocks child refugee on security grounds](#)

Sri Lankans have comprised one of the largest group of **asylum seekers** travelling by boat to Australia from Indonesi

### [ASIO screening of children criticised](#)

THE Greens have called for the immediate suspension of ASIO security checks being conducted on child **asylum seekers** over concerns the practice breaches human rights obligation

### [Detainees tell of Christmas Island punishment](#)

DETAINEES have described punitive measures on Christmas Island, saying the Australian territory is becoming the destination for "naughty" **asylum-seekers**

### [Injured detainees returned to NT detention](#)

A group of **asylum seekers** injured in violent clashes at a Darwin immigration facility has been returned to detention

### [Carrot and stick to control refugees](#)

Detainees deemed low-risk are being allowed to leave the scorching heat of Curtin in Western Australia's far north for the low-security and temperate detention centre near Hobart,

Cheers

Justine

[dassan.org](http://dassan.org)