

DASSAN update 27/1/12

In todays update

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Yesterday in Australia people marked the arrival of the first fleet at Sydney Cove in 1788 with protests (and celebrations). Many took this day as an opportunity to draw attention to the issue of asylum seekers (see [Bishops call for humane approach toward asylum seekers](#), [Rush wants asylum seeker stories](#), [Nation's day a chance to shine a light into our darkness](#))

Let's hope 2012 brings justice for the first peoples of this country as well as those who have come here most recently seeking safety.

Dinner for detainees

Thanks to all those who responded to the [NT News story last week](#) on food for people in detention. Over the last year the NT News has in general been balanced in its coverage of these issues and we often receive positive comments from people in other states about our local paper. The story on food created a predictable response from those in our community who are afraid and misinformed, but also a huge number of letters and texts from people critical of the NT News story and sharing the facts about asylum seekers, eg "*A shameful article by the NT news which does nothing to challenge the misinformed stereotypes in the community around refugees and continuing to spread racism and prejudice*" (see more comments [here](#))

Please consider writing and texting to the NT News when there are articles on the issues of asylum seekers and show our community how many of us there are.

Refugees and ASIO assessments

(From A Just Australia Website) - See DASSAN's media release today [here](#).

Right now, more than 50 recognised refugees (4 here in Darwin) face spending the rest of their lives in immigration detention because ASIO considers them a security risk. These are people who the Australian Government believes are entitled to our protection under the Refugee Convention. Yet their freedom is denied because they have received an adverse security assessment.

Refugees with adverse ASIO findings have no legal recourse and ASIO is under no obligation to explain the reasons behind their assessments. They don't know why their freedom has been denied. They don't know if or when they will be released from detention. Many have been detained for years, remaining in political limbo and are suffering from acute mental health problems. Some have young families and are separated from wives and young children.

How you can help

Write to your local MP to lobby the Attorney-General for a policy change that meets both the human rights of recognised refugees and national security needs. Tell them:

- Keeping recognised refugees detained indefinitely is in conflict with Australia's obligations under the Refugee Convention;
- Refugees are entitled to know why they have been given a negative security assessment and avenues to challenge the assessment;
- An independent review mechanism is needed to oversee the decisions made by ASIO;
- The mental health of refugees and their families will continue to deteriorate unless the Government can find a solution;
- Alternatives to indefinite mandatory detention work throughout the world including in Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA.

Essential reading

RCOA letter to Attorney-General Nicola

Roxon http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/statements/120119_NRoxon_adverse_security.pdf

Federal Labor MP and chair of the Joint Select committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network Daryl Melham has called for the release of refugees with adverse security assessments, subject to control order <http://bit.ly/AqVXJX>

ASIO Director-General David Irvine told the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network that ASIO could work within a review mechanism (page 29 of this document) www.aph.gov.au/hansard/joint/commttee/j461.pdf

An account of the impact adverse ASIO assessments are having on refugees and their families <http://www.smh.com.au/national/without-hope-without-reason-20120113-1pzei.html>

The International Detention Coalition has studied models of alternatives to detention in a range of international jurisdiction. <http://idcoalition.org/cap/handbook/>

Next DASSAN meeting

Thanks to all those who came along to our first meeting of the year and welcome to new members of DASSAN. 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 next meeting is on **MONDAY 6th February from 530 to 7pm**, at Melaleuca Refugee Centre (in Rapid Creek Business Village). All welcome - for more information contact dassan2011@gmail.com

Visiting people in detention

DASSAN will be holding another visitor training session soon. We have many requests for visitors from people in detention, and visiting is a way for show support. We receive overwhelmingly grateful and positive feedback from asylum seekers and providers about how important it is that people get visits from the community. As one man told us " *please tell all the people who visit someone how much importance this is. When I knew someone was coming every week and we could talk about anything, or just sit together, it made my long days more bearable. You do not know who much it means to us.*"

We will also be starting visiting at [Wickham Point Immigration Detention Centre](#) in the near future. If you are interested in visiting people in detention or would like to know more please contact dassanvisits@gmail.com.

St Vincent de Paul also coordinates a visitor and support program to groups of people in the Detention Centres, as well as an excursion program. Contact volunteer.nt@svdpnt.org.au

Support for people on Bridging Visas

Are you interested in supporting people living in the community on [bridging visas](#)? This could include having a room to rent, offering employment, visiting and social support, donations of old bikes, mobile phones, clothing etc. For more information contact Red Cross: Sarah Kavanagh on 8924 3989 skavanagh@redcross.org.au or Kerry Barber on 8924 3990 kbarber2@redcross.org.au . For volunteer enquiries please contact Kimberly Jonsson on 8924 3988 or kjonsson@redcross.org.au

More information about their entitlements can be found here : <http://www.asrc.org.au/media/documents/welfare-entitlements.pdf>

HELP NEEDED!

Rock Against Racism

DASSAN and Darwin Aboriginal Rights Collective will be organising a Rock Against Racism on **April 7th**. If you are interested in helping out or getting involved contact us [here](#)

T-Shirt printing

DASSAN will be doing another print run of the winning tshirt from the childrens tshirt competetion ' For those who come accross the sea we've boundless plains to share". Some helping hands for printing would be very welcome ! (no experience neccesary) - contact [Anna](#)

SOCCER coordinator!

Thanks to all those who responded to the call out for a soccer co-ordinator for weekly soccer matches with young people in detention - someone has now taken up this role - if you are interested in being involved in this project please contact Meri : 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

contribute to our [website](#) - contact David at 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 this Easter - contact Emma for more information at dassan2011@gmail.com

[learn more](#) about the issues

Links and News Update

[Serco's 'secret' manual on use of force](#)

LAWYERS are fighting for the public release of a "confidential" document that outlines how Serco security officers are trained to handle **asylum-seekers** in a Darwin detention centre

[Rush wants **asylum seeker** stories](#)

Australian of the Year Geoffrey Rush has urged local writers to tell the stories of **asylum seekers** who try to make the perilous journey to Australia by boat.

[Bowen defends Nauru costings](#)

A \$2 BILLION estimate for housing 750 **asylum seekers** on Nauru is driven by the Immigration Department's concern at avoiding Christmas Island-style riots and legal action by the government regulator Comcare, the advice reveals

[Conflicting reports about detainees' hunger strike](#)

There are conflicting reports about just how many **asylum seekers** have been on a hunger strike at the Pontville Detention Centre near Hobart. Refugee advocates say that between 50 and 150 **asylum seekers** were involved in the strike

[Bishops call for humane approach toward **asylum seekers**](#)

The Catholic Bishops Commission for Justice, Ecology and Development has called on political parties to mark Australia Day by working towards a common approach to **asylum seekers** - and put a limit to their time in detention,

[**Asylum seeker** talks hit a brick wall](#)

Any chance of the major parties working together on **asylum seeker** policy now appears dead

[Protesters request visit to detainees in Leonora](#)

The group says it will travel to Leonora this week to hold a vigil to protest over the detainment of **asylum seekers**. The Leonora detention centre is currently housing around 90 unaccompanied male teenagers

[Terror war not over yet, says ASIO chief David Irvine](#)

In a speech to the Sydney Institute, Mr Irvine also delved into the controversial issue of **asylum-seekers** who have been declared security threats but are unable to challenge ASIO's assessments or the material on which they are based.

[Naval officers 'would disobey' orders to turn back **asylum-seeker** vessels under ...](#)

A FORMER defence chief has declared naval officers would disobey orders from a future Abbott government to turn back **asylum-seeker** vessels, saying commanders would always put safety ahead of policy.

[Boat policy must stick to global law](#)

AUSTRALIAN policy on **asylum seekers** arriving by boat should always adhere to international law, a former defence force chief says.

[NT Human Rights award winner in Hobart for Australia Day](#)

Pontville has been one of the most successful detention centres in Australia in terms of the community welcoming the **asylum seekers**. of art from both Darwin and Pontville centres scheduled for the end of February

[Abbott to get tougher on **aylum seekers**](#)

Tony Abbott has vowed to get 'even tougher' on **asylum seekers** if he becomes Prime Minister

[Curry on the menu at detention centre](#)

ASYLUM seekers in Darwin detention are being served golden grub, if the menu is anything to go by. But does luxury birdseed taste better than regular birdseed when you're in a cage?

