



# The Wickham Point detention facility

## History

On 3 March 2011, the Australian Government announced the expansion of immigration detention accommodation on the mainland. The announcement included the decision to lease a new detention facility at Wickham Point outside Darwin. This replaces the previously announced contingency site of 11 Mile Antenna Farm in Darwin.

The site is located 35 kilometres by road from Darwin's CBD and 15 kilometres from Palmerston, the nearest residential area.

The Northern Territory Government gave additional planning approval to cover use of the site as a detention facility in May 2011. While the site had planning approval for use as a workers' camp, the government's commitment to the lease was dependant on the additional planning approval. The government signed the agreement for lease of the site and buildings on 1 June 2011.

Detainees will not be permitted to leave the facility except during supervised excursions.

The entire site will have appropriate security.

## Costs

The 1500-bed facility at Wickham Point will have an estimated government capital outlay of \$9.2 million as opposed to the estimated \$185 million required to develop 11 Mile Antenna Farm.

The capital outlay by the government will provide security infrastructure and administrative infrastructure not normally required in a workers' camp.

## Lease

The lease is expected to cost \$82 million over three years.

The services agreement with the detention services provider will cost about \$114 million over three years, but there is a provision to negotiate lower costs if numbers are lower and parts of the facility are not used. The cost of Serco services is also dependent on client numbers.

The privately leased facility offers a cost-effective option to easing the pressure on detention accommodation.

This is a turn-key lease agreement with the developer providing the land, buildings, fit-out of the accommodation, dining areas, provision of amenity rooms, and outdoor recreational spaces.

## Design

The facility's three separate compounds will each have their own support amenities, including areas for education, internet facilities, libraries, religious worship and recreation rooms.

Each compound is designed to accommodate 500 asylum seekers for a total of 1500 people.

The accommodation rooms, which are similar to the rooms at Darwin Airport Lodge, will exceed the detention standard guidelines of 10 square metres with the overall room size being 18.3 sq metres.

Meals will be cooked and consumed in dining rooms.

The construction will be completed in stages. The first stage, which includes the first 500 beds and all core support buildings, is scheduled to be completed in early November 2011.

The department will begin operations at the site from that time and expects asylum seekers to be accommodated there shortly after the initial opening. The remaining 1000 beds are to be completed in two further stages by early 2012.

## Impact on the local community

The department is consulting key stakeholders in the local community to help minimise disruption from construction, as well as to explore the use of local businesses and contractors. Regular community consultation will continue over the life of the facility.

The department has also briefed industry on the Wickham Point peninsula about the facility. Their concerns have been around the longer term impact of the facility should further development proceed. As this is not planned as a permanent facility, it is unlikely to have a lasting impact on industry plans.

The existing gas and power plant are more than five kilometres away and a proposal by Inpex to build a gas facility a few kilometres away is still some time away from being confirmed. If it does go ahead, production would not start for at least five years.

## Health

Sand flies have been identified as a potential concern at Wickham Point and treatment and protection options will be implemented. In accordance with Northern Territory Government requirements, the developer will put in place a special fence line and pesticide solution, including regular spraying of all buildings and their surrounds. All buildings, including the accommodation units, can be sealed and have air-conditioning.

The department will meet all health costs for people in detention at Wickham Point. No local resident's access to health services will be adversely affected.

International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) will provide primary health services to people in detention at Wickham Point, to minimise the impact on local health services. The department contracts IHMS to provide these services across the detention network. Wickham Point clients will be able to attend an onsite clinic from Monday to Friday similar to people in the broader community. This will not be available on a 24-hour seven-day-a-week basis

IHMS does not provide emergency or specialist care; however, the department will fund the Northern Territory Government for additional services.

## Emergency services

The department will work closely with law enforcement and other emergency services in the Northern Territory, minimise the impact on the local community.

Once Wickham Point is operating, business continuity exercises covering various emergency situations will be undertaken involving the department, Serco and emergency services, similar to those conducted at other centres.

The department is aware of trucking operations on the main road and has planned for slow-down and turn-off lanes to be included in plans for the facility's entrance road.

## For more information

Local community members can make enquiries about the Wickham Point facility by emailing [wickhampoint@immi.gov.au](mailto:wickhampoint@immi.gov.au).