

Tour Notes:

Wickham Point Immigration Detention Centre (WPIDC)

A short scenic 50km drive from Darwin nestled amongst the woodlands, stand the new jewel of the Australians detention centres, the Wickham Point Detention Centre, sorry I mean 'Immigration Accommodation Facility'

Driving down the strong avenue of trees leading to the reception area you can't help but feel a welcoming sense of entry. Not only do the many plants soften the buildings and hide the infrastructure but they also provide interest for pedestrians. (Their words not mine).



The centre is divided into 3 compounds, each with a 500 person capacity, but with the plan to only house 250 in each. Compound 1 is due to be operational in early to mid-Dec (yes they are aware it is early December already). They hope to have 180 new clients by the end of December.



The 3 compounds will house a variety of nationalities, mimicking Australian society, and the many communal areas scattered around will also help facilitate the clients understanding of what it is like to be part of a community, better preparing them for when they move into a real Australian community.





The proposed recreational facilities make the NIDC look like a severely depressing place to reside. The full scale football field that will be shared in a yet to be decided manor between the 3 compounds is complemented by each area having their own smaller field and outdoor gym that is bound to get plenty of use in the cooler Darwin months. There is also an undercover pool table and table tennis area that the clients will be able to retreat to on the odd occasion that it rains.



The rooms are clean and spacious, with a nice bunk bed, TV, fridge and on suite bathroom. In fact any backpackers on Mitchell Street would be proud to be able to advertise such accommodation. The two persons per room policy is purely for safety reasons, and I understand the thinking behind this as I often feel unsafe sleeping alone at night, even when surrounded by a 40 foot security fence.



There is a hospital area, and separate mental health area where medical treatment can be provided to the clients. There is also an area visiting dentist and optometrist can practice. A computer lab, computer training room and library also complement the facility. The small windowless interview rooms will help to bring the case worker and client closer together, at least in a physical sense.

Surrounding the facility are a motion sensor 20 foot fence, then a 15 foot sterile area, then a second fence, this time electrified, but don't worry it is only electrified to an 'ouch don't touch' level.



All the staff were very polite and helpful, everyone from the people providing the tour down to the guys working construction made an effort to make us feel at home. And no better example of this can be found than when on leaving the security guard at the gate asked to look in the boot of my car, for what I can only presume was to check the air pressure on my spare tyre, something I always neglect to do.

The only fault I could find is that there appears to be no communal indoor area except for the dining hall and the visitors meeting area might be a tad small



In conclusion if I had to choose to be indefinitely detained in a humid climate, 50km from Darwin Centre, housed with 1500 single males, sharing a bunk room, with an outdoor gym facility, surrounded by a 20 foot electric fence, I could think of no place more suitable than the new Immigration Accommodation Facility.