

Project SafeCom News and Updates

Sunday, 26 July 2015

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1. Elaine Pearson: It's been two years since Manus Island reopened. Not a single refugee has been resettled

Refugees in Papua New Guinea face a perpetual life in limbo. This wasn't the 'unique' arrangement the Australia public was sold

The Guardian

Elaine Pearson

Monday 20 July 2015 15.50 AEST

Two years ago, Reza Mollagholipour, a civil engineer from Iran, was on a boat crammed full of asylum seekers and migrants bound for Australia from Indonesia. Mollagholipour fled Iran after receiving threats for uncovering corruption at his company. It was the second boat to arrive on Christmas Island after the Rudd government in July 2013 reinstated a policy of mandatory offshore processing for "unauthorised maritime arrivals" to Australia.

The Australian authorities sent Mollagholipour on from Christmas Island to Manus Island in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Although given legal recognition as a refugee, Mollagholipour remains stuck on Manus two years later. Not a single person has been resettled or integrated into PNG two years on, and more than 900 men are still locked in detention.

This is the human cost of Australia's "stop the boats" policy. Australian officials love to laud its "effectiveness" but the policy has come at an enormous human cost for the hundreds of men, women and children still detained on Manus Island and Nauru.

I met Mollagholipour in Lorengau, the main village on Manus, when I visited the island in June as part of a joint Human Rights Watch and Human Rights Law Centre team to better understand the situation for refugees and asylum seekers held there.

Mollagholipour spent the first 18 months locked up in detention. Since January, he has lived in a transit center, which currently houses 40 refugees. "This is still like being in detention, island detention," he told me. "I want to start my real life. They need to clearly tell us what are the steps to resettlement, how can we move on with our lives?"

He and seven other refugees have been issued PNG identity documents including a work permit. But when Mollagholipour lined up job interviews in the PNG capital, Port Moresby, back in March, officials prevented him from leaving Manus Island, saying there was no formal integration policy in PNG.

"This document is absolutely useless," Mollagholipour said. "I think it was just for the chief migration officer to take a picture with me. I was used by PNG immigration."

Despite the restrictions on their lives, Mollagholipour and others have tried to stay positive and make the best of island life. Some have tried to get jobs or voluntary positions in the local school or hospital. But PNG immigration has thwarted these efforts at every turn by prohibiting even casual or voluntary work.

Other refugees have grown despondent, fearful of venturing into the local community. They recall the night in February 2014 when another Iranian, Reza Barati, was beaten to death and local residents, police and guards allegedly injured more than 50 asylum seekers after protests at the detention centre. So the men spend their days in their rooms glued to their mobile phones chatting with family and friends far away.

One of the refugees tried to explain to me what life was like in the transit centre after long periods in detention: "You become domesticated, like an animal inside a cage. You think they are fine. They look normal, they seem healthy but they could not survive in nature, and that is like us now. We become like that. Mentally, we are not fine." An ethnic Rohingya refugee told me, "In Burma, the government shoots us. Here, they kill us mentally."

Meanwhile, more than 850 asylum seekers and 87 refugees remain locked up in poor conditions in the detention centre on Lombrum naval base. PNG authorities deny them access to visitors and mobile phones. Media and human rights groups are prevented from visiting them. These men have committed no crime; their only mistake was to think Australia would treat them fairly and decently when they boarded a boat headed there two years ago.

The refugee agreement between Australia and PNG signed on 19 July 2013 states, "What is unique about this Arrangement is that persons found to be refugees will be resettled in Papua New Guinea." Yet two years on, that "uniqueness" remains unfulfilled.

After two years, it's clear that the transfer policy of "boat people" from Australia to PNG needs to stop. Refugees still stuck on Manus Island need to be allowed to move freely, get jobs and be productive members of PNG society – that is, to get on with their lives. If PNG can't or won't allow that to happen, then Australia needs to act and give these refugees a future – preferably in Australia – instead of a perpetual life in limbo.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/20/its-been-two-years-since-manus-island-re-opened-not-a-single-refugee-has-been-resettled>

2. Anne Aly: Reclaim Australia is the product of rising rightwing extremism

George Christensen may believe Reclaim Australia isn't racist, but the narrative that underscores the movement is shared across extremist groups

The Guardian
Anne Aly
Monday 20 July 2015 11.42 AEST

Reclaim Australia, which describes itself a grassroots movement, held rallies across Australia at the weekend "to stand together to stop halal tax, sharia law & islamisation [sic]".

Fortunately, Australia does not have an incessant record of such public performances, although our past is peppered with occasional eruptions of violence from Lambing Flat (1861) to Cronulla (2005). We also do not have a familiar history of terrorism and violent extremism.

According to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), between 2001 and 2011, Australia experienced six terrorist attacks. Of these, only one resulted in fatalities. This attack, though categorised as a terrorist incident by the GTD, occurred when an explosion on board the Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel (SIEV) 36 resulted in the death of five asylum seekers in April 2009. Of the remaining listed terrorist attacks, one was an unknown chemical agent in a letter to the United States consulate (Melbourne, 2001), one was an explosion on a private business (Broadbeach, 2006), one an armed assault on a synagogue (Sydney, 2006) and two were attacks on mosques (Perth 2010 and Brisbane 2001). The 2010 incident involved shots being fired into a mosque during prayer time by two men alleged to have links with the neo-Nazi group Combat 18.

While we continue to wrestle with the very real threat of violent jihadist extremism perpetrated by those who identify with Daesh (Islamic State), we should also remain aware of the emergence of other forms of extremism that are equally threatening.

Over the last decade Australia has seen a sharp increase in the emergence and visibility of far-right extremism, from pseudo political parties to organised groups to mobilising campaigns like Reclaim Australia. The ideological roots of extreme racist groups are no longer confined to men who hide behind white hoods or angry youths with shaved heads and swastika tattoos. Nor are their campaigns reserved for Africans, Jews and minority races. They now form the core system of an emerging extremist movement in Australia that targets Muslims and Islam under a thinly veiled guise of protecting Australia.

It is hard to ignore the anti-Muslim sentiment that saturates Reclaim Australia's website and Facebook page. While their supporters continually claim they are not against Islam, Reclaim's website makes several derogatory references to Islam and Muslims in Australia. Their Facebook page attracts comments such as, "When the time finally comes to eradicate this evil all the islam [sic] appeasers should go with them."

And this is where George Christensen's attendance at the Reclaim rally and his support of the Reclaim movement is so disturbing. He claims there is nothing in Reclaim Australia's list of principles that supports labels assigned to them such as "racists" and "bigots". He also says he would not attend the rally if Reclaim "had been expressing values such as: we are against Islam; we want to deport Muslim people; we don't want to allow Muslim immigration; or we don't want mosques to be set up."

These claims are either a gross misunderstanding of Reclaim's agenda or the result of a lack of research on Christensen's behalf. His adamant stand to attend the rally – even in defiance of any (unlikely) orders from the prime minister – may be put down to his political conservatism. We could even give Christensen the benefit of the doubt and accept he is representing the majority of his constituents in Mackay. But this does not account for the fact the Reclaim Australia movement is more than the sum of its 24 principles. It is the product of a rising and disturbing wave of rightwing extremism that bears many of the same hallmarks of other extremisms, both past and present. Just like anarchism, new-left extremism, extreme anti-colonialism and violent jihadism, the narrative that underscores Reclaim comprises five main points:

- • We are engaged in a battle against an ideological enemy that seeks to destroy us
- • Protecting our way of life is the only way to ensure our survival
- • They are dangerous, threatening and morally corrupt
- • We are morally good
- • Our future depends on defeating them

Together these five elements do two things – first they reinforce out-group derogation by blaming those who are not "us" for a range of moral and social ills. Second, they set the boundaries about what it means to be "one of us". When these boundaries are broad-based values such as freedom, democracy and equality, being one of us is the morally better choice.

The dome of silence that has descended over our political leadership and the failure of Tony Abbott to condemn the Reclaim movement speak volumes. Campaigns like Reclaim don't get traction on their own; they emerge and grow within an enabling environment where ideas that we once would have deemed unreasonable, intolerant and against our national character become mainstream.

Sadly in Australia, our government's politicisation of national security issues has created the very conditions that allow far-right movements to flourish. Australians deserve better. We deserve a nation that stands together, not apart, in the face of adversity. We deserve a nation that faces challenges to our security without compromising the values that extremist groups of all kinds seek to undermine.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/20/anne-aly-reclaim-australia-is-the-product-of-rising-right-wing-extremism>

3. The Nauru Inquiry Proves We Can't Outsource Our Ethical Obligations To Asylum Seekers

In the midst of detailed and disturbing evidence, a senior bureaucrat found himself bedevilled by a question too big for his pay grade, writes Max Chalmers.

New Matilda
21 Jul 2015
By Max Chalmers

After nearly four months of evidence – of child sexual assaults, guards trading drugs for sexual favours, endemic self-harm and mass suicide pacts – the ongoing Senate Inquiry into the Nauru detention centre finally reached its essential question late yesterday afternoon.

Long before the Senate resolved to interrogate the operations of the 'Regional Processing Centre' re-established on the island by the Gillard Government in 2012, the dysfunction and abuses occurring there had been made clear by leaks to the media, a disturbing trickle of information found to be based on credible testimony by the Moss review.

There have been surprises. The revelation that Wilson Security staff spied on Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, for instance, as well as testimony that guards recorded sex with refugees and propagated the footage.

But the large number of child abuse and sexual assault allegations could not have honestly caught any observer by surprise, certainly not the Department of Immigration, who has been kept abreast of the incidents and the data as they have been recorded.

As Leonard Cohen put it, everybody knows. Everybody knows Nauru is a scorching and near lawless island where a group of over 1,000 refugees cannot be neatly integrated into a population of 10,000, barely coping with their country's history of colonial and corporate plundering, environmental degradation, and ongoing corruption.

This is a place where the delivery of basic services – water, clothes, adequate shelter – is outrageously difficult, and the promise of real security out of the question (Transfield's Kate Munnings was asked yesterday if she could guarantee the safety of asylum seekers detained in the centre her company runs. She declined to answer the question).

As the evidence has been produced, the service providers contracted to run the centre and the Department of Immigration have played a tedious game of pass the parcel. They've given detailed descriptions of procedures and processes, and steadfastly stood by their practices and their staff. And still, no-one will take responsibility for what has happened – what continues to happen – on Nauru.

When Transfield Services, the company handed the \$1.2 billion contract to run offshore processing, came before the Inquiry yesterday, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young had had enough.

"You're not getting away with blaming other contractors for the appalling situation inside the Nauru detention centre. I'm not going to have it and I don't think anyone on the Committee is going to cop that," the Greens Senator fumed.

Later in the afternoon, as senior members of the Department of Immigration took their seats, the source of this frustration was made clear.

Labor Senator Kim Carr, who has shifted seamlessly in character between a gruff real-talking enforcer and a chortling provocateur during the Inquiry, finally gave utterance to the question hanging over every gritty fact unearthed by whistleblowing staff and internal contractor records.

"For the duty of care [on Nauru], who's responsible," he asked Department Secretary Michael Pezzullo.

"The government of Nauru is ultimately responsible in the exercise of its jurisdiction," the Secretary replied in a neat tautology.

The idea that the buck stops with the Nauruan government is one often repeated by the Australian Government. Transfield passes responsibility to Save The Children, who pass it right back, only for the Department to be blamed, only for the responsibility to finally be thrust at the feet of the Nauruan authorities.

When the music stops, the parcel conveniently comes to rest with a country where there is no free press, an absence of real civil rights, and an increasingly restrained political opposition.

Whose fault is that?

As the Secretary continued, he was interrupted by Carr.

“I’m not asking you to defend the position. I’m just asking what’s your assessment. We’re in the process of writing a report. That’s the official view, that it’s not your responsibility. It’s the government of Nauru’s responsibility,” he said.

Pezzullo reiterated his view, but was again interrupted by Carr. The inquiry has been pinned down in detail for much of the time (when is a tent a marquee and not a tent?) but in five words the Senator exposed the forest from the trees.

“Who’s got the moral responsibility?”

Pezzullo paused.

“Well if you want morality I...”

The Secretary shrugged, and lifted his hands.

Carr cut in, right hand bopping up and down by his side, now appearing slightly agitated: “What is it? What is it?”

Pezzullo: “I’m an administrator of a Commonwealth Department, Senator. I’ll tell you what the state of the law is, I’ll tell you what the state of administrative policy is.”

He clasped his hands and looked around the room. Inquiry Chair Alex Gallacher mumbled into his microphone and the hearing moved on.

On one hand, this Inquiry is intended to find out if the companies like Transfield, and organisations like the Department of Immigration have done everything in their power to help things run smoothly on the island. In that regard, they’re very likely to be found wanting.

But the reason Pezzullo couldn’t answer Carr’s question was because it hit a nerve that goes beyond the gut wrenching particulars of Nauru, and brings every case of abuse, sexual assault, and failed care back to the bigger picture.

Asserting that Nauru is ultimately responsible for handling the problems thrown up by the immigration detention centre hastily re-established on its tiny state is equivalent to saying there is no moral responsibility to attend to them at all.

Nauru cannot do the job. Evidence given by Geoffrey Eames, the country’s former High Court chief justice barred from returning to the island in a purge of its judiciary in 2014, made that abundantly clear earlier in the day.

It does not have the resources, the independent judiciary and police, let alone the political will to attend to the allegations arising from the detention centre.

They will not be resolved.

But offshore processing has never been about resolving problems. It’s about outsourcing them.

Just as responsibility for detention centres in Australia was outsourced to private firms in the 90s, the entire policy has now been pushed offshore.

There’s something telling about the Abbott government’s boat ‘push-backs’, an apt metaphor for the broader approach being taken by Australia to those who flee persecution by sea. We’ve pushed people onto Nauru and Manus, pushed them back to the high seas off the coast of Java, and pushed them into the death camps of Thailand. The Coalition has pushed them to the political foreground, then out of mind and out of sight.

With people, we’ve also pushed blame.

Changing the way the processing and resettlement of refugees on Nauru is administered is a worthwhile exercise, one that may even save lives in the future, and will certainly keep pressure on the companies profiting from the practice.

In reality, Australia continues to exert massive control over what happens there, and probing the details will increase the likelihood the people detained will be treated humanely.

But the answer to Senator Kim Carr's question, to the central question of this Inquiry, is clearly not 'Nauru'.

The moral responsibility for what happens to the people we have pushed into a precarious future on Nauru is ours. Neither private contractor nor people smuggler nor tropical island can be paid to take it off our hands.

<https://newmatilda.com//2015/07/21/nauru-inquiry-proves-we-cant-ousource-our-ethical-obligations-asylum-seekers>

4. The Guardian EXCLUSIVE: Healthcare in detention

A Guardian Australia investigation into International Health and Medical Services, the contracted provider of healthcare to asylum seekers Australia has detained on the mainland and offshore on Christmas Island, Manus Island and Nauru.

The Guardian
21 July 2015

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/series/healthcare-in-detention>

5. Immigration healthcare firm 'likely to fail' on child protection – briefing note

IHMS would have failed 2014 compliance checks on whether detention centre staff were cleared to work with children, leaked documents show

The Guardian
Bridie Jabour, Paul Farrell and Nick Evershed
Tuesday 21 July 2015 08.59 AEST

Australia's healthcare provider for asylum seekers in detention could not guarantee its staff were cleared to work with children and admitted it was likely it would fail any compliance checks on the issue.

In a January 2014 meeting briefing note, International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) lists one of the discussion points as maintenance of clinician records and admits it does not know whether all staff have undergone working with children (WWC) checks at the Perth immigration reception and processing centre in Western Australia.

The note questions whether staff need to physically carry their WWC check card with them while working on site.

"Some sites are likely to fail at the moment, for working with children checks, and basic life support checks – what is the baseline for site liaison to measure our competency for these credentials?" the note says.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/21/immigration-healthcare-firm-likely-to-fail-on-child-protection-briefing-note>

6. Fraud 'inevitable' over asylum seeker health targets, leaked documents show

The Guardian
Paul Farrell, Bridie Jabour and Nick Evershed
Tuesday 21 July 2015 08.56 AEST

The company that provides healthcare for Australia's asylum seekers in detention failed to meet medical targets, included incorrect data in reports, and admitted it was "inevitable" fraud would be committed as it tried to meet government standards, leaked documents reveal.

International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), which has received contracts from the Australian government worth more than \$1.6bn, has taken an extraordinary approach, bending – and at times even breaking – official targets in its care of asylum seekers, internal briefings obtained by Guardian Australia show.

The firm, a subsidiary of the global healthcare giant International SOS, has been delivering healthcare to asylum seekers across successive Labor and Coalition governments since 2009 in one of the most politically divisive policy areas in Australia.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/21/inevitable-over-asylum-seeker-health-targets-leaked-documents-show>

7. 'Significant risks' to health of asylum seekers in firm's failure to meet targets

Leaked audit of IHMS reveals children got required vaccinations 7% of the time and GP appointments were made within three days 29% of the time

The Guardian
Bridie Jabour, Paul Farrell and Nick Evershed
Tuesday 21 July 2015 08.59 AEST

Asylum seekers needing referrals to specialists and children needing vaccinations were failed multiple times by their healthcare provider at Christmas Island detention centre, and its solution was for the department to loosen standards of healthcare.

An independent audit of healthcare records kept by International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) on Christmas Island in 2012 has been leaked to Guardian Australia and shows IHMS repeatedly failing criteria set by the immigration department on how to look after the health of asylum seekers in its care.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/21/significant-risks-to-health-of-asylum-seekers-in-firms-failure-to-meet-targets>

8. Asylum seeker healthcare firm's reports included wrong data – internal briefing

International Health and Medical Services knew some of the details of hundreds of incidents was 'doubtful' but included them in reports, briefing notes show

The Guardian
Nick Evershed, Paul Farrell and Bridie Jabour
Tuesday 21 July 2015 08.57 AEST

The health contractor for Australia's detention centre included incorrect data in reports to the immigration department that could have led the company to avoid financial penalties, leaked documents reveal.

In monthly reports to the immigration department, International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) was required by contract to outline the number of incident reports that had been filed outside a certain timeframe. For critical incidents, reports need to be filed within four hours, for other incident reports the deadline is within 24 hours.

If less than 98% of the incident reports have been properly filed, then IHMS is subject to a financial penalty, called an abatement.

However leaked documents show that IHMS included incorrect information when compiling the monthly reports for the immigration department.

When an incident report is filed, health workers must manually input the time that IHMS was advised of the incident, or else it defaults to the time the report is submitted. The difference between the time IHMS was advised, and the time of the report being submitted is used to assess compliance.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/21/asylum-seeker-healthcare-firms-reports-included-wrong-data-internal-briefing>

9. IHMS deployed staff in detention centres without police checks

Leaked reports from healthcare firm appear to show the company misled Australia's immigration department about background check compliance

The Guardian
Paul Farrell, Nick Evershed and Bridie Jabour
Wednesday 22 July 2015 07.15 AEST

Australia's health provider at the Manus Island detention centre hired and deployed medical staff to care for asylum seekers before they had undergone police checks, but appear to have misled the immigration department and misreported their status in successive monthly reports, leaked documents reveal.

Three Papua New Guinea medical employees were all deployed to Manus Island in January, according to internal IHMS documents that detail foreign staff employees.

At the time the staff were employed, the contract between IHMS and the immigration department said that “appropriate and reasonable investigations of the suitability” of staff needed to be undertaken, which must comprise “a review of each individual’s criminal, medical professional and employment history”.

A spokesman for the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, said the department was investigating the allegations raised, and a spokeswoman for IHMS said the company would internally investigate whether police checks were all properly declared to the immigration department.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/22/ihms-deployed-staff-in-detention-centres-without-police-checks>

10. 'Grab from the excuse bag' – how health firm IHMS tackled asylum seeker targets

Exclusive: International Health and Medical Services acknowledged internally that it could not meet Australian government targets, documents show

The Guardian
Paul Farrell, Bridie Jabour and Nick Evershed
Wednesday 22 July 2015 06.18 AEST

Australia’s healthcare provider for asylum seekers in detention accepted that fraud would occur within its own ranks and expected to fail a series of healthcare benchmarks set by the immigration department, leaked internal documents have revealed.

One presentation suggests ways the firm, International Health and Medical Services, can “grab from ‘the excuse bag’” when it misses government targets.

An investigation by Guardian Australia into IHMS has exposed serious concerns about the medical organisation and its relationship with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection in caring for asylum seekers held in detention in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/22/grab-from-the-excuse-bag-how-health-firm-ihms-tackled-asylum-seeker-targets>

11. Tony Abbott says Peter Dutton will look at revelations over detainee healthcare

Immigration minister to look into IHMS and its relationship with his department, but Abbott expresses confidence in asylum seeker healthcare

The Guardian
Bridie Jabour, Daniel Hurst and Paul Farrell
Tuesday 21 July 2015 13.00 AEST

Tony Abbott says the immigration minister will look at revelations that the healthcare provider for asylum seekers admitted fraud in detention centres was inevitable.

The prime minister said he was confident asylum seekers were receiving proper healthcare as it was revealed International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) had failed on many occasions to reach medical targets for caring for asylum seekers.

The Australian Lawyers Alliance called for some of the allegations to be referred to police, Amnesty International called for the centres to be shut before someone died and the Australian Medical Association (AMA) said the healthcare was obviously inadequate.

“Well, I am happy to have a look at it. This is the first I have heard of this particular observation. But I am confident that the people that are being looked after in these centres in Nauru and in Manus Island are receiving good levels of healthcare,” Abbott said in Canberra on Tuesday.

“I am confident that we are doing what duty we have to these people but obviously I am happy to have that matter looked at by the minister for immigration [Peter Dutton].”

Guardian Australia reported IHMS admitted it was “inevitable” fraud would be committed in detention centres, that it put asylum seekers at risk by failing to meet medical targets and that it included incorrect data in reports.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/21/tony-abbott-says-peter-dutton-will-look-at-revelations-over-detainee-healthcare>

12. Peter Dutton warns of consequences if immigration contractors don't perform

Asked about IHMS revelations, immigration minister says companies must 'do the work they are paid to do' or risk losing government contracts

The Guardian

Paul Farrell

Wednesday 22 July 2015 15.58 AEST

The immigration minister, Peter Dutton, has warned that contractors who don't perform or use taxpayer money inappropriately may lose contracts, after initiating an investigation into the company that provides healthcare for asylum seekers.

Guardian Australia has revealed a series of failings by the detention health provider, International Health and Medical Services (IHMS). The revelations include internal documents that show IHMS failed to undertake some working with children checks, provided incorrect data about incident reports to the immigration department and believed fraud would inevitably occur within the organisation in meeting the benchmarks set down by the immigration department.

On Tuesday the prime minister, Tony Abbott, asked Dutton to look into the claims. Dutton said the claims related to a period of "great dysfunction" under the previous Labor government, but said the department would investigate the claims in consultation with the minister.

IHMS has also launched an internal investigation following Guardian Australia's report that police checks were not undertaken on Manus Island before staff were deployed, and this information was withheld from reports to the immigration department.

When asked on Wednesday what steps the minister or the department would take if there was evidence that IHMS or other contractors had acted fraudulently Dutton said: "Like any department we have contracted arrangements with third parties. If people don't perform under those contracts there will be consequences. If people don't do the right thing by the Australian taxpayer, if they don't perform in relation to the contract there are consequences as a result of that."

Dutton added he was referring generally to contractors, rather than specific arrangements.

"The commonwealth has contracts with providers. If people don't perform, if they don't do the work they were paid to do, there will be consequences as a result of that. I think that's just a statement of the obvious as I say, and that is not to make particular comment or pass judgement on a particular provider."

He added: "I think across the commonwealth we want to make sure we've got value for money, because we're spending taxpayers' money. And if people are doing the wrong thing they won't be performing for the commonwealth into the future."

IHMS have recently been contracted again by the federal government to continue provider health services to asylum seekers until 2019, despite insiders saying the department encouraged external stakeholders to apply due to a perceived desire for change.

Dutton was speaking at the launch of the "border watch", a rebranding of the previously named "customs watch", which encouraged port industry bodies to report concerns about smuggling. The Coalition has provided an extra \$88m in funding to the organisation.

The minister and a small press group were surrounded by approximately 50 Australian Border Force officers as the minister spoke. He later observed a sniffer dog attempting to find drugs in a series of pallets.

The dog did not appear to locate any contraband. He later licked the immigration minister's face.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/22/peter-dutton-warns-of-consequences-if-immigration-contractors-dont-perform>

13. Immigration records so poorly kept that IHMS could not locate asylum seekers

Documents from the medical care provider for Australia's detention centres say that individuals' medical data and even their location can be incorrect

The Guardian

Paul Farrell, Nick Evershed and Bridie Jabour

Thursday 23 July 2015 07.46 AEST

International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) has been unable to locate asylum seekers in its care because of poor records from the immigration department, according to leaked internal briefings.

Presentations for IHMS reveal broad concerns about both the healthcare firm's handling of personal information and the immigration department's ability to locate asylum seekers held in its care.

Because of the poor data management, which the slides attribute to the immigration department, this also means that IHMS is unable to accurately measure performance under its contract with the immigration department, they say.

The revelations form part of a series of investigations by Guardian Australia into the provision of medical services for asylum seekers held in Australia and on Manus Island and Nauru, and the contract that underpins them.

A series of presentations from March to August 2013 contain admissions about the accuracy of data held by both IHMS and the immigration department.

In a slide where IHMS's performance against certain metrics is considered, it notes that the measurements "reflect a range of errors".

This includes: "Data about clients' locations is provided by DIAC [immigration] and can be unreliable (eg a client is on Nauru but the client's record indicates that he is at Wickham).

"As a result, the process of attributing compliance (and non-compliance) to sites is not always accurate."

It also notes that "records can remain 'active' well after clients have been discharged or repatriated ... this causes the number of overdue screenings to be over-stated".

In a slide titled "sources of inaccuracy – performance management", the briefing says performance can be difficult to measure because IHMS does not have a standard approach to data entry, the location data provided by the immigration department is poor, and performance failures can be overstated because of inaccurate records about active care.

Other documents obtained by Guardian Australia highlight similar concerns with the handling of asylum seekers' personal records and the accuracy of clinical files. A July 2012 internal audit conducted by consultants Protiviti of records on Christmas Island found that overall, IHMS was not meeting the performance threshold outlined under its contract with the immigration department.

It said that while IHMS did comply with some requirements, "the extent of non-compliance introduces significant risks to the department and their clients, for which it owes a duty of care."

The review found some areas of widespread errors. Seventy per cent of records of diagnostic screenings tests did not comply. Records relating to the commencement of asylum seekers vaccination programs were 89% non-compliant.

Another audit by Protiviti in July 2013 of records from Manus Island and Nauru continued to highlight problems with IHMS's handling of asylum seekers records.

The audit identified "high levels of average compliance" of records on Nauru, but said there were continued errors in records for Manus Island.

A subsequent audit, conducted directly by the department in October 2013, found that IHMS did not meet the 90% threshold for complete medical records, leading to a 5% financial penalty at both Manus Island and Nauru.

A spokesman for the immigration department said: "Minor data discrepancies may occasionally be observed between departmental systems and IHMS's medical records system.

"These discrepancies are due to different data upload rates between the two systems and are quickly clarified and corrected.

"The clinical care detainees and transferees receive is not affected by these discrepancies."

A spokeswoman for IHMS said: "IHMS is provided with daily updates on the location of all individuals held in detention both onshore and in the regional processing countries via nominal roll lists which are compiled by the service providers at each site."

"As we receive these daily nominal roll lists, any potential issues with other location reporting data has no impact on the quality of clinical care provided."

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/23/immigration-records-so-poorly-kept-that-ihms-could-not-locate-asylum-seekers>

14. Immigration department sought private medical records 'for political reasons'

Clinical directors at IHMS raised concerns that sharing the records of asylum seekers could breach privacy laws, an internal briefing shows

The Guardian
Paul Farrell, Bridie Jabour and Nick Evershed
Thursday 23 July 2015 07.48 AEST

The personal medical records of asylum seekers have been handed over by International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) to Australia's immigration department for "political purposes" and potentially in breach of privacy laws, according to leaked internal briefing notes from within IHMS.

The revelations are contained in the meeting notes of a clinical directors' meeting at IHMS on confidentiality in September 2013, obtained by Guardian Australia.

They raise further concerns about the role of the detention health provider IHMS, which delivers healthcare services to asylum seekers on the mainland and in detention centres on Christmas Island, Nauru and Manus Island, and its relationship with the immigration department.

In response IHMS and the immigration department strongly denied they had inappropriately provided or sought access to asylum seekers' medical records.

The briefing document, written by a senior IHMS clinician, outlines the way that the immigration department has sought access to confidential medical records of asylum seekers for what he describes as "political purposes".

In a part of the presentation titled "areas of concern", the clinician notes that data is passed to the department beyond the immediate medical needs of asylum seekers.

"Such an example is passing on updated medical information on clients who are in hospital – in most cases the department wants the information for 'political' reasons and not for reasons of health and welfare of the client.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/23/immigration-department-sought-private-medical-records-for-political-reasons>

15. Richard Ackland: IHMS revelations bolster the legal and political case against the detention of asylum seekers

While the leaked documents may not force the government to change course immediately, at least the Australian electorate cannot put its head in the sand and pretend it has absolutely no idea what is going on

The Guardian
Richard Ackland
Thursday 23 July 2015 06.36 AEST

There is one group that will be poring over the details of the Guardian's revelations into the shortcomings of the healthcare provided to asylum seekers – and that is plaintiff lawyers.

Guardian Australia's analysis of the documented internal workings of International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), and its relationship with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, is a fertile source of material for any class action lawyer seeking to mount a negligence case against the commonwealth and IHMS – the contracted provider of health and medical services to asylum seekers held in Australian operated detention facilities, including those offshore.

Already there is a class action under way alleging a breach of the commonwealth's duty of care for failing to provide adequate education for children detained on Christmas Island. Maurice Blackburn is handling that case in the Victorian supreme court.

Plaintiff law firm Slater & Gordon is also running a class action alleging negligent treatment of asylum seekers on Manus Island by the commonwealth, Transfield Services and the former contractor G4S.

The duty of care owed by the commonwealth to asylum seekers and refugees is non-derogable – it cannot be suspended or transferred. There is still a way to go with these cases before the emergence of details that might embarrass the government and the Australian people in whose name these policies are implemented.

The lawyers for the plaintiffs in the Manus case have been assisted by revelations about conditions there documented by Amnesty International, the UNHCR, the commonwealth ombudsman and Guardian Australia.

Now we have this telling tranche of internal IHMS documents detailing the company's struggle to cope with the demands of its contract, the clash of clinical and commercial objectives, the pressure it is under to fudge results, the problems of gaining the required clearance for its personnel to treat children, failure to act on issues like bullying, the inability to handle complaints within an adequate timeframe, high non-compliance rates for diagnostic screening and commencement of vaccination programs, failure to meet thresholds for the completion of medical records, including incorrect information in reports to the department, concocting excuses, etc, etc, etc.

The publication of this information by Guardian Australia is another fragment of detail about the plight of the people we are so miserably failing in our duty to protect.

Disclosure of IHMS's internal documents are the very thing the legislation seeks to stymie, although this information is not beyond the clutches of a courtroom. The electorate is not in a strong position to insist on a change of policy in the way our "sovereign borders" are maintained and asylum seekers treated, because voters have largely been cocooned in officially ordained blissful ignorance.

Full story at <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/23/ihms-revelations-bolster-the-legal-and-political-case-against-the-detention-of-asylum-seekers>

16. MEDIA RELEASE: Serco guards bashed by criminal deportees at Yongah Hill

Tuesday July 21, 2015
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

There has been a major clash between Serco guards and so-called criminal deportees (501s) in Hope Compound.

At least two bloodied guards were taken out of the compound as a result of the clash at around 12.30pm, Western Australia time.

The four compounds at the Yongah Hill detention centre have been locked down. Today's clash is just the latest with the 501s at Yongah Hill over the last few months. The problems have been made worse by the fact that immigration department no longer separates 501s from asylum seekers.

The result is that there have also been clashes between 501s and asylum seeker. Asylum seekers have routinely been assaulted; one Chinese asylum seeker was bashed by 501s as recently as two days ago.

One Yongah Hill asylum seeker told the Refugee Action Coalition, "We are not safe here and we are frightened to stay here. There is no use making a complaint to Serco -- they are unable to protect us."

"There are only around 80 asylum seekers being housed at Yongah Hill," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition, "There is no reason that asylum seekers cannot be housed safely. Indeed there is no reason for them to be there at all. Many are long-term detainees, one of them for over six years.

"The department lost control of Yongah Hill months ago. Moving 501s and detainees to Christmas Island has solved nothing.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

17. Brawl at Yongah Hill detention centre proves guards have lost control, refugee group says

ABC News Online
By Gian De Poloni
Posted Wed 22 Jul 2015, 5:40am

A brawl inside a Western Australian immigration detention centre, in which Serco guards were injured, shows the lack of control staff have over the facility, the Refugee Action Coalition has warned.

The fracas broke out in the Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre north-east of Perth on Tuesday when 50 detainees forced their way into an internal compound.

In a statement, the Australian Border Force (ABF) said a number of officers who responded to the disturbance were injured, and were being assessed by medical professionals.

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said the brawl showed staff were powerless to protect asylum seekers from violence.

"They no longer feel safe and they say very explicitly, if the Serco guards aren't safe inside the detention centre, how on earth can they be safe?" Mr Rintoul said.

"[Serco] clearly have got no control inside the detention centre.

"Something much more serious needs to be done to ensure that the asylum seekers are kept safely."

Serco would not respond to questions or comment on the injuries to its guards.

In a statement, Serco said keeping people safe was the group's first priority.

"We are supporting our staff, who acted immediately to de-escalate this incident," the statement said.

"They do an excellent job in what can often be difficult and challenging circumstances."

Concern over housing of criminals at centre

Mr Rintoul said calm in the centre had deteriorated since it also began housing convicted criminals facing deportation under section 501 of the Migration Act.

"Previously, the 501s were actually housed separately from the asylum seekers inside the detention centre but that's no longer the case," he said.

"You've got asylum seekers alongside 501s in the same compound, sometimes in the same room.

"You've got people from very, very different circumstances, and that has lead to clashes.

"Asylum seekers themselves have been asking for a long time to be separated from the 501s.

"They are a very different category to the asylum seekers, and Serco and the Immigration Department need to address that."

A spokesman said the ABF was committed to ensuring the safety of those in detention, and to maintaining the good order of its immigration detention centre.

"The ABF does not tolerate violent and aggressive behaviour in IDCs, and will take all appropriate steps to stamp out such activity when it occurs," the spokesman said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-22/yongah-hill-brawl-shows-guards-not-in-control-refugee-group-says/6638452>

18. Man charged with murder of asylum seeker Reza Barati granted bail

Refugees claim Joshua Kaluria, who was charged by Papua New Guinea authorities over death of the 23-year-old Iranian, threatened to go after eyewitnesses who gave statements to police

The Guardian
Australian Associated Press
Friday 24 July 2015 12.51 AEST

A Papua New Guinean man charged with the murder of asylum seeker Reza Barati has been granted bail in Papua New Guinea.

Joshua Kaluria was charged over the death of the 23-year-old Iranian man inside the Australian-run asylum seeker detention centre on Manus Island in February 2014.

Manus Island MP Ron Knight confirmed a local court had released Kaluria into the community.

Refugees in the transit centre on Manus Island have claimed Kaluria has made contact with them and threatened to go after eyewitnesses who gave statements to police. Two asylum seekers, who witnessed the bashing of Barati, have been granted refugee status but are refusing to leave the detention centre because they fear for their lives.

Knight said if anyone had complaints about Kaluria's conduct they should call the police and his bail could be revoked.

"People can be so stupid and do things like that," he said. "But I don't believe he should be doing that, I don't believe he did but if he has done that ... there should be an official complaint."

Kaluria led police on a five-month chase from Manus Island to the country's mainland and finally over the sea to Kimbe, the capital of West New Britain province before his arrest in August last year.

Another man Louie Efi has also been charged over Mr Barati's death and police are still looking for three more suspects – a PNG man and two others believed to be from Australia or New Zealand.

Comment has been sought from Peter Dutton, the Australian immigration minister.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/24/man-charged-with-of-asylum-seeker-reza-barati-granted-bail>

19. Man suspected of murdering asylum seeker Reza Barati walking free, source says

ABC News Online

By Papua New Guinea correspondent Liam Cochrane

Posted Fri 24 Jul 2015, 6:20pm

One of the men accused of beating an Iranian asylum seeker to death on Manus Island is walking free despite not being granted bail.

Salvation Army worker Joshua Kuluvia and security guard Louie Efi were arrested and charged with the murder of Reza Barati.

The attack happened inside the Australian-run immigration detention centre on Manus Island when guards and other staff attacked asylum seekers in February last year.

Kuluvia was arrested after a five-month manhunt and is awaiting trial.

However a source on Manus Island said the suspect had been seen walking free in the capital Lorengau.

"He was walking around Lorengau .. he was very relaxed," one source told the ABC.

Separately, Manus Island MP Ronnie Knight told Australian Associated Press that Kuluvia was out of prison and in the community.

Officials on the island said the court had not granted bail to the suspects.

"Both of them are remanded, there's no-one granted bail," said a court official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they do not have authority to speak to the media.

The murder case has twice been delayed because of a lack of legal representation for one of the suspects.

Manus Island's police chief confirmed the suspects should be locked up.

"The two guys are remanded and are not allowed bail," said provincial police commander Alex N'dranou.

"After the recent court hearing they've been moved back to the [police] lock up and they are still there, waiting for the September hearing," he said.

The provincial police boss dismissed the reports of the two suspects roaming free as "speculation".

However, the ABC understands that in the past inmates at the provincial prison sometimes left detention during the day and returned to their cells at night.

In January, when some asylum seekers were detained without charge at the Manus Island police station cells for protesting, the ABC witnessed several of them walking in and out of large holes in the fence.

While security may be lax, Manus Island is a remote island province, located 800 kilometres from PNG's capital Port Moresby.

The immigration detention centre on the island is part of Australia's policy of processing asylum claims offshore to discourage dangerous boat journeys to the Australian mainland.

Since the policy was announced two years ago, boat arrivals have dramatically decreased. Several dozen asylum seekers on Manus Island have been granted refugee status but none have been resettled permanently in PNG.

A further 1,000 male asylum seekers remain in immigration detention on Manus Island.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-24/manus-island-murder-suspect-walking-free-source-says/6647126>

20. Afghan fears he will be killed by Taliban if sent back from Australia, Peter Dutton urged to intervene

ABC Radio CAF - The World Today
By Angela Lavoipierre
Posted Wed 22 Jul 2015, 12:42pm

A group of prominent Australians, including five federal MPs, is urging Immigration Minister Peter Dutton to reconsider sending an asylum seeker back to Afghanistan.

Hazara man Nadir Sadiqi arrived in Australia on a boat in 2010 and has been living in the Brisbane community for almost three years.

He is due to be deported early next month, despite his claims that he will certainly be killed by the Taliban.

A letter to Mr Dutton, given exclusively to the ABC, pleads for the minister to intervene.

Mr Sadiqi is anxiously counting the days until August 6, 2015 when his current bridging visa runs out.

"If I am sent back to Afghanistan, certainly I will be killed by the Taliban or the extremists," Mr Sadiqi said.

Already tortured by Taliban, father killed

He believes he will be killed because he said he has already been tortured by the Taliban and his family members have been killed and also kidnapped.

"My father was killed by them and my two brothers kidnapped by them," he said.

"Also, I have received a tweet and a message from them through Facebook saying if I am sent back to Afghanistan, I will be killed by them."

Mr Sadiqi said the message he received on Facebook from a member of the Taliban contained a threat of beheading.

It came after the Immigration Department mistakenly published the private details of thousands of asylum seekers online last year.

He believes the threat from the Taliban came as a result of that leak.

Refugee advocate Terry Boyce said his claim is being considered in the legal battle for Mr Sadiqi to remain in Australia.

"On May 6th, Nadir got a letter from the Immigration Department advising that the minister had issued him a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) under the new legislation and an E-bridging visa until August 6th," he said.

While a new visa may sound like a reprieve, Mr Boyce said it has been bad news in Mr Sadiqi's case.

"The effect of that, legally, was that any appeals in process will not proceed and Nadir needed to make arrangements to leave the country by August 6th," Mr Boyce said.

Online petition generated to approve visa

The Government is still assessing the extent to which Mr Sadiqi and other asylum seekers were affected by the data breach.

His lawyer is currently seeking an undertaking from Mr Dutton that he will not deport Mr Sadiqi until that decision has been handed down.

An online petition urging Mr Dutton to approve Mr Sadiqi's application for permanent protection in Australia has attracted more than 59,000 supporters.

In the next few days, Mr Dutton will receive a letter also aimed to grant permanent protection to Mr Sadiqi.

It will be signed by 25 prominent Australians, including Labor's Anna Burke, Melissa Parke, and Claire Moore, as well as Richard Di Natale and Larissa Waters from the Greens.

Human rights barrister Julian Burnside has also added his name.

"Australians get very upset when they see asylum seekers dying in boats, but we should be equally distressed at the idea that refugees who reach safety in Australia are then sent back to their deaths in the places they have fled," Mr Burnside said.

"That is just as bad as people drowning at sea.

"They're just as dead as if they'd drowned and yet their deaths are caused by us."

Mr Sadiqi said he is grateful for this support but he is pessimistic about his chances.

"I'm completely hopeless. I think the Government is going to send me back to Afghanistan," he said.

"That's why I'm very worried and also, I'm very depressed."

A statement from Mr Dutton's office said the department is currently reconsidering Mr Sadiqi's claims.

It also said Australia does not return asylum seekers to their countries of origin until all claims for protection have been fully considered.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-22/afghan-refugee-due-deported-fears-for-life-taliban-threats/6639766>

21. Wilson Security apologises to Sarah Hanson-Young for spying

Security firm Wilson Security apologises to Sarah Hanson-Young after Greens senator was spied on during Nauru visit

Sydney Morning Herald / AAP
July 20, 2015 - 12:55PM

A security firm has apologised to Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young for spying on her while she was visiting an immigration detention centre in Nauru in 2013.

Fairfax Media reported in June that private security guards took the extraordinary step of running a secret surveillance operation on the Senator during a four-day visit to Nauru.

Senator Hanson-Young was given the code name the "Raven" when at least one Wilson Security guard, acting without authority, kept her activities under surveillance at a hotel and outside the centre.

At the time Immigration Minister Peter Dutton dismissed claims that she was spied on and called her "an embarrassment to our country".

Wilson security executive manager John Rogers offered an unreserved apology to the Senator during a Senate inquiry hearing on Monday and condemned the "isolated actions of a misguided individual".

Detention centre operator Transfield services also offered an apology.

"It was extremely regretful," senior company executive Kate Munnings said.

Ms Munnings said it was usual corporate practice to have code names to protect the privacy of projects with high levels of confidentiality.

She maintained the raven code name was the decision of an individual who went rogue but insisted the actions were in the interest of the Senator's security.

The staffer lost their job and was subject to disciplinary action, the inquiry was told.

Ms Munnings repeatedly declined to confirm whether Transfield staffers were present at security meetings when the senator's itinerary was discussed before her arrival.

Senator Hanson-Young, a prominent critic of offshore detention and the major parties' asylum seeker policies, made the official visit to Nauru for four days in December 2013 with her then chief of staff.

The Greens senator questioned why she was not informed of the spying incident in a timely manner.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/security-firm-wilson-security-apologises-to-sarah-hansonyoung-after-greens-senator-was-spied-on-during-nauru-visit-20150720-gig6n1.html>

22. Nauru detention centre operator Transfield Services apologises for surveillance of Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young

ABC News Online

By political reporter Anna Henderson

Posted Mon 20 Jul 2015, 3:30pm

The company running the detention centre on Nauru, Transfield Services, has apologised after a security contractor conducted secret surveillance of Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young.

In June the Immigration Department confirmed a contractor had been disciplined over the spying incident in December 2013.

The Wilson Security supervisor was disciplined for tailing Senator Hanson-Young's car after she left Australia's immigration detention facilities on the Pacific island.

Transfield has been giving evidence about conditions on Nauru during a Senate inquiry in Canberra.

Senior executive Kate Munnings was questioned over reports Senator Hanson-Young was the subject of secret surveillance at her hotel, in her car and at other places outside the detention centre.

"It was extremely regretful and on behalf of Transfield, I apologise that this has occurred," Ms Munnings said.

Senator Hanson-Young questioned the length of time taken to provide an apology.

"Why wasn't I told while I was on the island?" she asked.

Ms Munnings said the individuals involved were acting in the interests of Senator Hanson-Young's safety.

Senator Hanson-Young was also given the codename "Raven".

"What's with the bird names?" fellow Greens senator Scott Ludlam asked.

"Project Swan, Project Cygnet, Project Duckling, is that just part of the corporate culture?"

Ms Munnings said it was usual corporate practice to have codenames to protect the identity of projects being discussed.

"They mean very little other than to protect the privacy of the project that's being discussed," she said.

Ms Munnings said it was not usual to attach codenames to people.

"It was the decision of an individual who acted outside his authority and disciplinary action was taken," she said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-20/transfield-apologises-for-surveillance-of-hanson-young-on-nauru/6634716>

23. Nauru abuse: No staff charged despite 30 allegations of asylum seekers being abused

Sydney Morning Herald

July 20, 2015 - 11:55AM

Nicole Hasham

Not a single staff member accused of abusing a child asylum seeker at Nauru has been charged for an offence and the centre's operator cannot guarantee the safety of the detainees, a Senate inquiry has heard.

It also emerged on Monday that on-the-job staff drug testing is not conducted at Nauru, despite allegations of guards trading marijuana for sexual favours from female detainees.

Transfield Services, which runs the detention centre at Nauru, says there have been 67 child abuse allegations at the facility - 30 against staff and 37 against asylum seekers.

The allegations against staff relate to all service providers including Transfield, Wilson Security, the Salvation Army and Save The Children.

As Fairfax Media reported on Friday, allegations against staff include that a security officer used "excessive force" to remove a minor from a bus, and that staff pushed or threw rocks at child asylum seekers, or touched them inappropriately.

Transfield Services Commercial & Strategy Manager Erin O'Sullivan said of the 67 allegations, 12 were referred to police. Six staff members were dismissed, two were removed from the site and one was suspended. Ms O'Sullivan said she was not aware of a staff member being charged over any allegation.

A Transfield director, Angela Williams, could also not guarantee that the staff members had been permanently dismissed from the centre, saying they may have been reassigned to a different section or stood down pending investigation.

Transfield Services said the definition of child abuse was broad, and included children fighting and inappropriate discipline within families, as well as alleged abuse by staff.

The company is being paid \$1.2 billion over 20 months to run detention facilities at Nauru and Manus Island as part of the controversial offshore processing regime instigated by the former Labor government.

The contract expires at the end of October and Transfield Services is seeking its renewal.

Labor senator Kim Carr asked how the firm reconciled the serious allegations of abuse at Nauru with its commitment to upholding human rights at the facility.

The independent Moss review into sexual abuse at the Nauru detention centre found evidence of rape, sexual assault of minors and guards trading marijuana for sexual favours from female detainees

Transfield Services told the hearing in Canberra that while random alcohol testing of staff took place daily, on-the-job drug testing "can't be done" because of limited pathology services on the island.

Transfield's operations chief executive Kate Munnings said "behavioural indicators" and other measures were used to manage the risk of drug use among staff.

Ms Munnings said it takes its human right obligations seriously and staff "hold paramount" the safety of asylum seekers, and the company acted "decisively and appropriately" when allegations were made.

She refused to guarantee the safety of all detainees when prompted, saying the company worked with all stakeholders to ensure care and welfare was provided.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young sought detail on 402 instances of Transfield Services employees who had been dismissed at Nauru and Manus Island.

Ms Munnings said this included staff who abandoned their role by not turning up for work.

She was unable to say how many were dismissed for being intoxicated, despite Transfield having a strict drug and alcohol policy.

Labor senator Alex Gallacher accused Transfield of avoiding giving detailed answers to the inquiry.

Senator Hanson-Young raised concerns over a child who was allegedly abused by a staff member at Nauru in 2013, but remained in the centre. She said after the alleged offender was fired, the child suffered further abuse and humiliation as "retribution" from other staff.

Transfield Services said the Immigration Department was responsible for the decision to leave the child in detention.

The inquiry heard facilities at Nauru were initially "rudimentary", resulting in electricity outages and water shortages.

Transfield official Daron White, who manages logistics and facilities at the centre, said the provision of adequate water had been "challenging".

In the early days of the detention centre, 450,000 litres of water were available each day for asylum seekers and workers, Mr White said. This is despite about 1200 asylum seekers using up to 300 litres of water per person per day – or 360,000 litres - on top of the 1500 workers on the island who required water supplies.

This led to water rationing, two-minute shower rules and workers being instructed to skip showers to leave sufficient supplies for asylum seekers.

There have been allegations that a local officer gave additional shower time if an asylum seeker exposed themselves.

Earlier information supplied to the inquiry by Transfield Services revealed there had not been a single call to the whistleblower hotline set up for staff to make complains or report abuse.

On Monday Ms Munnings said there had since been two calls to the hotline.

Senator Hanson-Young questioned how well the hotline was promoted to staff, and suggested it was not operating effectively.

Transfield Services told the inquiry the hotline was advertised to staff, who were made aware of it during job inductions.

Staff could also report abuse to their managers, security or through other means, Ms Williams said.

Senator Carr suggested low use of the hotline reflected a lack of confidence in protections for whistleblowers.

Ms Munnings said it showed the "quality and capability of management" that staff did not feel the need to raise matters through the hotline.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/nauru-child-abuse-claims-no-staff-charged-despite-30-allegations-of-asylum-seekers-being-abused-20150720-gig2fu.html>

24. Sanitary products handed out by male guards, asylum seekers given ill-fitting clothing on Nauru, Senate inquiry hears

Sydney Morning Herald
July 20, 2015 - 4:24PM
Nicole Hasham
- with Sarah Whyte

Female asylum seekers on Nauru were denied easy access to sanitary pads for "security reasons", an elderly female detainee was given pink "hot pants" to wear as shorts and detainees were referred to by number, not name, according to evidence by former detention centre workers at a Senate inquiry on Monday.

Former Save the Children worker Natasha Blucher was among a group of charity workers removed from Nauru amid now-debunked claims that they encouraged detainees to harm themselves. She was joined at the inquiry by a colleague, Samantha Betts, who was not involved in those allegations.

At a hearing in Canberra, Ms Betts said child detainees were "directly exposed" to other detainees who had stapled their lips together, attempted suicide by hanging and women who had attempted to terminate pregnancies through starvation.

"I know this because the children told me. Most of the children would tell us in a panicked ... way," she said.

Ms Betts said sanitary products were provided to women who were menstruating on an "as needed" basis and women were made to routinely ask male guards for the items each time they went to the toilet.

After questioning the practice, Ms Betts said she was told by guards it was necessary for "security reasons", because sanitary pads were allegedly soaked in gasoline during 2013 riots at the centre.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young told the inquiry there were no female detainees at the centre during those riots.

The former detention centre workers told the inquiry that detainees, including pregnant women and children, were often provided with ill-fitting clothes.

She said children were forced to secure their clothes with hair ties "so their shorts didn't fall down".

Ms Betts said during her nine month stint at the facility, which ended in June last year, the clothing situation was "horrendous".

"There were children where their parents actually had to cut holes in their sneakers because their feet were growing too much and their shoes were too small," she said.

"Children would often ask us to help fix their thongs which we tried to do on several occasions ... with bread ties and bits of string."

She said ground cover at the centre was predominantly sharp gravel.

Ms Blucher said a case worker "once came into a tent holding a pair of pink hotpants, that had been provided to an elderly Burmese client of hers as shorts".

She said detainees were routinely referred to by their boat identification numbers, rather than their names.

Upon questioning this, she was told by security staff "we can't remember the names, all our paperwork only contains numbers".

The Save the Children workers were ordered off the island after former immigration minister Scott Morrison jumped on claims in an Wilson Security intelligence report that they coached detainees to self-harm and encouraged protests to embarrass the Abbott government.

The organisation strongly rejected the claims and the independent Moss review later found no evidence of the allegations.

Ms Blucher said she and her colleagues frequently tried to talk detainees out of committing self-harm, adding that claims to the contrary were "beyond comprehension".

The inquiry also heard evidence from Geoffrey Eames QC, who was Nauru's chief justice for three years. He resigned in March last year, saying he could not be assured that the Nauruan government would respect the judiciary's independence.

Mr Eames said he was told by a detention centre staff member that Mr Morrison instructed workers that "hard walls" should not be installed on Nauru because asylum seekers could then request air conditioning.

The hearing continues.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/sanitary-products-handed-out-by-male-guards-asylum-seekers-given-illfitting-clothing-on-nauru-senate-inquiry-hears-20150720-gigf1o.html>

25. MEDIA RELEASE: Two suicide attempts highlight Nauru inaction on sexual assault

Friday July 24, 2015
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

The mother and brother of a 23 year-old Iranian woman, who was viciously sexually assaulted and bashed two months ago on Nauru, attempted suicide last night on Nauru.

Controversy has surrounded the assault and the treatment of the family since the attack in May.

Initially the immigration department and the Nauruan police denied the sexual assault had taken place. It took three days for the Australian and Nauruan authorities to admit that the assault had taken place.

The woman, her brother and mother, have been held incommunicado in the staff accommodation area, formerly the original detention area, called OPC 1, since the woman was assaulted.

It is understood from refugees on Nauru, that the attempted suicides were precipitated by anger and frustration with the on-going treatment and isolation of the family, and in particular the separation of the victim from her mother and brother.

One refugee told the Refugee Action Coalition last night (Thursday night) that, "The family needs help. No-one knows what is happening to our friend and her family. No-one can talk to them."

The attempted suicides come at a time of escalating sexual assaults alongside inaction and indifference by police and authorities on Nauru. The escalating number and impunity associated with the assaults has created a climate of fear on Nauru.

Somali women at the Ewa refugee camp on Nauru have become the latest victims of what are becoming regular assaults. Last week, one Somali woman was threatened by three masked men armed with a knife.

Last night (Thursday night) police were called to Ewa when men approached the accommodation huts of the single women.

"Nauru is unsafe. The asylum seekers and refugees must be brought to the mainland," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"The Moss review and the Senate enquiry have revealed the scale of sexual and physical abuse against women and children in detention.

"Female refugees are being terrorised. Many of them have fled such abuse from their home countries only to find they are the victims of sexual crimes on Nauru.

"Some refugee women are so terrorised they have appealed to be placed back into detention.

"There must be an independent inquiry into the cover-up and continuing mistreatment of the victim of the May assault.

"Former Ministers and the Australian government has tried to cover up the assault and abuse that is endemic on Nauru. That is the main reason the Coalition government introduced the Border Force Act. That secrecy has led to a situation in which sexual assault happens on Nauru with impunity. The Australian government is complicit in the reign of terror on Nauru."

For more information, contact Ian Rintoul mob 0417 275 713

26. Suspected asylum seeker vessel heading for Dampier off WA's North West coast

ABC News Online

First posted Mon 20 Jul 2015, 9:38am

Updated Mon 20 Jul 2015, 3:39pm

A suspected asylum seeker boat has been spotted off Dampier in Western Australia's North West region.

A Federal Government source has confirmed to the ABC a boat was sighted and will be intercepted.

The ABC understands the boat could be carrying asylum seekers from Vietnam.

A spokesperson for oil and gas company Modec confirmed crew members on one of their tankers off Dampier sighted what appeared to be an asylum seeker boat at first light this morning.

Numbers could not be confirmed but the spokesperson said those onboard appeared to be in good health.

The ABC understands the North West-based police boat Delphinus has been deployed to search for the suspected asylum seeker boat.

The police vessel had been involved in the search for three missing fishermen and their vessel off the Dampier coast until this morning.

Police have been told the suspected asylum seeker boat was believed to be about 70 kilometres offshore.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) said it could not comment on the sighting.

A spokesperson for Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Peter Dutton said the Government did not comment on operational matters.

The Greens have criticised the level of government secrecy surrounding the boat's arrival.

"There's no justification for the minister and the department to keep the Australian people and the Australian Parliament in the dark," Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said.

"Be upfront about what has occurred here, and just have the guts to tell the Australian people what indeed is going on at our borders."

WA Premier Colin Barnett said he believed West Australian police were "looking after the situation" until a Commonwealth naval vessel arrived.

"This boat while I think it's approaching our coast is still well offshore and it's under surveillance," he said. "So the situation is in order. "I think the Abbott Government is doing an enormous amount and has stopped the arrival of boats."

It is almost two years to the day since an asylum seeker vessel arrived at a floating oil platform 200 kilometres off Dampier with 17 people from Vietnam on board.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-20/asylum-seeker-vessel-dampier/6633146>

27. Suspected asylum seeker boat spotted near the coast of Western Australia

The vessel was sighted off Dampier by the crew of an oil tanker on Monday morning and the passengers were reported to be 'healthy and in high spirits'

The Guardian

Calla Wahlquist

Monday 20 July 2015 12.54 AEST

A small boat believed to be carrying asylum seekers has been spotted near the coast of Western Australia.

The boat was sighted around dawn on Monday by the crew of an oil tanker near Dampier on the Pilbara coast, about 1,500km north of Perth.

The tanker was monitoring an oil rig operated by engineering company Modec on the north-west shelf, about 78 nautical miles, or 145km, from the coast. Gary Kennedy, Modec's operations manager in Australia, told Guardian Australia that the crew of the tanker noticed the small boat when it went inside the 500 metre exclusion zone around the oil rig.

"I can't confirm that it was a refugee boat, but there were a number of people on board," Kennedy said.

"From looking at the vessel the people seemed to be in good health and high spirits."

Kennedy said the tanker's crew contacted the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), which was sending a search plane to check on the boat.

He said the crew of the oil tanker had not made contact with the boat, which he said appeared to be in good condition.

The ABC is reporting that a WA police boat has been diverted from a search for three missing fishermen on the Dampier Peninsula to head toward the suspected asylum seeker vessel.

AMSA said it was not authorised to comment on the incident, and referred calls to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. A spokeswoman for the immigration minister, Peter Dutton, said it did not comment on operational matters.

In 2013, the crew of the same oil and gas rig spotted a boat carrying 17 Vietnamese asylum seekers. According to reports at the time, the passengers were the last group of asylum seekers to be processed on Christmas Island before the Rudd government implemented its Papua New Guinea solution.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/20/suspected-asylum-seeker-boat-spotted-near-the-coast-of-western-australia>

28. Government refuses to comment on reports of asylum seeker boat off Western Australia

Sydney Morning Herald
July 20, 2015 - 1:17PM
Nicole Hasham

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has refused to confirm reports that a suspected asylum seeker boat has been spotted off the coast of Western Australia.

The ABC said floating mining supply company Modec confirmed that staff sighted what appears to be an asylum seeker boat off Dampier, and those on board appeared to be in good health

There is speculation the boat contains Vietnamese asylum seekers.

A spokesman for the Dampier Seafarers Centre told Fairfax Media he believed an asylum seeker boat was sighted by crew on the Modec Venture MV11 structure, about 90 kilometres off the coast. He said there were conflicting reports the boat was either moored to the structure, or floating nearby.

He said the centre's chaplain, Ian McGilvray, was speaking to customs officials about providing assistance.

"[Reverend McGilvray] does ship visitations, he's speaking with customs at the moment to try and confirm some details," the spokesman said.

"[The suspected asylum seekers] have just been on long voyage, very dangerous. [Reverend McGilvray] likes to get out there and have a chat with people and see how they are going."

The spokesman said reports of the boat's arrival began filtering in early on Monday morning.

Asked about the suspected boat arrival, a Western Australian police media spokesman said he was "not in a position to confirm what resources we're putting into it".

"It's not actually our job, we're assisting the [Australian] Border Force," he said.

The ABC reports it is understood the police boat Delphinus has been deployed to search for the suspected asylum seeker boat.

The Modec Venture MV11 operation is run by energy giant Santos. A Santos spokeswoman said Modec was a contractor, but would not comment on the boat reports, instead referring all inquiries to the Australian Border Force.

The Australian Border Force referred inquiries to Mr Dutton's office. A spokeswoman for the minister said "we do not comment on operational matters".

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority also refused to comment, referring inquiries to the ABF.

The Abbott government claims its tough stance on asylum seekers is responsible for "stopping the boats".

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/government-refuses-to-comment-on-reports-of-asylum-seeker-boat-off-western-australia-20150720-gig529.html>

29. MEDIA RELEASE: No Turnbacks: Let the Vietnamese asylum seekers land

Tuesday July 21, 2015
Refugee Action Coalition
Ian Rintoul
mobile 0417 275 713

The Refugee Action Coalition has called on the Coalition government to bring the Vietnamese asylum seekers off Dampier to shore and allow them to make protection applications.

"We know from past actions, the government will likely attempt to return the asylum seekers to Vietnam," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

Forty-six Vietnamese asylum seekers were intercepted and returned to Vietnam in April. There are reports that the adults were detained and questioned. Some men are reported to still be in prison, and some children are not allowed to attend school.

Some of 41 asylum seekers screened out and sent back to Sri Lanka in July 2014 have been found to be refugees after fleeing to other countries. Some of the 41 remain in jail.

"Our concern is that the government will screen-out these asylum seekers and deny them the right to have their asylum claims properly considered. The secrecy that the government seeks to impose on so-called 'operational matters' is designed to prevent scrutiny of the abuse of asylum seekers' human rights. Some asylum seekers have previously been held captive on customs boats for a month before finally being returned. The government has no respect for human rights," said Ian Rintoul.

"In this kind of turnback situation, the asylum seekers are being directly handed to those they are fleeing from. It is a complete violation of their rights and international law."

"We are also calling on the Federal Labor party to clearly state where it stands on such turnbacks," said Rintoul.

"Labor should clearly oppose such turnbacks, but recent comments from Opposition Immigration spokesperson, Richard Marles have indicated Labor leaders intend to continue the Coalition's turnback policy; something expected to be discussed at Labor's national conference on the weekend. Marles owes it to Labor members and asylum seekers to say whether Labor would intercept and return asylum boats."

For more information, contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713

30. Anthony Albanese voted against boat turn-backs because 'I couldn't ask someone else to do something that I couldn't'

ABC News Online
By political reporter Jane Norman
First posted Sun 26 Jul 2015, 11:04am
Updated Sun 26 Jul 2015, 11:21am

Labor frontbencher Anthony Albanese says he voted against his leader's plan on boat turn-backs because he himself could not turn back an asylum seeker boat at sea.

But Mr Albanese believes the party's chances of winning the next federal election have been enhanced after yesterday's passionate and emotional debate over the policy at the ALP National Conference.

Delegates rejected a motion from the party's Left to prevent Opposition Leader Bill Shorten from adopting the turn-back policy.

"I couldn't ask someone else to do something that I couldn't see myself doing," Mr Albanese told Insiders.

"If people were in a boat including families and children, I myself couldn't turn that around."

Mr Shorten said a future Labor government would adopt the boat turn-back policy but he also vowed to nearly double Australia's refugee intake to 27,000, improve conditions at offshore detention centres and give more money to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to support its work in the region.

Opening the final day of the conference, Mr Shorten said he could not be prouder of Labor after yesterday's debate which highlighted the divisions in the party over the turn-back policy.

"It was respectful, it was passionate, it was open and I'm not sure that the objectors intended to do this, but as our great party does, we don't mind disagreeing with each other, but we're not going to let anyone else tell us how to disagree," he said.

"We won't let anyone outside damage us."

Mr Albanese said his party now had a "comprehensive" solution to the asylum seeker problem and does not believe a future Labor government will need to turn back any boats at sea.

"I don't believe [turn-backs] will start," he said.

"Everyone in Labor wants to make sure there aren't turn-backs because there aren't boats."

The Federal Government is not convinced by Labor's policy shift and maintains it cannot be trusted when it comes to border protection.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said Mr Shorten's "dodgy deal" on boat turn-backs was "anything but a policy".

"What Mr Shorten is proposing here is basically a white flag to say that if the Labor Party was re-elected at the next election, if they went into government at the next election, there would be hundreds of thousands of people arriving illegally by boat," he said.

Mr Albanese rejected that and said he believes Labor will go to the next election in a strong position.

"I think our position has been enhanced in terms of winning the election as a result of this conference," he said.

Labor deputy leader Tanya Plibersek and frontbencher Penny Wong also voted with the left, to ban boat turn-backs, although their votes were lodged via a proxy.

Ms Plibersek defended her decision to vote by proxy, saying it was standard practice.

"Well my vote was exercised by proxy delegate, it's absolutely standard procedure at [the] ALP conference and I think it's extraordinary that people are focusing on this process," she said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-26/anthony-albanese-vote-against-labor-policy-asylum-boat-turn-back/6648810>

31. Suspected asylum seeker boat 'unlikely to dock' after interception, WA water police say

By Charlotte Hamlyn

First posted Tue 21 Jul 2015, 3:32am

Updated Tue 21 Jul 2015, 5:28am

Police assisting in the interception of a suspected asylum seeker boat off WA's north-west coast have refused to comment on the boat's whereabouts or the fate of those on board after returning to port.

The boat, carrying what are believed to be Vietnamese asylum seekers, was spotted by crew members on an oil tanker at first light on Monday morning about 70 kilometres offshore.

Numbers could not be confirmed but those onboard appeared to be in good health, a spokesperson for oil and gas company Modec said yesterday.

Water police were called in to help locate the boat and the ABC understands an Australian Navy vessel followed later.

Police who returned to the Dampier port overnight would not comment on the operation to intercept the vessel, other than to say the boat was unlikely to dock at the port and that police would have no further involvement.

A spokesperson for Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Peter Dutton said the Government did not comment on operational matters.

Yesterday, the Greens criticised the level of government secrecy surrounding the boat's arrival.

"There's no justification for the minister and the department to keep the Australian people and the Australian Parliament in the dark," Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young said.

"Be upfront about what has occurred here, and just have the guts to tell the Australian people what indeed is going on at our borders."

On Monday WA Premier Colin Barnett said he believed West Australian police were "looking after the situation" until a Commonwealth naval vessel arrived.

"This boat while I think it's approaching our coast is still well offshore and it's under surveillance," he said.

"So the situation is in order.

"I think the Abbott Government is doing an enormous amount and has stopped the arrival of boats."

It is almost two years to the day since an asylum seeker vessel arrived at a floating oil platform 200 kilometres off Dampier with 17 people from Vietnam on board.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-21/suspected-asylum-seeker-boat-intercepted-by-wa-police/6635342>

32. New images show asylum seekers onboard boat off WA's North West coast

ABC News Online

First posted Fri 24 Jul 2015, 8:51pm

Updated Fri 24 Jul 2015, 9:36pm

New pictures have emerged of the asylum seeker boat that was discovered off Western Australia's North West coast earlier this week.

The boat was first spotted by crew members on an oil tanker on Monday morning, about 150 kilometres from Dampier.

The pictures, obtained by the ABC, show people inside the vessel.

Water police were called in to help locate the boat, followed by a Navy ship.

The boat was not brought in to dock at Dampier port and the Federal Government has refused to provide any details, citing operational reasons.

A Vietnamese advocacy group said earlier this week that it was worried the Government would unfairly dismiss the refugee claims of the asylum seekers.

VOICE said it believed up to 30 of the people on the boat were fishermen caught up in a territorial dispute between Vietnam and China.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-24/new-images-emerge-of-asylum-seeker-boat-found-off-wa/6647180>

33. Details about asylum seeker turnbacks to remain secret, commissioner rules

Information commissioner rules releasing custom vessel logs, emails and cables about turnback operations could have 'adverse effect' on border protection

The Guardian

Paul Farrell

Monday 20 July 2015 14.58 AEST

Australia's information commissioner has ruled that custom vessel logs, emails and cables about asylum seeker turnback operations at sea should remain secret.

The information commissioner, Professor John McMillan, ruled that requests for watch officer logs and authorisations for turnbacks were exempt from release because they could have a "substantial adverse effect" on the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS).

Guardian Australia sought access under freedom of information laws to the documents from all asylum seeker turnback operations between November 2013 and February 2014.

During this period a number of turnback operations occurred, including at least one that led to Australian vessels breaching Indonesian waters. Four watch logs were identified within scope, along with another 11 documents that were internal requests, cables, briefing papers and emails relating to turnback operations.

The ruling comes amid a sighting of what is believed to be an asylum-seeker vessel off the Western Australian coast.

McMillan ruled all 14 of the logs should be exempt in full on the grounds their release could have a "substantial adverse effect" on customs and would also likely have been exempt on national security grounds.

McMillan wrote in the decision: "I am satisfied from my own inspection of the documents (particularly the watch logs) that the claims, taken together, are reasonably based and genuine. They support the ACBPS claim that disclosure could reasonably be expected to have a substantial adverse effect on its operations."

Even if the documents were found to have a substantial adverse effect on customs, they could still have been released if the public interest factors were strong enough.

In a decision likely to be seen as controversial, McMillan suggested that any assessment of public interest in the release of the documents should be considered in the context of the federal government's border protection policies.

"This public interest balancing process must be undertaken in a context which accepts that the elected government has implemented a border control program of which the ACBPS operations are a part. While there is strong public and political debate about that program, it is not part of the IC review function to join that debate.

"In that context, I give greater weight in this balancing process to the factors against disclosure. There are reasonable grounds for finding that disclosure of documents 1-14 and segments of document 15 could frustrate the enforced turnback operations."

The decision will likely be seen as a victory for the federal government and lend legitimacy to its policy of secrecy surrounding asylum-seeker vessels.

Customs was also permitted to lodge submissions that have been hidden from Guardian Australia. Those submissions, made in February 2015, contain what McMillan described as an example of how disclosure of the information could be affected.

"Generally, the annex explained how a third party could use information about matters such as radar surveillance, vessel speed, communication between vessels, the identity of vessels, the timing of operations, authorisations and turnback procedures. I decided it was appropriate to accept that information on a confidential basis and not invite a further submission from the applicant."

In submissions to the office of the Australian information commissioner (OAIC), customs amended their claims about the initial exemptions and also later relied on the national security exemption that prohibits disclosure of information about the security of the commonwealth.

Although McMillan did not rule on this point because the documents were already found to be exempt under the substantial adverse effect exemption, he outlined that "the reasoning that supports that exemption claim could equally apply" to the national security claim. McMillan found that one document, which is a framework analysis of considerations for turnbacks, was not an exempt document and should be made public.

The 10-page document "contains a framework analysis of considerations that are relevant to enforced turnback operations, including the legal basis for operations, the operational objective, procedures to be followed, decision-making, and managing the response and conduct of boat occupants".

He wrote: "Release of this discussion would add to public understanding of how a difficult and sensitive function is discharged within government. Indeed, at least some of the content matches information that already forms part of public discussion of border control issues."

The decision is likely one of McMillan's last in his current role before he moves to become acting New South Wales ombudsman. The privacy commissioner, Timothy Pilgrim, has been appointed acting information commissioner. The federal government announced in 2014 the OAIC was to be abolished, but has been unable to pass a bill without the support of Labor and key independent senators.

Guardian Australia is considering whether it will appeal the decision.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/20/details-about-asylum-seeker-turnbacks-to-remain-secret-commissioner-rules>

34. Orange asylum seeker life rafts returned from water to Border Force storage yard in Darwin

ABC News Online

By the National Reporting Team's Kate Wild

Posted Wed 22 Jul 2015, 2:58pm

Two orange life boats of the type used by Australian Border Force for asylum seeker turn backs have been returned on the back of semi-trailers to a storage yard in Darwin.

The boats were off-loaded by crane at the boatyard in Darwin's light industrial area alongside another 10 boats that were covered with tarpaulins.

A member of the public who spotted the boats on the trucks said they appeared worn and had barnacles on them.

Local fisherman have speculated for some time about the orange rafts since they appeared in the Immigration and Border Protection service yards late last year.

A spokesperson for Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said the Australian Border Force used a "variety of vessels to prepare for and perform its maritime tasks".

The spokesperson would not disclose details about operational activity or the location of its assets.

Wooden boats on the move too?

It was reported in March that the Federal Government had built Indonesian wooden fishing boats under commission to replace the orange life rafts and the vessels have been regularly spotted by locals in Darwin Harbour undergoing maintenance.

The fishing boats built by Dragon Industries Asia for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, are being stored at Spot On Marine in Darwin.

The Federal Government confirmed last year it purchased orange life rafts identical to the ones seen by the ABC, for the purpose of pushing asylum seekers out of Australian waters, but in a seaworthy vessel.

The first turn back using an orange life raft is reported to have happened in January 2014.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-22/orange-asylum-seeker-life-rafts-spotted-in-darwin/6640568>