* **How would you describe the immigration detention facility? Are there fences, checkpoints and mechanisms that limit the movement of children?**
* **Is there access to a natural environment for children?**
* **Is there private space for children and families for living and sleeping?**
* **Is the immigration detention facility a clean and pleasant environment?**
* **In your view, what is the impact of detention on children? Describe your response to the conditions of detention for children.**

The facilities on Manus Island for asylum seekers during the period that I worked there could be described as 'makeshift'. All children lived in the fenced in 'foxtrot' or family compound. One side of the compound shared a fence with the Single Adult Male (SAM) compound and although there was a gap between these two compounds, people in each could see and hear each other.

In order to travel from outside the centre to inside the family compound, staff went through two checkpoints. At the main gate (external), we gave our name, organisation, and the time we arrived. We also had to show an ID card. This took us into the staff compound. Another checkpoint (internal) then led to the family compound and this was also guarded by G4S security personnel who took our name, organisation, time of arrival/departure and scanned us for electronic devices such as mobile phones which we had to surrender before entering. Children and families were not allowed to travel out of their compound without prior permission (for example, this might be obtained for medical appointments) and they were always accompanied by G4S security when leaving the compound.

From the compound the children could see the ocean (the beach was meters away) but they could not play on the beach or in the water because of the fencing and this upset them at times because it was very hot. The ground in the compound was concrete in some places and a mixture of dirt and crushed coral in others. This made it hard for children to play as if they fell over, they would be cut by sharp coral. It also often became very muddy and swampy because of the frequent heavy rain. Children were sometimes taken to a separate grassy area where they could play sport but this was limited as the Single Adult Men (called SAMs) were also scheduled at times to play sport there. Children and SAMs were never scheduled to play in this area at the same time. Also, during the middle of the day, it was extremely hot and humid and therefore not suitable weather for children to be playing sport.

Children and families slept in small block like buildings with little privacy. Their accommodation was not air-conditioned and became unbearably hot. I had been living in PNG prior to my time on Manus, in a house without air-conditioning and although I was able to cope, I had a spacious, airy house with many fly-screened windows and fans. My house was also raised off the ground so that it caught the breeze and had fewer mosquitos. This is how local people manage the heat. The accommodation for families on Manus was cramped, low to the ground, with small windows and each ‘room’ was directly next to another. Because it was too hard to sleep in such conditions, some of the teenagers slept on cot beds in the outdoor corridors, near the only available fans. I worried that this made them more likely to be bitten by disease carrying mosquitos and meant they had no privacy or protection from others as they slept.

For families who did sleep in their ‘rooms’ parents had no privacy from their children and in order to have privacy from other families, they would need to close up their rooms, exacerbating the heat.

Families were also frustrated by the lack of privacy as they tried to live as close to a normal life as possible. In some families, the mothers liked to take the ID cards of all their family members, go to the dining hall (or ‘mess’) and select food for their partner and children and bring it back to their accommodation to eat together as a family. I interpreted this as an attempt to have some control over the diet of their children (who could otherwise elect to not eat very nutritiously) and create some semblance of family life. G4S stopped this as they claimed that eating in the accommodation area was attracting rats and mice. They insisted that every family member line up and eat together in the mess. This was upsetting for some families and seemed to make them feel further like prisoners.

The facility could not be described as clean or pleasant. During the first month that I worked on Manus, I didn’t notice bad odours, but when I returned for my second rotation, the smell of sewerage was very strong, in both the family compound and in the staff compound. Children often complained about the terrible smell. On some days it was quite sickening. I tried to cover it up the classroom by spraying perfume. Despite my attempts, the smell, combined with the heat, was absolutely horrible.

During my time working in the facility, staff and asylum seekers experienced prolonged periods of severe water restrictions. A lack of water meant that we could only shower or wash clothes between certain hours and this sometimes resulted in queues forming in order to use the shared shower/bathroom facilities. Restricted access to water for washing had a serious impact on everyone because of the daily heat and intense humidity.

The school environment was also very challenging. When I arrived in March 2013, the school had recently been fitted with an air-conditioner and this was very well received by the children. Prior to this, my colleagues told me that they were teaching in the classroom with no air-conditioning. This was unacceptable given that the school had no windows and the building was made of concrete. Even with air-conditioning, we had no natural light (no windows) and a concrete floor. Children had been living in the camp since at least November of 2012 and it wasn’t until May 2013 that we had a small library (which the children loved) and a small window with yellow Perspex was finally installed in the two classrooms.

It is difficult to put into words the shocking impact of detention on these children. As children, they still sought out every opportunity to play, to have fun, to learn and to connect with others and yet they were always ‘on edge’. Seemingly small things easily distressed them and many of them became excessively fixated on what was ‘fair’ when playing games or when rules were enforced in the classroom. Some of the older students (mid-late teens) were preoccupied with what they might have done to have led them to be detained as they all knew other children who were asylum seekers who were living in the community in Australia. One young man fretted that his family had been sent to Manus because when he had been questioned on Christmas Island about whether he had ever tried to hurt himself, or thought about killing himself, he responded that he never did. At the time, he thought it best to present himself as strong and resilient, but he later regretted that he presented in this way as he was convinced that if he had seemed more vulnerable, his family would not have been sent offshore.

Some children worried constantly about their parents. Some parents had significant health problems and it was apparent to both asylum seekers and staff that medical facilities on Manus were inadequate. Many of the children became very close with the staff from Save the Children Australia (SCA) who they looked to for distraction and comfort in the absence regular support networks.

Children often had headaches, upset tummies, and reported trouble sleeping. They were also very unsure of who they could trust and seemed very suspicious of some of the adults around them. Even small and seemingly routine aspects of a school day, such as the taking of attendance, caused distress for some children as they worried about whether attendance was being reported to immigration and whether their family’s claim would be affected because they’d missed a class to see a doctor. Staff working with children had to ensure that they were very transparent and consistent in their actions and attuned to their concerns. I have worked with children for over 10 years and I have never seen children so anxious and stressed.

**Does the timeframe of the detention have a particular impact on children? For example, is there any difference in the ways in which a child responds to immigration detention after 1 week, 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, 1 year? Please give examples.**

I was not able to observe the children in the Manus Island facility for a long period of time so this question is not easy to answer. However, after returning to Australia, I regularly visited the children I previously worked with on Manus and who were subsequently detained in the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation (MITA). I visited these children over a period of about 6 months. During this time, these children and their families were gradually released into the community. I noticed a marked deterioration in the young people whose families were the last to be released from MITA (from the families previously on Manus) as time went on and they saw their friends leave. These days, even in detention, young people are able to see what their friends are up to on Facebook. They find it very hard to see pictures of other children (including their new friends in mainstream schools) who spend the weekends shopping and going out while they are being detained indefinitely. They also continue to worry about the reasons behind their own detention when other families have already been released. The signs of deterioration I have noticed include more frequent headaches and migraines, an inability to sleep, nightmares, unwillingness to participate in activities, withdrawal and increasingly spending time alone.

**Measures to ensure the safety of children**

* **Can you describe the measures to protect children from harm?**
* **Is there support for children who may be suffering from trauma either as a result of previous life experiences or in relation to the experience of detention?**
* **Please describe the security checks for children as they enter and leave immigration detention facilities. Do you think these checks are appropriate for children?**

In both Manus and at MITA, I have witnessed that security staff try to lower the risk of self-harming by making potentially dangerous items such as razors, inaccessible to children. This means that children are not allowed to have items such as pencil sharpeners or paper scissors. However, children in detention at MITA (in general) attend mainstream schools and there they can easily access these items so I am not convinced that such measures actually prevent them from being able to self-harm.

On Manus, local Papua New Guinean G4S staff were given approximately 1 hour of training from SCA staff on mandatory reporting and the protection of children. Having worked for more than a year in local PNG secondary schools I can confirm that in my experience, the concept of mandatory reporting for people who come in contact with children professionally is not practiced in PNG. I therefore felt that the training which was provided for G4S staff, was not adequate given the newness of the content for participants. They may have received training from elsewhere that I am not aware of.

SCA case workers and education staff regularly met, discussed and reported on children on an individual basis. Through closely observing children and families and regularly sharing information, we tried to be proactive in protecting children. SCA also had plans in place to remove and isolate children should an event occur that they should not witness in either the family or SAM compound. Our plans involved collecting children and accompanying them (and their parents if they were willing to come) to the internet room which had no windows and could be sealed off. We could then wait there with radios until the threat/problem subsided. Despite these efforts, children were still very aware of things such as suicide attempts, and self-harming, even when it occurred in the neighbouring SAM compound.

Children on Manus had access to psychological support through IHMS. Not all children received support although from my perspective, all children were suffering and in need of support. I also perceived a lack of co-ordination and co-operation between the staff of the different agencies working in the centre which was not conducive to supporting the children’s welfare. On one occasion, I tried to approach an IHMS staff member about a child I was very concerned about. I had been told by a colleague that an IHMS staff member was seeing and providing support to the young person in question. On approaching the staff member to ask if I could talk to them about the child, they told me that I should not approach them during their break (as all staff had to live within the centre and people ate in the same area that others held work meetings in, it was not always easy to decipher if someone was working or on a break). I asked if IHMS had a process by which I could make an appointment or lodge a concern and I was told that they did not. I made a time to speak to the staff member later in the same day and I tried to speak to them about the young person I was concerned about. I was told that my concerns were misplaced as the information that I had about the young person was incorrect. I left the meeting confused and followed up with the child’s case manager. It turned out that the IHMS staff member was wrong and was thinking instead of another young person of the same gender and nationality. I then needed to approach them again and this was very difficult without any process/procedure to follow. I mention this experience because I feel that it highlights a significant problem in that vulnerable children’s needs were not met because of a lack of consistency and co-ordination between agencies as well as a lack of formal process for staff to follow in working across agencies.

I was also shocked and dismayed when on one occasion; an IHMS staff member entered the school to collect a young girl for her appointment and called for her in front of me and the other children by her boat number instead of her name. On this occasion, she was not in the classroom; however on hearing the ID number, a few of the children readily identified her. I was surprised that they seemed accustomed to being called by a number and were aware of each other’s numbers. Witnessing this led me to question the effectiveness of support for children when some of the very people delivering the service were behaving in a way which is not conducive to promoting a child’s recovery from trauma.

Some children also seemed reluctant to talk to IHMS staff about their experiences and what they were feeling because they didn’t know if saying the ‘wrong thing’ would lead to their detention being prolonged. They didn’t understand the system and this led them to be wary of everyone and very selective in whom they trusted. I experienced this when children confided in me and made me promise ‘not to tell anyone’. I am not qualified to counsel children regarding experiences of trauma and yet some children didn’t want to talk to anyone in an ‘appointment’ like setting due to some sort of fear of authority or of information being passed on to immigration officials.

With regards to support for children detained in Melbourne, some of the children I know received counselling from the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture while they were detained in MITA.

In terms of security checks, children did, sometimes, attend excursions with SCA staff and this required them to leave the compound and go through checkpoints. G4S security staff were always present on these rare outings (my understanding is that 3 or 4 excursions happened over a 7 month period and on one of those excursions, families where not allowed to leave the bus). When children left the compound they were required to show their ID card and had to be wearing suitable footwear (not thongs/flip flops). In terms of appropriateness, children were not searched or treated badly when moving through checkpoints.

It was however, difficult for children to see the staff leaving the compound through the checkpoints, which we would do on our one day off a week. On two occasions, as I was leaving to go to town to buy some groceries, children called out to me from behind the fence and asked if I was coming back. It was not easy to see their faces pressed against the metal of the fence and know that they had no way of knowing when they might be allowed out next. One child wrote in her school journal about how her family were ‘fence people’ who had to stay inside. She wrote that I felt like a family member to her but then she saw me leaving and knew that I wasn’t a ‘fence person’ – I had freedom and could go outside. I believe it was very hard and somewhat damaging for children to watch staff freely travel through checkpoints and also come and go on our rotations. It reinforced for them the divide and that they were ‘prisoners’ with no access to life outside the compound.

Lastly, as I have mentioned earlier, I have visited families detained at MITA on a number of occasions. I became aware that some families who were formerly on Manus were in the MITA facility through another family who had already been released into the community detention program. I then went to MITA and requested to see the children (in some cases, I did not know the names of the parents). My partner and I filled out some forms and showed photo ID to the Serco staff on duty at the front desk. They then called the children into the visitors’ areas. Initially, the children who arrived to meet me did not come with their parents. I was very surprised that Serco would allow unrelated adults to visit minors without their parents’ knowledge or permission. In this case, I did know the children and over the course of my visit most of the parents came to greet me and thank me for visiting, but Serco had no way of knowing that my visit would be welcomed by parents. It was not until my third visit that a different Serco worker informed me that I could only see a child if I also called for the parent and they attended with their child. This stricter approach seemed much more reasonable in terms of protecting children, however once I was inside the visitor area, even children whose parents I hadn’t requested were allowed (by security staff) to enter the visiting area and spend time with me.

Although I am personally pleased to be able to visit children who I know and care about in a relaxed way, I find it alarming that minors are granted access to adults without their parents’ knowledge or permission. I would also add that when I have requested to visit children or families at MITA, there have been times when Serco staff have made an error and brought the wrong person to see me. On one occasion when I explained that the person before me (a young Iranian woman whom I had never met) was not the person I had requested to see (a Tamil teenage boy), the officer replied, “but this is 19.2 and that’s who you requested”. I was dismayed to see that as on Manus, some staff referred to people seeking asylum as numbers. The young woman looked embarrassed and upset and I felt terrible that she was treated in this way. I mention this because I do not believe that children self-harm simply because they happen to have access to a pair of scissors but that treatment which creates feelings of worthlessness and shame contribute to poor mental health and this in turn leads to a risk of self-harming. In both Manus and MITA I have seen practices which not only fail to protect children from harm but which actively contribute to the harm they experience.

**Provision of education, recreation, maternal and infant health services**

* Is formal education available to children? Please describe the types of education that are available. Is it appropriate for the age, the educational level and needs of the child?
* Are there playgrounds and play equipment for children?
* Can you describe the medical services and support that is available for expectant mothers and new mothers? Can you describe the medical support for babies and infants? Do you think these services are appropriate?

Within the Manus Island facility, children went to ‘school’ between 9am and 3pm. Although more than one teacher was employed for each of the primary and secondary classrooms, teachers worked on rotations so that only one teacher was working in the centre per class. An education manager was also present, but this person’s role was administrative (including testing children’s reading skills, etc) and they did not teach in the classroom unless they were covering for an absent teacher.

In the secondary classroom, there was a class of 17 students, ranging in age from 10 years old to 18 years old. In terms of academic ability, the students ranged from illiterate in English, to students who were able to confidently read simple chapter stories. The range in ages and abilities in one class, was therefore immense. In Australia, new arrivals (including refugee background children) would typically be enrolled in a language centre where they would be put in small classes (up to 14 students) with other children who share a similar level of English and who are within one or two years of each other in age. The quality of education available to children on Manus could therefore be described as below the equivalent available to children in Australia.

In Australia, in a ‘formal’ secondary education setting, students are taught a variety of subjects by teachers who have specialised qualifications in the teaching of that area. For example, they will have different teachers for maths, English and art. This is also true of local secondary schools in PNG. For the young people on Manus there was only one teacher available at a time to the secondary students. Although these teachers were qualified and experienced secondary teachers, they were (quite naturally) not qualified to teach in all subject areas. Hence, teachers had to do the best they could to deliver subject content that was outside of their teaching area such as maths and science.

Also, because all children needed to fit into either a single ‘primary’ or ‘secondary’ class, there was one student who was put into the secondary class for no other reason than because he was above and beyond the other primary students in terms of English ability. This resulted in a child of 10, studying with young people who were 17 and 18 years old. Although this was the best outcome available as the child was happier and was learning more in the secondary class, it was not an appropriate solution with regards to the child’s age and development and would not happen in Australia.

When I first arrived, SCA had just received a shipment of maths and science textbooks for students to use. Although these textbooks were new and suitable for some students, there were not enough. Even when students worked in pairs, there were not enough books to go around. There were two students who were tested and determined to be at a year 11 standard in maths, but there were no books available for them as the books the school had were for year 7 – 10 students. Also, there were no English/literacy textbooks or dictionaries although there were some picture books, DVDs, and some class readers. My understanding as to why resources were so limited was that procuring goods and having them delivered to somewhere as remote as Manus Island is a very difficult and lengthy process.

The students who were detained on Manus had access to computers for one hour during the school week. During this hour, power was sometimes interrupted so there were weeks when students had no computer time for their studies. This made implementing Australian standards of education impossible. I tried to assist the education program through the provision of my own personal items. I bought an iPad, loaded with educational apps which I thought students could share and use in small groups. Despite repeatedly asking for permission from G4S, I was told that I was not allowed to bring it into the school because it had a camera. I submitted a written request to G4S in which I offered to allow G4S staff to disable the camera with a password which even I would not know. My offer was turned down and I was told that the iPad was never to enter the family compound. I felt that G4S staff were much more concerned with images of the school being leaked than the quality of schooling available to children.

In the school, there was access to a projector, and I brought a personal laptop with me from Australia (SCA also had a laptop available which could be brought to the classroom). In the classroom, I was technically able to access wireless internet but was not allowed to use it. I was also warned, once G4S staff became aware that my personal laptop also had a camera, that ‘intelligence’ had been gathered about what I was bringing into the classroom. I was questioned as to why I needed a computer in the classroom – a question which I found very peculiar, coming from an Australian in 2013. I explained that a computer could be used to electronically record information such as attendance and student progress – a common practice in Australian schools. I was told that I could continue to take my computer to class ‘for the time being’ but that I was being monitored and that there would be continued consideration of the situation.

In the Manus facility, there was no playground for children (no swings, slides, etc). There was a volleyball court but children shared this with adults. Small children therefore did not seem to play on it. After school hours (from 4pm – 8/9pm) SCA staff ran recreational activities for children such as art classes, fitness programs, movie nights, library time, music lessons, etc. Children loved these activities and sometimes became frustrated and exhibited challenging behaviours in the one hour between school finishing and recreational activities commencing. During lunch time and after school, children could borrow sport equipment such as balls, cricket bats and badminton rackets from SCA.

The children whom I have kept in contact with who have spent time in onshore detention centers (since leaving Manus), have attended regular mainstream school. All the children I have spoken with in this situation (seven children) have said that they love school and are happy to leave the ‘camp’ (as they call it) and go to school. Two of the older children have told me that it’s hard watching their new friends leave school to go back to their houses when they, as detained children, have to be escorted by Serco staff to a van.

I would also like to add that last year, there were two 17 year olds who were living in MITA but who were not at school. I spoke with the school (a place which other MITA detainees attend) who explained that as the boys would soon turn 18 and as they have limited English, there ‘didn’t seem to be much point’ having them attend (English as an Additional Language classes for new arrivals was offered at this school and would have been suitable for these young men). Immigration officials agreed with the school’s decision. One young man has subsequently turned 18 and has recently been released into the community. He has been told by another school that he is welcome to attend. The other boy (still 17 years old) remained in detention until a few weeks ago. When I last visited MITA he did not want to come out of his room and I was unable to see him. I was very disturbed that although he has a right to attend school as a 17 year old, the school staff (who have never met him) and an immigration official decided that there was ‘no point’. As an educator and as someone who knows these two young men, I feel confident in saying that attendance at school would benefit them both enormously. First of all, they require English for day to day interactions, even in detention, as Serco staff do not speak their language. Moreover, time outside of MITA with other young people, in a positive learning environment would likely help to ward off depression and anxiety. These young men’s stories highlight that sometimes, even those who are entitled to an education are denied access because they are unable to advocate for themselves when they are detained.

With regards to medical services and support which is available for expectant mothers and new mothers; on Manus, all expectant mothers and their families were transferred to mainland Australia. My understanding is that this was because it is not considered safe for pregnant women to take anti-malarial medication.

In MITA, I know one expectant mother who has had access to medical checks but is concerned about her diet. In detention, meals are quite regulated in terms of times people can eat and what they can eat. This woman has found it difficult in her first trimester as she has suffered from morning sickness and food aversions/cravings. This is a difficult situation to manage as she wants to have a nutritious diet for her baby’s development but she cannot control her own diet or when she eats.

* **Are you aware of instances of family separation as a result of immigration detention?**
* **What forms of contact are available for families to maintain communication?**
* **What efforts were made to reunite children with siblings and parents?**
* **What are the effects of family separation on children?**

I am aware of one situation where two boys who had been raised as brothers were separated. The situation which case workers told me about was that a father had arrived at Christmas Island with two children he referred to as his ‘sons’. However, one was a biological son and the other had been taken in as a baby as he had no other carers. The father and biological son were sent to Manus and the other child was taken to mainland Australia as an unaccompanied minor. The boy who was sent to Manus was very upset to have lost his ‘brother’.

Families on Manus could contact other family members through phone calls and the internet. Phone lines were sometimes down or the connections were so poor that they couldn’t have a conversation. I heard many complaints about this.

Some young men were with their fathers only as their mothers had been left behind in their country of origin. They worried a lot about family who had been left behind and children who were without their mothers missed them a lot. Also, on Manus, medical facilities were such that people needed to be flown to Australia to have medical care in some situations. This meant that families were separated (mothers from children) while they were flown out to have treatment and this again caused anxiety and concern for those families.

**The guardianship of unaccompanied children in detention in Australia**

* What care and welfare services are available for children who arrive in Australia without parents or family members?
* Are the supports adequate?
* Is closed detention appropriate for unaccompanied minors? How can they be best supported?
* The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection is the legal guardian for unaccompanied children in detention – is this an appropriate arrangement?

There were no unaccompanied children on Manus. I also do not personally know any in detention onshore.

**Assessments conducted prior to transferring children to be detained in ‘regional processing countries’**

* Can you describe the pre-transfer assessments conducted prior to transferring children to regional processing countries?
* Are the pre-transfer assessments appropriate for children?

I am not able to describe the pre-transfer assessments conducted prior to transferring children to regional processing countries but I would like to comment on the transfer of children between detention facilities. On the 20th June, 2013, fourteen young people and their families were transferred from Manus to Christmas Island. Staff (including myself) found out about this on the day, as did the children and families. Neither SCA staff on Manus nor families were told about the destination and the flight was chartered. The remaining children and families were not given any information about whether or not they would remain or also leave (they too eventually left the island abruptly at a later date). This is incredibly stressful for children and families who have no idea where they are headed, what might happen to them or why.

Many months later when I was able to meet some of the families again at MITA, I learnt that some families had been ‘transferred’ from Manus to Christmas Island, then onto mainland detention facilities in Darwin or Adelaide, then again onto MITA. At each departure, families were told at the last possible minute about their move and did not understand why they were moving. Children commented to me that each time, they were not able to bring everything with them and sometimes beloved toys that had been donated to them were left behind.

Even Australian born children without traumatic histories often find transitions into new schools or new communities very difficult. For children who have already suffered separation from family and friends in their home countries this constant and unpredictable uprooting is particularly cruel. Each time children are moved they lose friends and the support of some staff they have grown to trust. They must then readjust to a new system and then continue to live with the fear that at any moment, someone may decide to uproot them again. This is a very stressful situation for children and families and is likely to contribute to their anxiety and depression.

Lastly, I have recently learnt that when children are released from detention into the community, the schools they previously attended (while they were detained) are not informed of where the families are released to or which school the children are next enrolled in. This means that important information which the school holds, such as the academic skills of the child, the child’s level of English, any developmental concerns or strategies which work well for engaging and supporting the child are not able to be communicated to the staff of the new school. As the family may have limited or no English, they are not always able to supply this information themselves. This poorly coordinated process also means that school staff and classmates are not able to contact the child to say goodbye or wish them well at their new school resulting in yet another abrupt and possibly traumatic transition for already vulnerable young people. The situation is similar for children who receive counselling while they are detained – once they are released, their counsellor is not given any contact information and so is not able to follow up with the family to continue to support the child.

Additional Notes: Access to medical services/concerns about physical wellbeing

To my knowledge, asylum seekers on Manus Island did not have what could be called ready or easy access to medical services. In order to request a medical appointment, asylum seekers needed to lodge a form requesting a medical appointment. These forms were available within the family compound but were written in English, a language that most adults were not able to communicate in. Interpreters were present in the camp but needed to be requested which meant that lodging a medical request could take some time. Once a family filled out a form and requested a medical appointment, they had to wait to hear back about when it was. When it came time for the appointment, families (including children) needed to wait at the security checkpoint to be escorted in a van, by G4S, to IHMS’ medical facilities. There was no shade or shelter provided on the side of the fence where the families had to wait and the temperature and humidity during the day was very high.

Tummy bugs seemed very common amongst both asylum seekers and staff. People who were sick were told they were ‘in quarantine’ and were required to use a particular toilet, shower, etc. Children who were sick were told to stay away from school. However, the school (and the internet room) were the only air-conditioned places that children could access. When sick, the only option for children was to stay alone in their incredibly hot rooms - not a suitable option for feverish, unwell children. I recall one young man who was supposed to be quarantined in his room begging to be allowed to sit quietly in the corner of the classroom. He became very depressed if left alone and also very uncomfortable being inside a small hot room during the heat of the day. I could not see the point in forcing him to go to his room when everyone had to live in such proximity from one and another and had to eat all their meals together in one room.

Lastly, ear infections and skin conditions (fungal problems) were prevalent amongst those detained. As I have previously mentioned, I lived in PNG for approximately two years and during this time, I did not have an air conditioner. Despite around the clock access to fans and to a safe water supply, myself, my partner and the friends we knew (without air conditioning) all suffered from these conditions due to the extreme humidity. Some of the expat community living in PNG who take anti-malarial medication also suffer from side effects of this medication. From personal experience, ear infections, skins conditions and the side effects from anti-malarial medication are all very serious conditions which impact on one’s physical health and wellbeing and are difficult to diagnose and treat in a remote location such as Manus Island. The heat and humidity, presence of diseases such as malaria, the remoteness of the location and limited access to medical support combined to create much concern and frustration for those detained on Manus Island.