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During 2013 Christmas Island experienced unprecedented boat arrivals. As such, there was a significant impact on all stakeholders involved in the processing of detainees property.

Between March and June 2013 nearly 9,000 IMAs arrived on 125 vessels. This resulted in more than 40,000 detainee transfers and movements to accommodate the rapidly expanding population. Given the large number of arrivals, detainees were being transferred to mainland centres or regional processing centres before their property was processed.

On 18 August 2014, Sally Reeves and Clinton Parker attended a briefing at Immigration about the Property Management Plan regarding the property issues on Christmas Island. We also briefly discussed a review of Individuals Allowance Points (IAP) through attendance at Programs and Activities (P&A).

Discussion Points:

- The previously reported 'two' containers of property was only 'one container'. The alleged second container only held welfare property, not detainee property.
- All (disputed) detainee in-trust property is at NWP
- AQIS called for the destruction of damaged and soiled property bags
- The remainder falls into four categories:
 - o No known owner
 - o Owner known, but returned to home country
 - o SIEV known, individual unknown
 - o Owner known, property returned unclaimed
- The department stated that all reasonable efforts will be made to resolve this long running issue
- Although it was acknowledged that the department could allocate resources, Serco do receive a fee for service and that must also be considered
- actions to be taken for these categories will in part be dependent on the numbers (which should be known shortly) but legislation will be followed including advertising in newspapers etc. where necessary.

Suggestions:

- we suggested that any correspondence to individuals (presumably form letters) should:
 - o be in their own language and not in English
 - be cautious in language, open style communication given likely concerns over previous privacy breach and potential reluctance for individuals to 'trust' the department.

In addition to the property briefing we also asked about Programs and Activities

- we asked when the last review was conducted of number of IAPs individuals can earn/be allocated?
- The department advised:
 - o A review is underway
 - A trial has been in place for some time increasing points an ASA detainee could earnup to 100
 - o Consideration is being given to:
 - broadening the items available through canteens
 - provide vocational style training courses to re-engage ASA detainees
 - * Introduce store cards that could:
 - be purchased and therefore become cumulative (limit of five weeks, in-trust property)

Contains deletions under FOI

 allow ASA detainees to purchase more expensive items/gifts to return home to family

Regards

Clinton Parker
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Immigration Detention Review
COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN
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Email:

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Influencing agencies to treat people fairly through our investigations of their administration

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