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Dehumanisation of asylum seekers

Case study of the Nauru Files

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Abstract

In October 2016 the newspaper the Guardian published an interactive database online with classified incident reports from an Australian overseas asylum seeker processing centre on the island republic of Nauru. The incident reports describe events that occurred within the Nauru Regional Processing Centre and this collection of over 2000 documents were given the name of “Nauru Files”. By using Nick Haslam's dehumanisation theory this thesis aimed to analyse the Nauru Files to find if the documents present evidence of animalistic and/or mechanistic dehumanisation. Upon reviewing the Nauru Files the author found four overarching themes; (1) deteriorating mental health for asylum seekers; (2) sexual assault, abusive behaviour and misbehaviour by staff, (3) incidents involving children and (4) misrepresentation of information. Furthermore, the evidence connected with these themes within the incident reports indicates dehumanisation, mainly mechanistic - meaning asylum seekers were deprived of aspects of humanness and were repeatedly treated as objects. Related to the Nauru Files a closer review of Australian immigration policies was conducted. The results show that the dehumanisation that is evident in the Nauru Files can be considered to be a product of Australia's long history of systematic dehumanisation of asylum seekers from non-European countries.

Table of content

Abstract	1
Table of content	2
Preface	5
Abbreviations	6
Chapter One	8
1. Introduction	8
1.1 Outline	9
1.2 Research process	10
1.2.1 Aim and purpose	10
1.2.2 Research questions	10
1.2.3 Secondary research questions	11
1.3 Methodology and material	11
1.3.1 Theoretical framework	11
1.3.2 Mixed research approach and case study	11
Case study	12
1.3.3 Data collection	13
1.3.4 Delimitation concerning primary data	13
1.3.5 Understanding and decoding the Nauru Files	14
1.3.6 Ethics	15
1.4 Previous research	15
1.4.1 Asylum seekers in detention centres	15
Chapter Two	20
2. Dehumanisation	20
2.1 Nick Haslam's dehumanisation theory	23
Figure 1. Haslam's links between concepts of humanness and corresponding forms of dehumanisation.	24
Source: Haslam, 2006.	24
2.1.1 Denial of humanness leads to dehumanisation	24
2.1.2 Six social-cognitive underpinnings of dehumanisation	25
Relational cognition	26
Cognitive modalities	26
Behaviour explanation	26

Social categorisation	27
Psychological distance	27
Empathy	27
2.2 Dehumanisation theory and asylum seekers	27
2.3 Other theories on dehumanisation	28
2.4 Critique	30
Chapter Three	32
3. Historical review: Australia's immigration policies and legislation	32
3.1 The establishment of the federation and 'White Australia' policy	32
3.2 Post-war immigration	33
3.3 The end of the 'White Australia Policy'	34
3.4 Introduction of dispensation programmes, amnesties and the Humanitarian Programme	35
3.5 Mandatory detention and "unlawful non-citizens"	35
3.6 Pacific Solution 2001-2008	36
3.7 Pacific Solution 2011-Present	37
3.8 Australia and European-centered immigration policies in the context of dehumanisation theory	38
Chapter Four	40
4. The Nauru Regional Processing Centre, actors and pre-Nauru Files reports	40
4.1 Nauru Regional Processing Centre	40
4.2 Actors operating at Nauru Regional Processing Centre	42
4.2.1 Broadspectrum/ Ferrovial	43
4.2.2 Wilson Security	43
4.2.3 Salvation Army	43
4.2.4 Save the Children	44
4.2.5 International Health and Medical Services	44
4.2.6 Digicel Nauru	44
4.2.7 Nauru government	45
4.2.8 Doctors without Borders	45
4.3 Reports and investigations from 2012-2016	45
4.4 Dehumanisation theory and the running of Nauru Regional Processing Centre	46
Chapter Five	48
5. The Nauru Files	48
5.1 Themes within the Nauru Files	48
5.1.1 Deteriorating mental health of asylum seekers	49

Threat of self-harm	50
Actual self-harm	51
Voluntary starvation	53
5.1.2 Sexual assault, abusive behaviour and mistreatment by staff	54
5.1.3 Incidents involving children	57
5.1.4 Misrepresentation of information	58
5.2 Australian government's response to the Nauru Files	59
Chapter Six	61
6. Analysis: Nauru Files and dehumanisation	61
6.1 Six social–cognitive underpinnings of dehumanisation	61
6.1.1 Relational cognition	61
6.1.2 Cognitive modalities	63
6.1.3 Behaviour explanation	64
6.1.4 Social categorisation	65
6.1.5 Psychological distance	65
6.1.6 Empathy	66
6.2 Summary: To what extent is there evidence of dehumanising tendencies in Nauru Files?	67
6.2.1 What particular aspects of dehumanisation are relevant in the study of asylum seekers?	67
Chapter Seven	68
7. Concluding remarks - are there dehumanising tendencies within the Nauru Files?	68
Bibliography	70
Appendix 1. Table over detainees at Nauru Regional Processing Centre	80
Appendix 2. List of inquiries and reports into offshore processing.	83

Preface

In 2012 I was an exchange student at the Australian National University, located just a short distance from the heart of Australian politics - the Australian parliament. During my year I witnessed what I understood as a shift in the national political climate concerning immigration policies. As a result, it sparked a lasting interest in migration studies and Australian politics.

Abbreviations

1903 Act	Naturalization Act 1903
1992 Act	Migration Amendment Act 1992
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
AUD	Australian Dollar
CSO	Client services officer/staff member of Transfield Services
CW	Save the Children case worker
ERT	
IHMS	International Health and Medical Services
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisations
IRA	Immigration Restriction Act 1901
HN	Human Nature
Medivac'd	Medcially evaduated
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières /Doctors without Borders
Nauru	The Republic of Nauru
NF	Nauru Files
NRPC	Nauru Regional Processing Centre
OPC3	A facility within the NRPC compound
Protocol	Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967
PILA	Pacific Islanders Labourers Act 1901
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PS	Pacific Solution
Refugee Convention	United Nations' Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951
RPC3	A facility within the NRPC compound
SCA	Save the Children Australia
UAM	An unaccompanied minor
UN	United Nations

UNHCR
UH

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Uniquely Human

Chapter One

1. Introduction

According to the most recent United Nations' (UN) figures, there are approximately 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. This is the highest on record (UNHCR, 2018). Many leave to seek resettlement possibilities. With the establishment of the 1950 United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), signatory nation-states have a formalised obligation to these individuals. Since the creation of the United Nations' Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 (the Refugee Convention) and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967 (the Protocol), 148 states are committed to following international law governing the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. Individuals may seek asylum in any country they set their foot in and also seek asylum through resettlement schemes (UNHCR). Only a few nation-states partake in the UNHCR resettling scheme, including the USA, Canada, the Nordic countries and Australia (UNHCR, 2017). While these countries have committed to protect asylum seekers and refugees, individuals are often met with negativity, superstition and hostility (Esses et al, 2008). A common perception of asylum seekers and refugees arriving in Europe is that they will bring terrorism and unemployment for EU citizens (Stokes, Bruce & Simmons, 2016). Headlines such as "‘NOT WELCOME’ Vile stickers telling migrants to ‘go home to Africa’ spark fears of hate crimes" (Godden, 2016), "Italy calls for mass migrant deportations as half a million refugees arrive" (O'Brien, 2017) and "Australians want boat arrivals treated more harshly: poll" (Dorling, 2014) are common. The opposition towards asylum seekers and refugees may be explained by host country citizens believing that many of the individuals arriving "are making illegitimate claims with regard to their circumstances and are violating principles of justice and fairness in an effort to ‘get ahead’" (Esses et al, 2008). Such beliefs could result in a perception of asylum seekers and refugees as immoral, which in turn facilitates illicit dehumanisation of refugees (Esses et al, 2008). These attitudes and dehumanisation could explain in adverse refugee policies, founded on a premise that asylum seekers and refugees are not worthy of equal and fair treatment (Esses et al, 2008).

These perceptions and trends have been at the centre of Australia's public and political sphere. For decades, individuals arriving in Australian territories via maritime vessels have been referred to as *boat people* and depicted by Australian politicians in parliament as possible threats to the nation (Mackellar, 1977; Millbank, 2001). In 2012, Australia reintroduced an immigration policy referred to as the Pacific Solution (PS), which was previously implemented from 2001 to 2007 (Britannica, 2018). The policy prescribes for the offshore processing of asylum seekers trying to reach Australia via maritime vessels. Since the policy came into force in August 2012, individuals arriving in Australian waters are transferred to the regional processing centre on the Pacific island state of the Republic of Nauru (hereby referred to as Nauru) and Papua New Guinea's (PNG) Manus Island. On Nauru, asylum seekers must stay at the Nauru Regional Processing Centre (NRPC) for the duration of the asylum process. The detention of the asylum seekers has sparked great interest and considerable outrage in the international humanitarian and human rights community (Human Rights Watch, 2016; Amnesty International, 2016; Australian Refugee Council, 2018; UN News, 2018; MSF, 2018). Australia and Nauru have by joint efforts limited visitation possibilities and public access to information concerning NRPC. Insight into the treatment and well-being of the facility's inhabitants is actively curtailed through high visa costs, confidentiality agreements for NRPC staff and by making it illegal for medical personnel working at NRPC to speak out. As a result, prior to October 2016, little was known regarding the living conditions at NRPC (Doherty, 2016).

In October 2016, the Australian newspaper the Guardian released over 2100 incident reports, collectively known as the Nauru Files (NF). These documents were provided by an anonymous source and constitute the largest collection of information concerning asylum seekers within NRPC that have been made available to the public (Evershed et al, 2016).

1.1 Outline

This thesis will analyse the treatment of asylum seekers within the Australian immigration system, from the perspective of dehumanisation theory. The author will carry out a case study of the NF and put this in the context of Australia's international humanitarian obligations and national immigration policies (current and historic).

First, the author will present the research process, methodology and theoretical framework. Second, the dehumanisation theory will be explained both in the abstract as well as in the context of asylum seekers. Third, to provide context concerning the NF, the thesis will continue with a historical review of Australian immigration policies and legislation. Fourth, once the theoretical and historical framework has been established, the author will provide an overview of the NRPC and pre-NF reports. Thereafter, the NF case study will follow, highlighting themes among the files and the Australian government's response to the documents. Finally, the findings of the case study will be analysed within the theoretical framework of the dehumanisation theory. The thesis will conclude with a discussion about whether traits of dehumanisation is evident in the NF and Australian immigration policies.

1.2 Research process

1.2.1 Aim and purpose

This thesis will use dehumanisation theory to analyse the policies and practices related to the treatment of asylum seekers in the NRPC, as evidenced by the contents of the NF. The purpose of this analysis is to gain further understanding of the processes and policies governing the treatment of asylum seekers, with a particular focus on Australian immigration policy and its compatibility with international humanitarian law. Specifically, Nick Haslam's¹ dehumanisation theory will be applied to analyse the situation at NRPC and whether there is evidence of dehumanising tendencies.

1.2.2 Research questions

The following research questions have been developed to assist the aim of the thesis:

- *Do the Nauru Files provide evidence of dehumanising tendencies?*
- *If established that there are dehumanising tendencies in the treatment of asylum seekers at Nauru, to what extent have Australian policies contributed to such tendencies?*

¹ Nick Haslam is currently Professor of Psychology at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

1.2.3 Secondary research questions

To operationalise the research questions above, the following two secondary questions have been formulated:

- *What particular aspects of dehumanisation are relevant and/or prevalent in the study of treatment of asylum seekers?*
- *How have Australian immigration policies evolved and, in particular, have dehumanising trends been introduced over time and if so, to what extent?*

1.3 Methodology and material

1.3.1 Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework needs to be structured and presented to enable analysis of the laws, policies and legal documents governing asylum seekers within the Australian immigration system. The framework presented in this thesis originates in the field of social psychology but is applied using an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from the academic fields of social science and peace and conflict studies. The main theory in this thesis is based on Haslam's dehumanisation theories presented in the 2006 publication "Dehumanization: An Integrative Review." Haslam's writing is recognised as pioneering and fundamental to the theorisation of the central issues of this thesis. The phenomenon of dehumanisation, while not new, had not been greatly categorised and theorised prior to Haslam's highly respected studies, thereof can be considered leading within research concerning dehumanisation (Livingstone Smith, 2014).

1.3.2 Mixed research approach and case study

To analyse and gain a further understanding of Haslam's theory of dehumanisation, this thesis will conduct an empirical case study investigation based on a sequential explanatory design. This design is described by Robson and McCartan (2011) as:

Characterised by the collection and analysis of quantitative data following the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Priority is typically given to the quantitative data and the two methods are integrated during the interpretation phase of the study. The quality of data functions to help explain and interpret the findings of the primary quantitative study. (p. 178)

The design of this thesis is to first introduce a quantitative collection of evidence overview of Australian immigration policies and legislation to provide context for the qualitative analysis and presentation of the NF. The choice of research method is based on the reasoning that to understand the qualitative findings of the case study of the NF, a quantitative study of the contexts of Australian immigration policies and the introduction of Australian offshore processing of asylum seekers and refugees is required. By limiting the data set and scope of research to a case study, we have the opportunity to gain an understanding of the particular phenomena dehumanising asylum seekers. Therefore a quantitative study focused on the history of Australian immigration policies and legislation in addition to a qualitative study of the files will be presented in this thesis. This paper could contribute to the understanding of the dehumanisation theory and the underlying processes of immigration policies and practices.

Case study

Case studies have been proven to be an important source of information in diverse academic fields, from psychology to international relations (Robson & McCartan, 2011: 150-152). This form of academic research tool gives the academic community the opportunity to research in a qualitative matter and test hypotheses. Robert Yin (2009) describes case studies as “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary within its real-life contexts using multiple sources of evidence” (Robson & McCartan, 2011: 150). Robson and McCartan (2011) highlight that there are six important points that need to be included in concluding an effective case study (p. 150). The case study must have a clear (1) *strategy*, indicating the case studies strategic approach. The strategic approach implemented during a case study must be for (2) *research purposes* which focus on a (3) *empirical* collection of evidence. Case studies can highlight the (4) *particular* with individual cases, in addition to studying a (5) *phenomenon within a context* while implementing (6) *multiple methods* of evidence or data

collection. Robson and McCartan (2011) highlight the importance of the analysis of the data and empirical evidence, but also the significance of the context.

While using case studies can provide in-depth understanding and knowledge concerning a particular topic, case studies have also been subject to criticism. This is in instances where they have not been conducted in a proper and methodical way eg. by presenting skewed and dishonest results (Robson & McCartan, 2011: 150-152). The author of this thesis aimed to avoid this by methodically treating the empirical evidence with the mixed research approach and clear presentation of the information in the study.

1.3.3 Data collection

This thesis is based on a case study in addition to the literature review and desk research concerning dehumanisation theory, Australian immigration policies and the NRPC to enable putting the issue into a larger context. The secondary sources used are of different outlets, namely academia, media, reports and law texts. The academic sources have been retrieved through the Uppsala University library search engine in addition to Google Scholar. Further sources include international reports, media reports, Australian legal sources and international conventions.

The 2000 incident reports are treated as primary data and quantitative analysis of these has been conducted. This has been done to provide a further understanding of the conditions and treatment of asylum seekers at NRPC.

1.3.4 Delimitation concerning primary data

Clear delimitation is needed concerning the scope of the research and to handle the primary data. In this thesis the author considers three factors are important to take into consideration: selection bias; recognition of retracted information; and delimitation of the information available to the public.

Firstly, selection bias is considered to occur when the author unknowingly discards information that might seem irrelevant and selects information which may seem relevant for their purpose, not realising the discarded information can be of value. If selection bias has not been taken into account by the publisher, this may skew findings and undermine the reliability of

sources (Henderson & Page, 2007). E.g. the information coming from The Guardian might be a case of selection bias by the journalists. The author of this thesis is aware of selection bias and will present data from the NF objectively.

Secondly, the information in the reports has been edited by the publishing journalists at the Guardian who released the files to the public. Details that can identify individuals e.g. age, name and nationality have been retracted according to the same methodology used in the former integrity commissioner Philip Moss's report on allegations of sexual assault at NRPC in 2015 (Evershed et al, 2016). The incident reports contained large amounts of personal information and to protect the identities of the persons mentioned in the report, the Guardian chose to retract the information mentioned above (Evershed et al, 2016).

Thirdly, due to a large number of incident reports, each report cannot be detailed individually. Amongst the provided information by the Guardian, this thesis focuses on incident reports where a scanned copy of the original document was available. This approach was selected to enhance transparency. The information contained in the incident reports will be presented summarised under categories and themes.

1.3.5 Understanding and decoding the Nauru Files

The files are coded with a specific language and terminology established by Broadspectrum (previously known as Transfield Services), the company operating NRPC. The Australian government contracted Transfer Services to follow a specific procedure with regards to reporting incidents occurring at the compound. The incident reports are divided into five risk rating categories: minor, critical, major, unclassified and information (Evershed et al, 2016). The classification of the severity of the incident is determined by the staff member reporting the incident. The Guardian has added additional categories to facilitate understanding of the nature of the incident detailed in the report (The Guardian, 2016). It is important to highlight that the authors of the incident reports are staff members of the NRPC and it is through their perspective the incidents are authored and ranked. Therefore, the incident reports have a risk of recognised bias. E.g. critiques towards staff members could possibly have been underreported and severity of incidents downplayed.

1.3.6 Ethics

Information released through a whistleblower or leaked scheme can pose ethical issues in academic research. The ethical dilemma in this thesis is whether to use the NF as primary data for the case study, as they were not leaked to the public through a legitimate whistleblower scheme. The information shared in the NF was not intended for public use. Neither authors nor the individuals mentioned in the documents have given their consent. While the documents might not be admissible in a legal arena, the documents can prove to be valuable for academia. Michael (2015) argues that using leaked documents in academic research should not be discarded due to fear that it would hurt the research (p. 179). The information is already publicised and has been reported in the media. “The leaks simply allow us to ‘leapfrog the traditional 30 years process’ of declassification” (Michael, 2015: 179). Therefore, the NF for the purpose of this thesis is regarded as a valid primary source, providing great insight into the offshore processing scheme.

1.4 Previous research

Research concerning asylum seekers is conducted in multiple academic fields e.g. medicine, psychology, media, sociology and international humanitarian law to mention a few. To further our understanding to what extent the NF provide evidence of dehumanising tendencies in the context of NRPC, it is important to review previous research concerning asylum seekers in the context of detention centres. This will provide a further understanding of detention centres and asylum seeker experiences in a more general context. Research concerning asylum seekers in detention centres can be found in various academic fields, in particular in studies concerning asylum seekers wellbeing and mental health.

1.4.1 Asylum seekers in detention centres

Research concerning asylum seekers in detention has been greatly investigated across the globe, and especially concerning asylum seekers mental health. Derrick Silove, Zachary Steel and Richard F. Mollica (2001) describe in “Detention of asylum seekers: assault on health, human

rights, and social development” the origin of the modern day detention centres and the possible impact on asylum seekers’ mental health:

The end of World War II ushered in a new era of international commitment to provide humane protection to all people fleeing persecution. This decade, however, has witnessed a steady erosion of that ethos, the most disturbing change being the tendency to confine asylum seekers in detention centres in countries of the West. Many of these people have suffered torture and other abuses, raising particular concerns that the anxiety, fear, and frustration provoked by detention may prolong and exacerbate underlying traumatic stress reactions and thereby create long-term psychosocial disability. (p. 1436)

This description provides an introduction to the creation of detention centres and its possible impact on asylum seekers welfare. Furthermore, Silove, Steel and Mollica (2001) outline the common practice in western countries as the USA, UK and Australia to contain individuals arriving at their borders and create infrastructures to do so (p. 1436).

In previous research Silove, Steel together with Charles Watters (2000) concluded that “allegations of abuse, untreated medical and psychiatric illnesses, suicidal behaviour, hunger strikes, and outbreaks of violence among asylum seekers in detention centres have been reported” (p. 604). The article provides evidence that asylum seekers in detention who experience post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychiatric stress in addition to post-migration stress. Silove and Steel (2001) continue in “The mental health implications of detaining asylum seekers” conclude that mental health of asylum seekers and refugees in Australia mandatory detention gravely deteriorate. Based on their research detained asylum seekers and refugees suffer greater levels of past trauma and that detention centres provide a retraumatising environment (p.596-9). Steel et al. in “Psychiatric status of asylum seeker families held for a protracted period in a remote detention centre in Australia” (2007) found that families in the study “regularly distressed by sudden and upsetting memories about detention, intrusive images of events that had occurred, and feelings of sadness and hopelessness. The majority of parents felt they were no longer able to care for, support, or control their children.” (p. 527). Steel et al. indicate that these are detention-related symptoms and concludes that the high rates of psychological disorders should raise concern amongst health professionals. The

authors call for action to influence policymakers to establish humane immigration policies and “it is essential that in attempting to manage the international asylum crisis, countries with a strong tradition of humanitarian refugee policies do not implement approaches that cause further harm to this vulnerable population” (Steel et al., 2007:535). Aamer Sultan and Kevin O'Sullivan (2001) reconfirm this in a Australian context in their study “Psychological disturbances in asylum seekers held in long term detention: a participant-observer account”, and also indicated that period of protests from the asylum seekers occurred due to strong feelings of injustice towards the asylum seekers treatment and detention.

Evidence that asylum seekers in detention exacerbate psychological symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic disorder can be found also in the USA, as presented in Allan S. Keller et al's “Mental health of detained asylum seekers” (2003). The deteriorating health of asylum seekers in detention centres produce great concern for medical professionals and human right advocates. In the case of Keller et al.'s research, the detention centres visited for the research are in windowless facilities and asylum seekers are required to wear jail uniforms. This indicates that the asylum seekers are punished and have their mobility and agency removed, much like prisoners who have committed crimes (Keller et al., 2003). Further evidence of sign of distress and psychological trauma from detention is presented in “Mental health implications of detaining asylum seekers: systematic review” (2009), where Katy Robjant, Rita Hassan and Cornelius L. E. Katona present research based on asylum seeker detainees in the UK which indicate that upon impending release, the mental health of detainees can improve but the general theme is that the mental health of the detainees are greatly impacted in the long-term.

In summary, the overview of previous research concerning asylum seekers in detention centres is greatly focused on the mental health of detainees and gives a strong indication that the mental health of detainees deteriorates severely. The presented research give ample evidence that detainees of all ages, adults and children, gain detention-traumatic disorders and their mental wellbeing is greatly harmed by the detention practices in countries where these studies were conducted. Comparatively, with the USA, the UK and Australia detainees experiences are recorded to have almost identical conclusions and therefore one could argue that the western model of detaining asylum seekers in detention centres is harmful, regardless of the nation-state.

1.5 Relevance to the field of humanitarian action and conflict

The academic field of humanitarian action is multidisciplinary and crosses various academic fields. With its multidisciplinary approach, it involves studies of international humanitarian law as well as peace and conflict studies.

Some of the key sources of international humanitarian law are the United Nations' declarations, conventions and protocols. These documents are signed by nation-states worldwide with a commitment to fulfil and protect the rights set out therein. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR) sets out the fundamental rights of every person in the world. These rights are absolute and shall not be denied by other persons, entities or states (UDHR Articles 2 and 30). The preamble of the UDHR contains a pledge that each of the UN member states will respect and uphold these human rights. For the purpose of this thesis, the key rights are: the right to dignity and freedom (Article 1); freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 5); the right not to be subject to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile (Article 9); and the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution (Article 13.1). In the context of asylum seekers, core obligations on nation-states are also specified in the United Nations' Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 (the Refugee Convention) and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967 (the Protocol). The Refugee Convention places an obligation on signatory nation-states to partake in humanitarian resettlement schemes. If Australia, a signatory to the UDHR and the Refugee Convention, infringes these obligations by denying individuals fleeing conflict their fundamental human rights, this is of concern in the matter of international humanitarian law. If the Australian immigration system is framed to dehumanise and treats asylum seekers as less worth than Australian citizens, this would be relevant to study within the humanitarian field.

In the context of peace and conflict studies, the treatment of asylum seekers is a key aspect of the study of the implications and consequences of conflict. Conflict as a concept ranges from small scale interpersonal to international conflicts (Galtung, 2004). Armed conflict is one of the primary causes for individuals leaving their place of origin or country of residence to seek safety and, often, asylum (UNHCR, 2016). As mentioned above, the number of displaced people

in the world today is the highest in history. With current restrictions on air travel, many refugees and asylum seekers are by necessity forced to explore alternative modes of transportation, including walking, road vehicles and maritime vessels. The arrival of displaced people by maritime vessels is at the centre of the current political debate and rhetoric in Australia. Due to the geographical location of Australia, the exclusion of availability of air travel for undocumented displaced persons provides a unique perspective on this aspect of treatment of asylum seekers (Spinks, 2013). Therefore the study of the Australian authorities' treatment of persons fleeing conflict is of relevance in relation to peace and conflict studies.

Chapter Two

2. Dehumanisation

The terminology dehumanisation has been recorded since the early 19th century but the more in-depth research of the phenomenon commenced two decades ago. Its greater study originated in the school of social psychology and to this day, the majority of research concerning dehumanisation is within its originating school of study (Livingstone Smith, 2014: 814). The terminology of dehumanisation has been given several different definitions. David Livingstone Smith in “Dehumanization, Essentialism, and Moral Psychology” (2014) presents a summary of key definitions of dehumanisation:

1. Actions that subject others to indignities or, in a more Kantian vein, involve treating others merely as means (e.g., MacKinnon 1987).
2. Rhetorical practices that metaphorically liken human beings to non-human animals or inanimate objects (e.g., Bar-Tal 1989).
3. Denial of the subjectivity, individuality, agency, or distinctively human attributes of others (e.g., Lemoncheck 1985).
4. Treating others in such a way as to erode, obstruct, or extinguish some of their distinctively human attributes (e.g., Mikkola 2011).
5. Conceiving of others as subhuman creatures. (pp. 814-815)

Due to the versatility of these definitions, dehumanisation can be considered an interdisciplinary concept applicable in various academic fields, e.g. peace and conflict studies, genocide studies and media studies (Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016: 25; Luna, 2015).

Dehumanisation as a phenomenon in peace and conflict research describes the perception of an individual or group as less than human and worthy of lesser treatment than a fellow human being (Luna, 2015; Haslam, 2006). Dehumanisation challenges the concepts of social justice and positive peace and enables interpersonal, institutionalised and structural types of violence (Luna, 2015: 19-20). A positive peace ideal means a society where “... the values, attitudes and institutions of society support and enable social, economic and political justice and promote and enforce their protection for all groups within it” (Luna, 2015: 20). Social justice is the equal

distribution of wealth, opportunities and rights to all in a society. Essentially, dehumanisation leads to the exclusion of individuals or groups from the benefits of positive peace and social justice. Thus the phenomenon is often linked to research concerning ethnicity, race, immigration and genocide (Luna, 2015; Haslam, 2006).

In genocide studies, dehumanisation is particularly observed in the persecution of groups of individuals. In “‘Disease Incarnate’: Biopolitical Discourse and Genocidal Dehumanisation in the Age of Modernity” (2007) Richard Savage’s discusses the biopolitics which increased in popularity during the 19th century. Groups falling outside the perceived homogenous norm were viewed as threats and often depicted in medical terms as diseases which should be eradicated. This dehumanising rhetoric deprives individuals of human attributes and portrays them as objects for eradication (pp. 404-405). One example of this would be the systematic persecution of Jews during the Second World War where individuals were portrayed as less human (Haslam, 2006; Steizinger, 2018). Johannes Steizinger’s publication “The Significance of Dehumanization: Nazi Ideology and Its Psychological Consequences” (2018) underlines the integration of dehumanisation principles in the Nazi political ideology condoned dehumanisation and legitimised genocide. By studying the work of Alfred Rosenberg’s, the main ideologist and theorist who greatly shaped Nazi party anti-Semitic ideology, policies and work Steizinger (2018) found that:

Rosenberg’s anti-Semitism is an example of the conviction that there are humans who do not possess the essence of humanity and thus are mere human animals. He emphasizes time and again the ‘uncreative character’ of Jews and contrasts their properties to what he regards as uniquely human. (p. 150)

This reinforces the aspect of dehumanisation where individuals are perceived to have little or no human properties and are considered more as animals, therefore are not of equal worth as persons possessing these properties.

In studies of more contemporary genocides, e.g. Kjell Anderson’s interview-based dissertation “The Dehumanisation Dynamic: A Criminology of Genocide” (2011) provide further evidence of dehumanisation’s key role in genocides and:

...demonstrate the nature of genocide as a non-deviant crime of conformity. Propaganda from the criminogenic state drives this legitimisation of the crime of genocide. Perpetrators rationalise their actions, through the techniques of neutralisation, which are derived from state propaganda, peer influences, and the tendency of individuals to minimise their own culpability. Thus, perpetrator decision-making is rational but is constrained within the context of the genocidal state. (p. i)

Andersson's research was focused on perpetrators and victims of genocide in Rwanda, Burundi, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bangladesh, and Cambodia and provides an indication of how individuals are affected by propaganda legitimising dehumanisation and ultimately genocide.

Within the academic field of media studies, the study of dehumanisation has often focused on the portrayal of individual or communities as "others". One example is "Demonising the cultural Other: Legitimising dehumanisation of foreign domestic helpers in the Hong Kong press" (Ladegaard, 2013). The article concludes that the Hong Kong press apply a positive "us" versus a negative "them" perspective in reports concerning foreign domestic help. They are portrayed as "strange" with "strange belief(s)" which helps legitimise the negative press which dehumanise foreign domestic workers (Ladegaard, 2013). The study of dehumanisation and this polarising rhetoric has also been relevant to the analysis of media coverage of wars and terror, e.g. in Steuter and Wills publications "Discourses of Dehumanization: Enemy Construction and Canadian Media Complicity in the Framing of the War on Terror" (2009) and "'The vermin have struck again': dehumanizing the enemy in post 9/11 media representations" (2010). These publications use similarly the medical language studied by Savage (2007) in the study of genocides and provide evidence of a systematic dehumanisation of the "other" in western media, in this context of Canadian and US press. Steuter and Wills' article "...focuses on newspaper headlines as influentially compressed narratives replicating and recycling key metaphors that systematically figure the enemy as an animal, vermin, or metastatic disease" (2010) in US media, which could be considered to be rhetorically linked to the language of dehumanisation. Further, in "The visual dehumanisation of refugees" (Bleiker et al, 2013), the authors discuss the dehumanisation framing of media images of asylum seekers in Australia. Coverage focuses on the arrivals of large groups on maritime vessels, and there is little representation of individual

asylum seekers' plight. Rather than highlighting the humanitarian challenges, the media coverage tends to portray asylum seekers as threats to security and sovereignty which reinforces negative rhetoric concerning asylum seekers (p. 398).

In summary, the study of dehumanisation, regardless of discipline, aims to bring understanding to the actions and reasoning that supports removing an individual or community's human characteristics. Humanitarian action exists to secure the preservation of life, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity. The study of dehumanisation is therefore of great interest, as the phenomenon is in direct conflict with the aims of humanitarian action (Development Initiatives, 2019).

2.1 Nick Haslam's dehumanisation theory

While the terminology of dehumanisation had existed previously and been used in research in various academic disciplines, Nick Haslam's theory in "Dehumanisation: An Integrative Review" (2006) was one of the first major publications to present a systematic theoretical basis on dehumanisation. Haslam's theory is based on the fundamental perception that dehumanisation cannot be conducted unless individuals or communities have aspects of their humanness removed. Therefore, defining the properties of humanness is a key starting point (Livingstone Smith, 2014: 819). This has great relevance for the study of dehumanisation in a humanitarian action context since the foundation of humanitarian action and human rights are built on core principals focused on protecting human dignity and treating all humans are equal (Development Initiatives, 2019). Based on this reasoning and the focus on humanness, or the perception of the lack of humanness, is why this particular theory was chosen for this thesis.

Subsequent dehumanisation research has built on Haslam's theory, using the rhetoric of his theory and building on the theoretical foundation which Haslam created (Livingstone Smith, 2014; Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016). This indicates that Haslam's theoretical framework is leading in research concerning dehumanisation.



Figure 1. Haslam's links between concepts of humanness and corresponding forms of dehumanisation.
Source: Haslam, 2006.

2.1.1 Denial of humanness leads to dehumanisation

While conceptualising and theorising dehumanisation, Haslam built his theory on the foundation of the concept of humanness, and the denial of it. This means that in order for dehumanisation to occur, individuals must be denied aspects of humanness. Therefore, Haslam proposed in his theory two concepts of humanness interlinked with two forms of dehumanisation (2006).

The first form of dehumanisation presented by Haslam is perceived as the denial of humanness referred to *uniquely human* (UH) referring to “characteristics that are uniquely human”, which results in imbuing individuals and groups with animal-like features (Haslam, 2006). This *animalistic dehumanisation* can be seen e.g. in the Nazis' representation of Jews as vermin and in racist depictions of Africans as apes (Haslam, 2006). Animalistic dehumanisation contradicts the perception of human uniqueness in qualities such as civility, refinement, moral sensibility, rationality, logic and the concept of maturity (Haslam, 2006). These qualities differentiate humankind from animals according to Haslam, therefore forming part of one's humanness and human uniqueness. The dehumanisation process includes portraying individuals or groups as unintelligent, coarse, amoral, childlike, irrational and lacking culture and self-restraint (Haslam, 2006: 257-8). The drives of individuals would then not be strongly

cognitive and mediated, and instead driven more by “motives, appetites, and instincts” (Haslam, 2006: 258).

The second form of dehumanisation, so-called *mechanistic dehumanisation*, denies the humanity of the subjects by representing them as objects or automata (Haslam, 2006: 252). Mechanistic dehumanisation reflects on the concept of humanness relating to *human nature* (HN). This humanness refers to emotional responsiveness, interpersonal warmth, cognitive openness, agency and individuality. In this dehumanising process, individuals and groups are said to be lacking these properties. Instead, they are perceived as inert, cold, rigid, fungible and superficial (Haslam, 2006: 257-8). With little emotion, passiveness and other deep-seated characteristics, individuals are based on superficial attributes, similar to an object or automata.

2.1.2 Six social–cognitive underpinnings of dehumanisation

The theoretical model of the two perceptions of dehumanisation contrasts human versus animal and human versus machine/object. Haslam recognises associated features of the model in the context of emotion, semantics, psychological essentialism, social context and distinctive features (2006). Each of these contexts emphasises the versatility of the theories and the different implicational areas, but it must be recognised that both forms of dehumanisation have been shaped by societal factors such as “political and religious ideologies, mass movements [and] delegitimizing beliefs” (Haslam, 2006: 260) and have social-cognitive underpinning. Haslam suggests six social-cognitive underpinnings which enable dehumanisation: relational cognition, cognitive modalities, behaviour explanation, social categorisation, psychological distance and empathy (2006: 260-262). These six prerequisites are outlined below, so as to provide an additional framework for the analysis of the NF.

Relational cognition

Relational cognition emphasises the feeling of unity between members in a group and close relations. There is a great importance of “categorical distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’”, which can be linked to racial and ethnic identity (Haslam, 2006: 261). This underpins interethnic conflict and can be found in e.g. in research concerning dehumanisation in media (Ladegaard, 2013; Steuter & Wills, 2009; Steuter & Wills, 2010; Bleiker et al, 2013). In animalistic

dehumanisation, this would constitute likening individuals to animals, and othering of other groups, who are breaking the cultural norms of the majority (Haslam, 2006: 261). This may be contrasted with mechanistic dehumanisation, where the exclusion of an individual or group by “mechanistic fashion, taking an indifferent, instrumental, distancing, and objectifying orientation toward them, may not construe any social relationship to exist” (Haslam, 2006: 261). In that case, there would be no interaction or relation with the group, no common social framework and a lack of relatedness in a communal dynamic (Haslam, 2006: 261).

Cognitive modalities

Cognitive modalities enable fluidity between social and natural history, resulting in anthropomorphism, totemism and certain groups being considered “less than human” (Haslam, 2006: 261). Animalistic dehumanisation in this instance generates an understanding that an individual or group is a different species and not human-like, while mechanistic dehumanisation emphasises treating individuals as objects, free to be used instrumentally, due to them having “no emotions or rights because they have no minds” (Haslam, 2006: 261).

Behaviour explanation

Behaviour explanation can cause dehumanisation through two features, namely by both explaining and providing reasoning for the actions and behaviours of others. This approach favours mechanistic dehumanisation in the sense that it revokes personal agency and de-emphasises intentional states. Individuals explain others’ actions by claiming they only reacted this way because of specific reasons and not due to their own will. This process allows the perception of the individual or group associated with little or no intelligence (Haslam, 2006).

Social categorisation

Dehumanisation through social categorisation is enabled through depersonalisation, meaning that the individual's characteristics which point out one’s individuality are removed and become fungible. Becoming mutually exchangeable links mainly to mechanistic dehumanisation, emphasising on a person being a replaceable item that is free to be used and discarded. On the other hand, animalistic dehumanisation focuses on the categorisation of groups as lacking human

uniqueness characteristics, “perhaps by the fear-mediated attribution to it of unrestrained hostility” (Haslam, 2006).

Psychological distance

Psychological distance facilitates moral exclusion and objectification of others, through an emotional state of disconnect (Haslam, 2006: 262). With a physical and social distance, “the other” can be simplified or imbued with abstract traits. The dehumanisation created by psychological distance is linked with “shallower, ‘cooler’, more distanced, and less intentional perceptions of others” (Haslam, 2006: 262).

Empathy

A lack of empathy can lead to forms of dehumanisation. With a lack of prosocial concern, warmth and depth, dehumanisation through lack of empathy proves an emotionally impoverished and shallow perception of “the other”. This is deeply connected to the features of mechanistic dehumanisation and can be more deeply rooted due to its involvement and active engagement of people’s inner thoughts and feelings (Haslam, 2006: 262).

2.2 Dehumanisation theory and asylum seekers

While the phenomenon of dehumanisation originates from social psychology, Haslam’s animalistic and mechanistic dehumanisation models and the six identified social-cognitive themes are applicable in various fields of academia, e.g social science and peace and conflict studies. The features constitute a framework which provides further understanding into different processes and levels involved in a dehumanising process. This is of value when reviewing and analysing policies, laws and documentation concerning asylum seekers.

Dehumanising treatment of others is in direct conflicts with the fundamental human rights outlined above (section 1.5), such as the right to dignity and the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. In the context of asylum seekers, this can be particularly acute. The ‘us vs them’ distinction and the ability to put the suffering of others out of our mind, becomes easier the farther removed we are from those whose fundamental rights are being infringed. The distance can be geographical, socio-economical or cultural. The author’s

case study of the NF (sections 4 onwards) will highlight the specific manifestations of dehumanisation theory in the asylum seeker context.

A possible critique of the application of theory in this thesis is that Haslam's theory was developed in the context of social psychology, but is being applied to a different discipline of study. It is important to be cautious when applying a theory outside its original academic field (Murray & Evers, 1989). However, the author of this thesis considers that the key points of dehumanisation theory add great value to research in humanitarian and peace and conflict contexts. This is because academic research within the humanitarian field can be branching in different academic fields to give a more holistic approach (Heintze & Thielbörger, 2017: v). Therefore, applying a social psychological theoretical framework to the context and evidence from a humanitarian perspective can produce an analysis beneficial in the research context of politics, asylum seekers/refugees, international security and the humanitarian field.

2.3 Other theories on dehumanisation

Haslam's theory of dehumanisation has been found to be relevant to the study in this thesis. While other theories concerning dehumanisation could have presented valuable insight, Haslam's theory presented the most detailed framework which can be used for this analysis.

The leading competing theory in this field was presented by Jacques-Philippe Leyens et al. (2000) in the publication "The Emotional Side of Prejudice: The Attribution of Secondary Emotions to Ingroups and Outgroups" (Livingstone Smith, 2014). This theory attributes the creation of dehumanisation to so-called *infracumanisation* (Leyens et al., 2000). Leyens' theory explains this phenomenon by focusing on dehumanisation through the language of attributed emotions. The theory of infracumanisation presents two kinds of emotions: *primary* and *secondary* emotions. Primary emotions are fundamental emotions that humans and animals share, e.g. anger, joy and surprise, while secondary emotions are regarded as unique to humans, e.g. "sorrow, admiration, fondness, disillusion, admiration, contempt, and conceit" (Livingstone Smith, 2014: 817; Leyens et al., 2000). Individuals relate these secondary emotions to their own *ingroups*, meaning the group that the individual identifies with. Leyens' theory describes that removing human attributed emotions from other groups, or *outgroups* as referred within the theory, creates a dehumanising bias. The outgroups are then only attributed with primary

emotions, shared with animals and persons as “infrahumans” (Leyens et al., 2000: 186). Leyens et al. write that:

If people think that their group is superior to other groups, are especially concerned about their own group, and attribute different essences to their ingroup and outgroups, then it follows that people should believe that "the" human essence belongs to their ingroup and that an infrahuman essence characterizes (some) outgroups. (Leyens et al., 2000: 187)

Compared to Leyens et al.’s theory of infrahumanisation, Haslam’s theory provides a broader theoretical framework of dehumanisation. It is more multilayered, and the aspects of infrahumanisation (which can be related to Haslam’s animalistic dehumanisation) is considered to be one of several dimensions of dehumanisation. Haslam’s theory provides a framework for a deeper and more holistic analysis. The author of this thesis, therefore, considers it to be the theoretical framework which will add the most value to the subject matter of this thesis.

Other theories concerning dehumanisation or theoretical work related to dehumanisation defined in this thesis is e.g. Daniel Bar-Tal “Delegitimization: The extreme case of stereotyping” (1989), where the author explores the concept of *delegitimization*, which:

is defined as categorization of groups into extreme negative social categories which are excluded from human groups that are considered as acting within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values. Delegitimization may be viewed as a denial of categorized group's humanity. (p. 170)

Bar-Tal’s theory concentrates on intergroup relations and explores the effects of stereotypes, which in turn create prejudices and lead to the dehumanisation of groups. While this theory provides valuable insight, it does not provide enough focus on dehumanisation. Haslam’s theory direct focus on dehumanisation is considered in this thesis to be more relevant.

Furthermore, the research concerning *moral exclusion* could have brought valuable insights, e.g. Susan Opatow (1990) writes:

Moral exclusion occurs when individuals or groups are perceived as outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply. Those who are morally excluded are

perceived as nonentities, expendable, or undeserving; consequently, harming them appears acceptable, appropriate, or just. (p. 173)

This can be related to Haslam's mechanistic dehumanisation. Opatow's moral exclusion provides insight to the instances where individuals are considered and treated as expendable objects, and how a moral aspect justifies this. As Haslam's theory not only considers the mechanistic side of dehumanisation but also include the animalistic aspect of dehumanisation, his theory provides further possibilities for analysis concerning not only one but two forms of dehumanisation.

While the research of the mentioned authors provides interesting and valuable insights, none match the broad framework concerning dehumanisation which Haslam's theory provides, while Haslam's theory encompasses many of the aspects of the mentioned researchers have highlighted. In this thesis, Haslam's theory is, therefore, better suited for as the theoretical framework for the analysis of dehumanisation.

2.4 Critique

The only formulated critique against Haslam's theory has been created by Livingstone Smith (2014) in "Dehumanization, Essentialism, and Moral Psychology". While Livingstone Smith (2014) aims to critique Haslam, his criticism could be argued to rather reconfirm aspects of dehumanisation presented in the theory, e.g.:

Recall that Haslam's "animalistic" form of dehumanization is supposed to be a function of denying that the dehumanized other possesses uniquely human traits, thus leaving them with only human nature traits. However, dehumanized others are often represented as kinds of organisms that do not possess the so-called human nature attributes. They have often been described as cockroaches, worms, microorganisms, lice, and leeches (Smith 2011) – none of which are known for their emotionality, vitality, and warmth. (p.820)

While Livingstone Smith is correct in that animalistic dehumanisation focuses on denying individuals traits that consider them human, it does not contradict itself by identifying

dehumanised individuals likeness to animals as e.g. cockroaches and worms. The fact that these animals lack traits like “emotionality, vitality, and warmth” as described by Livingstone Smith could be argued to instead reconfirm Haslam’s theory that individuals and communities that are dehumanised are considered to be lacking traits that are linked to uniquely human traits. Livingstone Smith’s point regarding the removal of human traits, leaving only “nature human attributes” would arguably be closer linked to Leyens et al.’s theory with primary and secondary emotional attributes, in the sense that the removal of secondary emotions leaves the individual associated with their primary emotions which are considered to more animal-like.

Chapter Three

3. Historical review: Australia's immigration policies and legislation

A historical review of Australian immigration policies and legislation is required to understand the evolution of the treatment of asylum seekers. This review aims to provide insight into the political climate and landscape which resulted in the creation of offshore processing as a concept and solution in Australian politics.

Australia as a migrant based country has had several immigration acts restricting the flow of individuals of non-European descent and individuals arriving by maritime crafts. Since Australia gained its independence in 1901, a multilayered system of statutes, policies and schemes have both shaped and reflected the attitude of the Australian government towards asylum seekers and immigrants arriving on Australian shores.

3.1 The establishment of the federation and 'White Australia' policy

Uniting seven colonies under the British Crown, the new federal Australia designed acts to shape what had until that point been an immigration based country. The legislation was introduced to restrict the flow of immigrants in general, and their country of origin in particular. The legal framework was created by three key statutes: the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (IRA), the Pacific Islanders Labourers Act 1901 (PILA) and the Naturalization Act 1903 (the 1903 Act) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015).

In the start of the 20th century, Chinese labour migration, in particular, was perceived as a threat to the labour market and economy. In response to such fears, IRA was passed to restrict the origin of immigrants and to keep Australia homogenous "based on racial theory, eugenics, polygenesis and Darwinism that had been fundamental to the process of building colonial empires" (Jupp, 2007: 9; Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 13). While IRA did not mention race, it contained a dictation test aimed to exclude non-Europeans (Jupp, 2007: 9; Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 13). Additionally, the Act prescribed that if a prohibited immigrant is found entering Australia they could be punished with six months in prison and liable for deportation. The Act also provided that any person born outside the Commonwealth

(then the British Empire) was automatically liable for deportation. Furthermore, PILA provided for the mass deportation of Pacific Islanders working in industries in New South Wales and Queensland. Between 1904 och 1914, 7,262 South Sea Islanders were forcibly repatriated and those nationalities were not allowed to reenter the Commonwealth after 1904 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 12). It should be noted that due to the fact that Australia is a federation, each of the previous colonies had their own immigration policies. The extent to which the 1901 and 1903 Acts were enforced therefore varied between the different states. Accordingly, the impact of these Acts may not have been so extreme as first reading may indicate. However, these federal laws constitute strong evidence of the federal government's policies treatments of immigrants and asylum seekers (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015).

The treatment of non-European immigrants was firmly cemented by the 1903 Act. It dictated who was eligible to apply for citizenship. Citizenship was not open to “an aboriginal native of Asia, Africa or the Islands of the Pacific” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 12). With amendments to the Act, proficiency in English also became a prerequisite for citizenship (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 12).

3.2 Post-war immigration

The exclusion of non-European immigrants through the above statutes resulted in the coining of the terminology *White Australia Policy*. However, the World Wars would somewhat alter the attitudes towards immigration. There had been regulated migration schemes introducing non-British migrants to settle in Australia in the period between the World Wars. 1945 saw a distinct change in the Australian government's approach to regulating migration. The Ben Chifley government established the Department of Immigration and introduced the large scale Assisted Passenger Migration Scheme (more commonly known as “Ten Pound Poms”²). The purpose was to increase the workforce to support Australia’s growing and developing industries (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015). However, with the IRA still in force, the migration pool was limited to the British Isles (Jayaraman, 2000; Commonwealth of Australia, 2015). Assimilation to the Australian culture became a central requirement for immigrants. The

² “Ten Pound Poms” refers to the price of £10 per adult which was charged for immigrating under the Assisted Passenger Migration scheme. Source: Commonwealth of Australia, 2015.

Nationality and Citizenship Acts of 1948 and 1955 established who was considered to be an Australian citizen (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015). As a result, immigrants who had resettled in Australia during the Second World War were forcibly deported (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 44).

The national legislation and policies are difficult to reconcile with Australia's commitment to the Refugee Convention. The Refugee Convention, as outlined above, places an obligation on signatory nation-states to partake in humanitarian resettlement schemes. In 1958, a new Migration Act (the 1958 Act) was passed, repealing IRA and ending the dictation test requirement (Jayaraman, 2000). The Migration Act 1958 was based on a universal visa system, whereby any nationality was eligible to submit a visa application. While the 'White Australian Policy' lingered, its popularity declined as it was increasingly recognised that the policy was not in agreement with the realities of post-war Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 44).

3.3 The end of the 'White Australia Policy'

The administrative and policy framework that corroborated the 'White Australia Policy' began to be dismantled under the coordination of Peter Heydon³ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015). Heydon "believed that Australia's sense of racial superiority damaged Australia's interests overseas" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 45). The 1958 Act was officially reviewed in 1966 and resulted in amendments of the Act which substantially weakened the 'White Australia Policy'. E.g., the 15-year residence requirement for non-Europeans was reduced to five years (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 45). Later "in 1973, legislative changes to citizenship criteria allowed all migrants, regardless of race or origin, to apply for Australian citizenship after three years of residence" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 51). During this period, Australia committed to the United Nations' Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1967, which made the rights of the 1951 Refugee Convention universal and no longer limited to refugees and asylum seekers from the post-Second World War context in Europe. As a signatory, Australia has to protect the rights within the Protocole and the Refugee Convention and "undertake to put into place domestic measures and legislation compatible with their treaty obligations and duties"

³ Secretary of the Department of Immigration between 1961- 1971.

(OHCHR). Australia's humanitarian responsibility was thereby extended to respond to humanitarian resettlement programs for any nationality (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 59).

Further, the Gough Whitlam and Harold Holt governments ended the establishment of 'White Australian Policy' with the introduction of the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act of 1975. The Act prohibited discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, descent or ethnic origin (Racial Discrimination Act 1975). During the economic prosperity in the 1970s and 80s, the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs introduced the Migration Programme which established partnerships with Asian countries to facilitate migration (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 50-56).

3.4 Introduction of dispensation programmes, amnesties and the Humanitarian Programme

During the 1970s, immigrants started arriving from Vietnam and Indonesia. Australia accepted small groups of refugees, however, "there were no dedicated visas or formally dedicated programmes for refugees" at this time (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 59). In 1973, the "first 'dispensation' programme intended to regularise the status of people who had overstayed their visas" was introduced (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 58). In 1976, the Humanitarian Programme was established to handle the increasing number of asylum seekers arriving by boat. The staff of the programme set out to inform refugees in origin countries such as Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, intending to discourage the motivation for maritime migration to Australia. The Department of Immigration ended up processing 95,000 Indochinese for resettlement between 1975 and 1985 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 60). In 1989, Australia joined a group of countries in the Comprehensive Plan of Action aiming to establish an "integrated and coordinated international response to recurring outflows of refugees from Vietnam and the existing refugee population who had languished in camps in South-East Asian countries for more than a decade" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 62). This did not stop the flow of migrants seeking refuge in Australia via maritime vessels.

3.5 Mandatory detention and "unlawful non-citizens"

The Paul Keating government reacted to the increased volume of the arrival of asylum seekers, predominantly from Indonesia (Phillips & Spinks, 2013). The attitude towards immigrants

arriving by sea changed and a simplified and single streamlined visa program was introduced. The Migration Amendment Act 1992 (the 1992 Act) contained noteworthy legislative changes, including introducing a category of migrants called “unlawful non-citizens.” It also introduced conditions for mandatory detention and removal of these individuals, regardless of how the migrant entered Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 70). The 1992 Act was advertised as a temporary measure to address the vast numbers of Indochinese asylum seekers arriving by sea at the time. Specifically, it strictly regulated the grants of bridging visas. These were only made available to individuals overstaying visas, provided they were not deemed a security risk. Unlawful non-citizens, including in particular “unauthorised boat arrivals”, were ineligible (Phillips & Spinks, 2013). Then Minister of Immigration Gerry Hand said in a speech:

The Government is determined that a clear signal be sent that migration to Australia may not be achieved by simply arriving in this country and expecting to be allowed into the community /.../ This legislation is only intended to be an interim measure. The present proposal refers principally to a detention regime for a specific class of persons. As such it is designed to address only the pressing requirements of the current situation. However, I acknowledge that it is necessary for wider consideration to be given to such basic issues as entry, detention and removal of certain non-citizens (1992; Phillips & Spinks, 2013)

The mandatory detention, while advertised as a temporary measure, has continued in force. Today, Australia is the only country in the world with mandatory detention (Phillips & Spinks, 2013).

3.6 Pacific Solution 2001-2008

The PS as a political policy and concept were first introduced in Australia during the John Howard administration in 2001 (Cameron, 2013). This policy was a reaction to an incident where a Norwegian ship had rescued 450 individuals from a sinking raft in the Indian Ocean. The rescued were mainly Afghani Hazara fleeing an active conflict. They were denied entry to Australian territory, in breach of humanitarian international law (Evershed et al, 2016). Instead of processing and admitting these asylum seekers entry to Australian territory, the Howard government made an agreement with the Pacific island states of PNG and Nauru to take the

refugees. The two nations have strong ties to Australia, having been either under Australian administration (Nauru) or a previous colony (PNG) (Oxfam, 2007:6). The arrangement was backed by the notion that the refugees were “queue jumpers” in the international system and choosing an illegal migration route (Cameron, 2013).

This arrangement was in place between 2001 and 2008. Officially on the 8th February 2008, PS ended. Thereafter, the asylum seekers on Nauru would be processed on the Australian external territory Christmas Island (Phillips & Spinks, 2013; Cameron, 2013). During this time Australia faced great criticism from human rights organisations and the UN concerning the mistreatment of refugees. The offshore processing of asylum seekers was viewed to be in direct violation of the Refugee Convention. The PS also appeared in direct conflict with Australia’s aim to promote “accountability, transparency, equity and sustainability as key principles for governance in the Pacific, so the lack of transparency and sustainability in the (current) program has sparked widespread anger” (Oxfam, 2007: 7).

3.7 Pacific Solution 2011-Present

In 2011, the Julia Gillard government tasked the Joint Select Committee on Australia’s Immigration Detention Network to re-evaluate the PS. The aim was to develop a “no advantage” policy (Davidson, 2016). Following recommendations from the committee, parliament voted to reinstate the PS with the passing of the Migration Legislation Amendment (Regional Processing and Other Measures) Bill 2011.⁴ The bill provided for an “‘enhanced screening’ process - criticised for its lack of transparency” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012; Davidson, 2016). As a result, individuals trying to reach Australian territory via maritime crafts were redirected to Manus Island and Nauru for their asylum seeker processing (Davidson, 2016). The differentiation from the Howard government’s PS is that the current policy is officially focused on combating human smuggling, instead of addressing “queue-jumpers” (Cameron, 2013). After the opposition leader Tony Abbott was sworn in as Prime Minister in 2013, he announced the implementation of Operation Sovereign Borders, a militarised effort to divert maritime migrants to Nauru or PNG. Maritime migrant issues were met with a culture of secrecy, insisting that

⁴The bill was later renamed the Migration Legislation Amendment (Regional Processing and Other Measures) Bill 2012

“water matter” were a border security concern (Davidson, 2016). The secrecy concerning the treatment of asylum seekers in offshore processing centres was reinforced by the introduction of the Border Force Act 2015. It is now an offence, carrying a maximum penalty of two years in prison, to release information concerning conditions within the processing facilities (Davidson, 2016). The Australian government claim independent investigations of the facilities by a third party are unnecessary, and the United Nations, Amnesty and other non- and trans-governmental organisations have been denied entry to NRPC (Davey, 2015). Additionally, the Nauru government in 2014 introduced a non-refundable fee of 8000 AUD for journalist applying for a visitors visa to visit the regional processing centre. The fee is the result of hostility towards media paying attention issues at the regional processing centres (Davidson, 2016; Farrell, 2015b). NRPC was a detention centre until 2015 when greater free movement on Nauru was introduced by converting it to an “open centre.” However, asylum seekers are still not allowed to leave the island republic (Karlsen, 2016). The latest developments under the Malcolm Turnbull government is a possible resettlement program to the US. If the resettlement deal is refused by the refugee a 20-year visa is established on the island of Nauru (Maiden, 2016).

3.8 Australia and European-centered immigration policies in the context of dehumanisation theory

Haslam’s dehumanisation theory is presented in Chapter 2 includes two versions of dehumanisation, animalistic and mechanistic dehumanisation. These forms of dehumanisation are the product of the removal of the humanness detailed as UH and NH. The regarded removal of UH and NH humanness aspects of individuals or groups which can result in othering and dehumanisation.

As outlined above, Australia's immigration legislation and policies have had features of exclusion of groups, firstly of non-Europeans and later of immigrants arriving by maritime vessels. This is arguably evident from the implementation on ILA, PILA and the 1903 Act where individuals that are not from the British Isles were directly liable for deportation and not allowed to gain citizenship. This can be considered to have been enforced in the effort to keep Australian homogenous and uphold the values based on the Darwinistic ideologies that the policies were built upon. This gives an indication that in the effort to keep Australia homogenous, individuals

not from the British Isles are denied aspects of humanness and therefore not equal worth to British immigrants. This is evident in e.g. the English dictation requirement needed to regain citizenship. If an individual lacks the speech proficiency in the English language it can be argued they lack a key aspect of British culture, which indicates that the lack of language skills could contribute to regard that these individuals lack culture which is one of the UH aspects animalistic dehumanisation. Thereby by dehumanising “an aboriginal native of Asia, Africa or the Islands of the Pacific” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015: 12) by denying them the possibility to regain citizenship on the basis of reinforcing the Darwinistic ideologies, indicating that some animals/humans are superior to others by the lack of culture and other HU aspects which ultimately creates animalistic dehumanisation.

Furthermore, during post-World War II immigration and the implementation of the Australia White Policy contained restrictions of which individuals were allowed entry into Australia, and specifically from which parts of the world they were from. Specifically not from non-European countries. Again this could be considered evidence that immigrants pose a threat to the strive for a homogeneous Australia. This reinforced an us versus them mentality which can be found in the social-cognitive underpinnings of dehumanisation. The Humanitarian Programme urges individuals immigrating to Australia from mainly Asian Pacific countries to refrain from seeking residence in Australia, which can also arguably be considered to be a threat to Australia's homogenous society. Continuously, with the implementation of 1992 Act and PS, it can be argued that the focus on restricting “unauthorised boat arrivals” arriving from South East Asia and the Pacific, to limit the pool of individuals who were eligible for bridging visas. By considering these individual as *illegal* again implies a “us” versus “them” mentality. This can be considered to have to limit the NH aspects of humanness such as agency and individuality. Removing NH humanness aspects can result in that these individuals would be considered as removable objects, indicating mechanistic dehumanisation.

In summary, while Australia has committed to international conventions and humanitarian obligations, hostility towards the growing number of undocumented immigrants has increased in the latter part of the 20th century and the start of the 21st century, indicating both animalistic and mechanistic dehumanisation.

Chapter Four

4. The Nauru Regional Processing Centre, actors and pre-Nauru Files reports

To further the understanding of the NF, it is important to understand the environment, including the administrative and operational context, in which the recorded incidents occurred.

4.1 Nauru Regional Processing Centre

The NRPC was initially established in 2001. The Statement of Principles, signed on 10 September 2001, entailed a commitment of 20 million AUD for development of camps planned to house 800 detainees (Oxfam, 2007). Two camps were built in the Meneng District on the southeast part of the island, named “Topside” and “State side” (Oxfam, 2007).

The processing centres were closed in 2008 by order of the Kevin Rudd government, following political campaign promises during the 2008 general election and political pressure from international institutions and NGOs, including the UN and Amnesty, that were strongly criticising the processing centres (Cameron, 2013).

Topside reopened in October 2012, two months after the parliament accepted the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Australia’s Immigration Detention Network. Since then, the detention centre has housed between 371 - 1177 individuals (see Appendix 1). The detainees include refugees from Iran, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iraq, Burma, India, Nepal, Somalia and Lebanon. Additionally, a significant proportion of asylum seekers are classed as Stateless (see graph 1; Karlsen, 2016).



Graph 1. Nationalities on Nauru and Manus Island (PNG) Regional Detention Centre in 2014-2015.
Source: Karlsen, 2016.

The Nauru government commenced refugee status determinations on 19 March 2013 and started “handing down its first tranche of refugee status determinations (though the precise number of persons assessed and outcomes was not made publicly available until July 2014)” (Karlsen, 2016). As of 31 October 2016, 1,195 claims for asylum have been filed. 79 % (941 claims) of the claims have been found to be genuine refugees (Karlsen, 2016).



Picture 1. Aerial photo of “Topside” camp from 2015. Coordinates 0.540564°S 166.929703°E. Source: Remi Chauvin for the Guardian (Farrell, 2015)

4.2 Actors operating at Nauru Regional Processing Centre

NRPC is operated by an elaborate system of outsourcing private companies on the behalf of the Australian government in agreement with the Nauru government.

The budget spending by the Australian government is estimated to be 1.1 billion AUD between 2015-2016 (Karlsen, 2016). The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection monitors and assesses the outsourced companies through a performance management framework included in the service contract (Farrell, 2015a). The Australian government has decided to withhold the names of several contractors, due to fear of prosecution and boycotts (Farrell, 2017). The following companies are however known to be involved in the running of the NRPC:

4.2.1 Broadspectrum/ Ferrovial

Transfield Security, originally a building and mining company, was contracted in 2012 to operate the NRPC by the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship⁵ (Transfield services, 2012). The company changed its name to Broadspectrum in 2015, due to the Transfield family withdrawing the use of the name following to the alleged human rights violations and “controversy of the detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru” (Wiggins & Smith, 2015). Ferrovial bought Broadspectrum in 2016 and continued to hold a contract from the Australian government until 2017 when it was replaced by Canstruct International Pty Ltd (Amnesty International, 2017). Arguably the Australian government therefore have to have had formed an understanding that the company contracted to run the centre had knowledge about alleged human rights violations and were potentially contributing to those violations, so much so that the company’s founders wanted to distance themselves and the association with their name (Wiggins & Smith, 2015). Despite this, the Australian government continued to contract to Broadspectrum, and later Ferrovial (Amnesty International, 2017). This could weaken any possible argument

⁵ The Department of Immigration and Citizenship changed its name in 2013 to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

from the Australian government stating that they were not aware of possible human right abuses and cannot be held responsible for the actions of a private entity.

4.2.2 Wilson Security

Wilson Security has been subcontracted by Broadspectrum to provide security services at the NRPC (Transfield services, 2012; Wilson security, 2014). Together with Broadspectrum, Wilson Security discontinued its services at NRPC as of October 2017 (Wilson Security, 2016). The company faced great criticism from the union Media Alliance and the political opposition when it found that Wilson Security hired private investigators to find possible confidential sources to journalists within the detention centre (Farrell, 2017).

4.2.3 Salvation Army

The religious organisation was initially contracted to run the welfare services at NRPC. Upon being granted the 74 million AUD contract by the Australian government (Laughland & Jabour, 2013), Salvation Army spokesperson, Major Paul Moulds, stated:

While The Salvation Army remains gravely concerned about the potential impact of offshore processing on the wellbeing and mental health of asylum seekers, our primary concern is to provide the best possible care in these circumstances. (The Salvation Army, 2012).

The contract expired 31 January 2014 and was not renewed by the immigration minister Scott Morrison (Laughland & Jabour, 2013).

4.2.4 Save the Children

Between 2012-2015 Save the Children performed duties related to children's welfare and mental health, and received 36 million AUD for welfare services to minors (Farrell, 2015c; AusTender, 2014). The organisation received bad publicity concerning statements regarding that staff members encouraged asylum seekers to commit self-harm at NRPC. Serious allegations of sexual assault claims were also made against Save the Children staff at NRPC. Ten staff members had their contracts terminated by the Australian government due to these claims and were deported. Integrity minister Philip Moss launched an investigation into the sexual assault claims. The accusations towards Save the Children employees were proved false, and the

dismissed employees received compensation when the exoneration came through the Moss report (Commonwealth of Australia; Davidson, 2017). The organisation did not get a renewed contract and the contract went to International Health and Medical Services (IHMS).

4.2.5 International Health and Medical Services

The company provides mental health care services and won a 1.6 billion contract from the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (Farrell, 2015a). International Health and Medical Services (IHMS) are contracted to provide primary and mental health care services in the “broadly comparable to Australian public health standards, to asylum seekers residing within the Regional Processing Centre (RPC) on Nauru” (IHMS, 2019).

4.2.6 Digicel Nauru

Partly owned by the Nauruan government, Digicel received 3 million AUD for upgrades to telecommunications and internet infrastructure (AusTender, 2013; Farrell, 2017). The island republic’s only telecom company banned websites, such as Facebook, due to fear of media scrutiny in 2015 (Farrell, 2015c).

4.2.7 Nauru government

In addition to Digicel and Eigigu Holdings, the Nauru government charges the Australian government visa fees up to 1000 AUD per asylum seekers.

4.2.8 Doctors without Borders

“Médecins Sans Frontières” (MSF), or known in English as “Doctors without Borders”, operated on Nauru during 2017-2018, and treated both local and asylum seekers. Their presence were terminated in October 2018 when they were forced out of Nauru. The organisation released a statement stating that “MSF is deeply concerned for the health and wellbeing of its patients and describes the mental health situation of asylum seekers and refugees on the island as ‘beyond desperate’,” (Davidson 2018). This forced exit of an organisation that speaks out concerning the treatment and health of asylum seekers on Nauru could indicate a pattern of terminating and not renewing contracts of out non-profit organisations that are committed to human rights like Salvation Army, Save the Children and MSF present at Nauru to provide support and health

(mental and physical) services to the asylum seekers but maintaining expensive private for-profit corporate contracts e.g. Boradspectrum/Ferrovial (Davidson, 2018; Farrell, 2015a; Farrell, 2015c; AusTender, 2014; Laughland & Jabour, 2013).

4.3 Reports and investigations from 2012-2016

Since the opening of the processing centre, reports and investigations by trans-international institutions, international non-governmental organisations (INGO) and government assigned committees have published findings giving rise to grave concerns regarding human rights abuses (see Appendix 2). They report a lack of services, delayed refugee claims, deteriorating mental health, poor facilities unsuitable for their purpose, sexual assault and environments unsuitable for minors. Companies profit from the immigration detention business and, by extension, from grave human rights violations. Recommendations include resettlement in Australia and that the governments and companies involved should take a stand against human rights violations and end the offshore detention. Medical and welfare staff working within the offshore processing scheme have reportedly denounced the treatment of asylum seekers at NPRC. They have described it as inhumane and ethically posing a grave issue from a humanitarian perspective (Isaacs, 2015; Gunn, 2016). Generally, the mental wellbeing of asylum seekers is evidently deteriorating. 34 deaths have been recorded by The Border Crossing Observatory since the first opening of Australia's offshore processing detention centres. At least 30% of those deaths (11 cases) have been determined to have been due to self-harm and suicide (Esses et al, 2016). However, despite severe critique from the UN and human rights organisations, the Australian government still attempts to silence critics. E.g. they have focused on the technical issue that Dr Isaacs broke the law when he published the editorial “Nauru and detention of children” (2015) in the Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health. Meanwhile, the government has not adequately responded to Dr Isaac’s descriptions of the treatment of children within the offshore processing centre, and fear for their physical and mental health. The closest to formal recognition of the issue is the acknowledgement by:

The immigration department itself [of] the link between prolonged immigration detention and deteriorating mental health at the Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) hearings into children in detention. (Esses et al, 2016)

4.4 Dehumanisation theory and the running of Nauru Regional Processing Centre

The strong bond between Nauru and Australia is further reinforced through the placement of the offshore processing centre on the island state, which creates a complex outsourcing scheme. The NRPC is an industry which is a source for lucrative contracts and employment possibilities. The Nauruan government and international cooperations gain large contracts from the Australian government to run its offshore processing scheme, for e.g. Digicel, Eigigu Holdings and Boradspectrum/Ferrovial. The structure of private contractors and the geographically removed location creates distance between the Australian society and the asylum seekers. This facilitates both the animalistic and mechanistic relational cognition aspect of dehumanisation, preventing the forming of social relationships. Putting a physical distance between the asylum seekers and the Australian population enforces the animalistic us versus them mentality. It also enforces the mechanistic dehumanisation by excluding the asylum seekers from the society they want to be a part of. Physically removing them from that society prevents the Australian people from relating to the asylum seekers.

In addition, INGOs who have had contracts to operate at NRPC have ended their work, often in relation to speaking out against human right abuses at NRPC, despite confidentiality clauses. Meanwhile, companies like Boardspectrum/Ferrovial continued to have contracts to run NRPC, despite claims of human right abuses. Arguably the INGOs operate to uphold international human rights and work to uphold the core of international humanitarian of protecting human dignity and treating all humans are equal but for-profits do operate on the basis on the same core. By removing these INGOs and implement efforts to silence their claims one could argue this is a way to remove exposing aspects of the humanness of the asylum seekers. Despite continuous strong criticism has been published by transnational institutions such as UNHCR and INGOs, refugees and asylum seekers are likely to remain in Nauru for the foreseeable future.

Chapter Five

5. The Nauru Files

In October 2016 the journalists Nick Evershed, Ri Liu, Paul Farrell, and Helen Davidson at the Australian newspaper the Guardian published an online interactive database containing a collection of documents sourced from NRPC. The database consists of 2,105 documents which are incident reports authored by personnel at the NRPC between 2013-2015. Incident reports are in this context short summaries of “reportable” events recorded by NRPC staff member. Staff members are obligated to write these reports due to “contractual requirements set down by the Australian government in order to document and keep records of what is happening inside the detention system” (Guardian, 2016). As the NF collection of incident reports was not previously available to the public, it is considered to provide the public with new insight into events at the NRPC related to the 591-1,233 asylum seekers that were detained at NRPC during this time period (Appendix 1.; Guardian, 2016; Evershed et al, 2016; Isaacs, 2016).

Therefore, to establish whether NF provides evidence of dehumanising tendencies, an overview of NF’s incident reports will be presented below. This overview presents quotes directly sourced from NF with the aim to provide an understanding of what events that have occurred at NRPC and themes that are re-occurring within the documents⁶.

5.1 Themes within the Nauru Files

The information provided in the reports varies from children falling down on the football field to reports of self-harm. Depending on the severity of the event, Transfield Services were contractually obliged to write an incident report, or the company would be eligible for fines. Events of a great severe nature, referred to as “Critical” incidents in NF, would have to be verbally reported within 30 minutes and in writing within three hours, while incidents considered to be minor needed to be documented in a report within 24 hours.

⁶ In NF both the terms retracted and redacted is used in the quotes from incident reports, indicated information has been removed.

Additionally, the incident reports in the interactive database are categorised by what is perceived to have happened in the event reported by Transfield Service according to the contract with the Australian government (Evershed et al, 2016). Each incident can fall into several categories and Evershed et al. (2016) note that the categorisation of the incidents should be treated with caution. The categories presented below serve as indications of what Transfield Services have been reporting to the Australian Government.

Therefore, in this thesis overreaching themes are presented, which combines different categories and evidence in other incident reports that might provide a further understanding of events of similar character. Based on the aim and purpose of this thesis, the themes presented below have been judged by the author as deviating from events that could be considered as a by-product of regular life.

After reviewing the incident reports, four themes have been identified by the author: (1) deteriorating mental health of asylum seekers; (2) sexual assaults, abusive behaviour and mistreatment by staff; (3) incidents involving children; and (4) misrepresentation of information. These themes are presented in the thesis by the quotations of either the authors of the NF incident reports or direct quotes from the persons involved in the incidents documented in the NF incident reports.

5.1.1 Deteriorating mental health of asylum seekers

A large portion of the incident reports provides evidence of deteriorating mental health of asylum seekers, especially related to the infliction of self-harm. While no definition of what exactly constitutes self-harm is presented in the database, the mental health charity SANE Australia defines it as follows:

Self-harm means any behaviour which involves the deliberate causing of pain or injury to oneself — usually as an extreme way of trying to cope with distressing or painful feelings. Self-harm includes cutting, burning or hitting oneself, binge-eating or starvation, or repeatedly putting oneself in dangerous situations. It can also involve abuse of drugs or alcohol, including overdosing on prescription medications (SANE Australia, 2018).

In accordance to the classification in the NF, the incidents reports available throughout the database indicate 331 reports of threats of self-harm, 62 reports of actual self-harm and 20 reports of voluntary starvation (Guardian, 2016). Thereby, out of the 2,105 incident reports in the database, close to a fifth of the reports indicate asylum seekers having the intention to harm themselves or actually harming themselves. If each incident report represented one individual's case, that would indicate that between 33% - 70% (depending on the time period) would have mental health issues based on the number of asylum seekers detained at NRPC (Appendix 1; Guardian, 2016).

Threat of self-harm

Of the 331 incident reports indicating threats to self-harm, the severity ranges from asylum seekers indicating “something bad will happen” to threats of suicide. Quotes from incident reports giving an indication of wanting to harm oneself are e.g.:

“[Redacted 1] told caseworker she had to see her husband [redacted 2] today if not something bad would happen” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca141212);

Throughout the incident reports, there are continuously wordings like “hurt”, “kill” “strangle”, “harm” and “die”, which in this thesis are all considered to be more extreme in the context of self-harm and threats of suicide. Evidence of this is e.g.:

“...[Redacted] was heightened. Stated he wants to kill himself. Displaying unusual behaviour. Appeared happier later” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca141683);

“...I would rather kill my baby in my womb than watch her die slowly here on Nauru...” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140087);

“...She handed the rope to the case manager saying that she had considered using this to strangle herself...” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca150120);

“Client advised that "All the single females met to discuss mass suicide” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140794);

“...I have to kill myself to go to Australia?/.../What kind of place makes a [retracted] year old try to kill themselves!...” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca150186);

‘If I am made to have my baby on Nauru, I will have my baby in my tent and kill myself and my baby /.../ if I am made to have my baby on Nauru, I will have my baby in my tent and kill myself and my baby’[sic!]. [redacted] stated ‘I have a plan’ [redacted] then proceeded to go into her tent and came out with a razor. she showed the razor to CW and explained she could take out the blade from the razor and with her hand gestured moving the razor across her stomach, indicating how she would self harm. [Redacted] further disclosed she would cut open her stomach and stated ‘to do my own caesarean’. [Redacted] then informed she would pull out the baby and then stated ‘I will then cut the baby in half’. [Redacted] went on to inform that if they take away the razors there are many in RPC3 and that she would find one. She informed if she could not find any razors she would throw herself onto a chair or beat herself with the chair or a rock until she killed herself and the baby (Evershed et al., 2016).⁷

These examples of threats of self-harm indicate great distress by the asylum seekers involved. A large portion of the reports categorised as threats of self-harm was of the severer nature, often specifically declaring that the asylum seeker wishes to die or have the intention to end his/her life.

Actual self-harm

62 incident reports detail instances of actual self-harm, and their severity ranges from self-inflicted wounds to attempted suicides. The actions of self-harm can be argued to not be intended to be life-ending, as they seem to often consist of actions like banging heads against walls and cutting oneself with razors. E.g.:

“[Redacted 1] was very distressed and disclosed that his mother had been self harming, by hitting herself and banging head against wall” (Evershed et al, 2016); ⁸

“[Redacted] showed case worker her arm and she had self harmed overnight. Case worker saw at least 10-12 superficial cuts on arm” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca14461);

⁷[Incident report number unknown], 15 October 2015.

⁸ Incident report Sca [illegible] 4774, 26 September 2014.

“...[retracted] showed me a heart that he had sown into his hand using needle and thread. I asked why he did it and he said ‘I don’t know’” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca150321).

More extreme medical incidences of self-harm are evident in the documents. In many of these documents there is a reference to the phrase “code blue“ and occasionally “code black”. The psychologist and traumatologist Paul Stevenson that has worked at NRPC clarify that a “code blue is a medical emergency, almost invariably a suicide attempt or act of self-harm” and a code black indicate “Officer Needing Assistance” (Doherty and Marr, 2016). Amongst the files are there documented attempted suicides, e.g.:

“...she began to vomit. A strong smell of bleach was detected. A code blue was called” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca150442);

[Retracted] tying the rope to the beam above his room. He has also tied the rope around his neck and attempted to weigh down the rope. Writer and CSO [Client service officer] supported his weight and called a code blue over the radio (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140634);

Yesterday my mum and dad kept scolding me about not eating, mum was yelling a little bit but dad kept yelling lots saying if you don't eat I will beat you. He followed me in and out of the room for about 30 mins. Then I didn't want to live anymore so I got a razor and tried to cut my throat to kill myself, but the razor wasn't sharp enough. I found another razor that was sharp and then got scared so I cut my arm. I cut my arm as it made me feel better, but I also thought if I did it mum and dad would leave me alone... (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca290503);

... I responded to a code blue in called in tent [retracted], in Area 10, arriving at this location at approximately 0749hrs. On arrival I found 4 male asylum seekers with a range of cuts on their forearms. The cuts ranged from superficial to deep. //...//First Aid was offered to all 4 UAM's into by CSO's [retracted] and [retracted] and this was declined/...//The situation ins Area 10 was chaotic, with numerous UAM's attempting to destroy property and tents at 0750hrs I called an Emergency Code Black (Officer Needing Assistance). ERT members and more CSO's arrived to contain the situation. It was at this time I observed further 2 UAM's with superficial cuts to their forearms...(Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140634).

Due to the nature of the redaction of the document, it is not always clear if the individuals are described by name or their personal identification number, or referred to as “Boat ID number” in the previous quote which refers to their boat arrival number (Evershed, et al, 2016). The last quote indicated there was a practice to identify individuals by their number instead of their names.

Voluntary starvation

As described above in the SANE Australia definition of self-harm, voluntary starvation is also a manifestation of self-harm. The incident reports give evidence that voluntary starvation was conducted for various reasons, such as a form of protest in addition to self-harm, e.g.:

“Writer spoke with client about general wellbeing and his non-eating. He stated he had not been drinking water. He refused all offered. Minimal response” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca141600);

[Redacted] was very distressed following a CAPS interview - she said that the interpreter did not relay the correct or full information. Client left interview in extreme distress, indicated she is not eating (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca141336);

“Client [redacted] stated to SCA worker that he had commenced voluntary hunger strike due to lack of information regarding his back pain and treatment from immigration”(Evershed et al, 2016: Sca14536);

“Asylum seekers advice they have been on a hunger strike for many days, in protest to not being able to be together in OPC3” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca141060);

“[Redacted] had informed the staff that he will not eat or drink anything until he gets to Australia” (Evershed et al, 2016).⁹

In summary, these reports describing either threats of self-harm or actions of self-harm indicate that the health of asylum seekers are deteriorating. Other incident reports include labels such as medical incidents and family violence. These can be seen as additional indicators of deteriorating mental health and extreme stress.

⁹ [Incident report number unknown], 28 May 2015.

5.1.2 Sexual assault, abusive behaviour and mistreatment by staff

A high number of reports testify to incidents concerning sexual assaults, abusive behaviour and mistreatment conducted by staff members. While children and adults have reportedly been subject to sexual abuse by other asylum seekers, the sexual assaults by NRPC staff members have the additional element with the abuse of power. E.g. incident report Sca150051 describes two incidents, firstly where a Transfield staff member sexually assaulted a child during a car ride where:

...[Redacted] informed me that her husband [redacted] had reported 4 months ago to her that he had been in a car with his [redacted] year old son with 2 Nauruan Wilsons Security officers, [redacted] stated that according to [redacted], [redacted] was sitting in-between himself and the security officer. [Redacted] stated that this car was taking the two from area 9 to IMHS RPC3. [Redacted] alleged that [redacted] informed her that their son [redacted] had said to [redacted] that one Nauruan officer had put his hand up [redacted] shorts and was playing with his bottom. [Redacted] then reported that [redacted] stated that he removed [redacted] from the middle of the car and placed [redacted] on his lap but did not say anything as he feared the two Nauruan officers in the car with him. [redacted] informed CSPW [redacted] that she had reported this to immigration officers in Brisbane when she was recently medivac'd [sic!] (within the last two weeks)'... (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca150051).

In the same incident report, a second incident is present concerning a guard stating that stroked a female asylum seekers headscarf stating:

“...if there is anything you want let me know. I can get you anything...” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca150051).

Additionally, a Wilson Security guard is documented saying this to a female asylum seeker while she is hospitalised for self-harm:

“I like you /.../ your problem is that you haven’t had sex in two years /.../ why don’t you try having sex with me?” (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca141017);

Another example of sexual harassment and sexual abuse by guards and male individuals in NRPC is the following;

...[Redacted 1] advised that she continues to receive ongoing sexual advances by a number of male Nauruans in Area 1 of OPC3 often near the playground at night. She states on the most recent occasion occurred on 20/04/14 in the evening when a male Nauruan CSO approached her and [redacted 2] and said when she gets out here, he'll marry her. She reported over the past 3-4 weeks, she had a Nauruan CSO attempt to hug and kiss her and invite her to a 'sexy party'" (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca141201).

Other than acts of a sexual nature, there is evidence that staff have been involved in incidents of an abusive nature, often involving children, e.g.:

[Redacted] witnessed [redacted] being physically removed from the playground with a lot of force by the guard on duty. He was upset by the way he was treated and turned around and threw a handful of rocks at the guard. The guard went to grab [redacted]. However [redacted] was nearby and witnessed everything and shouted at the guard. [Redacted] and the guard argued when a second guard came over and resolved the issue (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140144);

CSPW was approached by [redacted] regarding his son [redacted]. He states that one of the Nauru guard [redacted] has struck his son across the face. He uses his hands to show a slap/strike across the cheek and showed the caseworker his sons face, which he said was swollen (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140096);

...[Redacted] currently has bruising on his right buttock/thigh area following the incident reported on 20/04/14 which CSO [redacted] intervened when it was alleged [redacted] slapped [redacted]. [Redacted] [redacted] alleges that injuries on her son [redacted] are a direct result of CSO [redacted]'s intervention and use of physical force in managing the behaviour (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca141250).

Save the Children advisors have almost exclusively been reporting offences concerning other staff members mistreating asylum seekers, including children. In several cases, Save the

Children advisors log complaints concerning security officers from Wilson security and Transfield services for rude behaviour, non-cooperation and lack of responding, e.g.:

As the Save the children caseworker (CW) [redacted] entered OPC3 she was approached by [redacted] [redacted] who was carrying his son [redacted] [redacted] looked visibly distressed and [redacted] was rather limp and quite non responsive. His mother followed closely behind and stated that [redacted] is very hot, 'our rooms is very hot' and indicated that they needed IHMS assistance. The CW asked the parents whether an ambulance had been called and got the impression from the family that it had. The CW attempted to liaison with 3 or 4 Wilson officers about the ambulance. The officers appeared causal in their response and communication the mother. The CW was familiar with this family and assessed [redacted]'s state to be major, bordering critical. The CW was informed that no ambulance was available and they would have need to take a bus to IHMS. The CW was told that a bus may take 30 minutes or more. The CW states the seriousness of the situation for the child involved. The CW was challenged by the officer [redacted] who asked 'Have you got kids?' and another who asked 'Have you done First Aid?'. Short time after a save the children vehicle arrived at camp. The family was put in the car by the CW and Wilson stated that an escort of their was needed to accompany the family. The CW asked for an escort to be arranged, as the child was very sick. The response given was that Wilsons officers were short on staff. A short time later, a escort was provided and the family were driven to IHMS at OPC1 (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140139);

The Save the Children Case Worker (CW) [Redacted] approached the SAA area to speak with her clients which staying there. As she approached, she noticed 3 Wilson officers trying to block the path physically (with their bodies) of another male client. The client is not known to the CW and to appeared to be alone, without family in SAA at the time of the incident. The officers appeared to be blocking the client from approaching the stairs to leave SAA. The client was not presenting as physically agrees I've what the CW observed and a female Wilson officer [redacted] began to raise her voice at the client telling him to sit down. She argued with him and mimicked his behaviour. She swore at the client saying 'you fucking touched me' and 'you're a dick' (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140141).

The events transcribed in these reports give an indication of staff members conducting inappropriate behaviour towards persons in within the NRPC related to their status as employees

of the centre. It could be argued that staff are in a position of power since they are in charge of the care of asylum seekers and are part of the operational apparatus of NRPC.

5.1.3 Incidents involving children

While information concerning age is redacted in the incident reports, the reports still provide information if the incident involved minors. Among the files, there were 226 incidents reports concerning assault and express concern for minors. The events include e.g. the following:

“School bus driver drove dangerously, stopped to get petrol (leaving children to wait on hot bus and side of the road in the heat)” (Evershed et al, 2016);¹⁰

“...[Redacted] said she was hit by her teacher ‘4 times on legs and stomach...’ (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140585);

Child [redacted] allegedly still not eating. Child reported that he will not eat without his father. Father reported that he is not coping and all his son wants is to be with his mother who is in Australia on a bridging visa (Evershed et al, 2016);¹¹

SPW [redacted] and Interpreter [redacted] interviewed [redacted] for Case Management reasons. Save the Children spoke with [redacted] about a rash on his daughter’s arm [redacted]. [Redacted] became very irritated and stated he was going to take [redacted] to IHMS and leave her there until they solved the problem. [redacted] added that he had reached his limit and could not care for his children anymore and that he is giving up the care of his children. [redacted] repeated several times the children were no longer his responsibility and SCA were to take them. [redacted] stated that if this did not happen he would kill himself and his children. [Redacted] stated he was no longer responsible for what happens to the children (Evershed et al, 2016: Sca140634).

Due to the redacted information, classification system and poor documentation administration, it is hard to indicate exactly how many incidents that involve children but it is evident that a large portion of the events transcribed do involve children, due to the language of the incident reports and if it’s noted that the events have included a minor. This includes the events of deterioration

¹⁰ [Incident report number unknown], 24 March 2014.

¹¹ [Incident report number unknown], 1 September 2013.

of mental health, sexual abuse, abusive behaviour and mistreatment by staff that has been previously mentioned.

5.1.4 Misrepresentation of information

In the files, it becomes apparent there is a systematic downgrading of incidents involving staff members of NRPC, as 133 incident reports are recorded by the Guardian to have been altered by staff at NRCP (Evershed et al, 2016). Evershed et al. (2016) also observe this in the information section concerning the database, and write:

The private companies that manage the detention centre have extremely poor data handling practices. Some incidents have also been deliberately downgraded in their seriousness. This means that the way incidents are categorised should be examined carefully. There are examples of severe incidents categorised as “information” /.../ The risk ratings are applied inconsistently, if at all. Some of the ways the information has been categorised has changed over time, leading to further inconsistencies in counting the data.

Evidence of this can be found in incident reports across the database. E.g. is the case Sca140042, which details a father telling a Save the Children officer that a staff member had choked his son. The Save the Children officer, upon further investigation, later noted in the incident report these allegations seemed legitimate. While the information in this document contained details of a serious offence committed by a staff member towards a minor, the rating of the case did not change even though further investigation proved the allegations to be true. Additionally, the previously referenced incident report Sca150051 was originally classified as critical, indicating a grave incident, but the rating was changed by Transfield service staff downgrading it to a lower security rating. This raises concern regarding the internal rating system and the possibility of downgrading reports involving staff members.

In 2015, there is a notable increase in the number of files for which the severity classification was retrospectively downgraded. In 2014, there is evidence of five cases where the severity rating has been downgraded. In the period of January to October in 2015, this number had increased to 128. It is notable that it was during this time period which Broadspectrum’s running of NRPC became the subject of serious allegations of human rights violations (Wiggins

& Smith, 2015). The subsequent abuse and downgrading of documents have also been reported by journalists and confirming the notion that staff members at NRPC breached the contracted guidelines staff members and companies were contractually obliged to follow. This breach concerned reporting and conduct towards asylum seekers (Farrell & Doherty, 2016).

5.2 Australian government's response to the Nauru Files

Due to the nature of the release of the documents reactions, in a newspaper and without apparent approval from either the Australian or Nauru government, it has caused the government to heavily criticised the release of the document collection. The Guardian journalists Davidson and Doherty stated:

Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection said many of the incident reports 'reflect unconfirmed allegations or uncorroborated statements and claims – they are not statements of proven fact'. 'The documents published today are evidence of the rigorous reporting procedures that are in place in the regional processing centre – procedures under which any alleged incident must be recorded, reported and where necessary investigated,' it said. The department said it was examining the matters raised to ensure the reporting process by the centre's service providers was appropriate, but there was no evidence to suggest under- or misreporting. 'The Australian government provides support to the Nauruan government, including the deployment of Australian Federal Police officers to work alongside the [Nauruan police force] and build their capacity to investigate complex and sensitive incidents' (2016).

This quote provides an indication that the Australian government disapprove of the release of the NF to the public, while the staff members at NRPC followed the contractual agreements from the Australian government which aimed to document the events at NRPC. Furthermore, Australia's Immigration Minister Peter Dutton at the time of the NF release commented with the aim to provide an explanation of the content of NF:

'Because in the end people have paid money to people smugglers and they want to come to our country,' he said. 'Some people have even gone to the extent of self-harming and people

have self-immolated in an effort to get to Australia and certainly some have made false allegations' (Calvo, 2016).

According to the Australian Federal Police, people smugglers are “individuals or groups who assist others to illegally enter a country” and are according to their website concerning people smuggling the consequences of this is that “there are serious security and criminal concerns when people arriving in Australia are not properly identified; there are major quarantine and health risks involved in people bypassing lawful immigration channels; processing illegal immigrants creates significant logistical problems and costs; it infringes the sovereignty of Australia's borders” (AFP). Due to the language of Duttons comment connects the asylum seekers to people smugglers which has a strong negative connotation with the Australian Federal Police, which is the policing branch of the Australian government.

Chapter Six

6. Analysis: Nauru Files and dehumanisation

The previous chapters presented an overview from a historical perspective over Australia's immigration the legislation and policies, actors and structure of the NRPC in addition to the NF's overreaching themes, but does this provide evidence that dehumanisation is occurring in the document collection?

To further understand if dehumanisation is evident in the data collection analysis is presented below using Haslam's dehumanisation theory, including utilising the six social-cognitive underpinnings of dehumanisation to provide further basis for the analysis. The underpinnings provide context whether the prerequisites for dehumanisation is present and help determine if dehumanisation is evident in NF. Therefore this chapter will start with exploring the six underpinnings of dehumanisation, and then discuss further if dehumanisation is in evident in NF.

6.1 Six social-cognitive underpinnings of dehumanisation

The social-cognitive underpinnings of dehumanisation which Haslam presents in his theory further context and depth of analysis concerning NF. By exploring these underpinnings insights into different aspects where dehumanisation theory can be applied are presented and we gain further understanding concerning whether dehumanisation is present in NF. It also provides further understanding to the historical and operational context linked to NF.

6.1.1 Relational cognition

In chapter two Haslam describes relation cognition as the feeling of unity and forming close relations, and removing these humanness aspects can create an us versus them mentality. This could be related to racial and ethnic identity, which is mentioned in previous research. After exploring the NF there are indications of dehumanisation formed by relational cognition, both animalistic and mechanistic.

Animalistic dehumanisation based on rational cognition emphasise the lack of culture and breaking cultural norms of the majority population, further example of this is found in the previous research concerning the dehumanisation of minorities during World War II by denying the humanness features and compare persons to animals. In the case of NF the provided incident reports give an indication of othering and “us” versus “them” mentality provided by documented staffs treatment of the asylum seekers, but there is not a real indication in the documents that there was a continuous likeness asylum seekers or staff to animals. There is though more indication that asylum seekers were perceived to lack humanness aspects related to UH, which includes lack of culture, moral sensibility and maturity. This can be detected in the staffs recorded treatment of asylum seekers, from the Wilson staff members who swears at a minor asylum seeker when this individual does not sit down as ordered and stating that the individual is conducting inappropriate behaviour with the phrase “you fucking touched me”. This is arguably an indication that the asylum seeker is perceived to be lacking culture, self-restraint while behaving childlike and irrational in the possible perceived viewpoint of the Wilson staff members.

Providing further context the historic review of the Australian immigration policies and legislation provide further proof that the underpinnings of Darwinism, which can indicate that there was a perception of immigrants throughout Australia’s history were predicted to lack the Australian normative culture.

In contrast mechanistic dehumanisation is based on the rational that focuses on the exclusion of groups. According to Haslam this is done by taking an indifferent stance, by distancing and objectifying groups and individuals, which in turn can result in the lack of social relationships and little or no interaction between groups. What is indicated in the NF documents that there is a sense of want from the asylum seekers to be a part of the Australian societal context. This is interpreted to be manifested in the desperation of the asylum seekers, especially in the context of self-harm and attempted suicide. Many of the individuals in the reports claim that they are actively excluded from Australian society while at NRPC and as a result the incident reports indicate that their mental health deteriorates, e.g. incident report Sca150186 where the asylum seeker ask if she has to die to go to Australia.

Collective othering and exclusion from the Australian society is arguably a continuous theme in Australian immigration policies - the portrayal of a threatening ‘other’ from across the sea. The treatment of asylum seekers can be related to animalistic dehumanisation in the sense the asylum seekers arriving via maritime vessels are breaking cultural immigration culture in Australia. In Australia, entering the country with visas and bridging visas is the ‘legal’ and culturally correct way of entering the country and a part of Australian norms. Animalistic dehumanisation is also evident in the sense of frustration demonstrated in the NF concerning long periods of waiting for asylum processing and the treatment from staff members at the NRPC which reinforces the idea of a clear ‘us’ and ‘them’ perspective. This polarisation is also mirrored in Australian politics. Dutton’s response to NF directly mentions this mentality: “Because in the end people have paid money to people smugglers and they want to come to our country” (Calvo, 2016).

One aspect of mechanistic dehumanisation that can be found in NF can be related to the distance between the asylum seekers and Australians. The physical distance and mental distancing can indicate the creation of an environment where interaction between asylum seekers and Australians is physically difficult or impossible. It is arguable that the companies and governments involved in the offshore processing scheme is limiting the possibilities for asylum seekers to form relationships with Australians. This is manifested not only by the geographic distance to the Australian mainland but also the fact that Digicel blocked social platforms e.g. Facebook. With the continuous limitation of public insight, access to NRPC and the misrepresentation of information. This makes it hard for the public to gain a full understanding of the asylum seekers situation and form relations with asylum seeker within NRPC.

6.1.2 Cognitive modalities

Haslam describes dehumanisation by cognitive modalities to indicate anthropomorphism, totemism and certain groups being considered “less than human”. While no animalistic dehumanisation has been explicitly expressed in the NF, there is possible evidence for mechanistic dehumanisation. According to Haslam mechanistic dehumanisation is manifested by treating persons as objects, free to be used instrumentally due to the perception that these individuals have no emotions or rational thinking.

Arguably the initial indication of mechanistic dehumanisation is the mandatory removal of asylum seekers arriving by maritime vessels and relocating them, removing asylum seekers agency and therefore the situation where NF became a byproduct is a result of mechanistic dehumanisation. Additionally, the reasoning behind the removal of migrants upon arrival with military force has been to combat human smuggling, and this arguably indicates that the asylum seekers rational or intelligence is lacking. This relates to UH features of lack of *logic*. It suggests asylum have no minds of their own, simply abiding the human smuggling scheme. This mechanistic perspective justifies the lack of reinforcement of international human rights to this group of asylum seekers because the perception that they broke the cultural norm in Australia due to lack of intelligence and victims of human trafficking smugglers. Therefore according to mechanistic dehumanisation it is justified for them to be treated accordingly and moved around like pieces on a chessboard.

Further, evidence of mechanistic dehumanisation is found in the NF, specifically related to sexual assault, abusive behaviour and mistreatment by staff. Transfield Services and Wilson Security who misused their position of power within NRPC arguably treated the victims of the abuse as objects, utilizing their power to control the individual they possess how they see fit. This is e.g. evident in the incident report Sca150051 describing the event where Wilsons Security officers had sexually assaulted a minor in a car and the father of the child was afraid to intervene due to the possible consequences. In this situation the child was treated as an object by the Wilsons Security officers and used as they saw fit, therefore mechanistic dehumanising the child.

6.1.3 Behaviour explanation

Haslam's dehumanisation through behaviour explanation, which favours mechanistic dehumanization, is characterised by the reduction of individual agency and the perceived lack of intelligence of groups. As Australia's offshore processing system is currently based on the perception that individuals travelling with maritime vessels with the aim to reach Australia are victims in an elaborate human trafficking scheme, with little personal agency from the asylum seekers and sporting little intelligence. Therefore, they need to be directed on what to do and where to go, namely NRPC, to start the procedure of seeking asylum. This is an indication of dehumanisation, but is there evidence in the NF? Yes, in particular when staff interacts with

asylum seekers which indicated the staff members action were based on the belief that the asylum seeker lacks personal agency. E.g in chapter five in incident report Sca140144 detailing a guard removing the child with excessive force, removing the child's agency and perceiving the intelligence of the child to be lacking since the removal of the child was necessary.

6.1.4 Social categorisation

Haslam describes the removal of individuals characteristics as a product of social categorisation and individuals become fungible, which mainly is associated with mechanistic dehumanisation. Acting in a humanitarian context, individuals should not become fungible and be perceived as replaceable. By the nature of NRPC and its system where each individual receives a Boat ID number, and NF documents give an indication that asylum seekers were referred to by their boat numbers instead of their names - which is arguably a strong removal of individual characteristic. The language in NF also refers to the asylum seeker also by “client” which also deprives them by their names in the documentation.

However, this is arguably a product of the strategic and systematic mandatory detention of asylum seekers. Australian immigration policy and legislation have aimed to restrict specific forms of maritime immigrants from entering the country, no matter who you are or your country of origin, thereby depersonalising the individual. As the NRPC is a form of income for the Nauru government and several outsourced companies, it is profitable to uphold this depersonalised system. The offshore processing scheme would not accept this if it were not for the Australian policies and laws, which can be argued to be fear-based and arguably systematising mechanistic dehumanisation in order to operate in its current format.

6.1.5 Psychological distance

Dehumanisation through psychological distance focuses on the moral exclusion and objectification of others, through an emotional state of disconnect according to Haslam's theory (Haslam, 2006: 262). The redirection of asylum seekers arriving with maritime vessels to Nauru does not only create a physical distance between Australia and NRPC, but also a psychological distance due to the lack of information flow and exclusion of asylum seekers from the Australian communities. This creates an easier objectification of asylum seekers, a theme which can be seen

clearly throughout immigration policy throughout Australia's history. In NF this becomes evident, especially in cases related to threats of self-harm. In incident reports Sca140087 and Sca150186 the psychological distance is manifested when the asylum seekers clearly express that there is a distance between them and Australian society. This in turn causes psychological distress.

6.1.6 Empathy

NF and its origin give evidence for the lack of empathy for asylum seekers' situation and their humanitarian needs. Ironically, in the international arena, Australia is portrayed as a country at the forefront of shaping and promoting asylum seekers and refugees rights. The 1951 Convention was originally introduced to address the aftermath of events in Europe after Second World War with the sole focus on migrants from Europe. This correlated with the European-focused Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 as the rights of the refugees and asylum seekers were limited to those of European nationality or descent. When the 1967 Protocol opened up the convention rights to all refugees, Australia adapted to the political landscape. While officially Australia on the international arena commends itself for its tolerance towards asylum seekers and refugees, nationally it still holds a perception that the nation-state and sovereignty are under threat by foreign individuals. The national legislation and policies demonstrate a desire to keep the nation-state safe from individuals deemed 'suspicious', therefore legitimising the shift towards offshore processing and the reopening of detention centres on foreign soil. With this reasoning by the Australian government the PS is legitimised, and detaining asylum seekers arriving by maritime vessels is then considered a issue of national security. This ultimately leads to the dehumanisation of asylum seekers and they are instead unlawful individuals who enter the country illegally, while they actually are within the legal scope to enter countries by any means to seek asylum according to the Refugee Convention and the Protocol (UNHCR). This shows how the lack of empathy is systematically incorporated in the Australian immigration system discarding the asylum seekers' needs. It gives evidence there is a lack of NH such as interpersonal warmth and emotional responsiveness by the Australian government, resulting in lack of empathy towards asylum seekers.

In NF there is also a description of situations where the lack of empathy is evident from the staff, e.g. incident report Sca140139 where personnel were reluctant to call for an ambulance for a minor who were showing clear signs of illness and distress according to the reporting Save the Children worker. This reluctance can be interpreted as a lack of empathy and lack of interpersonal warmth and emotional responsiveness towards the asylum seekers.

6.2 Summary: To what extent is there evidence of dehumanising tendencies in Nauru Files?

In summary, the breakdown of Haslam's theory has provided insight on whether the NF and the Australian immigration policies showed evidence of dehumanising tendencies. While the different aspects of the theory might not apply to the whole collection of the NF, there are concrete indications that dehumanising tendencies are recurrent in the collection of reports.

According to the evidence provided in the NF and mentioned above, dehumanising tendencies present in Haslam's theory of particular relevance is relations cognition, cognitive modalities and behaviour explanation. These categories can provide an indication that dehumanising tendencies are evident in the NF. These sections give an indication that asylum seekers at NRPC are stripped of certain agency and treated less than human, with more evidence for mechanical dehumanisation.

6.2.1 What particular aspects of dehumanisation are relevant in the study of asylum seekers?

The study of the treatment of asylum seekers in Australia and the case of NF is important for the general study of asylum seeker welfare, mental well-being and agency in particular, and if dehumanisation is evident it indicates according to Haslam's theory strips individuals of their individuality and agency which can heavily impact their well-being. If countries like Australia, who are committed to humanitarian resettling schemes and are signatures to the Refugee Convention and the Protocol, are applying aspects of dehumanisation in their treatment of asylum seekers then this could be considered to be violation of fundamental human rights. If so, this should be further studied to gain understanding of possibly dehumanising immigration policies and dehumanising treatment of asylum seekers.

As the NF are products of incidents recorded in NRPC, a processing centre for asylum seekers applying for asylum to Australia, and the NRPC is set up in accordance to contemporary

Australian immigration policies and legislation then it can be concluded that the dehumanising experiences experienced at NRPC are a result of Australian immigration policies.

Certain dehumanising tendencies are evident in accordance with Haslam's theory, the follow-up discussion give evidence that indicates that the current Australian offshore processing system in place on Nauru is actively violating human rights and denies individuals their human dignity, a core aspects of human rights.

Chapter Seven

7. Concluding remarks - are there dehumanising tendencies within the Nauru Files?

Through the study of the six cognitive underpinnings of Haslam's dehumanisation theory, this thesis concludes that NF provides evidence of animalistic but foremost mechanistic dehumanisation. Evidence of dehumanising tendencies is present to that extent that all the six cognitive underpinnings of dehumanisation are found in NF to some extent in the collection of documents and the four themes drawn from NF provide evidence of undisputed mistreatment of asylum seekers. The particular aspects of dehumanisation that are relevant to NF and the study of an asylum seeker are the possible removal of human uniquenesses, the removal of human characteristics and othering of asylum seekers which results in the denial of human rights in disregard of international conventions which Australia is contracted to.

Additionally, the theoretical framework of dehumanisation theory with its six features helps to establish that dehumanisation systematically is present within the Australian immigration system, as demonstrated by the NF case. The Australian immigration system has structurally enforced a system of dehumanisation through themes of exclusion, objectification and a 'us' versus 'them' mentality. While Australian policies and immigration acts have changed over time with international conventions and humanitarian initiatives, themes of dehumanisation and 'othering' have repeatedly been present in immigration acts and policies. Based on the previous research concerning Australian immigration policies it can be concluded that the exclusion of particular groups in the context of migration is nothing new in Australian history. While "White Australia Policy" is history, the PS system is a modern dehumanisation scheme.

The systematic exclusion of migrants wanting to resettle in Australia provides strong evidence of Australia failing to uphold international human rights and international conventions in addition to humanitarian standards.

7.1 Recommendations for the academic and humanitarian community

I would recommend further study concerning dehumanisation specifically within the field of humanitarian action. It would be of great interest develop a concrete theory that is adapted to the field of humanitarian action, human rights and peace and conflict studies. This would prove further dehumanisation theory's applicability to other academic fields. While this thesis gave insights concerning dehumanisation in NF further study concerning Australian immigration policies and treatment of asylum seekers is encouraged as this thesis was restricted methodologically and with no direct access to asylum seeker testimonies. While NF gave great insight to asylum seekers situation at NRPC further access must be given and the international community should act to reinforce the Refugee Convention and the Protocol. This would hopefully lead to the closing of NRPC and ultimately the asylum seekers resettlement in Australia and ending, hopefully, Australian dehumanising immigration policies for good.

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Appendix 1. Table over detainees at Nauru Regional Processing Centre

Source: Commonwealth of Australia. *Immigration detention statistics*. Accessed at: <https://www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/research-statistics/statistics/live-in-australia/immigration-detention> [13 Aug. 2017]

Nauru detention centre	Men	Women	Children	Total
2017 June	281	48	42	371
2017 May	279	48	43	370
2017 April	278	50	45	373
2017 March	279	49	45	373
2017 February	284	49	45	378
2017 January	286	49	45	380
2016 December	286	49	45	380
2016 November	290	49	44	383
2016 October	295	50	45	390
2016 September	300	51	45	396
2016 August	306	55	49	410
2016 July	307	55	49	411
2016 June	338	55	49	442
2016 May	361	55	50	466
2016 April	363	56	50	469
2016 March	363	55	50	468
2016 February	365	55	50	470
2016 January	372	58	54	484
2015 December	390	79	68	537
2015 November	393	80	70	543
2015 October	413	113	95	621

2015 September	425	114	92	631
2015 August	446	114	93	653
2015 July	439	111	87	637
2015 June	453	114	88	655
2015 May	448	105	81	634
2015 April	469	113	95	677
2015 March	489	126	103	718
2015 February	509	126	107	742
2015 January	549	134	119	802
2014 December	596	164	135	895
2014 November	643	198	155	996
2014 October	702	226	167	1095
2014 September	715	239	186	1140
2014 August	748	263	222	1233
2014 July	695	268	183	1146
2014 June	687	289	193	1169
2014 May	658	304	208	1170
2014 April	677	310	190	1177
2014 March	665	313	179	1157
2014 February	630	300	177	1107
2014 January	621	259	132	1012
2013 December	535	187	116	838
2013 November	404	173	109	686
2013 October	327	158	106	591
2013 September	Data not available			
2013 August	Data not available			
2013 July	Data not			

	available			
2013 June	Data not available			
2013 May	Data not available			
2013 April	Data not available			
2013 March	Data not available			
2013 February	Data not available			
2013 January	Data not available			

Appendix 2. List of inquiries and reports into offshore processing.

Source: Karlsen, 2016

- Amnesty International, *Nauru Offshore Processing Facility Review 2012*, 23 November 2012.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Mission to the Republic of Nauru, 3 to 5 December 2012: report*, 14 December 2012.
- UNHCR, *Monitoring visit to the Republic of Nauru 7 to 9 October 2013*, 26 November 2013.
- K Hamburger, AM, *Nauru Review 2013: Executive Report of the Review into the 19 July 2013 Incident at the Nauru Regional Processing Centre*, report prepared by Knowledge Consulting, 8 November 2014.
- Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), *The Forgotten Children: National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention*, AHRC, Sydney, November 2014.
- P Moss, *Review into Recent Allegations Relating to Conditions and Circumstances at the Regional Processing Centre in Nauru*, Final report, [Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Canberra], 6 February 2015.
- Senate Select Committee on the Recent Allegations Relating to Conditions and Circumstances at the Regional processing Centre in Nauru, *Taking Responsibility: Conditions and Circumstances at Australia's Regional Processing Centre in Nauru*, August 2015.
- C Doogan, *Review of Recommendation Nine From the Moss Review*, 26 June 2016.
- Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry, *Conditions and Treatment of Asylum Seekers and Refugees at the Regional Processing Centres in the Republic of Nauru and Papua New Guinea*, Interim report, May 2016.
- W Bacon, P Curr, C Lawrence, J Macken, C O'Connor, *Protection denied, Abuse Condoned: Women on Nauru at Risk*, Australian Women in Support of Women on

Nauru, [Australia], June 2016.

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- Amnesty International, *Treasure island: How companies are profiting from Australia's abuse on Nauru*. 2017