

## Detention centres: Woomera

- A. The Woomera Immigration Reception and Processing Centre was situated near the village of Woomera in South Australia. It was surrounded by vast dessert. The Australasian Correctional Management managed this. It was opened to accommodate for the ever growing number of boat people. Its objective is to hold the detainees until their Visa applications can be processed by the government.

Opened in November 1999 in response to an overflow of unauthorised arrivals. Intended to hold 400 people. However it peaked in 2000 and it was found that it has up to 1,500 detainees. This site became home to the controversy over Australia's immigration policies and detainee conditions. Several well-known, publicised riots held by detainees complaining of their conditions were held here. During these officers and refugees were injured and ended in hospital. These detainees have also complained of their human rights. The 'Woomera Breakout' was the most well-known of these protests. 1000 Australian citizens gathered around the centre to protest. During this 30 refugees escape, some of them were captured, but some fled.

The detention centre has since been shut down. It is now a part of Australia's Defence Force.

- B. Woomera Detention Centre has numerous strong links to the case study of 'Encountering Conflict'. It is prevalent in the lack of understanding between Australian government officials and the detainees. As seen, this led to riots and violence.

These few understandings can be strongly linked:

### **Conflict occurs between the powerful and powerless**

This explains the conflict between the Australian officials and the refugees angst with their lack of control over their and their families future.

### **Conflicts can occur because of expectations that are not met**

The refugees can grow more and more upset over the time taken to process their Visa's.

### **There are different attitudes to refugees throughout the world**

This is evident in Australia's controversial refugee policies. There has been debate over their lack of human rights.

- C. To start with, thinks links to the novel *The Rugmaker of Mazar-E-Sharif* as Najaf himself was transferred to Woomera Detention Centre upon arrival. He himself was an unauthorised refugee. He was in November camp. *'I share November with hundreds of people from lands I have never visited.'* Furthermore, he is witness to the conflict that unfolds behind the barbed wire. He explains that as the people grow more and more desperate even the smallest of incidents, such as a cheater in a card game, can escalate to the most severe of arguments. *'But the officials and the guards don't understand that when you live behind big fences, each day makes you more desperate. Anger and sorrow build up and build up, and good sense begins to starve to death.'*