



Australian Government
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

Sister Libby Rogerson
Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW
PO Box 259
ROSEBERRY NSW 1445

15 MAY 2006

Dear Sister Rogerson

Thank you for your letter of 18 April 2006 to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone, concerning new border control measures for unauthorised boat arrivals. Senator Vanstone has asked that I respond on her behalf.

Effective from 13 April 2006 the Australian Government will introduce legislation to allow people who arrive in Australia by boat without authority, regardless of their nationality or where they arrive, to be transferred to offshore processing centres for assessment of any asylum claims. Any people found to be refugees will remain offshore until resettlement to a third country, preferably not Australia, is arranged.

These changes are fully consistent with Australia's international obligations under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Australia will not return people found to be refugees to the place they fear persecution.

While these processing changes may contribute positively to our relationship with Indonesia, they were introduced to regularise policy and ensure consistency in the treatment of all unauthorised boat arrivals.

The government will also increase its capacity to patrol Australia's northern waters. Each unauthorised boat attempting to reach Australia will continue to be handled according to individual circumstances.

The changes introduced allow all asylum applications from unauthorised boat arrivals to be determined equitably. These measures balance our international obligations with the government's strong commitment to effective border control.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Hutchinson', written in a cursive style.

Alan Hutchinson
A/g Assistant Secretary
Onshore Protection

people our business

6 Chan Street Belconnen ACT 2617