



SENATOR THE HON. CHRISTOPHER ELLISON

Minister for Justice and Customs
Senator for Western Australia
Manager of Government Business in the Senate

MC06/9039; 06/8475

Ms Libby Rogerson
Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in
New South Wales
PO Box 259
ROSEBERY NSW 1445

12 JUL 2006

Dear Ms Rogerson

Thank you for your letter of 18 April 2006 regarding the Refugees Convention.

The Government has introduced into Parliament a Bill, which, if passed, will permit the Government to transfer people who arrive in Australia by boat without authority, regardless of their nationality or where they arrive, to offshore processing centres for assessment of any asylum claims.

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 complies and will continue to comply with its obligations under this Convention and continues to assess claims on their merit under the Convention guidelines. Australia will not return people found to be refugees to where they fear persecution.

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. These measures balance our international obligations with the Government's strong commitment to effective border control.

As the Attorney-General said in his letter to you earlier this month, Australia has a proud and long tradition as a resettlement destination for refugees from around the world. Australia has

taken more than 660 000 refugees since 1945, and today is one of the top three resettlement countries. The Government's approach to unauthorised arrivals will continue to reflect this tradition and our commitment to our international protection obligations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Chris Ellison', written in dark ink.

CHRIS ELLISON
Senator for Western Australia