



Australian Government
Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Ms Grace Ellul sm
Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW
PO Box 259
ROSEBERY NSW 1445

Dear Ms Ellul

Thank you for your letter of 11 August 2008 to the Minister for immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, concerning the Government's immigration detention reforms. The Minister has asked that I reply on his behalf.

The treatment of asylum seekers has been controversial in Australian political debate for many years with the length and conditions of their detention a particular focus of criticism.

The Government was elected on a platform that included a commitment to reform – not only in resolving outstanding issues but also a more humane treatment of those seeking our protection.

In just a short time, the Government has taken a number of major steps to restore public confidence in the integrity of our immigration system.

The immigration detention reforms the Minister announced are based on a new set of values – values that take a risk-based approach to detention and seek a prompt resolution of cases.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship has already commenced work on an implementation plan to give effect to these values. The implementation plan will be developed in consultation with community interest groups and agencies such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Department will seek to progressively implement the reforms over coming months, initially through changed policies and guidance, then through regulation amendment and eventually through legislative change.

The detention reforms follow on from a number of significant changes in immigration policy made by the Government. Earlier this year, we ended the discredited Pacific Solution by closing the offshore processing centres on Nauru and Manus Island. The temporary protection visa regime has been abolished.

people our business

The Government believes that the new framework for immigration detention will meet our border security needs and deliver more humane treatment for people who seek protection in Australia.

Thank you for writing about this matter.

Yours sincerely

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

Dermot Casey
Acting First Assistant Secretary
Community and Detention Services Division

3 September 2008