



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

File Number: 15/24653

22 December 2015

Sr Geraldine Kearney sgs  
Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes  
PO Box 259  
ROSEBERY NSW 1445

Dear Sr Geraldine

Thank you for your letter dated 23 November 2015 to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, about the settlement of refugees currently in Papua New Guinea and Nauru. I have been asked to respond on behalf of Ms Bishop.

Australia's policies provide safe and legal migration pathways to those in need and to discourage people from relying on people smugglers. A critical element of our policies is to send a clear message that people smugglers do not offer a path to Australia. If people do try to reach Australia by boat with no visa, they will either be safely removed from Australian waters, or transferred to a country in our region where their claims will be assessed.

Those people in regional processing found to be in need of protection will need to be settled. Australia is assisting in finding suitable settlement options. Currently, it is possible for refugees in Papua New Guinea and Nauru to settle in those countries, and for those in Nauru to settle in Cambodia. Should further countries offer settlement, then Australia will facilitate this, and where relevant, provide additional assistance to ensure local communities benefit.

Australia's policies have saved lives at sea, stemmed the flow of boats, and broken the business model of people smugglers. There have been no known deaths since these policies were implemented in 2013, compared to the 1,200 known deaths between 2007 and 2013.

More generally, Australia has a generous humanitarian settlement program for refugees. Australia is one of about 27 countries that offer resettlement places through the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Australia consistently ranks in the top three UNHCR resettlement countries, along with the United States and Canada.

Australia's humanitarian program targets refugees who often wait long periods in difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions overseas. This pathway helps to prevent people from resorting to people smugglers. In September, the Government announced it would resettle an additional 12,000 refugees who are fleeing the conflict in Syria and Iraq. These 12,000 places are in addition to the existing humanitarian intake of 13,750 places in 2014-15.

I hope this information explains and provides context for Australia's policies. Thank you again for bringing your concerns to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Goledzinowski AM  
Ambassador for People Smuggling Issues