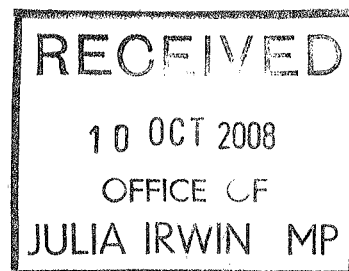




SENATOR THE HON JOE LUDWIG

Minister for Human Services
Manager of Government Business in the Senate
Senator for Queensland



C08/5250

Ms Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Ms Irwin

Thank you for your letter of 2 June 2008 concerning additional petitions recently submitted by the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne to the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding income support for asylum seekers.

I understand my colleague, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator the Hon Chris Evans, has written to you to advise of initiatives underway by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to reform visas and to provide information in relation to the Bridging visas issued to the group of asylum seekers referred to in this petition.

Whilst some asylum seekers have limited entitlements to Centrelink payments, they do have access to Centrelink Social Work services and Multicultural Services Officers. These officers work with the community to provide information and support to this group of asylum seekers.

Centrelink also works closely with DIAC and community organisations to assist asylum seekers understand their right to access income support as soon as they are granted visas which entitle them to receive Centrelink payments.

I agree to have this response be applied to previous petitions received on this issue from the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. Once again, thank you for writing on behalf of the petitioners. I trust my comments are of assistance.

Yours sincerely

JOE LUDWIG
Minister for Human Services

1.10.08