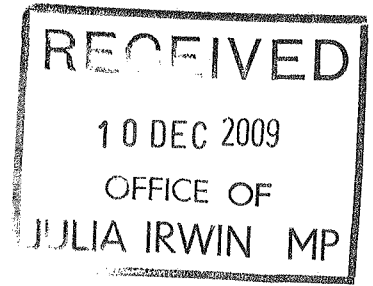




SENATOR THE HON JOE LUDWIG

Cabinet Secretary
Special Minister of State
Manager of Government Business in the Senate
Senator for Queensland



Reference no: C09/48348

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin

Thank you for your letter of 17 September 2009 to the Prime Minister regarding a petition, submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions, for the nation of East Timor to receive an award in the Order of Australia. As the minister responsible for honours, I have been asked to respond on the Prime Minister's behalf. I note that there is an expectation that Ministers will respond to a referred petition within 90 days of presentation.

The courage and loyalty shown by the 'creados' of East Timor, in support of Australian troops during 1941-43, was remarkable. I am also aware of the commendable work undertaken by the Mary McKillop East Timor Mission in raising awareness of the critical contribution made by the East Timorese people during the War. However, an award in the Order of Australia is not an appropriate form of recognition in this circumstance. The Order was established to recognise the merit of individuals as part of a living society of honour and its constitution precludes group awards.

However, the Government is currently giving some consideration to other, more appropriate, forms of recognition.

This letter has been copied to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon John Faulkner, and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Alan Griffin MP, for their information.

Yours sincerely

JOE LUDWIG

/ December 2009