



THE HON KEVIN RUDD MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
CANBERRA

The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

16 MAY 2011

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 30 March 2011 referring to petition 434-725, submitted for consideration to the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding support for programs to prevent child sexual exploitation in our region. In accordance with Standing Order 209 (b), my response is as follows.

The first request in the petition, to fund an ongoing education campaign and support service which helps Australians to identify and report suspicions or concerns about child sex offenders who travel overseas, is a domestic matter and falls under the responsibility of the Minister for Home Affairs and Justice, the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP. I understand officials from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) have already contacted the Committee Secretariat to ensure you also refer this petition to Minister O'Connor.

The second request in the petition, to fund community-based international development programs which focus on the prevention of and protection against forms of child sexual exploitation such as child sex trafficking and child sex tourism, falls under my responsibility.

Australia has been a long-standing and consistent supporter of efforts to combat child sex trafficking and child sex tourism in our region.

The Government is committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the reduction of poverty. By focusing on these key development priorities, Australia is helping to address the underlying causes of sex trafficking of children and young people and child exploitation. This is essential for a sustainable, long-term approach that aims to prevent people from becoming victims in the first place.

AusAID, in partnership with other agencies, also supports a number of activities to directly combat people trafficking, labour exploitation and child sexual exploitation. The focus of the aid program's efforts is to strengthen criminal justice systems and law enforcement, and prevent child trafficking through education and awareness-raising in source communities.

AusAID has recently commenced a program specifically to combat child sex tourism. *Project Childhood* is a four year, \$7.5 million program to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the Mekong sub-region. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is implementing a Protection Pillar, strengthening law enforcement capacity to combat child sex tourism, working with Interpol and assisted by the Australian Federal Police. The Prevention Pillar, implemented by World Vision Australia, builds resilience and awareness in communities and works with partner governments to improve preventive measures, including reporting hotlines. This program builds on the AusAID-funded Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) 5-year *Transition Plan for a Sustainable Response to Child Sex Tourism in South East Asia* (\$0.5m; 2007-2009), facilitated by the Australian charity Child Wise.

AusAID has supported successive projects in the ASEAN region since 1994 to raise awareness of child sex tourism, gain support and commitment for child protection within the tourism sector and build tourism capacity to combat child sex tourism in ASEAN member countries.

AusAID has a significant partnership through the aid program with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) which includes the protection of children from violence, exploitation and abuse.

Thank you for notifying me of this petition. I trust that this information will be of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Rudd