



**The Hon Jenny Macklin MP**  
**Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services**  
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MC08-033165

12 JAN 2009

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

Dear Mrs Irwin *Julia*

Thank you for your letter of 29 October 2008 about a petition submitted to the Committee about a social security agreement between Australia and the Philippines.

Australia currently has 21 bilateral social security agreements. A number of factors are considered in deciding whether to enter into negotiations with another country. It is a pre-requisite that the other country has a compatible social security system and that an agreement is likely to be mutually beneficial. Other relevant factors include people-to-people links, the level of business activity, community and political pressure, broader bilateral relations and costs to the Budget.

Officials from my Department met with representatives of the Philippines Embassy on 21 November 2008 for discussions in connection with this matter.

My Department is currently negotiating a number of social security agreements on behalf of the Australian Government and there are a number of long standing formal approaches from other countries seeking to commence negotiations. The petition for an agreement with the Philippines will be considered as part of a review of priorities for future social security agreements.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely

**JENNY MACKLIN MP**