



The Hon Jenny Macklin MP
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MC08-033162

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

09 JAN 2009

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