

Sen the Hon Amanda Vanstone

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural
and Indigenous Affairs

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Reconciliation



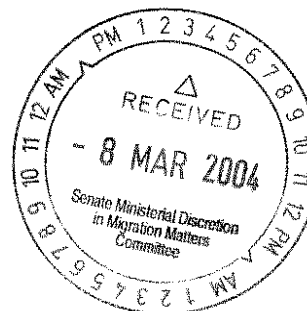
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2 March 2004

Senator Joe Ludwig
Chair
Select Committee on Ministerial Discretion in
Migration Matters
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Senator Ludwig 

Thank you for your letter of 11 Feb regarding the request by your committee for access to the notebooks of Departmental Liaison Officers and case files.

First, I recognise the importance to the Committee of having access to a broad range of information in relation to the operation of the Ministerial intervention powers. It has been my intention throughout your inquiry that my department provide whatever assistance it reasonably can to the Committee. To this end, the Department has devoted considerable resources to appearing at three public hearings of the Committee and providing a very significant amount of statistical information and explanatory material, including responses to more than 140 questions put to the Department.

While I am anxious that my Department co-operate fully with the Committee in the provision of information, requests to provide the notebooks kept by DLOs and a large number of case files present me with very real concerns. I set out those concerns in relation to the notebooks in my letter to you of 23 January 2004, and Ms Godwin set out the concerns in relation to the case files in her letter of 12 December.

You have asked that I reconsider these decisions. It is important that you understand that I am not intent on refusing to provide the Committee with information, but I do not believe that it is appropriate to provide it in the way that it has been sought. In particular, I remain concerned that you are seeking such a broad ranging and significant amount of personal information in relation to individuals who are not themselves the subject of your inquiry. Your letter does not address the concerns that I raised and still hold about the unprecedented, broad ranging and open ended request for information.

However, I remain committed to co-operating with the Committee in its inquiry and I reiterate the offer made in my letter of 23 January. If the Committee has specific questions that may be clarified by reference to the notebooks or other documents that the Department holds, I could facilitate the checking of such a specific request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Vanstone', with a stylized flourish at the end.

AMANDA VANSTONE