



**THE HON PETER DUTTON MP
MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION
AND BORDER PROTECTION**



Ref No: MC17-003993

Mr John Alexander OAM MP
Federal Member for Bennelong
PO Box 872
EPPING NSW 2121

John.

Dear Mr Alexander

Thank you for your representation of 20 February 2017 on behalf of Dr U Ne Oo, of Ryde, concerning the Australian Government's regional processing and settlement arrangements.

As a party to the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its *1967 Protocol* (the Refugees Convention), Australia takes its international obligations seriously. Australia is committed to providing protection to refugees consistent with the obligations set out in the Refugees Convention and other relevant international treaties to which Australia is a party.

With the establishment of Operation Sovereign Borders on 18 September 2013, the Government has focused on disrupting and deterring people smugglers, detecting and intercepting illegal maritime arrivals (IMAs), and supporting regional processing and resettlement of refugees, as well as returns of those transferees not found to be owed protection. Anyone who comes to Australia illegally by boat will be subject to regional processing arrangements and will not be eligible for permanent residency in Australia.

The Governments of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australia are working towards the closure of the Manus Regional Processing Centre (RPC). The well-being of transferees and refugees will be a central consideration as this work progresses. There is no detention on Nauru. The Nauru RPC operates as an open centre and transferees are free to come and go at any time without restriction. Transport is provided to assist transferees to move around Nauru.

The Governments of Nauru and PNG continue to progress refugee status determinations for people transferred to those countries under the regional processing arrangements. People found to be refugees in Nauru can settle there temporarily or resettle permanently in Cambodia. People found to be refugees in PNG can settle there permanently.

In addition to these existing arrangements, the United States (US) has agreed to consider resettlement of those refugees in Nauru and PNG endorsed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for referral to the US Refugee Admissions Program. US authorities will apply their own rigorous assessment and vetting processes to determine which refugees are eligible for resettlement in the US. Resettlement in the US will not be available to any IMAs in Australia. Information about this arrangement is available at: <http://www.minister.border.gov.au/peterdutton/Pages/Refugee-resettlement-from-Regional-Process-Centres.aspx>.

Australia assists Nauru, PNG and Cambodia to provide refugees with settlement support services to assist with integration. Services are delivered through a needs-based case management model and may include cultural and language orientation, employment, education and health linking, income support, and accommodation assistance. Services focus on building independence and self-sufficiency.

The orderly resettlement of refugees will take time and will not be rushed. Transferees found not to be refugees are expected to return home. For people choosing to return home voluntarily, assistance is available to help them to re-establish their lives in their home countries.

The Australian Government's Operation Sovereign Borders policies are designed to safeguard vulnerable people from exploitation by people smugglers, prevent the loss of life at sea and restore the integrity of Australia's borders. Restoration of Australia's border integrity has enabled the Government to increase the annual refugee intake. As a result, the Humanitarian Programme will increase from 13,750 to 18,750 by 2018-19. Focusing on persecuted minorities, Australia is also welcoming 12,000 refugees from the Syrian conflict zone. The ongoing success of these strong border control policies is enabling the closure of 17 immigration detention facilities.

Australia works closely with the international community and is an active partner in internationally coordinated resettlement efforts to respond to refugee situations. Fewer than 30 countries worldwide offer resettlement places each year. Of this number, only 10 countries have established annual resettlement programmes that resettle 500 or more refugees referred by the UNHCR. Australia consistently ranks among the top three of these countries, along with the US and Canada.

There have been a number of allegations made about incidents on Nauru and full responses to those allegations are available on the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's website, at: <http://newsroom.border.gov.au/channels/correct-the-record/releases>.

On 12 September 2016, the Senate referred an inquiry into serious allegations of abuse, self-harm and neglect of asylum seekers at the Nauru RPC, and any like allegations in relation to the Manus RPC, to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. Information about the inquiry is available on the Australian Parliament's website, at: http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/NauruandManusRPCs.

The Government remains committed to regional processing and resettlement and stopping the scourge of people smugglers and deaths at sea.

Thank you for bringing Dr U Ne Oo's concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely



20103/17

PETER DUTTON