

Recvd 15-3-2003



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
CANBERRA

5 MAR 2003

Executive Committee
Network for International Protection of Refugees
18 Shannon Place
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Dear Executive Committee

Thank you for your correspondence of 22 January 2003 to the Prime Minister regarding the sinking of SIEV-X. The Prime Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf and I regret the delay in responding.

The Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident was appointed to inquire into the 'children overboard' incident and the SIEV X tragedy. The Senate Committee made a number of recommendations as a result of their inquiry, including a recommendation that an independent inquiry examine Australia's role in the disruption of people smuggling activity.

The Prime Minister has asked the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to examine the recommendations made by the Senate Committee and to coordinate for the government's consideration a whole of government response in consultation with all relevant departments and agencies.

Thank you for taking the time to write about this important issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John R Perrin', written in a cursive style.

John R Perrin
Senior Adviser (Social Policy)

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Canberra City
ACT 2601
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26 February 2003

Network for International Protection of Refugees
18 Shannon Place
Adelaide SA 5000

Dear Sir/Madam

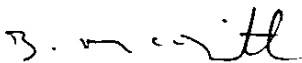
I refer to your correspondence of 22 January 2003, to the Hon. John Howard MP, Prime Minister regarding the sinking of SIEV-X and the tragic drowning of 353 refugees. This matter was referred to the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator the Hon. Chris Ellison who has asked me to respond on his behalf.

In your letter you raise the matter of a "people smuggling disruption program". The Australian Federal Police (AFP) uses the term "disruption" to describe the use of lawful investigations, both in Australia and overseas, targeting the organisers of criminal activity impacting on Australia. Specifically in relation to people smuggling, disruption activity includes the engaging of the host law enforcement agency to intercept passengers prior to boarding vessels. It also includes passing information in relation to organisers to those agencies to enable them to be arrested for any breaches of local law they may have committed, thus disrupting their activities. The AFP has never been a part of, nor encouraged, endorsed or participated in any unlawful act in any way.

As you are aware, operations to counter people smuggling from Indonesia, the sinking of SIEV X and other related matters, have been the subject of questions answered by the many witnesses before several Senate Committees. Also allegations raised in the *Sunday* television program have been investigated on two occasions. These investigations were oversighted and endorsed by the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The matter of a separate **judicial** inquiry is one for the government to determine.

Thank you for your concern in relation to this tragedy. I hope I have been able to clarify some matters for you.

Yours sincerely



B.J McDevitt
General Manager National