

* * Australian National Dialogue * of Christians, Muslims & Jews

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia
Parliament House
ACT 2600
11 February 2008

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to express our concern at the date selected by the Federal government for holding the 2020 Conference, which falls within the Jewish festival of Pesach (Passover) between 19 and 27 April 2008. Australians who observe the Jewish faith will therefore be precluded from attending and taking part in the Conference.

The purpose of the Conference, as stated by the government, is to undertake broad, long-term planning for Australia and its people, focusing on themes that bear most directly upon the nation's future. As the Conference and its outcomes will be relevant to the lives of all Australians, regardless of religion, it is vital that no part of the Australian community is excluded, or is made to feel excluded. By effectively excluding observant Jews from the Conference, the government will deny them the opportunity to enhance the quality of its deliberations, and will also compromise the integrity of the event as a truly national undertaking embracing all parts of the Australian community.

Although the government has asserted that observant Jews will be able to make their contribution to Australia's long-term planning other than by direct participation in the Conference itself, through written submissions or other mechanism, the Conference will provide participants with an opportunity for a direct and free-flowing interchange of ideas which will not be available through other mechanisms.

Prime Minister, we pride ourselves on being an inclusive, tolerant and multi-faith community that encourages co-operation and mutual respect among all citizens and we urge you to reconsider the matter carefully and set another date for the Conference that will ensure that all Australians who may be invited to contribute to it are able to attend.

The Conference will be discussing plans that will be important to Australia for many years to come. A delay of several weeks or months is surely a small price to pay to ensure that this important event truly encompasses the entire nation.

Yours sincerely



Ikebal Patel (Australian Federation of Islamic Councils),
Graeme Mundine (National Council of Churches in Australia),
Jeremy Jones AM (Executive Council of Australian Jewry)

Please Reply c/- Jeremy Jones AM, 146 Darlinghurst Rd Darlinghurst NSW 2010