

MEDIA RELEASE

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Vinnies National President seeks meeting with Home Affairs Minister

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society has written to the Home Affairs Minister, the Hon Peter Dutton, calling for a more civil approach to asylum seekers and refugees.

National President, Claire Victory reiterated the National Council's objections to the repeal of the Medevac legislation and urged that all people still held on Nauru and in Papua New Guinea should be quickly, permanently and safely resettled.

But she also said there are other issues which need urgent attention.

'The National Council maintains significant concerns about the Federal Government's policies in relation to three other matters that affect the approximately 30,000 asylum seekers who arrived by boat from August 2012 until December 2013 – most of the so-called 'Legacy Caseload,' Ms Victory said.

These include:

- the introduction of 'fast-track' claim processing following passage of the *Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Legacy Caseload) Act 2014*;
- the re-introduction of temporary protection visas in October 2013; and
- cuts of close to 60 % to the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) Program, commencing in 2018-19.

'The Government's policies on these matters are punitive. They appear to be based on a belief that punishing existing asylum seekers and refugees would discourage others.

'Turning the boats around may have been successful in stopping more arrivals, but we have seen no evidence that punishing existing asylum seekers has contributed to that outcome,' Ms Victory said.

The National President has requested a meeting with the Home Affairs Minister.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 conferences located in individual parishes across the country.