

MEDIA RELEASE

Vinnies welcomes Senator Lambie's proposed rejection of Asylum Seeker phone ban

6 October 2020

The St Vincent de Paul Society's National Council has welcomed Senator Jacqui Lambie's decision to block the Federal Government's legislation which, if passed, has the power to ban mobile phones from immigration detention centres.

The crossbench Senator announced her position late last week in an email to voters who took part in a poll she ran that found 96 per cent oppose the bill.

President of the St Vincent de Paul Society's National Council, Claire Victory, said given the current numbers, Senator Lambie's decision will prevent the Morrison government from getting the bill through the Senate.

The *Migration Amendment (Prohibiting Items in Immigration Detention Facilities) Bill 2020* is unlikely to be debated before 9 November.

'If passed, the legislation could prevent detainees from speaking to their lawyers, one of their few remaining legal entitlements,' Ms Victory said.

'We should all remember that people are legally entitled to seek asylum in this country and each should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

'Punitive measures such as the mobile phone ban will disadvantage hundreds of people whose only supposed crime is to seek asylum in Australia.

'Mobile phones are a lifeline to family, friends and supporters in an environment where the future is far from certain.

'I strongly encourage Senator Lambie to hold her ground in the lead up to the vote.

'Senator Lambie and other cross bench senators are often under considerable pressure, when holding the deciding vote on crucial legislation, and the Society and our extensive Vincentian Refugee Network are on standby to provide necessary support to the Senator if need be,' Ms Victory said.

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.

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