

26 July

URGENT CALL TO ACTION

Contact Senators

The Proposed Amendment to the Migration Act – Prohibited Items Bill / Mobile Phones

As you know, the Senate Committee is in the process of finalising its report and recommendations on this proposed change to legislation.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT SENATORS HEAR ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS THIS WEEK.

We encourage you to email or write to your state senators and also the senators on the Committee

See below contact details and also suggested points to mention in your email and calls.

We understand that at the Committee hearing Serco and the Government submitters were running hard on the criminal narrative, and the presence of high-risk detainees. *It is important to note that even those people (not asylum seekers) who are in detention awaiting deportation on ‘bad character grounds’ have already served their sentences, and are not necessarily high risk at this time (noting that Australia is now deporting people much more readily on so called ‘bad character’ grounds). As we know the government is keen to blur the distinction between these people and asylum seekers in immigration detention.*

YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO LOBBY SENATORS IN A MEASURED AND RESPECTFUL MANNER

The Senate Committee is due to deliver its report on the bill on 5 August.

The members of the Committee are:

Queensland Senator **Amanda Stoker** (Chair)

Victorian Senator the Hon **Kim Carr** (Deputy Chair) Tasmanian Senator **Claire Chandler**

Queensland Senator **Anthony Chisholm**

Victorian Senator the Hon **Sarah Henderson**

Tasmanian Senator **Nick McKim**

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EMAIL

members of the Committee – ideally THIS WEEK (prior to the completion of the report).

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EMAIL

all of your state senators (also noting those who are Committee members and acknowledging this) Contact details are available [here](#) on the ARAN website.

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FOLLOW UP

with phone contact to the senators’ offices.

Suggested points to include in your emails and discussions with senators

>>> Police already have powers to remove illegal substances and items.

>>> Immigration detention centres are not prisons – criminals belong in prison, not immigration detention centres.

>>> Refugees and people seeking asylum are in administrative detention because the government has not resolved their visa status. These people do not pose a security or criminal risk.

>>> This government has shown an enthusiasm for describing refugees as criminal, with no evidence. When arguing against Medevac Minister Dutton claimed that there were criminals amongst the refugees held offshore. He was unable to produce evidence at the time, and no evidence has emerged since.

>>> The intention to remove mobile phones must be seen as an attempt to silence those held in detention, and to prevent public scrutiny and access to advocates and other support people. This is evidenced in the removal of two people from the hotels being used as detention centres after they appeared on national television using mobile phones. The assertion that mobile phones pose a risk to staff in detention also demonstrates an intention to remove the only mechanism available to detainees to hold staff accountable for their actions and place some restraint on excessive use of force detention staff.

>>> Most refugees and asylum seekers have been held in detention for very long periods, and their **mobile phones are their lifeline** and link to the outside world, including maintaining contact with family members here and overseas, and legal and other support contacts. Being able to maintain some connection to the world outside is essential maintaining mental health.

>>> Advocates and health professionals fear that the removal of mobile phones would result in serious mental health issues and self-harm as people lost the little hope they have managed to hold.

Submissions made to the Committee [here](#).

Sign the [change.org](#) petition [here](#).