

Phones in Detention Centres

I am writing to you to express my concerns about proposed changes to the migration laws, namely Migration Amendment (Prohibited Items in Immigration Detention facilities) Bill 2020.

I understand that, if passed into law, it would allow staff at immigration detention facilities to classify the mobile phones of people detained as a "prohibited thing" which could then be taken away from them.

For many years I have been in contact over their mobile phones with men who were previously detained on Manus Island. Some have been medivacced to Australia where they continue to be detained. As well as their physical health issues, their mental health is very fragile and their ability to maintain contact with family, friends and lawyers is critical to preventing further deterioration. To take away their mobile phones, often their only means of contact with the outside world, staying informed and passing the time, will increase their isolation and threaten their wellbeing.

I urge you to resist this piece of proposed legislation which will undermine further the basic rights and freedoms of these vulnerable people who have been held in indefinite detention for many years.