

Morrison stands firm on 'stupid' medivac bill



Prime Minister Scott Morrison. Picture: AAP

Elias Visontay, Reporter, 2 hours ago February 6, 2019

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Prime Minister Scott Morrison has doubled down on his commitment to vote against controversial legislation to medically evacuate asylum seekers in offshore detention, labelling the proposal a “stupid bill”.

Appearing on Sky News’ Jones & Co with Alan Jones and Peta Credlin, Mr Morrison disputed that the successful passing of the “diabolic” bill pushed by independent MP Kerryn Phelps would lead to a constitutional crisis for his government. “I won’t be compromising on this bill ... If we lose that vote next week, so be it. “I will simply ignore it and we’ll get on with the business. “I’m not going to be howled down by the Labor Party who want to dismantle a border protection system I had a key hand in building. “This is a stupid bill ... It’s written by people who haven’t got the faintest idea how this works. We do,” Mr Morrison said.

Opposition leader Bill Shorten has indicated that Labor will vote to pass the bill, with several crossbenchers also signalling their support.

The proposed legislation would allow for two doctors to make a decision to medically evacuate refugees detained on an offshore facility if they believe the individual required treatment in Australia.

However Mr Morrison agreed with Jones that such a move would be “outsourcing” the border protection decisions outside of the government department. “You just need two doctors on Skype who say ‘well I can’t really see from here, so you need to be brought to Australia so I can see you here’, “That’s it. 400 people will come, single males from Manus Island and Nauru, within weeks.” Mr Morrison said.

The Prime Minister also revealed he had written to the prime minister of Thailand for a second time over the plight of Hakeem al-Araibi. “We got a response the other night ... I’ve also written to him again. “I was very disturbed at the appearance of Hakeem at the hearing the other day. He was shackled and I thought that was very upsetting and I know it would have upset many Australians. “I am respectfully reminding the Thai prime minister that Australians feel very strongly about this.

“We will continue to make these representations. And not just to Thailand but also to Bahrain as well, and we are. Our officials are doing a very good job ... We’re in a process there,” Mr Morrison said.

Mr al-Araibi was arrested and detained in November when he arrived in Thailand on holiday with his wife, with Bahrain requesting his extradition. The professional footballer came to Australia as a refugee after alleged torture by Bahraini authorities.

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