



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian Government must adopt a new strategy to end the death penalty

A group of leading Australian and international human rights organisations are calling for an overhaul to the way the Australian government campaigns to end the death penalty, today launching a new strategy document: 'Australian Government and the Death Penalty: A Way Forward'.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Human Rights Law Centre, Reprieve Australia, Australians Detained Abroad, NSW Council for Civil Liberties, Civil Liberties Australia and UnitingJustice Australia have joined forces to launch the blueprint.

The blueprint outlines the four steps the government must take if it wants to build on the current momentum to end the death penalty:

1. Developing a new Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade public strategy document aimed at ending the death penalty, everywhere;
2. Using the aid program to support civil society organisations campaigning for abolition in countries which retain the death penalty;
3. Joining forces with other nations to push for universal adoption of a global moratorium on the death penalty;
4. Putting in place stronger legislation so the Australian Federal Police is required by law not to share information with other law enforcement agencies that would potentially result in suspected perpetrators facing the death penalty.

"The Australian government has recently been outspoken about its condemnation of state sanctioned killings in Indonesia," said Claire Mallinson, National Director, Amnesty International Australia.

"It must, and can, continue to advocate for the abolition of the death penalty, particularly in our region, irrespective of the nationality or crime of the person being sentenced.

"The recent executions of eight men in Indonesia, including Australians Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, was an inhuman and unjust punishment and represents exactly why the Australian government must continue to speak out against the death penalty whenever it occurs," Claire Mallinson stated.

Claire Mallinson added, “We must now ensure Australia’s stance against the recent executions is reflected in all government policy. We are asking for change across the Australian Government – through diplomacy, our aid program, our federal law enforcement agencies.

Elaine Pearson, Australia Director at Human Rights Watch said, “The timing is ripe for Australia’s foreign ministry to make public a new comprehensive policy to end the death penalty worldwide, with specific and achievable goals for individual countries.

“The strategy should include consistent public and private diplomatic pressure, and show how the death penalty has failed to deter crime and been unjustly applied,” Elaine Pearson said.

Emily Howie, Director of Advocacy and Research at the Human Rights Law Centre said, “If Australia wants its opposition to the death penalty to be credible, it’s important that Australian laws consistently reflect that opposition.

“We have a chance to reflect on the lessons to be learned from the deaths of two Australians in Indonesia. If the Bali 9 case happened again tomorrow, nothing would prevent the AFP from acting in the same way. The AFP Act doesn’t contain sufficient safeguards. Fortunately there is a fix - parliament can move quickly to address this,” she said.

Ursula Noye, Vice President, Reprieve Australia said, "Momentum is building globally for the abolition of the death penalty. In recent months, Australia and our government have spoken out powerfully against executions.

“The time is right for us to take a lead role, build a regional coalition for abolition, and work towards a vote in the UN. We should make future generations proud," Ursula Noye stated.

Claire Mallinson added, “We must now ensure Australia’s stance against the recent executions is reflected in all government policy. We are asking for change across the Australian Government – through diplomacy, our aid program, our federal law enforcement agencies.

“This four point plan ensures the strong response we saw in recent months becomes a campaign to end the death penalty not just in Indonesia but everywhere,” Claire Mallinson added.

BACKGROUND

Australians have already shown their support for Australia to take a lead role in ending the death penalty in the region, and around the world, signing the online petition [“Ask Australia to help end the death penalty”](#).

Amnesty International has been campaigning to end the death penalty for more than 30 years. When the organisation first started, only 16 countries were abolitionist.

Now that number stands at 140 countries that have stopped using the death penalty either in law or practice.

For more information, see Amnesty International’s [annual review of the death penalty worldwide](#).

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