

REPRIEVE AU

Reprive Australia
Overseas Volunteer Program

President's Welcome

Thank you for your interest in a Reprive Australia volunteer placement. Reprive Australia volunteers share an absolute and steadfast opposition to the death penalty. In every case and in every country we maintain that the state should not execute.

We are dedicated to assisting lawyers in their local jurisdictions as they defend poor and marginalised accused subject to the death penalty. We have found that a most effective and immediate way to assist those on death row is through the allocation of practical resources, the power of dedicated and skilful volunteers.

Our volunteer program provides assistance to defence lawyers in capital trial and appellate offices. We place volunteers with lawyers who have otherwise limited resources to see that the rights of their clients are fiercely protected. Our volunteers conduct extensive research, manage and file voluminous materials, visit prisons and meet with witnesses and families all in order to keep people from execution.

We are very proud of all the work that our volunteers have been able to accomplish. Since 2001 we have placed over 100 volunteers in offices across the United States to fulfil many varied and demanding roles. In addition to the United States, we are expanding volunteer placements to Asia and Europe.

Placements can be challenging. Our volunteers work diligently in high stakes professional environments. Volunteers are expected to be able to respond swiftly and productively to the dynamic demands of local lawyers, and retain their composure and commitment at all times.

Volunteering with Reprive Australia is a richly rewarding experience. Your work will make a difference to people on death row; you will be able to substantially contribute to the preparation of their defence and see that the death penalty is scrutinised and opposed. It is an extraordinary opportunity and responsibility. I encourage you to read these materials and to submit your application.

Julian McMahan
President of Reprive Australia

About Reprieve Australia

Reprieve Australia is an anti-death penalty organisation. We work on several different levels, including the facilitation of volunteer programs at home and abroad; supporting and conducting awareness-raising events in respect of the death penalty and acting as a liaison with other organisations in the fight against the death penalty.

Reprieve Australia works to assist in the provision of effective legal representation and humanitarian assistance to those facing the death penalty at the hands of the state. We provide research and analysis for issues, countries, and cases.

Our national patron is the Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG. Although not legally connected, we are the sister organisation of the British charity, Reprieve UK, the US charity, Reprieve (US), and the Dutch organisation, Reprieve NL. We sit on the board of Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network and on the steering committee of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

For further information about Reprieve Australia please go to www.reprieve.org.au or email contact@reprieve.org.au to join our mailing list.

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Kismet Kaur - Law Student

Volunteer at **Capital Appeals Project (CAP)**
November 2016 - February 2017

I was privileged to be placed at the Capital Appeals Project, New Orleans (CAP) for the duration of my placement. This experience challenged me in many ways, allowing me to grow immensely both academically and personally whilst being able to experience the diverse and energetic culture of the city of New Orleans.

CAP provides representation for indigent clients appealing their death sentence and the program allows volunteers to become heavily involved in the processes and procedures of their clients' cases. I was truly humbled by the responsibility and autonomy I was given by the organisation and for the opportunity to build a rapport with and assist our clients. Further, I was able to see the practical side of what I was learning at law school in play. CAP provides you with a great diversity of tasks and being required to proof-read citations, draft letters to District Attorney offices and clients, and draft claims for appeals challenged me to take my own initiative and develop proficiency in my reading and writing skills. No matter what task you are given, making a contribution to the fight to abolish the death penalty is an invaluable feeling.

This experience has confirmed my aspiration to pursue a career in the criminal law sphere and continue to work to abolish the archaic and inhumane practice of capital punishment. It has opened my eyes to the pros and cons of criminal defense including the challenges of watching your clients and their families suffer, the constant battle of losing, but also the desire that keeps you motivated to keep fighting when all the odds are against you. It has been a true privilege to work with some of the greatest legal minds in the U.S. and with such passionate and hardworking individuals. I highly recommend this program as the opportunities I have had and the relationships I have built have made this a truly life-changing experience. The motivation I now have stems from the people I have met, the work I have done and the injustices I have seen during my time at CAP.

Where you will go

Volunteer placements are available in the United States, in Louisiana, Texas and Arizona, subject to need at the time. Placements in Asia and Europe are currently in development.

Once a volunteer has been accepted into the program and allocated to an office, Reprieve Australia will advise the volunteer of their placement and connect them with that host office.

Types of work

On arrival at their placement, Reprieve Australia volunteers are given in-house training to familiarise them with the host office and the requirements of the work. Thereafter, their tasks will be extremely varied, and will depend on the particular needs of the office at that time. The workload of the host office and the abilities and willingness of the volunteer largely dictate the tasks a volunteer will perform.

Tasks may range from providing assistance at trial, to performing legal research, to ferrying family members to death row to visit their loved one, to photocopying and administrative support.

Common tasks include:

- **File Management:** Volunteers will often find themselves either organising or updating files and/or team documents, and preparing notebooks and transcripts for use in Court.
- **Investigation:** Volunteers may assist the office's investigators or mitigation specialists. This work usually involves fact-finding exercises involving either interviews of potential witnesses or collection of documents. The bulk of investigative work for volunteers involves work with documents. This takes the form of public record requests to local courthouses, as well as news media research. Volunteers may also be involved in the collection of private documents, using release forms or subpoenas.
- **Research:** Drafting motions or appearing in court is the exclusive domain of the practising US-qualified attorneys. However, volunteers may be requested to research a certain legal issue and draft a memorandum outlining the legal issue. Other research may relate to issues of psychology or forensic science. Reprieve Australia volunteers in the past have

also engaged in research and litigation directed at systemic reform, rather than just relating to individual cases.

It must be stressed that sometimes the most important assistance a volunteer can provide is to ease the administrative load for attorneys working on active cases. If you are not prepared to spend a portion of your time doing filing, photocopying and possibly driving, then a volunteer placement with Reprive Australia may not be for you.

The work performed by Reprive Australia volunteers has proved vital to the legal offices to which they are attached. The assistance of Reprive Australia volunteers can often be the only way in which these offices are able to meet the demands of their caseloads.

Liam Bourke – Law Student

Volunteer at **Louisiana Capital Assistance Center**
March – June 2017



I recently returned from a three-month volunteer position at the Louisiana Capital Assistance Center (LCAC) in New Orleans. Personally, this was a truly enriching, rewarding and lifechanging experience.

I was fortunate enough to work alongside deeply devoted professional staff, who set an example I wish to follow in my career with the law. Their indefatigable opposition to the death penalty and other barbarous elements of the criminal justice system is inspiring.

In spite of entrenched inequity and prejudice, the LCAC's unwavering commitment to defending human dignity was a galvanising force which vindicated my position on capital punishment. From their tenacity and resolve, I return with an even greater passion, which propels me to continue the fight for justice. Were it not for the honourable work of the LCAC and similar organisations battling the death penalty, the world would be a much sorrier place.

At a more atomic level, it was touching to be involved with the people at the heart of the work. The political wrangling which occupies most of the debate overlooks and distracts from the fundamental human factor. Meeting and serving clients and their families brought this personal element into perspective for me. Talking face-to-face with another human being – shackled, deprived of liberty and whose life is at the mercy of a cruel and arbitrary system – is a humbling and poignant experience. These personal interactions reinforced my conviction that life is precious; no one deserves to die or be treated inhumanely at the hands of the law. It was also moving to observe and receive the sincere gratitude of clients, including former death row prisoners whose lives have been saved by the LCAC.

This is a testament to the staff's extraordinary pastoral care efforts and genuine concern for their clients' welfare. Despite expecting no recognition for their work, the LCAC staff are true heroes deserving of this praise. Personally, I wish to thank the LCAC, Reprive Australia and the generous supporters contributing to the cause.

Workload

No matter where in the world, the work week is long for lawyers working on difficult cases in under-resourced offices.

While most host offices keep typical office hours, during trials or other busy periods, volunteers may need to be flexible with their working hours.

Timing

Normally, a Reprive Australia volunteer placement will last between three and six months. Each volunteer must commit to a minimum of three months.

Interviews will typically occur in April and October. We recommend that you apply at least three months in advance of your proposed commencement date.

Angie Wong – Barrister

Volunteer at **Capital Post Conviction Project of Louisiana**

2004 - 2005

I was fortunate to have spent 3 months as a volunteer at the Capital Post Conviction Project of Louisiana (CPCPL) in 2004-2005. The experience of working on death penalty cases whilst living in New Orleans allowed me to observe the intimate connection between the criminal justice system and the historical, socioeconomic, and political context in which it exists and serves.

It was wonderful to meet exceptional lawyers who had had chosen to use their privilege and considerable skills to ameliorate the injustices perpetuated by the death penalty.

This has been formative to the way I now see the law and approach my role as a lawyer.



Personal Requirements

Volunteers must:

1. Be opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances. One key reason for this is that the volunteer is being sent by Reprieve Australia, and this is the position of the organisation.
2. Show great maturity and self-sufficiency. This is critical given the demanding and sometimes confronting nature of the work and the placement in a foreign country. Scant resources mean that supervision will often be minimal and so the ability to work independently is of paramount importance.
3. Be a help rather than a hindrance. Volunteers are placed into very busy offices with staff stretched to their limits. Accordingly, they must respect the office environment, and be sensitive to the personal impact of the death penalty work on the office staff. Volunteers should be aware that they will rarely receive praise or acknowledgement that their work may deserve, simply because of the extreme time pressures their supervisors are forced to operate under. Hence, maturity and self-knowledge are important.
4. Be capable of working independently or as part of a team.
5. Be capable of performing legal and/or factual research.
6. Have an understanding of the legal, political and social issues involved in the death penalty debate.
7. Be physically and mentally capable and willing to work in excess of 50 hours a week if it turns out that is necessary.
8. Have strong computer skills.
9. Have respect for the social environment in which they are working. Host offices are often located in socially and politically conservative regions. A volunteer needs to bear this in mind, and not assume that the people they encounter in the course of their placement share their views.
10. It is expected that on their return from a placement a volunteer will provide ongoing support to Reprieve Australia through participation in ongoing Reprieve Australia events, such as speaking at university career fairs, conducting research, writing articles, etc.

Practical Requirements

All volunteers must agree to abide by the conditions of the Reprieve Australia Volunteer Program, including:

1. Commitment for a minimum of three months;
2. Being able to finance yourself throughout the placement;
3. Complying fully with the terms of your visa;
4. Obtaining travel insurance at the highest level available including insurance for driving a motor vehicle.
5. Signing and abiding by the policies in the Volunteer Agreement.
6. Completing any required pre-departure training with Reprieve Australia;
7. Agreeing to follow the lawful directions of the Reprieve Australia Volunteer Coordinators in the course of your work;
8. Participating in a follow-up interview, filling in a feedback form and writing a full report at or near the conclusion of your volunteer placement; and
9. That you acknowledge and agree that your relationship with Reprieve Australia shall be solely and exclusively that of a volunteer and not an employee. You may not bind, obligate or represent Reprieve Australia without any prior written consent. You acknowledge that you are not eligible for, and shall not participate in, any employee pension, health or fringe benefit plan which is or may be provided by Reprieve Australia. That you acknowledge that Reprieve Australia assumes no responsibility for any injury, accident, illness—mental, psychological or physical, loss of personal property, debts or other contingencies which may befall you or your dependents directly or indirectly, during the course of or as a result of your volunteer work for Reprieve Australia. You waive all claims that you may have against Reprieve Australia arising out of your work as a volunteer. In particular you accept and recognise that Reprieve Australia, as a small not-for-profit largely run by volunteer contributions, has no control and little advanced knowledge of any risks that you may face, and you accept that you shall be responsible for the assessment of such risks and the appropriate measures to be taken to reduce or remove them.
10. Reprieve Australia volunteer placements also sometimes involve a lot of travelling, mostly in rural areas, spending nights in motels. As such, it is preferred that volunteers be over 21 years of age, mature and experienced travellers and have a valid driver's licence. However, if you do not satisfy either of these criteria, we will still consider your application.

Caitlin Emery

Volunteer at **Louisiana Capital Assistance Center**
2014



I spent three life-changing months at the LCAC in magical New Orleans. The dedicated attorneys and staff work tirelessly for their clients and their passion is contagious. A Reprieve volunteer placement is a rich immersion into the life and culture of a different place and legal system. You venture to places a tourist would have no excuse to go, learn stories of disadvantage, violence and survival and get to work alongside some seriously dedicated and brilliant people.

Most of all for me, the volunteer placement was an immersion into the political context surrounding the death penalty. This experience led to a permanent change in my consciousness, which I hope will spread to my colleagues, friends and family. Although I never doubted my opposition to the death penalty, it was important to meet people and be exposed to media with different views - that exposure was one of the most enriching aspects of the experience. I found performing even the simplest administrative tasks in support of this cause important and meaningful. In the face of the complexity of the law and its history, it's a great feeling to be able to offer your skills and time and to meaningfully contribute to the work of death penalty attorneys and the wider anti-death penalty movement.

I am so thankful for the experience of a Reprieve Australia volunteer placement and to those considering one I would say, "jump in".

Why apply?

The work of a Reprieve Australia volunteer may be difficult and emotionally challenging, the hours can be long and the offices are under resourced. However, it is a life changing experience and many Australians have seized it as a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity. The experience can be a rollercoaster of emotions; some volunteers have had the experience of seeing a client walk free during their placement, while others have worked on a case up to the time of execution.

A Reprieve Australia volunteer placement has real benefits for the participants. It offers the unique experience of working in a foreign country while supporting a humanitarian cause. The educational value of the program has been recognised by various universities, some of which provide course credits to students for participating, and may also provide financial assistance. It has also been recognised by employers who recognise the many important skills that volunteers develop during their experience.

Financials

Cost estimates for placements vary. Some volunteers also try to incorporate additional travel into their plans—please note the estimates below do not account for such additional expenses.

- U.S: On average, for U.S.-based volunteers, it costs between AUD\$8,000 and AUD\$10,000 to undertake a three-month placement. This includes airfares, accommodation and daily living expenses. Some have completed the placement on less, but the more a volunteer has the easier the stay and the longer they can stay.

Thanks to the generosity of the **Julian Wagner Memorial Fund**, Reprieve is able to offer a modest amount of financial assistance to a very select number of volunteers who could not otherwise afford to complete a placement. Applicants who wish to be considered for the fund should indicate so in their cover letter and include their reasons.

Accommodation

Depending upon the location of the placement, accommodation may be difficult to find, particularly for short-term stays. At some offices, there is volunteer accommodation available, but this is not free or guaranteed. Reprieve Australia puts incoming volunteers in touch with host offices and current or returned volunteers to help with organising accommodation. There may be more than one volunteer in each office at any point in time, from Australia or elsewhere, and volunteers may choose to share accommodation and costs during their stay.

How to Apply

We recommend that you apply at least three months in advance of your proposed commencement date. If you need to apply within this time, please contact the Overseas Volunteer Co-ordinator.

To apply, please send the following to overseas.volunteers@reprieve.org.au and contact@reprieve.org.au:

1. A completed Application Form, a copy of which is available from our website www.reprieve.org.au. Applications must be submitted with the following filename: name.application.doc (so, if your name was Jane Doe, the form would need to be saved as janedoe.application.doc);
2. A current curriculum vitae (name.cv.doc);
3. A sample of professional or academic writing (name.sample.doc);
4. A covering letter explaining your interest in volunteering with Reprise Australia (name.letter.doc);
5. A recent digital photo (head and shoulders only) saved as a JPEG (name.photo.jpg);
6. The names and contact details of one academic reference and one professional reference (volunteer or legal reference preferred);
7. A scanned copy of the photo page of your passport [name.passport.pdf or name.passport.jpg]; and
8. A scanned copy of a national police check [name.policecheck.pdf or name.policecheck.jpg], dated no less than 12 months ago.

Selection Process

After receiving the required information, applicants may be offered an initial interview involving general interview questions. If appropriate, the applicant will progress to a second interview which involves hypothetical questions and further discussion about the placement.

Following the interviews, Reprise Australia may request further information or documents, or contact your referees. Reprise Australia will inform all applicants about whether they have been successful in obtaining a placement in the Program.

Visas

Obtaining a visa is the sole responsibility of the volunteer. Acceptance into the program is required before you can attend any visa interview with the relevant Embassy or Consulate. If you are accepted as a volunteer, Reprieve Australia will provide the supporting documentation required for the interview.

- United States: Successful applicants will need a US visa to participate in the program. The appropriate visa is a B1/B2 visa.



Raj Bhattacharya – Criminal defence Barrister

Volunteer at **Gulf Region Advocacy Center**
2005 -2006

In the summer of 2005/06 I flew to Houston, Texas for my Reprieve volunteer placement. I was approaching the end of my law degree and slightly confused about what I actually wanted to do with that piece of paper. Eleven years later, I am a criminal defence Barrister and most of my friends from university are not practicing law.

Did this experience lead to my current profession? Yes, but not exactly in ways that you would imagine. Working at the Gulf Region Advocacy Center (GRACE), I learned very little about law itself. But I learned a great deal about how a system of law can be broken. And how committed advocates can give their all to try to fix it.

Houston in 2005/6 was the death-penalty capital of the free world - it executed more people than most countries. Yet here was GRACE, a beacon of hope. Lawyers working literally around the clock to file post-conviction appeals and seek to repair the damage that had been done in the courts below.

So eleven years later as I practice in Victoria, I am continually reminded that the rule of law is a fragile thing. It needs courageous advocates who are willing to push back against accepted mainstream views and defend our human rights. My Reprieve placement taught me this. What will it teach you?