



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

**Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Human Rights Sub-Committee**

MEDIA RELEASE
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*Chair: The Hon Philip Ruddock MP
Deputy: Senator Anne McEwen*

Towards a world without the death penalty

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has today released the report for its inquiry into Australia's advocacy for the abolition of the death penalty.

To improve Australia's advocacy efforts internationally, the report recommends the Australian Government develop, fund and implement a whole-of-government strategy that focusses our efforts on retentionist countries in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as the United States of America.

Chair of the Human Rights Sub-Committee, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP said:

"There is no place for the death penalty in the modern world. Encouraging more countries to abolish the death penalty would be a central aim of the strategy and, among countries retaining the death penalty for the time being, Australia should seek to reduce numbers of executions and reduce the range of crimes for which the death penalty can be imposed."

"Australia should take a special interest in death penalty cases where there are apparent shortcomings of due process or when the accused is a juvenile, pregnant, or likely suffering a mental illness," he said.

Other recommendations in the report include:

- Basing Australia's advocacy approaches on the principles of human rights and on the view that executions amount to torture;
- Bringing together a regional coalition of like-minded countries to promote abolition;
- Seeking increased transparency and disclosure from certain countries regarding numbers of executions, the number of people under a sentence of death and the crimes committed;
- Establishing ongoing funding and resourcing to support the whole-of-government death penalty abolition strategy;
- Funding civil society organisations whose work relates to death penalty abolition;
- Utilising the influence of parliamentarians and others who oppose the death penalty;
- Formulating guidelines to be activated at a departmental level whenever Australians are at risk of the death penalty in an overseas jurisdiction; and
- Improving procedures to be followed by the Australian Federal Police when information is provided to an overseas jurisdiction, in circumstances which may subsequently expose a person to the death penalty.

The complete report and information about the inquiry, including submissions and public hearing transcripts, is available on the website: www.aph.gov.au/deathpenalty.

For media comment: Contact the Human Rights Sub-Committee Chair, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP via Mr Ross Macdonald on 0417 852 209. For all other inquiries, contact the Secretary on (02) 6277 2313.