



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*

Australian advocacy for abolition of the death penalty

Australia has a longstanding, bipartisan policy commitment to the abolition of the death penalty, and now the Human Rights Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has been asked by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to review Australia's efforts to advocate for its worldwide abolition.

Australia has been an active participant in the protection and promotion of human rights, including through its support of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aimed at the abolition of the death penalty.

While there has been a global trend toward abolition, more than half the world's countries are yet to sign up to the protocol and in some countries the use of capital punishment appears to be increasing. Some of Australia's biggest trading partners and closest allies still impose the death penalty, including China, India, Indonesia, Japan and the United States of America.

Sub-Committee Chair, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP, says that as a nation we must renew our opposition to capital punishment, and find new and effective ways to advocate for worldwide abolition.

"We need to go beyond an approach where our voice is loudest immediately prior to a planned execution. We need to shift the focus to ending the death penalty worldwide and ensure that our advocacy for abolition is effective in bringing about this change," he said.

The Human Rights Sub-Committee acknowledges that this is an issue of deep concern to the Australian public, particularly in light of cases of Australians facing capital punishment overseas. While the Sub-Committee is concerned for the welfare of these individuals, this inquiry is a chance to explore options for strengthening Australia's anti-death penalty engagement and advocacy, rather than examining specific cases.

The Sub-Committee invites submissions addressing the terms of reference for the inquiry by Friday, 2 October 2015. The terms of reference ask the Sub-Committee to:

- review how Australia currently engages internationally to promote abolition of the death penalty; and
- consider further steps Australia could take to advocate for worldwide abolition, including by:
 - engaging with international institutions and likeminded countries;
 - cooperating with non-government organisations;
 - bilateral engagements and other diplomatic activities; and
 - other appropriate means.

Further details about the inquiry and information on how to make a submission can be obtained from the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/deathpenalty or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 2313 or emailing jscfadt@aph.gov.au.

For media comment: Contact the Sub-Committee Chair, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP via Mr Ross Macdonald on 0417 852 209. For all other inquiries, contact the Inquiry Secretary on (02) 6277 4306.