



Law Council
OF AUSTRALIA

Media Release

MR 3307
19 December 2007

Law Council Supports UN Vote to Halt Executions

The Law Council has welcomed a landmark resolution by the United Nations which calls for an immediate moratorium on executions as a first step towards the universal abolition of the death penalty.

Passed by the UN General Assembly early this morning, it is the first time a resolution calling for an immediate moratorium on executions has been adopted by the General Assembly.

Law Council President Ross Ray QC said, "This historic resolution sends a powerful message that the majority of the world's nations are not only committed to the abolition of the death penalty within their own jurisdictions, but are also committed to ending executions beyond their borders."

The resolution had the support of 104 of the 192 Member States, including Australia, who co-sponsored the resolution. The resolution was adopted by the majority of the General Assembly despite concerted opposition from a number of countries still ordering executions, including the United States, Singapore and China.

Mr Ray commended Australia's strong support for the resolution and has already written to the Minister for Foreign Affairs urging the Australian Government to use the resolution as an opportunity to continue diplomatic efforts to secure a reprieve for Australians currently on death row in Indonesia and Vietnam.

"Australia can be proud of leading the call for an immediate halt to the use of the death penalty. It is imperative that a country like Australia is vocal and consistent in its opposition to the use of the death penalty – wherever and whenever executions are ordered," he said.

"The General Assembly's resolution presents a chance for the Labor Government to correct the perception that Australia has a selective policy towards the death penalty and restore our credibility as a global leader in the movement to abolish capital punishment."

"Without that credibility, the effectiveness of any representations made on behalf of Australians at risk of execution will be jeopardised," Mr Ray concluded.

Media Contact: Elenore Eriksson,
Director Public Affairs - 02 6246 3716/0419 269 855

www.lawcouncil.asn.au

The Law Council of Australia exists to represent the legal profession at the national level, to speak on behalf of its constituent bodies on national issues, and to promote the administration of justice, access to justice and general improvement of the law.

19 Torrens St Braddon
ACT 2612, GPO Box 1989
Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone +61 2 6246 3788
Facsimile +61 2 6248 0639

www.lawcouncil.asn.au