

23 June 2022

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister Albanese,

#### **INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN JULIAN ASSANGE**

The NSW Council for Civil Liberties (NSWCCL) wishes to congratulate you on assuming the office of Prime Minister. We also wish to take this opportunity to reiterate our call for the Australian Government to exert its diplomatic influence on both the United Kingdom and the United States to end the unjust prosecution of Julian Assange and to bring him home.

#### **Bring him home**

Mr Assange remains inside Belmarsh Prison in the UK as he awaits a decision by the UK Home Secretary on whether to extradite him to the United States. This decision will come in a matter of days and action is urgently needed.

We have been heartened by reports that you share the view of many Australians that the incarceration of Julian Assange is unjust and has lasted too long.

If extradited to the United States, he faces a sentence of over 170 years in prison.

Though he is not convicted of any offence under UK law, he continues to be held as a prisoner in the same conditions as convicted murderers. His mental and physical health have seriously deteriorated. The Magistrates' Court ordered his discharge in January 2021 precisely because it found that his physical and mental condition is such that it would be unjust or oppressive to extradite him.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer has said "the suffering inflicted on Mr Assange, as a result of his prolonged solitary confinement, amounts not only to arbitrary detention, but also to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Mr Melzer noted that Mr Assange is not convicted of a criminal offence, poses no threat to anyone and that his prolonged confinement clearly lacks any legal basis.

#### **End the injustice**

As former Labor foreign minister Bob Carr has written, it is legitimate for Australia to ask the US to withdraw its case against Assange. He has pointed to the dangerous precedent set by the case –that a

government of a country can seize an individual anywhere in the world for no crime other than publishing information embarrassing to that government. It is unacceptable for the United States to seek to use domestic espionage laws against an Australian citizen, a person with no allegiance to the United States. Indeed, the case that has been brought against him by the United States has been condemned by every credible international legal and press freedom organisation.

Enough is enough.

For the remainder of the prolonged legal process, there is no reason why Mr Assange cannot be released to be with his long-suffering family.

The Australian Government must make urgent overtures to the Biden Administration and if necessary to the UK Home Secretary with the aim of allowing Mr Assange to come home. The Australian Government must ensure that charges are dropped, or a pardon is given. The Australian Government should also publicly rule out Mr Assange's extradition from Australia to the United States should he return home.

Since 1963 NSWCCCL has advocated for strong and effective protection for public interest whistle-blowers and journalists as fundamental to a healthy democracy.

Today we call for you, Prime Minister, to end this injustice against an Australian.

This is a public letter and will be copied to members of parliament and others listed below.

Yours sincerely,

Josh Pallas  
**President**  
**NSW Council for Civil Liberties**

Cc: Mr Andrew Wilkie MP  
**Co-Chair**  
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