

Media Release
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PM Must Oppose All Executions

The Howard Government should protect the lives of young Australians facing the death penalty overseas and others on death row by opposing the execution of Saddam Hussein, the Australian Lawyers Alliance said today.

Speaking on the anniversary of the execution of Van Ngyuen, ALA national president Simon Morrison said the Prime Minister needed to make a clear statement about the government's position on capital punishment.

"Opposition to capital punishment must be an absolute," he said. "The moment we start asserting there are justified executions – no matter how heinous the crime – we have conceded the debate."

"Many Australians have been watching with great concern as the Howard Government failed to oppose the death penalty imposed on Saddam Hussein. Likewise the government has not opposed the death sentence for the Bali bombers."

ALA member Julian Burnside QC said the government's inconsistent response to the death penalty was undermining its ability to stand up for Australians.

"While it may be electorally popular to support the death penalty for Saddam, it makes a mockery of the Government's efforts to intercede on behalf of Australians whose lives hang in the balance," Mr Burnside said.

"With young Australians on death row in Bali it is essential that our government speaks out against all forms of capital punishment."

"John Howard can't have it both ways. Either he supports the death penalty or he doesn't. If he does, he is condemning Australians overseas to death."

The Australian Lawyers Alliance will be hosting events to mark the anniversary of Van Ngyuen's execution in:

MELBOURNE: Friday 1 Dec; 1-2pm
State Library of Victoria Theatre,
Swanston Street, (Enter via LaTrobe St)

PERTH: Friday 1 Dec; 1-2pm **Venue:**
Venue: The Law Society of WA 328
Level 4, 89 St George's Terrace, Perth

For more information, contact Simon Morrison, National President, 0417 714 780 or Shannon Walker (EMC) on 0414 604476