

Senator the Hon Marise Payne,
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27 May 2020

Dear Minister,

We the undersigned current and former practicing members of the Australian legal profession, are writing to seek your urgent intervention on behalf of Australian citizen Julian Assange.

We do this with due recognition that diplomatic intercessions in the legal processes of foreign countries is not lightly undertaken. We also recognise that under certain circumstances it is appropriate and necessary. Careful interventions on behalf of Peter Grete, Melinda Taylor, David Hicks, James Ricketson and many others made a meaningful difference to positive outcomes in each case.

We strongly argue that it is time Mr Assange received a similar level of meaningful support.

As legal practitioners, we are deeply concerned about the precedent effect of prosecuting an awarded publisher for nothing more than doing his job. We also hold grave concerns about the conduct of this particular case given the enormous difficulties of conducting hearings amidst a pandemic. Mr Assange has been unable to meet with or instruct legal counsel, hearings have been disrupted and nearly impossible to follow by teleconference, and resolution has now been pushed back to September at the earliest. With viral spread throughout the UK prison system, the situation has become untenable.

Before the court reconvenes on 1 June, we request of you the following:

1. To make representation on Mr Assange's behalf that he be released on bail immediately;
2. To relay to us the outcome of this representation.

An Australian citizen needs the active support of his Government, now more than ever. We await a reply at the earliest possibility,

Regards,

Julian Burnside AO QC
Elizabeth O'Shea
Malcolm Ramage QC
Benedict Coyne
Dr Spencer Zifcak, Allan Myers Professor of Law, Australian Catholic University
Allan Myers QC
Mark Davis
Adjunct Professor George Newhouse
David McBride
Stephen Keim SC