

Senator the Hon Marise Payne,
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27 May 2020

Dear Minister,

We the undersigned currently serving and former Members of Parliament, Senators and Councillors are writing to seek your advice and your urgent intervention to protect Australian publisher Julian Assange.

Mr Assange is detained in Belmarsh prison in the UK in the midst of extradition proceedings wholly relating to publications for which the Walkley Foundation awarded WikiLeaks the 2011 “Most outstanding contribution to journalism”.

The extradition hearings have been disrupted and delayed, leaving Mr Assange unable to have his case heard until September 2020 at the earliest, while deaths within the UK prison populations and illness amongst judicial and penal staff cohorts continue to rise.

Even absent the heightened risks of a global public health crisis, Mr Assange is in poor health and has never needed the support of his Government more.

We are well placed to understand the diplomatic sensitivities given that the countries responsible for detaining and prosecuting Mr Assange are two of our closest allies. But one of the things that gives an alliance value is the ability to advocate directly in the interests of Australian citizens without such advocacy being mistaken for hostility.

Today we are asking you to convey our concerns, and any that you may share through appropriate channels, with the greatest of urgency. The court will convene next by teleconference on 1 June. Before this time 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

You will note that the signatories below encompass a very wide range of Australian political representation, from government, opposition and the crossbench, from former Ministers to independents. We believe this accurately reflects that concern for the well being of Mr Assange and the work of a free and open media transcends political loyalties.

We await a reply at the earliest possibility,

yours faithfully,

Andrew Wilkie MHR
Senator Peter Whish-Wilson
George Christensen MHR

Susan Templeman MHR
Zali Steggall MHR
Tony Zappia MHR
Julian Hill MHR
Adam Bandt MHR
Senator Richard Di Natale
Senator Rex Patrick
Senator Nick McKim
Maria Vamvakinou MHR
former Senator Scott Ludlam
former Senator Andrew Bartlett
former Senator Lee Rhiannon
Arthur Chesterfield-Evans
Sylvia Hale
James Ryan
Cathy Griff
Rochelle Porteous
Toni Wright-Tu
Greg Clancy
Phillip Bradley
Rohan Leppert
Vanessa Ekins
Brent Hoare
Philipa Veitch