Media Release

Law Council
OF AUSTRALIA

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Law Council welcomes release of Australian Government's revised Global Strategy for Abolition of the Death Penalty

The Law Council of Australia welcomes the release of the Australian Government's revised *Strategy for the Global Abolition of the Death Penalty*.

"The updated Strategy reaffirms Australia's strong opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances and for all people, and includes important updates to the Government's policy goals and methods of international advocacy," Law Council of Australia President-elect, Elizabeth Shearer said.

"The Law Council is pleased to see a number of its recommendations made as part of the 2024 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Australia's efforts to advocate for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty reflected in the updated Strategy.

"In particular, the updated Strategy now addresses international crime cooperation in its policy goals and as part of its whole-of-government approach.

"Consistent with the Law Council's Death Penalty Policy Statement, we will continue to advocate for reforms to ensure that Australia both upholds its international obligations and maintains its avowed opposition to the death penalty across the whole sphere of government.

"We also welcome the Government's commitment to convene a dedicated annual civil society consultation session on the abolition of the death penalty, and deliver an annual statement to Parliament outlining Australia's advocacy efforts.

"Since the launch of the previous Strategy in 2018, progress has been made on a number of fronts. In our region alone, we have seen the abolition of the death penalty in Papua New Guinea and the repeal of the mandatory death penalty in Malaysia.

"Retentionist jurisdictions such as Vietnam and Pakistan have reduced the number of crimes that attract the death penalty. Globally, the number of countries that are abolitionist in practice has increased," Ms Shearer said.

"Despite positive developments, the Law Council is concerned by an increase in the number of executions worldwide by a small number of retentionist jurisdictions, and coordinated efforts in multilateral forums to limit and undermine international human rights obligations relating to the death penalty. We have also seen disturbing developments in the method of execution and treatment of individuals facing the death penalty.

"In some cases, formerly abolitionist jurisdictions have either proposed or implemented the re-introduction of capital punishment, despite the absence of persuasive evidence that the

death penalty is an effective deterrent and the disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable members of society.

“These developments highlight the continued need for strong, principled international advocacy and leadership by Australia, implemented consistently across government and in partnership with civil society and like-minded states.”

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The Law Council of Australia is the national voice of the legal profession, promoting justice and the rule of law