

## **Supplementary submission:** from Civil Liberties Australia

At the hearing on 27 Nov 2015, Chair Philip Ruddock asked Civil Liberties Australia for proof of CEO Bill Rowlings' claim that support FOR the death penalty in Australia **currently** ranked somewhere between 45 and 55%. The following excerpts indicate that support FOR the death penalty in Australia has gone from about 23% in 2009 to about 52-54% between 2013 and 2015.

CLA believes this rapid change has occurred because the fear level in the community has been raised primarily by an over-emphasis on the risks of terrorism in Australia by government, but also because of rabid tabloid and TV coverage of gruesome murders.

### **1947-2009 poll figures: In 2009, support FOR the death penalty had declined to 23%.**

Roy Morgan poll <http://www.roymorgan.com.au/findings/finding-4411-201302260051>

### **FEB, 2015: 52% 'yes' to DP for drug traffickers in Bali**

Roy Morgan phone poll (2123 respondents) SMH, February 5, 2015, Tom Allard

#### **Bali Nine: Australian poll showing support for death penalty misleading say critics**

A poll finding a slim majority of Australians support the death penalty for Australian drug traffickers – seized upon by the Indonesian government to justify the killing of Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran – is crude and misleading, according to critics.

The "snap" poll by Roy Morgan Research was conducted in January by sending an SMS to the company's database of people it had previously interviewed, an uncommon method.

But what has most concerned pollsters and lawyers for Chan and Sukumaran is the question that was asked, and the ones that were not. Morgan asked: "In your opinion if an Australian is convicted of drug trafficking in another country & sentenced to death, should the penalty be carried out?" Those contacted were asked to reply Y for "Yes" and N for "No".

Just over half of the 2123 people respondents, 52 per cent, replied by typing "Y" on their phones.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/bali-nine-australian-poll-showing-support-for-death-penalty-misleading-say-critics-20150204-1366ul.html#ixzz3seMvkHKx>

### **SEPT 2014: 52.5 v 47.5 favour the death penalty for terrorist acts in Australia**

Roy Morgan poll, 1307 respondents

Small majority of Australians favour the death penalty for deadly terrorist acts in Australia

*September 19 2014 Finding No. 5814 Topic: Special Poll Public Opinion Country: Australia*

A special snap SMS Morgan Poll today shows a small majority of Australians (52.5%) favour the death penalty for deadly terrorist acts in Australia while 47.5% don't. This is a significant increase from 2009 when only 23% of Australians supported the death penalty being imposed for convicted murderers. Today's special SMS Morgan Poll was conducted with a cross-section of 1,307 Australians who were asked "If a person is convicted of a terrorist act in Australia which kills someone should the penalty be death?"

Analysing the results by voting preference shows Liberal voters strongly in favour of the death penalty for deadly terrorist acts in Australia (67.5% cf. 32.5%), as are National voters (70.5% cf. 29.5%), however both ALP voters (39% cf. 61%) and Greens voters (18% cf. 82%) are against the death penalty. (NOTE: Also gives the poll voting by gender and by age)

<http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/5814-death-penalty-for-terrorist-acts-september-19-2014-201409190533>

*Note: Specifically in relation to the Committee's current inquiry:*

### **MAY 2015: Lowy Institute poll: 51-45 support for active international campaign**

A **slight majority** say the Australian Government should play an active role in pushing for the abolition of the death penalty internationally (51%, compared with 45% saying it should not).

<http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/indonesia-death-penalty-polling-2015>

Death Penalty Information Center: International Polls and Studies (for comparison purposes)

<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/international-polls-and-studies-0>

So far as Civil Liberties Australia is aware, it is not National Party, Coalition, Government or Australian Parliament policy to reintroduce the death penalty. However, one MP (George Christensen, Dawson Qld) consistently campaigns in public for its reintroduction. Seldom are his public comments refuted by other MPs contemporaneously.

### **COMMENTS BY A COALITION MP (including a phone poll in his electorate, 54-45, 2013)**

**Nov, 2015:** Gabrielle Chan, Guardian, 24 November 2015

#### **Queensland MP George Christensen wants death penalty for terrorists**

According to AAP, Christensen has said taking citizenship from dual national terrorism suspects, which he said was just the start of measures needed in the "war against radical Islam".

He also wants citizenship revoked for those who advocated Shariah law in Australia.

<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/live/2015/nov/24/malcolm-turnbull-to-deliver-national-security-statement-politics-live>

**Mar, 2013:**

#### **George Christensen wants to see the death penalty introduced**

Daily Mercury, Mackay Qld, 14th Mar 2013 3:05 PM Updated: 15th Mar 2013 7:00 AM

OPPOSITION backbencher George Christensen is calling on state governments to stand-up for a re-introduction of the death penalty.

The Mackay MP's comment in favour of the death penalty for serious crimes of murder involving sexual assault on Twitter today sparked instant controversy.

He said it was up to Federal Government to clear the way by overriding an international convention adopted in 2009 by the former Rudd Government preventing states from imposing the death penalty.

"I think that if state governments stand up and say they want to re-introduce it Federal Government should immediately replete that law," he said. "It is my personal view that when we see such heinous crimes as what we witnessed in Melbourne with Jill Meagher, who was sexually assaulted and murdered, the death penalty is probably warranted in situations like that.

"I think the public should have a say on this, on whether they want it or not."

Mr Christensen described the death of Mackay woman Shandee Blackburn as a "tragedy", saying the public wanted to see just punishments for heinous crimes. "What I would say is if it was my daughter...and I think most people feel the same...they would want to see real justice for the perpetrator."

<http://www.dailymercury.com.au/news/george-christiansen-wants-see-death-penalty-introd/1792316/>

SEE ALSO a phone poll in conjunction with this article (over page).

**Jun, 2011**

#### **MP refuses to condemn death penalty**

Updated 1 Jun 2011, 9:57pm

LNP candidate for the north Queensland seat of Dawson, George Christensen

Photo: George Christensen says by banning the death penalty, Parliament gave the criminal an advantage over the victim. Related Story: Abbott defends candidate critical of Jews, gays, women  
Federal Coalition backbencher George Christensen has told Parliament he is in favour of capital punishment.

Mr Christensen, from the Queensland seat of Dawson, spoke during a motion calling on Parliament to recommit to its bipartisan condemnation of the death penalty across the world.

He says by banning the death penalty the Parliament gave the criminal an advantage over the victim.

READER POLL

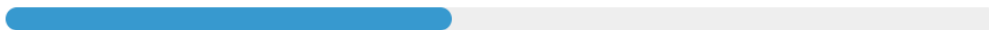
Do you think the death penalty should be introduced?

This poll ended on 21 March 2013.

Yes - **54%**



No - **45%**



This is not a scientific poll. The results reflect only the opinions of those who chose to participate.

TOPICS: [DEATH PENALTY](#) , [GEORGE CHRISTENSEN](#)

**Daily Mercury**

Note: 2013 phone poll, Daily Mercury Mackay, which accompanied article quoted above

**From:**

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