



The Premier of Victoria  
Office of the Premier  
1 Treasury Place  
Melbourne 3000

Thursday 12 June, 2008.

CC: Deputy Premier

Dear Premier

On behalf of Reprieve Australia, I commend the government's role in arranging a pardon for Colin Campbell Ross. It was a truly humane gesture that goes some way to righting a terrible wrong.

Of course, discovering that an innocent man was executed is a stark reminder to us all that capital punishment has no role to play in a truly civilised society.

Having conducted the last execution in Australia, it would be appropriate for Victoria to take the lead in throwing light on the danger of executing innocent people. I urge the government to establish a permanent commission to inquire into the wrongful execution of other Victorians, and to arrange pardons for those wrongfully convicted.

It is well-documented (particularly in the USA) that wrongful convictions are more common when the death penalty is available than when it isn't. This is due to the impact on the jury of the heinous nature of the crimes involved and the public pressure on the police, prosecutors and judges to achieve the ultimate penalty in notorious cases. It is no coincidence that these are the very factors that led to the wrongful conviction and execution of Colin Ross.

In addition to helping right the wrongs of the past, such an inquiry would have a tremendous influence on other countries and jurisdictions that continue to apply the death penalty. From my own personal experience of working in capital defence in Texas, I can assure you that Americans in particular are greatly influenced by how their friends and allies treat this issue. Innocence is a touchstone issue in the capital punishment debate in the USA and elsewhere. To create a record in Victoria of the history of wrongful execution here would assist greatly in influencing the debate in the USA and in many other executing jurisdictions.

This is an opportunity for Victoria to take the lead on the world stage on a crucial human rights question.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Walsh'.

**Rachel Walsh** | President  
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