

Louisiana
Capital
Assistance
Center

A Non-Profit Law Office

Rachel Walsh
President
Reprieve Australia
GPO Box 4296
Melbourne VIC 3001

March 13, 2008

Dear Rachel,

Thank you very much for your invitation to the Honorary Membership Ceremony and even more for the privilege the Committee has extended by including me in the list of honorees.

Unfortunately, I am not going to be able to make it back to Australia to attend what promises to be a terrific event. As Nick and Pia gleefully warned me many times, two children is more than double the work of one and my newly arrived daughter, Greta, has made it clear that I am not going anywhere.

In truth, I would probably have had to cancel anyway, given recent events. A judge in Baton Rouge just decided to allow a paranoid defendant with an IQ of 53 to fire his lawyers and represent himself on five counts of capital murder in a trial set to start in only a couple of weeks. We are scrambling to help the fired lawyers prevent this farce from proceeding. If nothing else it gives new meaning to the old adage that a man who represents himself has a fool for a client. I used to think it was just a saying but in Louisiana, apparently, it has the force of law.

Though I won't be able to attend personally my thoughts will be with everyone there. Please extend my fondest wishes and thanks to the entire Reprieve family, our supporters and to those others who have chosen to work in this difficult field. I did want to pass on a few reflections on what *ReprieveAustralia* has been able to achieve in the US over the last several years.

ReprieveAustralia started sending volunteers over to the US in November 2001 and since then we have sent 56 volunteers over, with another four scheduled to leave Australia in the coming months. The volunteers have been placed in nine different capital defense offices in five states. The efforts of *ReprieveAustralia's* volunteers have amounted to over 19 years of free labor performed on behalf of poor people facing execution in America.

All volunteers have given at least three months of their time and energy, some have been able to give more and some have even returned to volunteer again. Lucy Spencer, Ben Kiely and Nick Button have come and volunteered twice, while Ashley Halphen and Bonnie Renou have made the trip three times.

Lucy Larkins, after her initial trip as a volunteer, applied for and received the LCAC/Reprieve Client Welfare Fellowship. She has just completed a full year in Louisiana where she dedicated herself to providing for the welfare of capital defendants and their families.

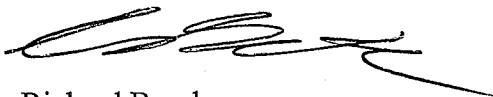
Eleni Antonopoulos returned four times, working as a volunteer for close to two years before being awarded the inaugural Clive Stafford Smith Reprieve Fellowship and taking up full time employment with the LCAC in New Orleans. She is now the lead investigator and mitigation specialist for our office.

Some of our alumni have also gone on to work with and support the efforts of those in Australia who have battled the death penalty in our region. Others have gone on to drive *ReprieveAustralia* forward, becoming committee members and office bearers

ReprieveAustralia volunteers have provided immeasurable help to a host of clients and their families as well as to the lawyers and investigators who do this work every day in America's deathbelt. Some of the people they have served have been executed, some spared death and some even released - exonerated of all wrongdoing. The work has not always been easy, nor the conditions favorable but volunteers have continued to come and do their work. For many of our clients, even more important than the actual tasks performed is seeing that people care enough to want to come and help.

I would not have predicted back in 2001 when Nick came up with the idea for *ReprieveAustralia* that we would still be going and indeed growing from strength to strength. I want to congratulate you and the rest of the Committee on your hard work and continued commitment to a cause which at times must seem far away but which is central to our shared understanding of the fundamental dignity of human life wherever we are on the globe.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Bourke
Acting Director*

* Licensed only in Texas

P.S. Please say hello to my Mum and Dad for me. I owe them both a phone call.