

***The Penalty Is Death:*
State power, law, and justice**
Edited by Barry Jones

August 2022 marks 100 years since Queensland abolished the death penalty: the first jurisdiction in the British Empire to achieve this major reform, decades before any other Australian state.

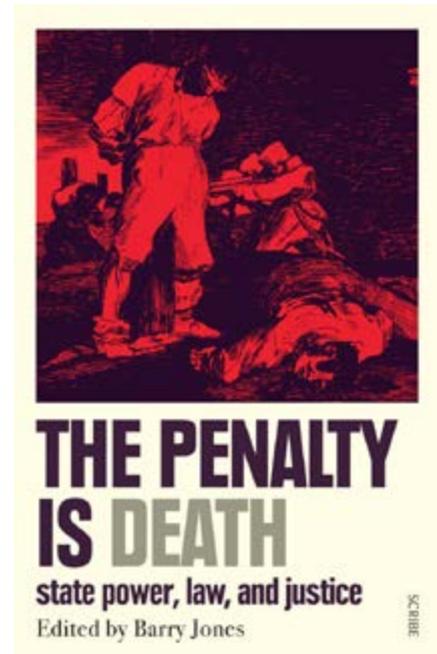
“Barry Jones’s polymathic intellect has been at Australia’s service for time out of mind. He is a genial and beguilingly persuasive public intellectual, neither vain nor scratchy with the less informed, and always constructive. Right through his public advocacy runs a deep intuitive sense of justice and human rights, and it was this passion that led him so effectively to champion the abolition of the death penalty in Victoria.”

Malcolm Turnbull

To mark the centenary, this seminal collection of humanitarian writing and passionate advocacy is to be published – updated and reissued with new contributions from Michael Kirby, Barry Jones, Julian McMahon and more.

Capital punishment continues to make headlines and shatter lives across the world, despite its abolition in this country. Writer, teacher, lawyer, social activist, polymath, former politician and national treasure Barry Jones examines the work that still needs to be done, the lessons from early activism and what capital punishment says about the State and the individual.

The Penalty Is Death was first published in 1968, in the aftermath of the hanging of Ronald Ryan in Victoria – the last man executed in Australia. An important new



introduction by Barry Jones brings the global issue of the death penalty up to date. While capital punishment is abolished throughout Australia – and Commonwealth legislation prevents state and territory governments from reintroducing it – Australian citizens still face the prospect of execution for crimes committed overseas in places like the US, Iran, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and China, among others. Indeed, many people still recall the trauma of 29 April 2015 when the best efforts of abolitionists and human rights defenders failed to save the lives of Australians, Myuran Sukumaran and Andrew Chan, from death by firing squad.

Australian lawyers and organisations continue to work to prevent executions and to abolish the death penalty in those countries around the world which still retain it. Barry Jones has collected the best examples of writing against the death penalty in world literature including the pioneering work of Cesare Beccaria, followed by Charles Dickens, Albert Camus and Clarence Darrow. George Orwell’s 1931 essay about a hanging he witnessed in Burma, remains one of the most moving and compelling first-hand accounts of a judicial execution ever written, graphically depicting the horrors of cold-blooded killing by state power.

Other updates to the book include forewords by Australia’s leading lawyers and activists in the field

including Justice Michael Kirby AC, CMG, Richard Bourke, an Australian barrister and now director of The Louisiana Capital Assistance Center, and Julian McMahon AC, a Melbourne barrister with extensive overseas experience in death penalty cases.

As a seminal collection of the best writings against capital punishment, *The Penalty Is Death* draws on a wide range of sources, historical and contemporary, and presents an overview of the legal, political and philosophical arguments for and against capital punishment, as well as firsthand accounts of the reality of executions and their aftermaths. Capital punishment continues to make headlines and shatter lives across the world, despite its abolition in this country. Writer, teacher, lawyer, social activist, polymath, former politician and national treasure Barry Jones examines the work that still needs to be done, the lessons from early activism and what capital punishment says about the State and the individual.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barry Jones (1932-) edited the first edition of *The Penalty Is Death* in 1968 (Sun Books) while secretary of the Victorian Anti-Hanging Committee (later Council) 1962-75. He has been a teacher, lawyer (briefly), academic, politician and author. He was a Labor Member of the Victorian Parliament 1972-77, the Commonwealth Parliament 1977-98 and Minister for Science 1983-90. He represented Australia at UNESCO in Paris 1991-96 and carried out research in Cambridge 2000-01.

His books include *Sleepers, Wake!* (1982), *A Thinking Reed* (2006), *The Shock of Recognition* (2016), *What Is To Be Done: political engagement and saving the planet* (2020) and *Dictionary of World Biography* (latest edition 2021).

A Fellow of four of Australia's five learned Academies, Barry Jones was awarded an AC in 2014.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

For interviews with Barry Jones, contributor Dr Mike Richards (author of an award-winning biography of Ronald Ryan) or CPJP's Chair, barrister, Stephen Keim SC, and for all media enquiries about the book and the centenary events in Brisbane on 1 August, please contact Dina Kluska at dina@pitchprojects.com or 0409 011 092.

The Penalty Is Death is a special Centenary project of lawyer Stephen Keim and the [Capital Punishment Justice Project](#), its supporters and donors.

