



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Charges against Assange must be dropped

The United States Government should respect Australia's wishes and drop the charges against Julian Assange before a court hearing begins next week, says Assange's union.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance welcomes the overwhelming vote by the House of Representatives in favour of calling for an end to the prosecution of Assange, who faces up to 175 years in jail if found guilty of espionage charges related to his work as publisher of Wikileaks more than a decade ago.

The vote, which was supported by the Prime Minister, sends a strong message to the US that it should bring to an end its efforts to extradite Assange and allow him to be released so he can be reunited with his family.

It comes just days ahead of a last chance for Assange to avoid extradition at a court hearing in London beginning next Tuesday.

"In the words of the Prime Minister, enough is enough," said the Federal President of MEAA's Media Section, Karen Percy.

"Julian Assange exposed wrongdoing and criminality when Wikileaks shed light on civilian deaths and possible war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. That was clearly journalism in the public interest.

"The charges laid against him pose a profound threat to press freedom and for all journalists around the world."

Assange has been a MEAA member since 2007 and in 2011 received the Walkley Award for outstanding contribution to journalism.

MEAA Chief Executive Erin Madeley said the vote in Parliament was a welcome development, but it must be followed up by the strongest possible advocacy by the government to its US counterpart to see this through to resolution.

"In the almost five years that Assange has been in Belmarsh Prison his physical and mental well-being has deteriorated unfathomably and he has been deprived of access to his two young sons," she said.

"Now it is time for him to come home."

**More information: Mark Phillips, 0422 009 011 or [mark.phillips@meaa.org](mailto:mark.phillips@meaa.org)**

📍 PO Box 723 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 📞 1300 656 513

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ABN 84 054 775 598