

### 6.3 Freedom of the Press

Submitting Councillor: Josh Fergeus

#### **MOTION**

*That Council:*

- 1. Asserts the City of Monash's staunch support for Freedom of the Press;*
- 2. Notes that WikiLeaks has played an important and effective role in disclosing war crimes, corporate fraud, environmental damage and other criminal abuses;*
- 3. Notes that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been held on remand in maximum security prison in the United Kingdom without charge, locked in a cell for 23 hours per day and that he continues to remain incarcerated;*
- 4. Notes that Mr Assange is now in very poor health and is facing extradition from the United Kingdom to the United States of America in an unprecedented Espionage Act prosecution for engaging in journalistic activity and, if convicted, faces 175 years imprisonment and potentially the death penalty for revealing the truth about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq;*
- 5. Notes that the treatment and experience of Mr Assange sets a dangerous precedent for journalists worldwide;*
- 6. Notes that the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has called for Mr Assange's immediate release and that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture, Nils Melzer, has examined Mr Assange in Belmarsh Prison and believes that his life is in danger;*
- 7. Notes and supports Amnesty International's call for the UK to hold firm and refuse to extradite Mr Assange to the USA and for the UK to abide by its obligations under international human rights law that forbids the transfer of individuals to another country where they would face serious human rights violations;*
- 8. Notes and supports the other major civil liberties, media freedom and human rights groups which have spoken out against the arrest and treatment of Julian Assange including:*
  - The International BAR Association of Human Rights Institute;*
  - The European Council;*
  - Freedom of the Press Foundation;*
  - Local, state and federal governments;*
  - Reporters Without Borders;*
  - Human Rights Watch;*
  - Australian Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance;*
  - Center for Constitutional Rights;*
  - Human Rights Law Centre;*
  - Digital Rights Watch;*

- *International Association for Media and Communication Research;*
- 9. *Writes to Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs requesting that the Australian Government urgently request that UK authorities address Mr Assange's poor health and mistreatment and uphold the human rights of Mr Assange as an Australian citizen;*
- 10. *Issue a public statement detailing Council's position and writes to local State and Federal MPs advising them of this position.*

**BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Many Councillors were contacted by the Australians for Assange campaign prior to the 2020 City of Monash election on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020.

The campaign, including local community members, requested that Council join with other local governments including the City of Melbourne in adding our voice in support of freedom of the press and the Australian Government's urgent intervention in Mr Assange's case.

Julian Assange is the founder of Wikileaks. He is an Australian citizen and winner of a Walkley Award for his work revealing information in the public interest regarding the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Australians for Assange Team identify many Monash residents as members of the Assange campaign. This is a non-partisan issue supported publicly by politicians and influential Australians from across the political spectrum.