

Media Release



Australia Myanmar Institute

Australian Government must appoint a special envoy to work for Sean Turnell's release

To: Australian media outlets

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Australia must redouble its efforts to gain the release of Sean Turnell's from detention in Myanmar and for his safe return to his family in Sydney.

Tomorrow marks 12 months since Sean Turnell, a distinguished economics professor from Macquarie University, was detained by the Myanmar military, on 6 February 2021. He had been providing advice on the Myanmar economy to the elected government, led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Since then, he has been held in isolation and been denied normal consular protection or family contact that is available to Australian citizens held elsewhere in the world.

The Australian Government must recognise that its efforts to secure Sean's release have failed. It's now time for fresh approaches, including the appointment of a special envoy to Myanmar to negotiate for his release.

This envoy should work with the support of all agencies and organisations concerned with Sean's welfare and any Myanmar person or group with influence. These negotiations and actions should also include contact with ASEAN and its leaders, as well as other countries and international organisations that have raised Sean's circumstances with the Myanmar military and called for his release.

The appointment of a special envoy is not an unusual way of handling these complex international negotiations. The Government should now move quickly to name a suitable envoy and keep Parliament fully informed of actions taken.

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