

Bali Nine member Scott Rush escapes death penalty

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Reprieve ... Scott Rush has escaped the death penalty / Pic: Made Nagi *Source:* The Daily Telegraph

AN Indonesian court's decision to commute Bali Nine drug smuggler Scott Rush's death sentence to life in prison is bittersweet, a family friend says.

Father Tim Harris, the family's former parish priest, said the decision to spare the Queenslander's life was wonderful but also heartbreaking.

He said Rush's parents Lee and Christine Rush were relieved, but their son's future remained grim.

"It's sort of bittersweet, isn't it, where there's great news about Scott's situation on the one hand but ongoing pain continues by virtue of the fact that Scott continues to serve a life sentence?" he told the ABC.

Rush's lawyer Frans Hendra Winata confirmed the death sentence had been overturned late last night after Rush won his judicial review before the Indonesian Supreme Court.

"Yes, I just heard it, the sentence has been changed to life," Mr Winata said.

"This is a really good news for the family.

"The reasons were that he's still young, he's being repentant and his role was only a courier," he said.

Rush, 24, had been facing the death penalty for his part in a 2005 plot to smuggle more than 8kgs of heroin.

It is understood that the Supreme Court granted his appeal on the basis that he had shown remorse for his actions, while also citing his age at the time as a mitigating factor.

What would you rather, if it was you - life in prison or execution? Tell us below

The court also considered the fact that he was not a ringleader in the group, and only a courier.

The so-called Bali Nine ringleaders, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, are also waiting for the outcome of their judicial reviews in the hope that they will also escape the death penalty.

"The Australian Government welcomes this decision by the Supreme Court," Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd told Parliament.

The Federal Government remains in close touch with Rush's parents, who have been informed of the decision.

Mr Rudd said Rush's parents had shouldered a heavy burden, with years of waiting for the decision.

Opposition foreign affairs spokeswoman Julie Bishop said Rush was a young man, aged 19, when he was caught trafficking drugs and had a somewhat troubled past.

If there was ever a lesson for people to understand they must abide by the laws of other countries, Rush's was one, she said.

Rush joins a number of other members of the drug smuggling plot who are also serving life sentences in Bali's Kerobokan Prison.