National Report of Australia - Universal Periodic Review 2021

**Annex 3**

Australia’s Voluntary Pledges as a candidate for membership of the UN Human Rights Council – 14 July 2017 – Status of Implementation

| **No.** | **Voluntary Pledge** | **Australia’s implementation actions** |
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|  |  | **Pillar one: advance the rights of women and girls** |
| **1.1** | Work collaboratively across all regions and forums to eliminate violence against women, support women’s voices and agency and increase and enhance economic opportunities for women. Australia supports the role of the Commission on the Status of Women in pursuing a global normative policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women. As a member of the core group on equal nationality rights, it will continue to play a leadership role in promoting gender equality in the Human Rights Council and will promote the mainstreaming of language on gender equality throughout the work of the Council. | **Implemented**Since joining the Human Rights Council (HRC), Australia has been a leader on gender issues. It has worked to mainstream language on gender equality and women's empowerment in HRC resolutions, regularly proposing amendments to insert or strengthen language on gender, and working to protect and enhance language in resolutions including on violence against women and girls, discrimination against women and girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and female genital mutilation.As an HRC member, Australia has made approximately 94 national and joint statements with a significant focus on gender, including statements on sexual orientation and gender identity, indigenous women, ending violence against women and girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women and girls with a disability, women’s political participation and women’s empowerment. In addition, Australia has made seven national and joint statements out-of-session on the impacts of COVID-19 on the rights of women and girls and LGBTI persons.Australia has led HRC joint statements on the plurality of families, on the Bejing+25 Platform for Action, and joined a range of other relevant statements. At the 44th session of the Human Rights Council the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women, Senator the Hon. Marise Payne, delivered a video statement for the panel discussion on COVID-19 and the rights of women and girls on 14 July 2020. The Ambassador for Gender Equality, Julie-Ann Guivarra, also delivered a video statement at the Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and Girls on 7 July 2020. Australia also advocates for the rights of women and girls at the UN General Assembly Third Committee, through statements and our engagement on resolutions.Ending violence against women and girls is a priority for Australia domestically and in our international efforts. Australia has provided support for the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, the Joint UN Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls subject to Violence, UN prevention initiatives Blueprint for Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls and Stepping Up Solutions to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls, as well as a regional UNFPA initiative (kNOwVAWdata) which is institutionalising the expertise and capacity for conducting prevalence of violence against women studies. We also support bilateral programs in the Indo-Pacific region, including in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Timor Leste and Pacific Island Countries. Australia supports a number of women's economic empowerment programs, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Investing in Women initiative which promotes inclusive economic growth through improving women's economic participation as employees and entrepreneurs in Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar. Australia was elected as member of the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) for the period 2019-23 and will serve as the Vice-Chair for the period covering the 64th and 65th sessions of CSW in 2020 and 2021.Australia engaged with civil society organisations and likemindeds during CSW62 in 2018 and CSW63 in 2019 and played a constructive role in negotiations and the Agreed Conclusions.In 2020, Australia continued to consult with whole of government partners, civil society organisations and likemindeds to reach agreement on a CSW64 Political Declaration that reflected key priorities. |
| **1.2** | Work with other governments and civil society to convert the objectives of the women, peace and security agenda into effective action. Australia will continue to implement its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2018. | **Implemented**Australia had specific commitments under its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (2012-18). DFAT works closely with other Australian agencies in implementing its commitments, including leading on the promotion of the global WPS agenda and providing targeted WPS training. Australia is working closely with other countries in the Indo-Pacific region to advance WPS activities. Australia continues to support civil society to participate in global forums on WPS, and has committed funding to key WPS funds, including the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund, UN Women Global Facility on Women Peace and Security, and the Sexual and Reproductive Health in Emergencies (SPRINT) Program, to accelerate community recovery by providing crisis-affected women, men and children with lifesaving sexual reproductive health services. Australia's second National Action Plan on WPS is expected to be launched in 2020.Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 *Women, Peace and Security* (WPS) mandate is important to Defence’s operational effectiveness and mission success. A gender perspective aims to minimise adverse impacts of operations on local populations, to assist with their return to enduring peace and stability. Defence continues to implement the priorities outlined in Australia’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Defence is well advanced in incorporating WPS priorities and a gender perspective into all core business activities. This includes peace and security operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities and major exercises. As at 1 January 2020, 18.6 per cent of deployed Australian Defence Force (ADF) members were women and women made up 18.7 per cent of all ADF members. The pledged target for women serving on United Nations (UN) operations is 15 per cent and the ADF exceeds this with a current rate of 27.7 per cent. As at July 2020, the percentage of female Heads of Mission has increased to 44 per cent, up from 25 per cent in 2015. Our development assistance program is internationally recognised for its commitment to high standards in gender mainstreaming, as well as its gender targeted activities in the Indo-Pacific. |
| **1.3** | Continue to advocate internationally for the equal participation of women in political, economic and social affairs. Australia is one of the few countries to have a dedicated ambassador for women and girls who works to promote gender equality, gender empowerment and ending violence against women. Australia is also a top 10 donor to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN -Women). Earlier this year, Australia reaffirmed its support for UN - Women, and will contribute $31.16 million over the next four years. | **Implemented**As articulated in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, Australia considers gender equality a human right and an important contributor to prosperity, stability and security. Through the Partnerships for Recovery: Australia’s COVID-19 Development Response, Australia has pivoted our development program to respond to the needs of women and girls during the COVID-19 response.Since 2011, Australia has appointed an Ambassador for Women and Girls. The Ambassador advocated for Australia's gender agenda in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora, to raise the profile of gender equality and women's empowerment globally. In March 2020, Australia announced a new Australian Ambassador for Gender Equality, Ms Julie-Ann Guivarra, our fourth representative on this issue. The Ambassador for Gender Equality is working to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, is a central focus of Australia’s diplomatic, development, and regional security efforts. At the 44th session of the Human Rights Council the Ambassador for Gender Equality delivered a video statement at the Interactive Dialogue with the Working Group on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and Girls on 7 July.Australia has provided core funding to UN Women since it was established in 2010. In December 2016, Australia signed a four-year Strategic Partnership Framework between DFAT and UN Women with committed core funding of AUD$7.79 million annually subject to budget. Australia was elected as Vice President of the Bureau of the UN Women Executive Board in 2019. In 2019, Australia was the overall tenth largest contributor to UN Women. As well as core funding, Australia funds UN Women for specific activities. In the 2018-19 financial year, Australia contributed AUD$12.2 million in earmarked contributions largely directed towards programs in the Indo-Pacific region focused on preventing violence against women, women's economic empowerment and women's leadership and participation, including in WPS. Australia also supports women’s leadership in the international system, and is nominating Natasha Stott Despoja AO as Australia’s candidate to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. |
| **1.4** | Pursue gender equality through its international development programme, ensuring that at least 80 per cent of Australian aid investments effectively address gender issues in their implementation, no matter what their principal objective. | **Partially implemented**In 2017–18, 75 per cent of Australia's aid investments effectively addressed gender issues in their implementation. Australia has found it challenging to meet its 80 per cent target in areas where investments focus on systems improvement, such as in the governance and climate change sectors. Australia also faces difficulties in areas where its choice of partner is limited, such as when Australia needs to partner with government systems, use local partners or work in fragile and conflict affected settings. |
| **1.5** | Continue to fund projects to end violence against women globally and defend and promote sexual and reproductive health rights, and continue to work towards universal access to these essential services. | **Implemented**Ending violence against women and girls is a priority for Australia domestically and in our international efforts. For details on some of Australia's work to end violence against women and girls internationally, see 1.1, above.Australia has worked to eliminate violence against women and girls through our international human rights advocacy in multilateral forums, for example on ending female genital mutilation and broadening the definition of rape. Australia also championed inclusion of sexual and reproductive health as an essential component of the Political Declaration of the High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage during the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly (September 2019).Australia supports developing countries to improve access to sexual and reproductive health rights services, bilaterally, regionally and globally through the Aid Program. This includes AUD$30million (2018-2022) to support Pacific Island countries to decrease unmet need for family planning, core funding to UNFPA and the International Planned Parenthood Federation as well as a number of country specific SRHR development initiatives. Domestically, the Australian Government currently allocates more than AUD$22 billion per year to subsidise a vast range of medical services, including those for sexual and reproductive health under Medicare, Australia's universal health system. In 2016, additional Medicare funding was made available for sexual and reproductive health related services. The Government has also committed AUD$500,000 towards action against domestic and family violence as part of the Women's Safety Package to Stop the Violence, and established 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health and medical services for Australians, including at least 12 PHNs undertaking specific activities focusing on family and domestic violence in 2017-18. Australia has 5 current National Blood Borne Viruses (BBV) and Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI) strategies to ensure priority populations, including women, have equitable access to prevention programs and resources, and testing and treatment.  |
| **1.6** | Advance gender equality across Australia through Government policies and programmes that consider the needs of different groups of women, particularly those who may face multiple barriers to full participation in work and community life. All Australian Ministers and departments share the responsibility for delivering equality for women, through liaison with the Office for Women. | **Implemented**The Office for Women works to advance gender equality through its focus on women’s economic security, safety and leadership.The Women's Economic Security Statement, announced in November 2018, includes a range of measures to address women's multiple and intersecting barriers to full participation in public life, including workforce participation. Key measures in the $158.3 million Statement that aim to boost women’s workforce participation include:* $20.5 million in grants through a women’s start-up fund, Boosting Female Founders, to increase entrepreneurship opportunities for women;
* $3.6 million for the Future Female Entrepreneurs program for around 55,000 girls and young women, to encourage entrepreneurialism and self‑employment;
* $1.7 million to 2022-23 to extend the Curious Minds program and get more girls into Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM); and
* $12.5 million for the reinstatement of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Time Use Survey, which will provide valuable insights into the time use on and economic value of unpaid and care work, a key factor in the workforce participation gap between men and women.

All Australian governments continue to work together to improve women’s safety. The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children recognises gender inequality as a driver of violence against women. The Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan identifies multiple national priorities for collaboration. These include efforts to step up support for primary prevention activities, and work to build on frontline services, including justice responses, to keep women and their children safe.The Government provides funding for women’s advocacy under the Women’s Leadership and Development Program (WLDP). From 2017‑18 to 2020-21, the Government invested $6.35 million in six National Women’s Alliances to bring the voices of over 180 women’s organisations to government, in particular, marginalised and disadvantaged groups, to respond to the challenges of COVID-19. These Alliances represent over 180 women’s organisations. The Alliances bring forward the views, voices and issues of Australian women and, in particular, women from marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The Alliances are a mix of issues-based and sector-based women’s groups, each have a focus and strong capacity for networking and advocacy activities. Their areas of focus include: economic security; women’s equality; violence against women; women in rural, remote and regional Australia; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; and migrant and refugee women. The Alliances also work with other sectors and stakeholders, including women with disability.The WLDP also provides funding to one-off or small scale grant projects to improve the lives of Australian women and girls and increase women’s leadership. Projects include the establishment of the Wilcannia Café to provide practical, hands-on training for women and girls, and help them develop life skills, job readiness and employment skills. The Women Building Australia project will also supports career pathways for women in the building and construction industry. |
| **1.7** | Review existing national policies and reinforce practical measures to remove all forms of gender-based discrimination in Australia. | **Partially implemented** Australia continues to review its policies and to remove gender-based discrimination. For example, on 14 December 2018, Australia confirmed that it removed its reservation to the CEDAW Convention as Australian women are no longer excluded from any combat roles in the Australian Defence Force.The federal *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) gives effect to Australia’s international human rights obligations and promotes equality between women and men. It protects people from unfair treatment on the basis of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, marital or relationship status, pregnancy and breastfeeding. The role of Australia’s Sex Discrimination Commissioner is to lead work in advancing gender equality, including through education, and monitoring legislation and policy for compliance with the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The AHRC, in conjunction with the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, recently completed its National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces, with the report tabled in the Parliament on 5 March 2020. The report identifies sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination and considered the nature, prevalence and drivers of sexual harassment, and the measures required to improve how Australian workplaces prevent and respond to sexual harassment. The Government is considering the report and recommendations in detail. On 7 December 2017, the Australian Parliament passed the *Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017* (Cth) (Marriage Amendment Act) providing marriage equality in Australia. From 9 December 2017, marriage is defined in the *Marriage Act 1961* (Cth) as ‘the union of two people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life’. The right to marry under Australian law is no longer determined by sex or gender.On 8 April 2019, the Government referred an inquiry to the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) on the framework of religious exceptions in anti-discrimination law (which include the Sex Discrimination Act). The ALRC will investigate whether these exceptions could be limited or removed altogether, while still allowing religious institutions to conduct their affairs in accordance with their religious ethos. This will include consideration of the Sex Discrimination Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sex, gender identity, and other attributes.The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) is charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces. The WGEA has continued to work collaboratively with employers providing advice, practical tools and education to help improve gender performance and eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender in relation to employment matters (including in relation to family and caring responsibilities). Further, the WGEA uses reporting data from employers to develop educational Competitor Analysis Benchmark Reports based on six gender equality indicators, including sex-based harassment and discrimination.  |
| **1.8** | Improve the economic security of women by closing the gender gap in Australia in terms of pay, retirement income and savings, particularly for women with low incomes. | **Implemented**Prior to COVID-19, growth in women’s employment was strong, with more women in work than ever before. The women’s workforce participation rate (ages 15 plus) rose from 58.7 per cent in September 2013 to 61.3 per cent in February 2020. In November 2019, the gender pay gap in Australia was at a record low of 13.9%. As at May 2020, it was 14.0%. A number of policy initiatives have contributed to address inequality in this area. For example, the *Towards 2025: An Australian Government Strategy to Boost Women’s Workforce Participation*, released in 2017, detailed government actions to address many of the drivers of pay inequity in Australia, including measures for flexible work, paid parental leave, childhood education, and encouraging women into non-traditional areas such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industries. The 2018 Women's Economic Security Statement also included practical measures to break down barriers to women’s economic security, including funding to boost female entrepreneurship, mid-career review activities, and flexible paid parental leave.Women are underrepresented in entrepreneurship and STEM education and careers, and participation of women from minority groups is particularly low. The persistent challenge of attracting and retaining girls and women in STEM studies and careers remains across the pathway from school and into careers and must be addressed to improve economic diversity and boost the financial independence of women. The Australian Government has implemented a broad array of actions to improve STEM gender equity in Australia including appointing a Women in STEM Ambassador, releasing our Advancing Women in STEM strategy and 2020 Action Plan, and supporting the Women in STEM Decadal Plan, Girls in STEM Toolkit and Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) initiative.The Government is continuing to ensure Australians are well-supported during their retirement by commissioning an independent review of the retirement income system. The review considered the three pillars of the existing retirement income system, being the age pension, compulsory superannuation and voluntary savings. A final report was handed to Government in July 2020. The Review included consideration of the issues women face in retirement given they are more likely to take career breaks, work part-time and have lower lifetime earnings and longer life expectancy. The Government’s reforms to superannuation introduced in the 2016 and 2018 Budgets will further help women improve their superannuation balances. |
| **1.9** | Commit to ensuring gender equality on Government boards. Australia is on track to achieve this target for women in leadership, with women comprising 41 per cent of current positions. | **Implemented**Australia is on track to achieve its target to have women holding 50 per cent of Australian Government board positions overall, with men and women holding at least 40 per cent of positions on individual board.As at 31 December 2019, women held 48.4 per cent of Australian Government board positions, a 0.5 percentage point increase since 30 June 2019, the highest percentage of women since public reporting began.  |
| **1.10** | Work to ensure that women and their children in Australia are safe from violence. In 2017, the Government allocated an additional $100 million to its National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. | **Partially implemented**Since 2013 the Government has invested over $1 billion to improve women's safety. The Women's Economic Security Statement launched in 2018, includes additional measures to help women experiencing family and domestic violence and relationship breakdown. The Government continues to implement the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022. The Fourth Action Plan (2020-22), launched in August 2019, provides a $340 million investment from the Commonwealth. |
|  |  | **Pillar two: promote good governance and stronger democratic institutions everywhere** |
| **2.1** | Through its development programmes, provide support to States to strengthen their public services and develop effective rule of law and justice agencies to ensure public safety and security. | **Implemented**Over the last few years, around one fifth of Australia’s aid program has been devoted to governance, which, among other things, supports States to strengthen their public services and develop effective rule of law and justice agencies to ensure public safety and security.Australia also provides funding to the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, to provide technical assistance to countries wishing to create a national human rights institution, and capacity building for countries wishing to strengthen existing institutions.Other examples of Australian work includes the PNG-Australian Governance Partnership Program, Solomon Islands Governance Program and the Vanuatu Australia Policing and Justice Program. In August 2018, the Australian Embassy in Hanoi signed an agreement with the Australian Human Rights Commission to deliver capacity-building support in Vietnam. |
| **2.2** | Continue its strong commitment to the global abolition of the death penalty. Australia considers the application of the death penalty to be a violation of basic human rights, fundamentally incompatible with the right to life and potentially inconsistent with the right to be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. | **Implemented**Australia became a member of the international anti-death penalty alliance, *Friends of the Protocol*, in October 2018, which promotes ratification of the Second Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and set up a consultative committee focal point with civil society. We are also a full member of the Support Group of the International Commission Against the Death Penalty, which supports internationally recognised Commissioners to advocate for global abolition. Australia’s Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva hosted the annual meeting of the International Commission Against the Death Penalty in 2019.Australia strongly supports multilateral resolutions on the death penalty. In September 2019, Australia co-sponsored and voted in favour of the most recent Human Rights Council’s biennial resolution on the human rights impacts of the death penalty. We are also on the inter-regional taskforce that negotiates the text of the UN General Assembly biennial resolution calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, which most recently passed in November/December 2018.Australian overseas missions and DFAT’s head office in Canberra undertook advocacy activities for World Day Against the Death Penalty on 10 October in 2018 and 2019. Australia also delivered HRC national statements on the abolition of the death penalty at HRC40 and HRC42. Australia makes Universal Periodic Review recommendations on the death penalty to all countries that retain the death penalty in any form.  |
| **2.3** | Develop and implement a whole-of-government strategy for advancing the global abolition of the death penalty, including efforts through the Human Rights Council. Australia has signed the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and has formally abolished the death penalty. | **Implemented**Australia’s Strategy for Abolition of the Death Penalty was launched by Foreign Minister Payne on 15 October 2018, and its implementation is underway. For examples of actions taken under the strategy, see commitment 2.2 above. |
| **2.4** | Reaffirm its strong commitment to the International Criminal Court and its essential role in fighting impunity for crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Australia will cooperate with the Court, including through robust political support and technical assistance; work to ensure that the Court has adequate budgetary resources to fulfil its mandate; and support initiatives to promote the genuine and effective investigation and prosecution of international crimes within national jurisdictions, including bolstering political will and technical capacity. | **Implemented**Australia is a strong supporter of accountability for serious international crimes, and a longstanding supporter of the ICC. Australia is taking a lead role in developing and implementing a reform agenda aimed at ensuring the ICC attracts high-quality candidates for key judicial and prosecutorial roles.As co-focal point on complementarity (since 2017, together with Romania), Australia has shaped dialogue between States Parties on this complex legal concept – which lies at the heart of the ICC’s operations, contributed to capacity-building, and demonstrated our commitment to the international rules-based order.Australia has supported retention of references to the ICC in relevant HRC resolutions (for example, resolutions on Syria and Myanmar), including through international advocacy with like-mindeds under our commitment to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) populations from the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.On 23 June 2020 Australia joined a statement of 67 ICC States Parties, which expressed our continued support for the Court. Australia is currently a member of the Bureau of the Assembly of States Parties. The Bureau assists the Assembly of States Parties in the discharge of its responsibilities. |
| **2.5** | At home, Australia will continue to promote good governance and strong democratic institutions ensuring its public institutions are transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs of its people. | **Implemented**Australia has robust oversight and transparency frameworks in place and continues to identify opportunities for improvement.There are agencies at both the Federal and state and territory level with a sole role of oversighting particular functions of government or whole departments and agencies. For example:* the Commonwealth Ombudsman oversees all areas of federal government administration with the exception of taxation and intelligence agencies. This includes oversight of the Defence Force, immigration, law enforcement, public interest disclosures and inspections and monitoring of key covert and intrusive powers by police and other law enforcement agencies;
* the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity investigates law enforcement-related corruption issues to provide independent assurance to government about the integrity of prescribed law enforcement agencies and their staff;
* the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner is the independent regulator for privacy and freedom of information, and promotes the right to access government-held information; and
* The Auditor-General’s functions include auditing annual performance statements of federal entities.

Additional oversight and accountability measures are embedded in functions of departments. For example, the Attorney-General’s Department supports the Australian Government to uphold human rights through its responsibility for protecting and promoting the rule of law and administering Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws. The department has a significant role in scrutinising draft Commonwealth legislation to ensure the rule of law is respected and rights of individuals are appropriately protected. This includes considering review mechanisms for administrative decisions, protecting access to personal information, and ensuring any laws, including the framing of criminal offences, are appropriately balanced, and consistent with Australia’s international human rights obligations.In 2018, the Australian Government announced that it will establish a Commonwealth Integrity Commission (CIC) to strengthen integrity arrangements across the federal public sector. The CIC will be a centralised, specialist centre for the investigation of corruption in law enforcement and the public sector. It will also work with agencies to build resilience to corruption and bolster agency capability to detect, deter and investigate corrupt conduct. The CIC will be established as an independent statutory agency, led by a commissioner and two deputy commissioners. The government sought views from the public on the CIC model in 2019.In 2015 the Australian Government became a member of the Open Government Partnership, an international initiative where civil society and governments seek to increase transparency and strengthen democratic governance. Australia’s second Open Government National Action Plan 2018-2020 outlined 8 commitments to enhance access to information, civic participation, public accountability, as well as technology and innovation for openness and accountability. Australia is in the process of jointly developing its third National Action Plan 2020-22 with civil society.The Australian Government launched the online Transparency Portal in 2019 as a central repository of publically available corporate information on all Commonwealth bodies. The Portal allows users to instantly generate tables and charts to compare information on resourcing, remuneration and staffing from multiple government bodies and financial years. |
| **2.6** | Ratify OPCAT | **Implemented**On 21 December 2017, Australia ratified OPCAT and it entered into force in Australia on 20 January 2018. On ratification, Australia made a declaration under Article 24 of OPCAT to postpone National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) obligations for up to three years. The Australian Government is using this time to work with state and territory governments which manage many places of detention, to establish Australia’s NPMObligations to accept a visit from the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) commenced on 20 January 2018. Australia was due to support a visit by representatives from the SPT in the first half of 2020. The SPT postponed its visit to Australia in March-April 2020 due to the spread of COVID-19. Australia looks forward to welcoming a visit from the SPT once it is able to proceed.  |
|  |  | **Pillar three: promote and protect freedom of expression** |
| **3.1** | Advocate internationally for the protection of journalists, human rights defenders and civil society in United Nations forums, including in the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council, as well as through bilateral and regional representations. | **Implemented**Australia has been a staunch advocate for civil society bilaterally and in multilateral fora. Australia has funded civil society participation at high-level conferences and meetings, for example at the Human Rights Council, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. We have also provided financial support for a range of civil society advocacy organisations and funded civil society to attend events such as the Equal Rights Coalition meeting in Vancouver in November 2018.At the 38th session of the HRC, Australia co-sponsored a resolution on civil society space and delivered a national statement with a focus on civil society space.Australia has continued to advocate to protect civil society participation in HRC processes during HRC efficiency and effectiveness discussions, and has intervened to support the right of NGOs to speak at the HRC when points of order are raised. We regularly make recommendations to States during their Universal Periodic Review appearances on protection of journalists, human rights defenders and civil society. For example, we made recommendations to Turkey in January 2020 and to Egypt in November 2019.Australia consistently supports the work of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders. Australia co-sponsored the HRC resolution to renew the Special Rapporteur’s mandate at HRC43 in June 2020, and raised concerns about ongoing reprisals against human rights defenders at HRC44 in July 2020. In October 2018, we made a national statement on the situation of human rights defenders at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly Third Committee.Australia also supports action in a range of fora on protection of journalists. Foreign Minister Payne participated in the Global Conference for Media Freedom in London in July 2019.Australia signed the joint-statement on Safety of Journalists at the 38th session of the HRC, and engaged actively in ensuring a strong resolution on Safety of Journalists at the 39th session. Australia led a joint statement on Saudi Arabia at the42nd session of the HRC, in which we expressed our concern at the treatment of civil society, human rights defenders, and journalists. We also called for accountability for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Australia also raised the Khashoggi case in its national statement for the Universal Periodic Review of Saudi Arabia. Australia expressed our concern about the impact of COVID-19 measures on journalists and media freedom through a range of initiatives to mark World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2020, including social media messages issued by DFAT and our diplomatic posts; and supporting the UNESCO High-level Dialogue on Press Freedom and Tackling Disinformation in the COVID-19 context, together with others in the Group of Friends of Journalists. Australia also expressed concern through a range of national and joint statements delivered in the HRC, and supporting joint statements made by the Groups of Friends on the Safety of Journalists at UNESCO in Paris, the United Nations in New York and Geneva and the OSCE in Vienna and the Freedom Online Coalition.Australia also supports protection of journalists and media freedom through bilateral representations, and regional programs. We raise media freedom issues bilaterally, as we did during the imprisonment of Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo in Myanmar from 2017-19, and speak out on cases of concern, as we did in the case of the arrest of Maria Ressa, CEO of Philippine online media outlet Rappler in March 2019. We also support the development of a strong, professional and sustainable media sector in partner countries. Australia’s Pacific Media Assistance scheme helps to develop media in the Pacific region by training the next generation of journalists and media practitioners.Australia is a member of the UNESCO Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists (see Voluntary Pledge 3.2 for further details). |
| **3.2** | Support the ongoing programme of work on freedom of expression of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Australia is a member of the “group of friends” supporting the work of UNESCO on the safety of journalists. Australia is also a member of the Geneva-based Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists. | **Implemented**The Australian Government remains actively engaged in the ongoing program of work on the UNESCO Group of Friends (in Paris and Geneva) supporting the safety of journalists. Australia is planning to participate in a Joint Safety of Journalists Conference at UNESCO in Paris, proposed for the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists (2 November 2020). Australia also co-sponsored a side-event hosted by the Geneva Group of Friends and organised by the International Press Institute, which focused on ‘Rising attacks on the press: a global scourge’, and was held during the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council (19 March 2019). |
| **3.3** | Work with other countries to ensure that individuals are able to enjoy the same human rights both online and offline, such as freedom of expression, including through its work as an active member of the Freedom Online Coalition. | **Implemented**The Australian Government strongly advocates for the protection of human rights and democratic principles online. Australia uses multilateral fora, including membership of UN bodies, to advocate for a free, open and secure Internet.We support international efforts to promote and protect human rights online, and ensure that respect for, and protection of, human rights and democratic principles online are considered in all Australian aid projects with digital technology components.The Australian Government appointed an Ambassador for Cyber Affairs in 2016 and launched Australia’s first International Cyber Engagement Strategy in 2017. A key outcome area of the Strategy is advocating internationally for the protection of human rights and democracy online. The Strategy also ensures respect for and protection of human rights and democratic principles online are considered in all Australian aid projects with digital technology components.Australia is a member and financial supporter of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC). Australia regularly joins FOC statements that promote the exercise of human rights online and support an open and interoperable Internet including statements on: internet censorship (May 2018), freedom of expression, and peaceful assembly and association (at HRC41, June 2019), digital inclusion and the human rights impacts of cybersecurity laws, practices and policies (2020) and COVID-19 and internet freedom (May 2020). Australia also led the development of a joint statement on behalf of the FOC Geneva group at HRC38 (June 2018).Australia supports efforts in multilateral fora to promote human rights online, including most recently through a national statement on new and emerging technologies and co-sponsoring the HRC resolution on freedom of expression at HRC44 in July 2020.The Australian Government also provided funding to the FOC Digital Defenders Partnership and the Foundation for Media Alternatives Philippines (2018-19). |
| **3.4** | Continue its advocacy, including in the Human Rights Council, for the enjoyment of freedom of religion or belief by all persons, including through its membership of the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief. In 2017, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs asked the parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to inquire into the status of the human right to freedom of religion or belief. | **Implemented**Key Australian actions to protect freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) internationally include:* coordinating action with fellow members of the International Religious Freedom Alliance and the International Contact Group on FoRB;
* participating in US Ministerials on the Advancement of Religious Freedoms in July 2018 and 2019, as well as the Global Call to Protect Religious Freedom in September 2019;
* raising concerns regarding FORB in Universal Periodic Review (UPR) appearances, and in statements at the Human Rights Council and at UNGA Third Committee; and
* regularly raising FORB issues during bilateral representations, as well as in regional and multilateral settings.

The inquiry into the status of the human right to FORB conducted by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade received nearly 700 submissions, the majority of which focused on issues concerning the protection of FORB in Australia. The Joint Standing Committee has completed the domestic component of its inquiry with the first interim report tabled on November 2017 and the second tabled on 3 April 2019.Domestically, the Australian Government appointed an Expert Panel, reporting in May 2018, to examine whether Australian law adequately protects the right to freedom of religion. The review received over 150,000 public submissions and conducted face to face consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. It found that Australians enjoy a high degree of religious freedom but that there were opportunities to strengthen protections. The Australian Government released its response to the report in December 2018 and has undertaken two public consultation processes on a package of draft legislation on freedom of religion, which includes a Religious Discrimination Bill. |
|  |  | **Pillar four: advance the human rights of indigenous peoples around the globe** |
| **4.1** | Actively engage with multilateral processes affecting indigenous peoples, including through discussions at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and strengthen the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. | **Implemented**Australia's Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, attended the 42nd session of the HRC in September 2019, delivering an address to the HRC on the rights of indigenous peoples, and participating on a panel for the international year of indigenous languages.Australia strongly supports the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and co-sponsored the HRC resolution to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur in September 2019.Australia is a cosponsor of the annual HRC resolution on indigenous rights, including expansion of the Special Rapporteur’s role to better represent the concerns of indigenous peoples within the UN system.Australia sent an all-Indigenous delegation to the 18th session of UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in April 2019. Australia also sent an all-Indigenous delegation to the 12th Session of Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) in July 2019, and hosted two side events.Australia has contributed to UN research and studies on indigenous rights and best practice methods and policies including the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and EMRIP.In line with our support for indigenous women and girls around the world, Australia has supported the attendance of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar, at both the 38th and 41st sessions of the HRC (June 2018 and 2019). |
| **4.2** | Support the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in both word and deed, including the promotion of the Declaration’s principles through national engagement, and internationally through its aid programme. | **Implemented**In line with the principles of the Declaration, Australia’s domestic work: recognises Indigenous Australians’ connection to land and sea; maintains and revitalise Indigenous languages; ensures access to education and health services, recognises and supports spirituality; and promotes cultural expression, including through independent media services. Australia supports the Declaration and is of the view that we give practical effect to it through our domestic policies and programs. Examples of Australia giving practical effect to the Declaration include:* working in partnership with Indigenous Australians to co-design and implement solutions tailored to reflect their community priorities and needs;
* the formal partnership on Closing the Gap, between Indigenous peak representatives and all Australian governments, to develop the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap and their continued role in its implementation, accountability and monitoring;
* enhancing Indigenous economic development through driving demand for Indigenous businesses and strengthening the capacity and capability of Indigenous Australians; and
* supporting Indigenous language centres, interpreters and use of language in schools, and recognising and supporting a variety of forms of cultural expressions.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency contributed to development of international policy (in partnership with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Attorney-General’s Department) by making submissions to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.Internationally, DFAT developed the *Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2015-2019: A Framework for Action* to align its work on issues affecting indigenous peoples across foreign policy, aid, trade and corporate objectives. Key relevant objectives include:* working with its partners to influence international policy to advance the interests of indigenous peoples in the international community;
* encouraging Indigenous Australians to apply for DFAT-funded opportunities to engage in and develop people-to-people links with the international community; and
* striving to deliver international programs that improve outcomes for indigenous peoples.

DFAT is in the process of developing a new strategy to replace the Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2015-19 and elevate indigenous issues across the foreign affairs and trade portfolio. |
| **4.3** | Continue efforts to increase the participation of indigenous peoples in all relevant processes and mechanisms of the United Nations human rights system. Australia will continue to contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples to support the participation of indigenous peoples in relevant meetings. | **Implemented**Australia provides funding to the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples through our annual voluntary funding to Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Fund supported 134 indigenous persons to attend UN Meetings in 2019. Australia provides funding to Indigenous Australian leaders and civil society representatives to participate in the UN human rights system. Australia funded Australian Indigenous civil society participation in 2018 and 2019 to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (April 2018 and 2019, New York), the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) (July 2018 and 2019, Geneva) and the Human Rights Council (June and September, 2019, Geneva).  |
| **4.4** | Advance the economic rights of indigenous peoples and harness the knowledge and expertise of indigenous Australians in the design and delivery of its aid programme. We recognize that indigenous businesses can provide expert, culturally appropriate, “peer-to-peer” assistance to other indigenous communities in developing countries. | **Implemented**Australia has developed a Charter for Indigenous Australian Businesses which provides information on how Indigenous businesses can engage with international markets and investors.DFAT’s Contracting and Aid Management Division hosted its first ever large-scale international development trade show – ‘the Big Meet 2019’ (November 2019) – in Canberra, with over 70 exhibitors (27 of which were Indigenous Businesses) and over 400 attendees at the event. DFAT has facilitated Indigenous subcontracting to commercial partners for the delivery of Australia’s Aid Program. Ongoing promotion of the Indigenous business sector with DFAT business lines areas has resulted in a number of directly engaged contracts being awarded.The Australian Trade and Investment Commission ('Austrade') led the first Indigenous business delegation to Canada in 2019.In September 2019, Australia's Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva hosted the launch of an OECD Study on Indigenous Persons and Regional Economic Development. |
| **4.5** | Pursue a referendum to recognize Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples under the Constitution. Australia is determined to ensure that no Australian is subject to violence and discrimination, and it strives to realize the economic, social and cultural rights of all citizens, but recognizes that there is more work to be done, particularly for indigenous Australians. | **Partially implemented**The Australian Government is committed to promoting and protecting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including working towards a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Constitution. In order to frame proposals for constitutional change, the Australian Government initiated the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition (2012) and the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2015). In 2017, the Referendum Council held a series of First Nations dialogues, culminating in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. This process identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities for recognition included a stronger voice in legislation and decision-making, truth-telling about the past and treaties. In 2018, the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples considered these recommendations and reported on a way forward. The Joint Select Committee acknowledged further work was needed to determine the details of an Indigenous voice to Parliament, before the Government could consider it. To progress this, the Australian Government allocated $7.3 million in 2019 for a co-design process for an Indigenous voice; as well as developing options for constitutional recognition.The co-design process will consist of two stages: 1) the development of options for local and regional decision-making models and a national Indigenous voice; 2) consultation and engagement to refine models with Indigenous leaders, communities and other stakeholders across the country by the end of 2020. This consultation will inform further refinement of the models ahead of final recommendations to Government. The Australian Government will hold a referendum when a consensus has been reached and it has the best chance of success. The Australian Government has not yet set a timeframe or a deadline on bringing a question for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians before the Parliament. |
| **4.6** | Recognizing the need for a collaborative approach, tackle indigenous disadvantage in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to improve health, education and employment outcomes, including through a refresh of the Closing the Gap agenda. | **Partially implemented**The Australian Government has delivered on its commitment to ensuring that the next phase of Closing the Gap is developed as a genuine partnership between all governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The partnership on Closing the Gap, between all Australian governments, the Australian Government Local Government Association (ALGA) and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks) came into effect on 22 March 2019. On 27 July 2020, the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap came into effect. It is underpinned by four priority reforms to change the way governments work with Indigenous Australians and is supported by 16 socio-economic targets to improve outcomes in education, employment, health and wellbeing, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and languages. The Australian Government also works in partnership with Indigenous leaders and communities through a range of local and regional arrangements. This includes Empowered Communities (EC), an initiative designed by Indigenous leaders from eight regions to reform how Government engages with Indigenous peoples and delivers services.The Australian Government is also committed to co-designing an Indigenous voice, which includes improving approaches to local and regional decision-making and Indigenous regional governance.Closing the Gap in health inequality remains a high priority for the Australian Government with the commitment of $4.1 billion for Indigenous-specific health initiatives over four years to 2022-23, which includes an annual increase of around 4 per cent.The Australian Government will continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to design, develop and implement policies and programs that impact their lives. This includes current work to revise the *Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-23*, which is being led by key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health experts.The Departments of Health and Education, Skills and Employment are jointly funding and implementing the Connected Beginnings Program (CBP). CBP focuses on integrating early childhood, child and family health and family support services with schools in a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities so that children are healthy and well prepared for school. |
|  |  | **Pillar five: promote strong national human rights institutions and capacity-building** |
| **5.1** | Work with other States to support their implementation of international human rights obligations and provide assistance to help them increase awareness of human rights, address human rights violations and abuses and hold those responsible to account. | **Implemented**Australia is committed to working with the international community to promote and protect human rights and to address serious issues of concern through bilateral, regional and multilateral channels, and through the aid program. Foreign Minister Payne regularly speaks to her counterparts about human rights concerns, and welcomes steps taken by governments to address those concerns. Australia holds regular human rights dialogues with countries such as Laos and Vietnam. A number of bilateral talks feature human rights as an agenda item. Australia engages closely on country situations to address human rights issues and support the implementation of human rights obligations.Some recent examples include:* Working with Indonesian Civil Society Organisations such as Rumah KitaB to end harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation and cutting through the *Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Justice Phase 2*, as well as in our advocacy through MAMPU the *Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment*.
* Supporting the Government of Indonesia to implement a Disability Law to increase access to public services and fulfilment of human rights for people with disabilities, and working with the Government to enable its ratification of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD).
* Funding a UNICEF project (2016-17) that supported the Government of Kenya to promote a multi media campaign against child marriage and associated human rights abuses.
* Providing capacity building to support the Lao Government under the *Australia-Laos Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program II* to strengthen Laos’ engagement in the UPR process; support ratification of the *International Covenant for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance* (ICCPED); strengthen reporting on the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR); and implement the CRPD.
* Assisting Malaysia with the development of draft anti-discrimination legislation by supporting and funding the President of the AHRC and Australia’s Race Discrimination Commissioner to travel to Malaysia to share Australia’s experiences (April 2019).
* Continuing to support the International Foundation for Electoral Systems to provide technical assistance and capacity building to the Myanmar Union Election Commission and civil society organisations.
* Supporting UNICEF to progress ratification of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in Somalia (2017).
* Supporting a project to build capacity for Nigerian Civil Society Organisations to monitor and document the implementation of Nigeria’s human rights obligations and UPR recommendations (2017-19).
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| **5.2** | Promote regional cooperation on human rights and work to build the capacity of and strengthen national human rights institutions and civil society, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia will continue its efforts to increase the formal role of national human rights institutions in the major processes and mechanisms of the United Nations human rights system. It will highlight the importance of national human rights institutions through its leadership in the Human Rights Council, and will continue to champion the resolution supporting national human rights institutions in the work of the Council. | **Implemented**Australia leads the biennial HRC resolution on National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) to advance international understanding of the important role of NHRIs, most recently in September 2018. Australia also cooperates closely with Germany to support its biennial UN General Assembly Third Committee resolution on NHRIs. Australia will again present this resolution at the HRC in September 2020.Australia works closely with the Asia-Pacific Forum (APF) of National Human Rights Institutions to support the establishment and development of NHRIs in our region. Australia also collaborates closely with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) to promote NHRIs' roles globally. Australia provides funding to both of these organisations.Australia also engages constructively with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), including inviting participation in bilateral human rights dialogues, the DFAT-NGO Human Rights Forum; and HRC-related delegations and processes. The AHRC also delivers technical assistance to other countries on behalf of the Australian Government.DFAT supported deepening human rights engagement with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), including building ties between the AHRC and AICHR and providing funding for consultations to discuss cooperative activities and human rights priorities in 2017, 2018 and 2019 and deliver the 2018 and 2019 AICHR interregional dialogues on Business and Human Rights. Further consultations are planned for 2020. DFAT also provided funding for the Disability Rights in ASEAN (DRiA) program, which supported the development and implementation of the *ASEAN* *Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.  |
| **5.3** | Maintain the A-status accreditation of the Australian Human Rights Commission. The Commission is an independent statutory body, the functions of which include providing education and awareness-raising on human rights, investigating and reconciling complaints of unlawful discrimination, conducting national inquiries and reporting on issues of human rights concern. The Commission is headed by a President and has seven Commissioners: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner; the Age Discrimination Commissioner; the Children’s Commissioner; the Disability Discrimination Commissioner; the Human Rights Commissioner; the Race Discrimination Commissioner; and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner. | **Implemented**The last review for Australia was undertaken in November 2016 and the Australian Human Rights Commission was granted A-status accreditation for a 5-year period until the next review in 2021. |
| **5.4** | Engage with and consider the views of civil society through both formal and informal mechanisms in the development of policies, legislation and programmes. Australia hosts an annual forum on human rights with non-governmental organizations to ensure a comprehensive and ongoing consultation mechanism. Even if the Government may not always agree with the views of civil society, it welcomes vigorous community debate and does not impede civil society from expressing their views. | **Implemented**DFAT and the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) facilitate regular forums on human rights with non-governmental organisations and civil society representatives in order to engage with them and seek their views on human rights issues and government policies, programmes and legislation. DFAT also provides regular e-briefings to NGOs and invites submissions ahead of HRC and sessions of the UPR.On 13 December 2018 AGD and the AHRC met with representatives from non-governmental organisations to discuss ways to improve government engagement and consultation with civil society with a view to use this information to guide preparations for the AGD's 2019 NGO forum. The Attorney-General also met with civil society organisations during the development of the Religious Discrimination Bill (see Voluntary Pledge 3.4). The Bill was subject to two exposure draft public consultation processes in 2019 and 2020.Australia supports the engagement of civil society in multilateral fora. For example, DFAT engages with, and provides regular briefing to, a broad range of NGOs around sessions of the HRC, the UPR and the UN General Assembly Third Committee. See Voluntary Pledge 4.3 for examples of funding arrangements. The Attorney-General’s Department also provides funding to civil society organisations to assist in the preparation of shadow reports for UN reporting processes, including most recently Australia’s reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and third cycle UPR. The Australian Government also provided funding for members of civil society organisations to attend the CRPD appearance in September 2019. |
|  |  | **Pillar six: Commitment to international human rights** |
| **6.1** | Support the independent mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office. | **Implemented**Australia engages effectively with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and their office. Australia supports the High Commissioner’s mandate and independence. Australia makes annual voluntary contributions to the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) to enable it to carry out its work.At the 38th session of the HRC (June 2018), Australia delivered a statement thanking the outgoing High Commissioner Zeid bin Raad Al-Hussein for his deep commitment, and that of his staff to improving the international human rights environment throughout his tenure. We also welcomed the new High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet in a joint statement delivered at the same HRC session (HRC38, 2 July 2018). In the same statement we reiterated our support for preserving the independence of the High Commissioner and the OHCHR. At the 41st session of the HRC (July 2019), Australia signed a joint statement delivered on behalf of the Mountains Group which urged all UN member states to pay any outstanding assessed contributions, prioritise securing adequate funding for the UN's human rights pillar and initiate discussions on how to reverse the trend of reduced regular budgets for OHCHR and ensure that the UN's human rights mechanisms are not disproportionately affected by overall cuts to the UN budget.Between 6 and 11 October 2019, UN High Commissioner Bachelet met Australian Ministers during her visit to Australia. High Commissioner Bachelet also participated in a range of events in Melbourne and Sydney arranged by the AHRC. |
| **6.2** | Uphold its open invitation for visits by special procedures mandate holders, as demonstrated by the five visits from Special Rapporteurs that Australia has received in the past year, which shows its commitment to being open to scrutiny. | **Implemented**Australia continues to maintain a standing invitation to visit for thematic UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders – Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups. The Australian Government has hosted visits from five Special Rapporteurs since its second-cycle UPR: • Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (4 – 18 October 2016)• Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants (1 – 18 November 2016)• Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (28 November – 5 December 2016)• Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (13 – 27 February 2017)• Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples (20 March – 3 April 2017).Australia was due to support a visit by representatives from the SPT, as well as visits from three Special Procedures Mandate Holders: the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur on African Descent and the Special Rapporteur on Housing to Australia in 2020. These visits have been delayed due to COVID-19, with some now postponed to the latter half of 2020 and some still to be rescheduled.Australia considers recommendations from Special Rapporteurs after their visit reports are tabled with the HRC, and routinely takes the opportunity to respond to these reports. |
| **6.3** | Promote the participation of civil society and human rights defenders, and underscore the importance of protection against reprisals. | **Implemented**Australia has been a staunch advocate for civil society bilaterally and in multilateral fora. For example, Australia advocated for civil society participation in the ECOSOC NGO Committee; cosponsored a resolution on civil society space at HRC38 and delivered a national statement with a focus on civil society space under Item 2 at the 38th session of the HRC. Australia has delivered statements against reprisals at the HRC, including at HRC42 in 2019 and HRC44 in 2020 where we highlighted reports of reprisals against victims, human rights defenders, NGOs, indigenous peoples and LGBTI persons.Australia has advocated for protecting civil society participation in HRC processes during HRC efficiency and effectiveness discussions in 2018, and has intervened to support the right of NGOs to speak at the HRC when points of order are raised. Australia also makes bilateral representations and country specific-statements on civil society issues.Australia signed the joint statement on Safety of Journalists at the 38th session of the HRC, and engaged actively in ensuring a strong Safety of Journalists Resolutions at the 39th session.Australia provides regular funding to the Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund, which provides emergency financial assistance to civil society organizations (CSOs) under threat or attack and rapid response advocacy and resiliency grants to support CSOs in responding to broader threats against civic space.For further details of Australia's promotion of the participation of civil society and human rights defenders, see 'actions taken' under commitment 3.1, above.  |
| **6.4** | Promote and support universal participation in the Human Rights Council, including through its longstanding commitment as the largest and longest -standing donor to the voluntary trust fund for the participation of least developed countries and small island developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council. | **Implemented**Australia's Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva has joined a Contact Group on HRC Membership to strengthen HRC universality, inclusivity and diversity.Foreign Minister Payne welcomed Fiji, the first-ever Pacific Island member of the HRC, joining the HRC in her address to the HRC's High Level segment at the 40th session of the HRC. Australia has liaised closely with representatives from Pacific nations in Geneva and Pacific capitals on HRC issues, including to brief officials so they are across HRC developments. Australia has worked closely with Fiji on the Council, and worked with the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) in the lead-up to its election as the second Pacific Island member of the HRC, We have provided RMI and other Pacific officials with multilateral training.Australia takes a leadership role in amplifying the voices of Pacific countries at the HRC. This includes by continuing to lead the development of joint statements from the Pacific which highlight human rights issues of concern in our region, and outline to a new audience our collective regional efforts to tackle these challenges. Australia is one of the longest-standing and largest donors to the UN HRC Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the HRC.  |
| **6.5** | Support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development nationally, regionally and globally. | **Implemented**The Australian Government has adopted an approach to the 2030 Agenda that is appropriate for our national circumstances. Domestic policy responsibilities and priorities are devolved to the relevant agency and level of government. Australia works with international partners to help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through overseas development and humanitarian assistance, as well as elements of our trade and economic cooperation.Australia submitted a Voluntary National Review on progress against the 2030 Agenda to the 2018 UN High Level Political Forum. The Australian Government made a submission and a formal response to an Australian Parliamentary inquiry into the SDGs in 2019. |
| **6.6** | Provide a generous and non-discriminatory humanitarian resettlement programme in response to the global refugee crisis. Australia consistently ranks in the top three countries for resettlement of refugees referred by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Government is significantly increasing humanitarian assistance for displaced communities. In addition to providing immediate life -saving assistance, Australia funds efforts to build the resilience and restore the dignity of those displaced, including through education and livelihoods. At the national level, the Government delivers settlement services to enable the participation of new arrivals as quickly and as fully as possible in Australian society and the economy. | **Implemented**The proportion of UNHCR referred refugees varies from year to year as Australia’s Humanitarian Program also includes places for self-referred refugees as well as refugees, and people in refugee –like situations, proposed by family members in Australia. In 2018-19, Australia increased the size of the Humanitarian Program to 18,750 places, up from 16,250 in 2017-18 and 13,750 in 2016-17. The program focuses on priority regions for resettlement of the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the Americas.The Humanitarian Program operates flexibly to respond effectively to evolving humanitarian situations and global resettlement needs. The Middle East has remained a focus of the Humanitarian Program in recent years due to the displacement of significant numbers of people from this region as the result of ongoing conflicts, primarily in Syria and Iraq.The grant of offshore humanitarian visas was suspended in March 2020 as part of the Government’s efforts to limit the entry and spread of COVID-19. As a consequence, the 2019-20 Program of 18,750 places was not fully delivered.The Australian Government funds the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) to support newly arrived humanitarian entrants to build the skills and knowledge they need to become self-reliant and active members of Australian society and the economy.  |
| **6.7** | Welcome people from every nation and celebrate diversity. Australia remains committed to combating racism and xenophobia. It is one of the most multicultural nations in the world, and its citizens identify with about 300 ancestries. Australia has drawn on this diversity to build a cohesive and tolerant society with shared common values, such as respect, equality, inclusion, freedom and the rule of law. In this regard, Australia has some of the most advanced laws in the world, including on intersex status. | **Implemented**The Australian Government, in collaboration with states and territories, promotes acceptance, tolerance and social inclusion across Australia through a range of programs and initiatives. Australia's constitutional democracy means that people are entitled to their views as long as they operate within our legal framework. A strong framework is in place at the federal level for the prevention of hate speech and the urging of violence against groups, or members of a group, on the basis of race, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin or political opinion. Additionally, the *Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment Act (No. 1) 2016* (Cth) introduced a new offence of advocating genocide to further respond to the negative impact on our community of people who preach hate.For more information on Australia’s anti-discrimination protections, including racial discrimination, see recommendations 117-121 and 78, 79, 81, 106, 125 and 126.The Australian Government’s multicultural statement *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong,* *Successful*, launched in 2017, renews and reaffirms the Government’s commitment to a multicultural Australia, in which racism and discrimination have no place. The statement outlines the strategic direction and priorities for multicultural policy in Australia, including encouraging economic and social participation of new arrivals, harnessing the advantages of our diversity and shared national interest, and continuing to build harmonious and socially cohesive societies.The Australian Government’s national Multicultural Access and Equity Policy aims to ensure that Australian Government programs and services meet the needs of all persons, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background so that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in our society. The Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner led the National Anti-Racism Strategy and the ‘Racism. It Stops With Me’ campaign from 2011 to mid-2019. The 2015 and 2018 evaluations of the National Anti-Racism Strategy found that the Strategy had a strong impact in starting conversations about racism, sending a message that racism was not acceptable, helping organisations to demonstrate leadership and empowering individuals and communities to take action against racism. The actions undertaken as part of the Strategy are now part of the ongoing work of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).Australian governments continue to invest in Australia’s social cohesion through programs that embrace Australia’s multicultural diversity and help all communities become actively part of, and benefit from, Australia’s economic and social development. The Australian Government is supporting the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia in its role as the peak body representing Australia’s Culturally And Linguistically Diverse community organisations, to advocate and promote issues on behalf of its constituency to government, business and the broader community. The Australian Government celebrates Harmony Week every year during the week that includes 21 March, the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Harmony Week celebrates Australia’s cultural diversity by fostering inclusiveness, cultural respect and a sense of belonging for everyone, with the message: ‘everyone belongs’. Harmony Week celebrations are strongly supported among schools, sporting organisations and community groups, local government, businesses and other government agencies.In 2018-19, the Australian Government provided $5 million for Fostering Integration Grants (FIGs). This program aims to facilitate the integration of migrants by encouraging social and economic participation of migrants, promoting and encouraging Australian values, addressing issues of low social integration and supporting a greater understanding and tolerance of racial, religious and cultural diversity.In 2019 the Australian Government invested $71 million in programs that embrace Australia’s multicultural diversity, promote social cohesion and help all communities become actively part of, and benefit from, Australia’s economic and social development.The package provided funding for Australian Government and community initiatives that:* encourage and support new arrivals to actively become part of and contribute to Australia’s economic and social development;
* build interfaith and intercultural understanding through sport, in classrooms, cultural institutions and through community-driven programs and outreach; and
* encourage a diversity of perspectives in the public debate and promote resilience against harmful and divisive messages, particularly those that promote violence.
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| **6.8** | Promote and enhance regional cooperation to combat trafficking in persons and slavery. Australia is actively supporting efforts to improve international cooperation on migration and trafficking in persons. This includes: taking part in the high-level review of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons; participating in the Global Alliance to Eradicate Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and Child Labour; supporting the efforts of the United Nations to develop global compacts on migration and refugees; and co-chairing the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. Nationally, Australia has one of the strongest and most comprehensive responses to modern slavery in the world. In February 2017, Australia established a parliamentary inquiry into whether Australia should adopt national legislation comparable to the Modern Slavery Act 2015 of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. | **Implemented**Australia launched the 10-year ASEAN-Australia Counter-Trafficking initiative to strengthen criminal justice responses and protect victim rights including to provide police training in financial investigations, professional development for judges, and to promote child-friendly courtrooms.Australia co-chaired the Bali Process ministerial conference, which agreed a new platform for public-private sector collaboration to tackle modern slavery. Australia continues to co-chair the Bali Process Trafficking in Persons Working Group, which aims to strengthen and coordinate law and justice responses to trafficking in persons in the region, including by strengthening engagement with the private sector and civil society.Australia launched a set of principles to guide government action to combat human trafficking in global supply chains at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly in 2018. Also at the 73rd session, Australia launched with Liechtenstein the Financial Sector Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Its final report was launched at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly in 2019.Australia delivered a series of bilateral activities with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific to support the development and implementation of strong policy and legal frameworks to address human trafficking.Australia engaged constructively in negotiations to develop the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration. Australia and the United Kingdom delivered a joint statement combating modern slavery at the 39th session of the HRC, and Australia joined the UK as part of the core group on the resolution on modern slavery at HRC42 (September 2019). At the 43rd session of the HRC Australia, Liechtenstein and the Netherlands delivered a joint statement on the financial sector’s role in eliminating modern slavery and human trafficking.Australia delivered a statement at the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in persons, including women and children and co-sponsored the resolution on Trafficking in persons, especially women and children at HRC44 (June-July 2020).Australia co-sponsored a resolution at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly (July 2019) supporting the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour 2021.Domestically, Australia introduced the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (the Act) on 29 November 2018, which came into force on 1 January 2019. The Act establishes a practical, risk-based reporting framework to directly target modern slavery in global supply chains. The Australian Government has also implemented the *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-2019*. Under the Plan, the Government worked closely with business and civil society to address human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices, including in supply chains. |
| **6.9** | Embed key protections for persons with disabilities into national policies, laws and programmes. Australia is implementing its National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 and the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The aim of both is to improve the lives and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Australia. The Government spends over $800 million each year on the Disability Employment Service programme, which helps job seekers with disabilities to find and keep a job. | **Implemented**The National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (NDS) is Australia’s overarching policy framework and key mechanism for driving inclusive policy and program design across all levels of government in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Strategy is grounded in the principles underpinning the CRPD—including that people with disability have the freedom to make their own choices; can participate fully in society; have equality of opportunity; have equal access with others to the physical environment, services and technology; and that difference and acceptance of people with disability is respected as part of human diversity and humanity.All Australian governments are working together to create a new National Disability Strategy to replace the current strategy, which expires at the end of the 2020 calendar year. Governments are committed to ongoing engagement with people with disability to develop the new Strategy.The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguarding Framework (the Framework) was developed in 2016. This was the result of extensive consultation between government departments, key stakeholders, people with disability, carers, providers, peak bodies and the National Disability Insurance Agency. The National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Commission (the NDIS Commission) is a new Commonwealth statutory agency established to improve the quality and safety of NDIS supports and services, including responding to complaints and reportable incidents, registration of providers, worker screening and the use of restrictive practices. The NDIS Commission has responsibility for a number of functions which contribute to the promotion of safe and quality services for NDIS participants. People with disability, or any other person, can make complaints about NDIS services and supports to the NDIS Commission. The NDIS Commission works with participants, providers and workers to resolve issues and improve the quality and safety of NDIS supports. |
| **6.10** | Continue to support global efforts to promote the implementation of States’ responsibility to protect, particularly measures that facilitate the early warning of potential mass human rights abuses and appropriate preventative and accountability mechanisms. | **Implemented**Australia harnessed likemindeds to support maintaining Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as a formal agenda item for the UN General Assembly. The UN General Assembly held a plenary meeting on the “Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” on 27-28 June 2019 as part of the formal agenda of its 73rd session. On 27 June, Australia joined a joint statement delivered by the R2P Group of Friends during the plenary. The Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, H.E. Gillian Bird, also delivered a national statement on the same day, reiterating Australia’s support and commitment to R2P. Member states’ supported continued formal discussion of R2P within the General Assembly at the 74th session the following year. As a member of the 'R2P Group of Friends', Australia actively contributes to joint statements on R2P during all relevant Human Rights Council (HRC) sessions. Australia exerted influence to ensure the first thematic resolution on R2P in the HRC (A/HRC/44/L.12) was framed to help with pragmatic implementation of R2P. Australia also initiated, engaged and supported joint statements - such as the statement delivered at the 39th session of the HRC on the relationship between human rights, peace and security and the Sustainable Development Goals. Australia engages bilaterally to support sanctions and seek accountability outcomes in the International Criminal Court. Regionally, Australia used its 2018-19 funding partnership with the Asia Pacific Centre for R2P to build momentum on implementation for atrocity prevention, such as building capacity for countries to conduct atrocity risk assessments and develop National Action Plans, advocate for the appointment of National R2P Focal Points in the region, and support the civil society Asia Pacific Partnership on Atrocity Prevention and the Asia Pacific Youth Network for Atrocity Prevention.Australia engaged via Pacific Island Forum on practical security and stabilisation initiatives that reinforce the aims of R2P, such as 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security which embraces an expanded concept of human security and builds on the 2000 Biketawa Treaty. |