



COUNTRY STATEMENT

SENATOR THE HON MICHAELIA CASH

MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT

MINISTER FOR WOMEN

**MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE
PUBLIC SERVICE**

SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

15 March 2017

CSW61

United Nations General Assembly Hall

Mr Chair

Australia is committed to the full and equal realisation of women and girls' human rights, to securing substantive gender equality and the empowerment of diverse women socially, politically and economically. I am delighted Australia is seeking to serve as a member of the Commission for the 2019-2023 term.

This complements Australia's candidacy for the Human Rights Council for 2018-20. It is the first time Australia has run for a seat on the Council.

Australia's Human Rights Council candidacy is a measure of our long-standing commitment to promoting and protecting human rights in Australia and around the world – it reflects our liberal democratic values and our identity as an inclusive, diverse and tolerant society, built on migration.

Mr Chair

The Australian Government is committed to women's economic empowerment by ensuring workplace diversity and flexibility, flexible and

affordable child care, increasing the incentives for women to work, and getting women into the jobs of the future.

Just as we need to ensure increased participation of women in the economy, we also need to recognise the social and economic impact of gendered norms.

Access to sexual and reproductive health, including family planning services, is critical for empowering women and girls. These services help women and girls stay healthy, remain in education and participate equally in society and the economy.

The barriers to participation are not the same for all women. Efforts to improve women's economic empowerment need to acknowledge the differing lived experience and diversity women face.

Alongside economic empowerment, Australia welcomes the empowerment of Indigenous women as an emerging CSW theme.

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women play leadership roles in their families, communities, and as contributors to the economy.

However indigenous women often face greater social and economic marginalisation.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through a range of initiatives to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage, including improving education, participation, and safety outcomes.

Mr Chair

Violence against women is a grave violation of human rights, and a barrier to women's participation in their communities and economies.

It is unacceptable in Australia that one woman a week is killed by a current or former partner; one in three women experience physical violence; and one in five women experience sexual violence in their lifetimes.

It is also unacceptable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than non-Indigenous women.

Australia is committed to keeping women safe. We have implemented a twelve year National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. Significant progress has been made, including finding new ways to tackle technology facilitated abuse.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the importance of diverse participation at CSW. Australia is proud of our longstanding practice of having representatives from Australian civil society organisations on our delegation.

I encourage other nations to do the same.

Australia also supports the inclusion of national human rights institutions at CSW, and Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner joins me in New York.

The empowerment of women and girls is achievable – in this, Australia's commitment is unwavering.

Thank you.