

Australia's 2nd Universal Periodic Review: Voluntary Commitments

Australia appeared before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva for its second cycle Universal Periodic Review on Monday 9 November, 2015.

During the interactive dialogue Australia made a number of voluntary commitments across a number of areas, including constitutional recognition for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples, family violence, the death penalty and discrimination against LGBTI people. Australia may make further voluntary commitments ahead of or around the time Australia responds to the recommendations in March 2016.

Find the full list of Australia's voluntary commitments below.

1) Constitutional recognition for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples

The Australian Government is committed to holding a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the Australian Constitution in the next term of Parliament. The government will undertake a national consultation process to ensure all Australians, and especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, have an opportunity to engage in this important national conversation.

2) Humanitarian support for the Syrian conflict

Australia commits to resettling 12,000 refugees fleeing conflict in Syria and Iraq. This will allow Australia to provide humanitarian support to more than 240,000 Syrian and Iraqi people who have been forced to flee their homes or seek refuge in neighbouring countries. This assistance is part of an additional \$44 million Australia is contributing to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria. Australia's overall contribution to this crisis now amounts to some \$230 million since 2011.

3) Family violence

The Australian Government commits to addressing the scourge of family violence. A \$100 million package of measures announced on 24 September 2015 will provide a safety net for women and children at high risk of experiencing violence. The package will improve frontline support and services, leverage innovative technologies to keep women safe, and provide education resources to help change community attitudes to violence and abuse. The package includes \$21 million for specific measures to help Indigenous women and communities

4) People with cognitive impairment in the criminal justice system

Australia commits to improving the way the criminal justice system treats people with cognitive disability who are unfit to plead or found not guilty by reason of mental impairment. As part of this, the Government commits to a national effort to analyse existing data and develop best practice resources for our jurisdictions.

5) Death penalty

Australia commits to taking further steps to strengthen advocacy for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty. This will be informed by the outcomes of a recently established inquiry being undertaken by our Parliament. As Chair of the Committee undertaking the work, Mr Ruddock will provide additional remarks on this important inquiry.

6) Older people

Australia commits to promoting and protecting the rights of older people internationally by modelling and advocating better use of existing UN human rights reporting mechanisms. Australia commits to including a dedicated section on the rights of 'older Australians' in all relevant human rights treaty and UPR reports. Australia will seek to have the rights of older persons reflected in UN resolutions and encourage existing Special Rapporteurs to consider the application of their mandate to older persons

in close collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.

7) Discrimination against LGBTI people

Australia will continue taking steps to end unlawful discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status under Australian law. The Australian Government commits to removing exemptions for Australian state and territory laws from the operation of Australia's national anti-discrimination laws. This commitment will take effect from 31 July 2016.

8) Foreign aid and development

Australia commits to supporting the protection and promotion of human rights through its foreign aid program by promoting prosperity, reducing poverty and enhancing stability. We welcome the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and affirm our commitment to advancing this agenda. The Australian Government commits to applying its *Development for All: 2015-2020* strategy to strengthen disability-inclusive development and our international *Indigenous Peoples Strategy 2015-2019* to advance the interests of indigenous peoples in Australia and around the world.

9) UPR implementation

The Australian Government commits to work with Australia's National Human Rights Institution, the Australian Human Rights Commission, to develop a public and accessible process for monitoring Australia's progress against UPR recommendations. This will include a periodic statement on progress against the recommendations on behalf of the Australian Government.

10) UN engagement

Australia will designate a standing national mechanism to strengthen Australia's overall engagement with UN human rights reporting.