

## VENEZUELA

At a press conference on Thursday 24 January 2019, you [Minister Payne] responded to a question on Australia's position on the Maduro – Guaidó power struggle, stating that Australia “will consider those matters”.

On 23 January, amid mass protests against Maduro's regime, Juan Guaidó, President of Venezuela's National Assembly, self-declared as the interim president of Venezuela. The Venezuelan constitution has provision for Mr Guaidó's actions. The **United States** immediately recognised Guaidó as the interim president and encouraged others do the same. s 33(b)

In response to statements by the United States, the Maduro regime broke diplomatic relations with the United States, giving its diplomats 72 hours to leave. **US Secretary of State Pompeo** has said the United States would maintain its diplomatic mission in Venezuela and conduct diplomatic relations through the government of interim president Guaidó.

On 23 January, the **Lima Group** [without Mexico], recognised Guaidó as interim president and called for new elections. The **European Union** has called for free and credible elections but has not yet recognised Mr Guaidó as interim president. The **United Kingdom** tweeted support for the EU statement. The **Organization of American States**, **Ecuador** and **Uruguay** have recognised Guaidó as interim president. **Mexico** recognises Maduro as President. **Russia, China, Turkey, Syria, Cuba and Bolivia** have made statements in support of Maduro.

On 10 January 2019, following a flawed election process in May 2018, Maduro was inaugurated as President for a second six-year term. On 9 January 2019, **HOM Bogota** (accredited to Venezuela) released two tweets outlining Australia's concern and support for the Lima Group's calls for Maduro to transfer executive power to the National Assembly and allow new elections to be held.

On 21 May 2018, Australia joined a statement (with Argentina, Canada, Chile, Mexico, United States) stating the 20 May 2018 Venezuelan Presidential election lacked legitimacy.

**Talking points:**

- Australia is deeply concerned at the deteriorating political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and the significant affects it is having across the Latin America region.
- On 10 January, the Australian Government supported the Lima Group's (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru) call for Nicolás Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency
  - we do not recognise Maduro as President
  - we called for new, free and fair presidential elections to be held as soon as possible.
- Australia acknowledges the United States and others have since recognised the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, as interim President in accordance with the Venezuelan constitution
  - Australia is monitoring the situation and considering these matters.

**Handling note**

s 33(a)(iii)

s 33(b)

s 47C and s33(a)(iii)

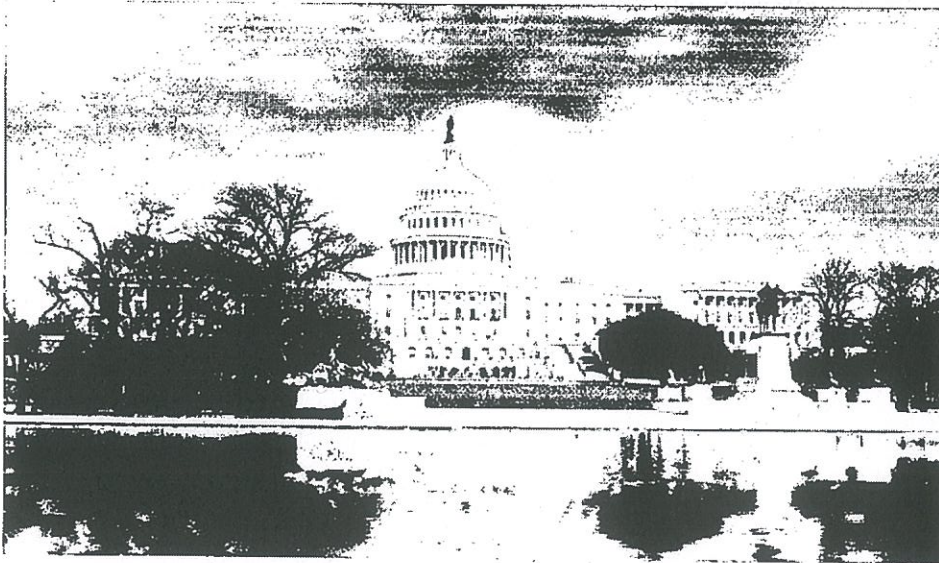


Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

# **BRIEF FOR MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SENATOR THE HON MARISE PAYNE VISIT TO WASHINGTON DC**

27 January – 1 February







## VENEZUELA

Nicolás Maduro was inaugurated as President of Venezuela on 10 January 2019, following a flawed election process in May 2018. On 21 May 2018, Australia joined a statement (with Argentina, Canada, Chile, Mexico, United States) stating the 20 May 2018 Venezuelan Presidential election lacked legitimacy. On 9 January 2019, Australia's Ambassador in Bogota (accredited to Venezuela) released two tweets outlining Australia's concern and support for the Lima Group's calls for Maduro to transfer executive power to the National Assembly and allow new elections to be held.

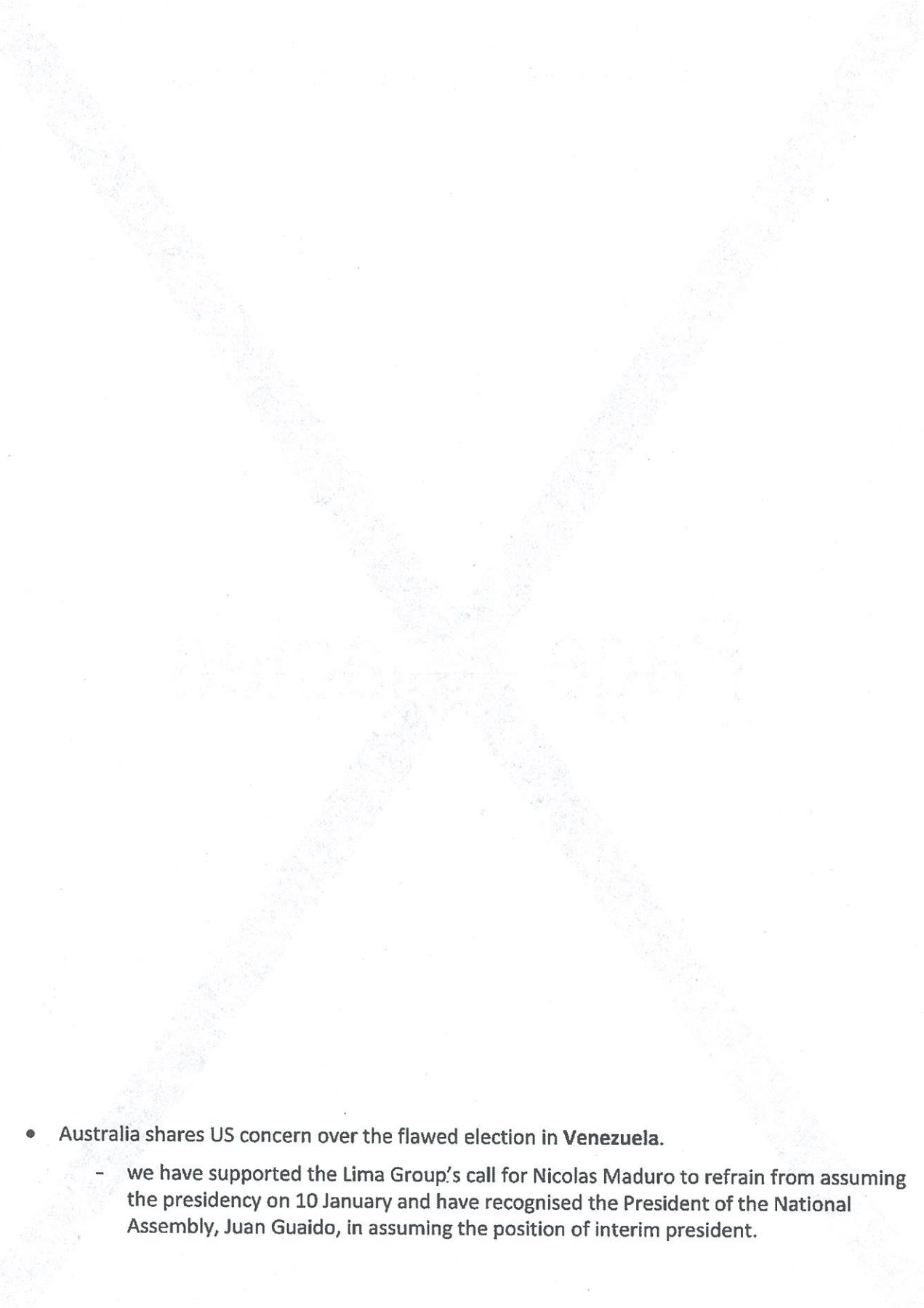
On 23 January, amid mass protests against Maduro's regime, Juan Guaidó, President of Venezuela's National Assembly, declared himself the interim president of Venezuela. The Venezuelan Constitution has provision for Mr Guaidó's actions. The United States immediately recognised Guaidó as the interim president and encouraged others to do the same. s 33(b)

In response to US statements, the Maduro regime broke diplomatic relations with the United States, giving its diplomats 72 hours to leave the country. US Secretary of State Pompeo responded that the United States would maintain its diplomatic mission in Venezuela and conduct diplomatic relations through the government of interim president Guaidó.

On 23 January, the Lima Group [without Mexico], recognised Guaidó as interim president and called for new elections. The European Union has called for free and credible elections but has not yet recognised Mr Guaidó as interim president. The United Kingdom tweeted support for the EU statement. The Organization of American States, Ecuador and Uruguay have recognised Guaidó as interim president. Mexico recognises Maduro as President. Russia, China, Turkey, Syria, Cuba and Bolivia have made statements in support of Maduro.

Exempt in full: s 47E(d), s 47C, s 33(a)(iii), s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

- Australia shares US concern over the flawed election in **Venezuela**.
  - we have supported the Lima Group's call for Nicolas Maduro to refrain from assuming the presidency on 10 January and have recognised the President of the National Assembly, Juan Guaido, in assuming the position of interim president.



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Pages 17 and 18 - Exempt in full:  
s33(a)(iii) and s33(b)

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Pages 19 and 20 - Exempt in full: s33(a)(iii), s47E(d) and s47C

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Pages 22 to 27: Exempt in full - s33(a)(iii) and s33(b)

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