

## Human Rights Council – 38th Session

### Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women

#### Panel 2: Advancing women's rights in the economic sphere through access and participation in information and communication technologies (ICTs)

Friday 22 June 2018

#### Australian Statement

Australia recognises that information and communication technologies, or ICTs, have the potential to enable opportunities for progressing women's rights.

ICTs can be socioeconomic levellers that facilitate women's economic inclusion and education, despite systematic power imbalances related to gender inequality and other factors – such as race, poverty, disabilities – that might marginalise women.

However, for women to take full advantage of these opportunities, we must address gender stereotypes that preclude meaningful access to ICTs. Access and participation should also include supporting women and girls as creators of ICTs, and not just users.

Australia is a strong supporter of girls' education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), including through Curious Minds, a program that enables girls to explore all aspects of STEM in a fun, supportive environment. Harnessing the full potential of our girls is necessary to reach our potential as a country.

While encouraging girls into STEM is important, it is not a panacea. We must also address the gender pay-gap and discrimination against women in the workplace. Empowering women and girls to put their education and skills into practice and taking concrete steps to achieve gender equality are the only sure way to ensure economic gains.

We would welcome the panel's views on how the international community can mitigate gender stereotypes that impede women from accessing the full benefits of ICTs.

221 words