

Human Rights Council – 38th Session

Clustered Interactive Dialogue with  
*the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences*  
& the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants

20 June 2018

### Australian Thematic Statement

Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women for her report.

Australia is committed to ensuring individuals – including women and girls – enjoy the same human rights protections online and offline. The Internet and digital communications provide an unparalleled opportunity for the promotion of human rights and for the exercise of the freedoms of expression and association. They also provide a unique platform to amplify marginalised voices, and for human rights defenders to better engage with vulnerable communities.

We are keen to examine the full impacts of information technologies on human rights. In July 2018, the Australian Government will partner with the Australian Human Rights Commission to present an international conference on *Human Rights and Technology*, which will consider ‘the social and individual impacts of new and emerging technologies’.

As the Special Rapporteur has recognised, digital technologies can be a platform for human rights violations. Sexist, misogynistic violent or discriminatory behaviour is no less potent online. It has real-world impacts and requires real-world responses.

Australia has taken the step to criminalise serious online harassment and bullying. But we remain concerned about the high rates of online harassment and other forms of violence against women in digital spaces.

We would welcome the Special Rapporteur’s reflections on any initiatives that successfully promote both digital literacy and gender equality – particularly to children and adolescents who tend to embrace new technology but can be particularly vulnerable to negative influences and violence.

237 words