**Human Rights Council - 39th Session**

**Preventable Maternal Mortality and Morbidity in Humanitarian Settings**

**Explanation of vote before the vote on Amendment L.31**

**27 September**

**Australian Statement**

As a sponsor of this resolution, we cannot accept the Amendment L.31. This proposal removes the responsibility that we share, as States, to ensure fulfilment of the fundamental rights to education, health and non-discrimination. It also fails to recognise international commitments made under the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly 3.7, ensuring that everyone, everywhere has access to sexual and reproductive health information and education.

Comprehensive sexuality education plays a central role in preparing young people to live a safe, fulfilling and productive life, and has been recognized by UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures as a human right on its own.

Comprehensive sexuality education provides people with the knowledge and tools required to enjoy a high standard of health, well-being and dignity; including through developing respect for human rights, gender equality and diversity, and attitudes and skills that contribute to safe, healthy and positive relationships.

The importance of comprehensive sexuality education in  reducing maternal mortality has been acknowledged by different UN agencies, including United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the World Health Organisation, the United Nations Population Fund, UN Women, the United Nations Children Fund, the United Nations Development Fund and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS).

These agencies have also acknowledged comprehensive sexuality education’s proven role in contributing to: the reduction of child, early and enforced marriage; early pregnancy; gender-based violence; sexually transmitted infections; HIV transmission and violence against women and girls. Worryingly, women and young people are at greater risk of experiencing these issues in humanitarian settings.

Supporting this amendment would deny individuals equal and universal access to the tools and knowledge required to protect themselves in all aspects of life, but particularly in situations of heightened risk and vulnerability.

We will vote against this amendment and call on all members on the Council to do the same. We cannot refuse to guarantee peoples fundamental rights to education, to live a life with dignity, to make informed and safe choices and to protect themselves from the risk of physical and mental harm.