**Human Rights Council - 39th Session**

**End of Item 3**

**28 September 2018**

**Australian Statement**

Australia reiterates our strong support for human rights defenders, and is concerned by the efforts to weaken references to human rights defenders within resolutions under this item. Indigenous human rights defenders, for instance, face particular risks of discrimination and violence, both for their indigeneity and for the professional activities they undertake.

Australia believes this Council plays a critical role in ensuring States are accountable in their efforts to protect human rights defenders from discrimination, violence, threats and reprisals.  We therefore urge members of the Council to refrain from undermining the safety and protections attributed to human rights defenders by removing references to them in any future text.

Australia also strongly supports the strong gender focus of this session’s resolution on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation.

Australia is committed to protecting and promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights in order to ensure all individuals have 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.

Finally, as set out in Article 2 of *the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights*, Australia recognises that economic, social and cultural rights are progressively realisable. There are a range of ways in which States can implement these rights, including remedies as appropriate.

*Delivered by Head of Mission, Sally Mansfield*