**Human Rights Council – 39th Session**

**28 September 2018**

**Statement at Action**

**Australian Statement**

**Syria – Explanation of Vote before the vote on amendment L.29**

Australia opposes the amendment proposed by the Russian Federation in L.29.

The proposed amendment appears to be an attempt to portray all sanctions as having a negative impact on human rights and humanitarian access.

Unilateral measures, including targeted sanctions, can be a powerful tool to promote human rights and hold accountable those who violate or abuse them. The careful targeting of sanctions is designed to improve the humanitarian situation and protect civilians in Syria.

It is abundantly clear to the international community that it is the Syrian authorities and their backers who are largely responsible for the suffering of the Syrian people – through their widespread violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. These have been documented in successive reports of the Human Rights Council’s Commission of Inquiry, and are addressed in this resolution.

Similarly, as the Commission of Inquiry’s report makes clear, the Syrian authorities and their backers and associated armed groups, as well as terrorist groups, bear the primary responsibility for the denial of humanitarian assistance to the people of Syria. Syrian authorities have consistently failed to facilitate – or at least refrain from hindering – the access of the United Nations and humanitarian actors to those in need. Syrian authorities continue to block humanitarian access even to areas that have come back under their control.

For these reasons, Australia will vote no on the amendment L.29 and urges all members to do the same.

Delivered by Head of Mission, Sally Mansfield