

Human Rights Council – 41<sup>st</sup> session

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea

2 July 2019

**Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur for her update on the situation of human rights in Eritrea. We support the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and repeat our calls on the Eritrean Government to cooperate fully with the mandate.

Australia is deeply concerned by reports detailing severe restrictions placed on freedom of religion or belief, as well as the arbitrary arrest and detention of members of religious groups not recognised by the Eritrean Government. We call on the Government of Eritrea to fully respect the freedom of religion or belief of all Eritreans.

Australia remains equally concerned by reports of torture and arbitrary and indefinite detention in Eritrea. We urge the Eritrean Government to uphold international human rights conventions including the Convention Against Torture and implement the 1997 Constitution.

While Australia acknowledges the efforts of the Eritrean Government to address gender-based violence, we note the absence of a comprehensive domestic legal framework to address violence against women and ongoing violations of the rights of women and girls.

Australia welcomes Eritrea's peace agreement with Ethiopia and continues to call for genuine dialogue, international cooperation and improved government transparency and accountability in Eritrea.

We ask the Special Rapporteur what the implications of the cessation of Roman Catholic health care services in Eritrea might mean for communities reliant on these services.

**220 Words**