**Human Rights Council – 44th session**

**Interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity**

**8 July 2020**

**Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the Independent Expert for his presentation and report and reiterates our strong support for his mandate.

Australia is deeply concerned that violence and discrimination against LGBTI people has risen during the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has clearly demonstrated that working to achieve equality and diversity requires deliberate and inclusive policymaking.

We thank the Independent Expert for bringing attention to the negative human rights implications of ‘conversion therapy’ practices. Diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are not an ‘illness’ requiring treatment. Australia recognises that these so‑called ‘conversion therapy’ practices are thoroughly discredited and not supported by scientific or medical evidence.

As the report notes, not only are these practices incorrect, they can amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. For example, the report highlights the concerning use of sexual violence and physical assault in these practices.

As a federation, Australia is working with its constituent jurisdictions to ensure such practices are not supported or occurring. However, an end to these practices requires more than a legal response. We therefore ask the Independent Expert how governments can support community-level efforts to combat the stigma and discrimination that underpins so-called ‘conversion therapy’.

191 words