

Human Rights Council – 44th session

Clustered Interactive Dialogue / Dialogue / Panel Discussion with the Working Group on
Discrimination against Women and Girls

7 July 2020

Australian Statement

We thank the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls for their presentation and report.

The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us that all workers have the right to a healthy and safe working environment^[1], and that access to safe and decent work is key to supporting gender equality and women's empowerment.

We welcome the report's consideration of the underrepresentation of women in STEM and the challenge this presents for women's employment opportunities^[2]. Through the 'Advancing Women in STEM' strategy and the appointment of Australia's Ambassador for Women in STEM, Australia is working to increase gender equality in STEM education and careers^[3], including by enhancing the visibility of women and driving cultural and social change for gender equality in this sector^[4].

Australia is also committed to ensuring that workplaces are free from sexual harassment, and we welcome the report's focus on this issue^[5]. This is why the Australian Government funded the Australian Human Rights Commission, Australia's National Human Rights Institution, to undertake a National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces. The Sex Discrimination Commissioner has recently concluded this Inquiry and the Government is now considering the report and its recommendations.

Legislation, while essential, only goes so far in preventing sexual harassment. True change also requires addressing structural and social gender inequality. We would like to ask the Working Group for their views on how Governments can work with the private sector to prevent sexual harassment by promoting gender equality in workplaces.

[241 words]