**Human Rights Council – 44th session**

**Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences**

**7 July 2020**

**Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur for her report.

Gender equality and the right to freedom of expression are priorities for Australia.

We are deeply concerned by reports that women journalists are increasingly at risk of gender-based violence. This violence violates rights, silences women’s voices, reinforces gender inequality and stifles democratic debate. The absence of women’s voices is a loss to us all.

We welcome the report’s consideration of online violence, which directly attacks women’s visibility and participation in public life[[1]](#footnote-1).

Human rights must be protected online. Online harms are connected to, and exacerbate, complex ‘offline’ abuse. Policy responses must be gender-responsive and technologically neutral to adapt to evolving uses of ICTs to commit violence.

Australia’s response to gendered online abuse encompasses a spectrum; from criminal offences targeting the use of ICTs to commit violence, to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, which provides resources and practical assistance, including information on reporting offences.

Preventing online violence and addressing the gender inequalities that drive violence against women journalists requires a concerted effort by Government, the private sector and communities.

We welcome the Special Rapporteur’s views on the role of the private sector – specifically the digital platforms that facilitate online communication – in preventing online violence against women journalists.

***[206]* Words**

1. A/HRC/44/52 para 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)