



MEDIA RELEASE

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Government response to human rights scorecard first step in addressing human rights concerns

The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) delivered an oral statement to the United Nations Human Rights Council overnight welcoming the Australian Government's acceptance of around 150 recommendations made as part of Australia's second "Universal Periodic Review".

NACLC, along with the Human Rights Law Centre and Kingsford Legal Centre, has been coordinating engagement with the UPR on behalf of a coalition of nearly 200 non-government organisations.

The process, also referred to as Australia's human rights scorecard, involves a 4-yearly review of the human rights record of each UN Member State and provides other countries with an opportunity to make recommendations for improvement.

"There were a spread of recommendations made by other countries, in particular in relation to Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people with disability" said Amanda Alford, Director Policy and Advocacy.

"We welcome the Government's acceptance of approximately 150 of the over 200 recommendations, and movement in some areas including business and human rights and removal of one of Australia's reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)" said Ms Alford.

"However, we are disappointed with the response in many respects. It provided little comfort across a range of areas that meaningful action will be taken to fully implement the recommendations. Existing approaches and funding levels are not enough across so many of the areas in which recommendations were made" added Ms Alford.

"For example, the response does little to indicate new and meaningful engagement or action in relation to the access to justice recommendations, including measures to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the criminal justice system, abolition of mandatory sentencing, access to legal assistance services, and ensuring adequate funding of initiatives designed to address family violence" added Ms Alford.

NACLC acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across Australia and particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional owners of the land on which the NACLC office is situated. We pay deep respect to Elders past and present.

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“While the response was limited, we are hopeful that with more time, and in the context of its Human Rights Council candidacy and with the recent appointment of Philip Ruddock as Australia’s Special Envoy for Human Rights, the Government will acknowledge it has work to do and use the UPR recommendations as the basis for real action on human rights in Australia” said Ms Alford.

“We do welcome the Government’s recognition of the role of civil society in the process and look forward to working constructively with the Government to monitor and implement these important recommendations” concluded Ms Alford.

For further information or to arrange an interview contact:

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