**Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 14th Session**

**Universal Periodic Review of Ghana**

**Statement by Australia**

Australia commends Ghana for the peaceful transfer of power which took place following the tragic death of Ghana’s widely respected leader, the late Professor John Atta Mills. This was a testament to the strength of Ghana’s democracy and institutions, and serves as a positive example to other countries.

Australia welcomes Ghana’s commitment, made in June this year, to abolish the death penalty. To formalise its abolition, **we recommend Ghana ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.**

Australia also welcomes Ghana’s commitment to a number of human rights reforms, in particular, reforms to support gender equality, and the expansion of Ghana’s Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice.

We welcome the fact that since its last review, Ghana has taken steps to improve the human rights of children, by expanding human rights education in schools and committing to appoint a Special Commissioner for Children, Persons with Disability and the Aged. We urge Ghana to continue its efforts to combat child labour and trafficking in the cocoa, fishing and small-scale mining industries.

Australia is concerned about the rights of persons with disabilities in Ghana, including reports that describe people with mental disabilities being forced into institutions, where conditions are unsatisfactory, against their will. We commend Ghana’s ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities earlier this year, and **recommend Ghana urgently strengthen efforts to reform policy so as to improve the lives of Ghanaians with disabilities in practice.**

Report of police brutality, arbitrary arrest and excessive detention are worrying. We strongly encourage Ghana to take necessary steps to ensure that legislation relating to police conduct is properly implemented and that the culture of impunity in the police and security forces is addressed. In this regard, **we recommend Ghana ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and introduce human rights education for police and security forces.**