**Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 26th Session**

**Universal Periodic Review of Venezuela**

**Statement by Australia**

Australia welcomes the delegation from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and appreciates its engagement in the Universal Periodic Review process.

Australia places importance on democracy, human rights and freedom of expression, including political expression and is concerned about the lack of progress made in these areas since Venezuela’s last UPR appearance.  **Australia recommends Venezuela invite representatives of international human rights organisations to visit Venezuela, including by issuing a standing invitation to the UN special procedures.**

Australia is concerned about limitations on freedom of expression, particularly the violent and arbitrary arrests, detention and imprisonment of opposition leaders, students and public activists through excessive force and enforced disappearances. **Australia recommends Venezuela release persons detained or arrested for political reasons and refrain from and prevent all forms of violence and retaliatory action, evictions, deportations, detention and coercion.**

Australia stresses the importance of protecting vulnerable persons including detainees, women, low-income, migrant and disadvantaged groups. **Australia** **recommends that Venezuela fully respect representative democracy, the separation of powers, legal rights, due process, universal human rights and the role of civil society groups and regional bodies.**