**Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 27th Session**

**Universal Periodic Review of Ecuador**

**Statement by Australia**

Australia welcomes the delegation from the Ecuador and appreciates its involvement in the UPR process.

We congratulate Ecuador on its success in improving the economic and the social rights of Ecuadorians through government investment and improved education and health services.

Australia welcomes the successful democratic presidential elections held in early 2017. We also welcome Ecuador’s efforts to improve LGBTI rights, highlighted by the implementation of inclusive voting rights for transgender people in the recent elections. **Australia recommends Ecuador progress efforts to end discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status.**

Australia is concerned at the high incidence of violence against women, while noting the steps taken to strengthen laws to prevent violence against women and gender-based crimes, including the introduction of a 2014 law criminalising femicide and gender-based discrimination.

Australia is concerned with the removal and appointment of many hundreds of judges through mechanisms that may be perceived as undermining judicial independence. **Australia recommends Ecuador ensure judicial independence and diversity in judicial appointments.**

**Australia also recommends Ecuador address concerns arising under the Organic Law on Communication (2013) which impose an increased level of self-censorship on media outlets.** The number of media organisations that have been sanctioned since the law’s inception is of concern.