**Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 29th Session**

**Universal Periodic Review of Botswana**

**Statement by Australia**

Australia commends Botswana on ratifying the *Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development* in May 2017 as an important step in promoting the rights of women. We welcome efforts to reduce gender-based violence, **and recommend that Botswana implement further measures to combat gender-based violence and take steps to strengthen legal protections for victims of gender-based violence.**

Australia believes that freedom of expression and assembly are a part of a robust democracy. We call on Botswana to ensure that these freedoms are protected and promoted; including in the lead-up to its national election in 2019. Australia **recommends Botswana improve legal protections for journalists, especially those receiving information from whistle-blowers or covering government protests.**

While Australia welcomes recent judicial decisions relating to sexual orientation, we recommend that the **government of Botswana enact legislation to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.**

Australia remains concerned that Botswana continues to apply the death penalty as a sentencing tool. **Australia recommends Botswana establish a formal moratorium on the death penalty, as a step towards complete abolition of this practice**.