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

**Universal Periodic Review of Tonga**

**Statement by Australia**

Australia acknowledges Tonga’s efforts to improve human rights including through: enacting the *Family Protection Act 2013*; introducing a National Disability Inclusiveness Policy; improving access to health services for people with disabilities; establishing the Office of the Ombudsman; and progressing work on a landmark employment relations bill.

Australia commends Tonga on well-run, peaceful elections in November 2017, following the dissolution of parliament in August.

We note Tonga’s continuing efforts to promote gender equality. The election of two women representatives to the Legislative Assembly is an historic first for Tonga. However, rates of domestic violence remain high. **Australia recommends that Tonga ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Australia also recommends Tonga prioritise work to eliminate violence against women, and to improve gender equality, including in relation to property and employment.**

While noting that Tonga has not carried out the death penalty for some time, **Australia recommends that Tonga formally abolish the death penalty, including ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and its Second Optional Protocol.**