**Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 30th Session**

**Universal Periodic Review of Cuba**

**Statement by Australia**

Australia recognises Cuba’s progress on human rights, especially efforts to advance gender and LGBTI equality. However, we are concerned about ongoing reports of the harassment of human rights defenders. **Australia recommends Cuba recognise human rights monitoring as a legitimate activity, provide legal status to local human rights groups, cease using tactics that intimidate them, and allow human rights defenders and civil society to engage with the UN and its mechanisms.**

Australia remains concerned by short-term, arbitrary detention used to prevent independent political activity and freedom of assembly. **Australia recommends Cuba end arbitrary detention of political activists and ratify the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.**

While we welcome the government’s continued moratorium on imposing the death penalty, the penal code still permits its use. **Australia recommends Cuba formally abolish the death penalty*.***

We welcome the government’s actions to expand internet availability but remain concerned by access restrictions to online information and broader media control. **Australia recommends Cuba remove internet access restrictions and relax control of the broader media environment.**