**Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 36th Session**

**Universal Periodic Review of Bulgaria**

**Statement by Australia**

**5 November 2020**

Thank you, [President/Vice President].

Australia commends Bulgaria on steps it has taken to protect and promote human rights since its last review, including A-status accreditation for its Ombudsman. Australia also welcomes Bulgaria’s efforts to address obstacles to the effective prosecution of crime and corruption cases.

The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women noted the normalisation and tolerance of gender-based violence against women, in particular domestic violence, in Bulgaria. The resurgence of hate crimes continues to present a key human rights concern, particularly in relation to Bulgaria’s LGBTI community, ethnic minority groups, refugees and asylum seekers.

Australia recommends that **Bulgaria:**

1. **Take steps to eliminate gender-based violence, including by ratifying the Istanbul Convention and increasing support to NGO-run crisis centres.**
2. **Strengthen education on LGBTI rights and legislates to protect against hate crimes against LGBTI persons.**
3. **Legislate or amend the current Family Code, in order to make civil partnership available to both different-sex and same-sex couples.**
4. **Improve access to services and provides greater incentives for employment of people with a disability.**