



70th session of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Preliminary Agreed Outcomes: Australia

Table of Contents

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women today examined the eighth periodic report of Australia on measures taken to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.....	2
Presentation of the Report	2
Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 1.....	4
Replies by the Delegation	4
Follow-up Questions and Answers	5
Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 2.....	6
Replies by the Delegation	6
Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 3.....	6
Replies by the Delegation	6
Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 4.....	7
Replies by the Delegation	7
Follow-up Questions and Answers	7
Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 5.....	8
Replies by the Delegation	8
Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 6.....	9
Replies by the Delegation	9
Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 7.....	10
Replies by the Delegation	10
Follow-up Questions and Answers	11
Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 8.....	11
Replies by the Delegation	11
Concluding remarks	12



The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women today examined the eighth periodic report of Australia on measures taken to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Patricia Bergin, First Assistant Secretary, Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet of Australia, recalled her country's historic accomplishments in fighting discrimination against women, affirmed the enduring importance of the effort and explained how the federalist system apportioned responsibility for implementation between the national and state levels, with the Office for Women strategically placed in a prominent position and each state and territory possessing offices dedicated to gender policy. She then surveyed programmes in place to overcome the challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in all areas under the Closing the Gap agenda, and to tackle violence against women in a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach. A working group of attorneys-general were working to respond to Committee's recommendations for a better legal framework on violence against women. Current efforts to redress the gender gap in pay and economic opportunities spanned all sectors, supporting childcare, diversity, flexibility, entrepreneurship, financial security, paths to leadership and financial incentives to promote women's advancement in the workplace.

In the discussion following that presentation, Committee Experts commended Australia on its efforts in all those areas, but expressed concern over the lack of a constitutional structure for human rights. Questions and concerns were also posed about the lack of information on the success of initiatives to assist women in indigenous communities, disabled women, lesbian and transgender women, and on respect for human rights of women in the refugee and asylum screening facilities on Nauru. The disproportionate representation of indigenous women in prison was another subject of urgent discussion. In family law, much concern was expressed over gender-neutral approaches to domestic violence and divorce. In addition, questions about the detrimental effects of budget cuts in the social services sectors were posed. Experts wondered as well what could be improved in parental leave and flexibility arrangements to allow women to make further progress in the economic sphere.

In concluding remarks, Ms. Bergin acknowledged that, as in the rest of the world, Australia still had many challenges to overcome to achieve true gender equity, but pledged its persistence in the effort.

Committee Chair Dalia Leinarte thanked the delegation for its efforts to provide answers to Experts questions and encouraged it to address the recommendations that would be issued as a result of the report and the dialogue.

The delegation of Australia was made up of representatives from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Social Services, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Jobs and Small Business, and the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Presentation of the Report

PATRICIA BERGIN, First Assistant Secretary, Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet of Australia, started by recalling a long legacy of Australian contributions to the



empowerment of women, which included ground-breaking international work of the feminist activist Jessie Street, and affirmed the importance placed by the country on meeting its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. She explained that under the country's federal system, the Federal Government was the State party to the Convention, but state and territory governments shared the responsibility for the advancement of women, which involved considering the needs of different women, including those who faced multiple barriers to full participation in work and community life. The Office for Women, in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, advanced gender equality at the Federal level, working across Government agencies, complemented by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner within the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. Each state and territory also had dedicated women's policy offices. Strengthening women's economic security, supporting more women to achieve leadership roles and ensuring that women and their children were safe from violence were the priorities of her Government in assuring gender equality.

The challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls were a primary concern, she said. Over the past ten years much progress had been made in supporting completion of primary, secondary and higher education in those communities, with programmes supporting science and technology careers. The Women's Voices project, in addition, explored holistic ways to improve the lives of marginalized communities, and the indigenous Business Sector Strategy aimed to increase women's participation in the economy. Initiatives also aimed to reduce domestic violence and improve outcomes in all areas, under the Closing the Gap agenda. Ms. Bergin acknowledged that the reports under that agenda did not include gender disaggregated data, with the exception of life expectancy. Efforts were under way to refresh the agenda by October 2018, with the formulation of a new framework, targets and performance indicators, she explained.

To tackle violence against women in a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach, and to respond to Committee recommendations, she said, a National Plan was in place for the period 2010 to 2022, which required better support for women and children vulnerable to violence, holding perpetrators to account and engagement of all Australians to prevent violence from occurring. The latest action plan promoted community involvement in challenging discrimination and gender stereotyping, and in building social norms to confront controlling and aggressive behaviour; consultations for the next action plan starting in 2019 included consideration of the special needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, migrant women and women with disabilities. Since the National Plan had been put in place, the Government had invested over \$676 million to address family violence, with state and territory investment exceeding \$4 billion in the past three years. The most recent Federal Budget included an additional \$54 million for women's safety, with programmes including telephone counselling services, alert systems, attention to cyberspace and initiatives against elder abuse.

In response to Committee recommendations for a better legal framework to end violence against women, she said, senior justice officials from all regions had formed the Council of Attorneys-General Family Violence Working Group in May last year, and last November, a National Domestic Violence Order Scheme had taken effect; it required domestic violence orders to be automatically recognized and enforceable in all jurisdictions. Noting that the Committee had also urged Australia to adopt measures to combat sexual harassment in the workplace, she noted a new inquiry into the problem led by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner. The problem, she acknowledged, remained pervasive: one in four women and one in six men had experienced such harassment in the workplace in the past five years.



On women's economic security, Ms. Bergin noted the persistent gender pay gap and the extra challenges faced by women in marginalized communities, and explained that current efforts to redress those challenges spanned all sectors, supporting childcare, diversity, flexibility, entrepreneurship, financial security, paths to leadership and financial incentives to promote women's advancement in the workplace. As a result, the proportion of women on boards of top companies increased from 15.8 per cent to 27.7 per cent in the past five years. The Government was leading by example by setting a gender diversity target of 50 per cent of all Australian Government board positions being held by women. Women currently hold 44.5 per cent of all Australian Government Board positions. Many regional governments had similar schema in place, with the federal civil service achieving gender parity this year in its highest ranks. In the private sector, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency had created an extensive up-to-date date set of all business with over 100 employees and was accelerating momentum for equality in the workplace, partly through recognizing businesses that had created conducive work conditions for women and addressed pay gaps. High access to childcare, flexible scheduling, a strong legal system and special attention to marginalized communities were encouraging the momentum to continue.

In conclusion, Ms. Bergin emphasized the support to civil society provided by the Office for Women, which resulted in a "shadow" report on Australia's eighth periodic report, as well as a recognition by all Government agencies of the role played by non-governmental organizations in promoting gender equity.

Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 1

At the beginning of the interactive dialogue with the delegation of Australia, a Committee Expert raised the questions of the legal framework against gender discrimination, and asked whether the country was finally ready to address the lack of a constitutional Bill of Rights or a legislative human rights act. The Expert questioned the effectiveness of the 1984 Sex Discrimination Act, and asked whether the Government was ready to ensure a constitutional recognition of indigenous people and delete the race power article of the Constitution, while also recognizing a right to protection of asylum seekers and refugees. What was the timeframe for removing the two reservations to the Convention?

An Expert also asked if true guarantees would be put in place to ensure adequate access to justice for women at risk of having their rights violated, especially poor women and women from marginalized communities.

Noting that Australia was responsible for a much greater percentage of greenhouse gasses than its portion the global population, another Expert asked if the Government was ready to increase the ambition of its Paris Agreement targets on climate change.

Expressing concern also about the harmful effects on women of mineral extraction projects in Bougainville and elsewhere, an Expert asked what measures would be taken to redress the harms done, and would judicial remedies be forthcoming

Replies by the Delegation

Replying to questions about the lack of a Bill of Rights, a delegate described an extensive legal framework for human rights and gender equality that should satisfy the requirements of the Convention, including the Sex Discrimination Act. Legal frameworks also overruled other lacuna in



the Constitution, such as the recognition of indigenous peoples, as constitutional amendments were historically difficult to achieve: only eight of 44 referenda on proposed constitutional amendments had been successful. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights was part of a strong human rights framework, and strengthened consideration of human rights in all legislation was ongoing. Assessment of all legislation was not always possible, but efforts were being made to ensure that all bills conformed with obligations.

Delegates affirmed positive effects of the Sex Discrimination Act and explained that its amendments would ensure that the provisions applied to both men and women, to gender identity issues and to same-sex marriage. The Act would continue to be reformed to reflect the social reality of Australia, affirmed a delegate.

The Government was regularly reviewing the status of its reservations to the Convention along with compliance. As a result, legislation was now being prepared to allow withdrawing the reservation to women's equality in combat, as women now served in all areas of that sector.

On climate change, a delegate replied that Australia's 2030 targets for reduction of emissions were among the most ambitious globally, and explained that they would be reviewed every five years in order to reduce the emissions further. On extractive industries, women's participation in negotiations on such operations was supported and all companies were required to comply with applicable laws and international frameworks.

Follow-up Questions and Answers

A Committee Expert noted a contradiction in claims of being at the forefront of human rights and not having a Bill of Rights in the Constitution and remarked that the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights seemed to be a weak substitute. Experts also wanted to know how the recognition of indigenous peoples was being formalized and, given the much-criticized offshore screening process, how the rights of migrants were guaranteed.

An Expert disputed the ambitiousness of Australia's action to combat climate change, and doubted the comprehensiveness of measures to avoid the negative impact of extractive industries, given that women from Bougainville had waited for 40 years for compensation. She expressed additional concern over budget cuts to social services as well. In regard to access to justice, an Expert asked about the effects on women of cuts in legal assistance, and inquired about the efforts to increase the support for unmet needs in civil law processes.

Responding, the delegation explained that Australia was focused on safe, orderly and legal migration, in part because it was the only way to address the safety of migrants, particularly women. Current policies were instituted to prevent more people from dying at sea. Australia looked at all its policies through its international obligations and abided by the principle of non-refoulement. Support to refugees and humanitarian migrants awaiting determination of their status included social services and education, and had been recognized as a model. On offshore screening at Nauru, a delegate said that transferees, including women and girls, were treated with respect, and affirmed that Australia currently did not intend to review the process.

In reference to the question concerning climate change, the delegation described humanitarian aid being provided, particularly in Australia's region, to those effected by environmental events, no matter what their cause.



Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 2

Turning to institutional measures for the advancement of women, an Expert asked what measures had been taken to strengthen the various offices to cover the entirety of the country to coordinate a gender perspective across the board, and how their success was measured.

On temporary special measures, an Expert recalled the Committee's urge that quotas and targets be considered to increase women's participation in various sectors, and pointed to legal provisions that would allow such measures. Why was Australia reluctant to employ such measures?

Replies by the Delegation

The Office for Women was now in a more central department in the Prime Minister and Cabinet department, said a delegate, noting that it consisted of some 30 staff and prioritized women's safety and women's full participation in the economy, ensuring that they benefitted from such employment. State and Territory offices were of various sizes. Working groups coordinated development and implementation of policy across all State and Territory governments, with the effort including women's alliances. On funding, all Government agencies were currently experiencing financial limitations, but there had been an increase in support for many of the mechanisms that benefitted women.

With regards to temporary special measures, targets had been in place to increase women's participation on Government boards; although there was no timetable to reach the 50 per cent mark, many departments had already achieved over 50 per cent women's participation. New measures were being developed each year to further improve the situation, explained the delegation, adding that the country perceived special measures to be a tool that could be used when appropriate. Australia had been bold in certain areas, including in women's participation in security sector.

Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 3

In the next round of questions, Committee Experts asked whether certain educational goals for science and technology participation of indigenous peoples were specific for women or included men as well. The delegation was also asked to describe mechanisms in place to ensure that

implementation of the Convention was coordinated across the country, and address the issue of budget cuts for non-governmental organizations.

Replies by the Delegation

Support for science and technology education was targeted to indigenous girls to encourage their advancement in those fields, a delegate said, adding that there were also a range of initiatives to promote women's participation in those areas, including specialized academies, scholarships and internships. To ensure compliance across all institutions with international obligations in human rights, a Public Governance Performance Act required every agency to report on performance across states and territories.

On funding cuts for advocacy, a delegate said that new legislation would not undercut the ability of Australian non-governmental organizations to provide assistance domestically and abroad; legal aid



would not be cut, the legislation in question only concerned funds targeted to lobbying governments. Freedom of advocacy was specifically protected in laws at many levels.

Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 4

An Expert asked about what was being done to combat stereotypes of women from different cultures, such as those who wore veils, and what approaches were being taken to combat forced marriage in various communities, given that no one had been prosecuted for the practice. She asked also about measures that would be taken to end genital mutilation, and why information about the practice was kept private.

On combating gender-based violence, an Expert asked why there was no overarching legal instrument to combat the scourge, particularly since domestic violence seemed to be defined differently in different states. There was the lack of data on such violence and sexual assault in the country, while it was not clear when the planned mechanisms would be fully operational. The delegation was asked whether Australia intended to review the gender-neutral approach to domestic violence to determine its effects on women, and about a percentage of men and women who experienced sexual harassment in the workplace by members of the opposite sex.

In regard to efforts to combat human trafficking, an Expert asked whether they were adequately gender-sensitive, measures in place to make perpetrators more accountable, and how victims were informed of their rights. The delegation was requested inform on plans for a comprehensive victim support, measures to improve victim identification and protection, and plans to decriminalize prostitution and assist women who wished to exit the activity.

Replies by the Delegation

Australia was committed to combatting gender stereotyping and harmful cultural practices, a delegate said, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation, through a range of federal and regional initiatives.

Violence against women was being combatted on multiple fronts, including widespread media campaigns to encourage respectful and equal relationships. The definition of domestic violence was set out in the Family Law Act, including stalking and derogatory taunts and other, wider actions. Studies showed a wide preponderance of men as perpetrators of sexual harassment.

A delegate described actions plans on halting human trafficking and slavery, adding that such plans were reviewed regularly for effectiveness. Awareness for prevention and support to victims was well funded. Assistance included case-management support, counselling, housing and many other elements and was supervised by the Red Cross. Protection for vulnerable witnesses was provided.

Follow-up Questions and Answers

Committee Experts asked about the criminalization of domestic violence across the country, noting that there was an impression that the situation differed in different states. The delegation was asked for additional clarifications on the approach to human trafficking and forced prostitution, and what was being done to address the concern related to sexual exploitation and trafficking of women migrants in detention centres. What was being done to ensure the prosecution of Australian nationals who practiced trafficking and sexual slavery after joining extremist groups?

Experts also asked what was being done to strengthen respect for rights for women with disabilities, and prevent women from being subject to harmful interventions to alter transgender and other



behaviours. Could the delegation describe programmes to combat cultural stereotyping targeted at communities of concern and offer additional information on measures to combat genital mutilation?

Responding, the delegation explained that an initial 45-day period of rest and recovery was offered to women victims of human trafficking and the visa process had been destigmatized. Once the situation of the victim was determined, another visa could be granted with lower requirements of cooperation in subsequent legal actions. Assistance was available also for the victim's family.

Offshore processing centres were not detention centres, the delegate continued, reaffirming that all facilities were committed to treating migrants with respect. New South Wales and Victoria had decriminalized sex work but differed in their approach to licensing.

Another delegate explained that each state and territory was responsible for its legal framework to combat domestic violence; any other arrangement would be a major departure from the federal arrangement. National and state inquiries on violence against disabled persons were shaping protection of such persons as well as their access to insurance funds. There were many safeguards to prevent forced sterilization or abortions of disabled or transgender persons, the delegate said. Among initiatives to combat forced marriage was housing and access to support for women who were trying to escape such marriage.

Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 5

In the next round of questions, the Experts took up the issue of participation of women in public and political life, and asked if quotas to ensure parity in women's representation in Parliament were being considered, along with any other measures to accelerate progress in that area and to ensure that marginalized women were represented as well. Strengthening of representation of indigenous peoples was also inquired about, and support to the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples was urged. What was being done to address slurs against women in Parliament and ensure respect for women representatives?

Noting that many indigenous births were not registered, an Expert asked if there plans to reduce all barriers to birth registration. Another Expert asked about the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda by Australia and whether the supply of arms from the country contradicted that agenda.

Replies by the Delegation

Acknowledging that women were underrepresented in Parliament, a delegate said that the Government was considering targets rather than quotas. Women role models, such as women cabinet members, were also effective in recruiting women in Government, as was creating conducive conditions for mothers and other women.

The delegation informed on the funding for various initiatives to support legislative representation of indigenous peoples, and said that birth registration was free but lagged in Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities. In conjunction with state and territorial governments, awareness and access initiatives were being instituted to redress the problem.

There was wide-ranging consultation with civil and military sectors on moving the process forward on Women, Peace and Security, with consultations including the participation of women who had



been involved in conflict situations. The resulting action plan would focus more strongly on women's participation in peacekeeping. A commitment to funding that plan had been announced.

As far as respect for women in Parliament was concerned, it was not the only behavioural problem in the body, and a code of conduct was being considered in that regard.

Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 6

Turning to the situation of women in education, an Expert asked how initiatives to increase enrolment of marginalized women in education were being funded, how progress was being measured and how outreach to encourage the pursuit of science and technology was progressing. The handling of stereotypes in the education system was also questioned, as was expulsion of pregnant girls from school. Questions on access to education by women with disabilities were also posed. The Expert asked about the effects of budget cuts in social areas on women's education.

Another Expert noted with concern an uneven economic performance among regions and sectors and asked about initiatives to close the gender pay gap, and adopt diverse measures to address occupational segregation. Questions on the Fair Work Act, in regard to flexible work and paid parental leave, were also posed, with concern that Parental Leave Pay was now only paid at minimal wage rates.

On sexual harassment in the workplace, appreciation was expressed over funding for a study of the topic, but more was needed, an Expert said, asking about access to redress and accountability. Measures to address the retirement income gap were also needed.

On health issues, an Expert commended the Australian health care system on many fronts, and asked about the difference between private and public care, measures to ensure breast feeding was adequately supported, why cervical cancer screening required a fee above procedures for other cancers, and inquired about measures to ensure that abortion was available and safe from the restrictions imposed by opponents.

The Expert asked a range of questions on provision of mental health services and avoidance of stigma for women who needed it, and presented concern over high maternal mortality among indigenous women, disabled women and lesbian and queer women. Access to quality health care by women in migrant centres in Nauru also raised concerns.

Replies by the Delegation

A delegate described expansion of sites to promote educational opportunities for indigenous women, and acknowledging gender segregation in the educational system, explained that programmes were in place which targeted girls to encourage their participation in science in technology through exposure to role models, internships and other means. A related program for indigenous girls had yet to commence, said the delegate. There was a range of measures to improve safety of girls in schools, and specific measures differed from one jurisdiction to another, as did policies to ensure the continuation of education of pregnant girls.

On economic opportunity, much analysis was being applied to the issue of the gender pay gap, a delegate said. Segregated industries were one key problem in that area that was being addressed by Australia to achieve the G20 target to reduce the gap in workforce participation rates between men and women by 25 per cent by 2025. Regional difference could be accounted for by the occupational



mix in each region. There were provisions in the Fair Work Act that addressed flexible working arrangements, but informal arrangements were successful in that area. Another delegate described the paid parental leave scheme and acknowledged that the rates were at the level of the minimum wage, but there were no plans to change that fact.

In the area of healthcare, a delegate said that some people augmented public plans with private arrangements, but the care was equal. Work was being done to address waiting times. On mental health for women with diverse sexuality, support for awareness, access and reduction of discrimination was described. Broader mental health services were funded by states and territories.

Australia was below the World Health Organization target for breastfeeding, acknowledged the delegation and said that campaigns were being waged to improve the situation. In terms of closing the gaps in life expectancy of indigenous peoples, lifestyle campaigns had been put in place while implementation plans were being coordinated with regional governments to further study the problem and ameliorate it. The delegation stated that Australia supported Nauru to provide health care to refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru.

Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 7

An Expert, before moving on to the next section, decried cuts in social services in Australia that had occurred as taxes were reduced from an already low rate. She asked how the country planned to meet the requirement of the Sustainable Development Goals to leave no one behind, and if analysis was planned on the impact on women of such cuts, and the cuts to child-care centres.

Homelessness, especially among the elderly, and food insecurity were rising, she said with concern and asked what steps would Australia take to address that situation.

Another Expert asked how the situation of indigenous women on a range of issues could be improved, including their access to land and water resources, and inquired about measures that had proven successful in protecting indigenous women from domestic violence. Committee Experts urged Australia to undertake a serious analysis of the problem and understand why results of various initiatives seemed so disappointing. There was a disproportionate number of indigenous women in prison, Experts said and asked what was being done to redress that, and to protect those women from abuse in places of detention.

Replies by the Delegation

On achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of social service cuts, a delegate said that the Government had been on a pathway to reduce budget deficits that had resulted in targeting assistance to those most in need. At the same time, another delegate added, there had been a movement of funds to mitigate the cuts in community action areas.

Six billion dollars annually was being devoted to counter homelessness, the delegation added, along with long-term housing plans in the states and territories. There was a working group across the regions looking at homelessness among older women.

On the situation of indigenous women, a delegate described programs to counter food insecurity, particularly in extremely remote areas, as well as assistance to small-scale agriculture. Access to water was provided through a mixture of public and private services. The number of Aboriginal women in prison was of great concern due to a raft of conditions, and a billion dollars over four



years had been targeted to the problem, with employment, alcohol and drug services and many other elements in the resulting package of support.

Follow-up Questions and Answers

A Committee Expert said that the delegation's responses did not directly address the need for action in certain areas, such as safe school programmes, inclusive education for women in diverse situations, and dismissal of pregnant girls and countering stereotyping in subjects.

Another Expert, noting the lack of plans to improve parental leave and flexibility arrangements, said that inadequacies still had to be addressed, as did superannuation rules and its gender aspects. The high proportion of women who had experienced diminished employment opportunities after pregnancy also had to be redressed.

Experts asked further questions about imprisonment of women, including the proportion of indigenous women, the existence of strip searches and the languishing of women with mental health issues in prison. Further information on programmes to prevent homelessness among elderly women was requested.

In response to those and other questions, the delegation described provisions of the safe school programmes to address problems of lesbian and transgender girls and to stop bullying. Policies did exist to keep pregnant girls in school, they attested.

On economic opportunities and expansion of paid parental leave, it was correct that no plans were in place for that purpose. The Minister for Women was looking at incentives for men to take equal roles in caring for families so that inequalities in pay and retirement income were lessened.

A recent decree on improving services that could reduce homelessness kicked off a few days ago, a delegate said. On the issue of disproportionate and abusive jailing, community programmes were being developed to try to deal with that difficult question. The range of options available for disabled students was also described, with funding rising for such purpose. Abortion legislation, the delegation stated, was a matter under the purview of states and territories, but abortion services were funded by federal health care funds, although access was uneven across regions.

Questions from the Committee Experts: Round 8

On family law and parental rights, a Committee Expert decried the gender neutral approach to custody, characterizing it as a result of the men's rights movement. She asked how the harmful effects of such developments would be dealt with, including the provision of adequate legal aid in divorce. How were women's problems with religious divorce being addressed? The merger of the family court and the high court was posed as a concern.

An Expert asked, in addition, what was being done to recognize the change of legal gender identity as determined by the individual.

Replies by the Delegation

How the family law system handled domestic violence was an ongoing concern in Australia, a delegate said, describing bills in development to streamline judicial processes on the issue. A new framework on family violence was due to be rolled out soon. In terms of exit from religious



marriage, there was no provision to regulating such marriages as civil marriages; religious laws remained separate in the country.

On change of legal gender, all Government forms were recognizing a variety of sexual identities, the delegate said.

Concluding remarks

DALIA LEINARTE, Committee Chairperson, commended Australia on its report and its efforts to answer the expert's questions, encouraging the country to address the recommendations that the Committee would issue with the purpose of more comprehensive implementation of the Convention.

PATRICIA BERGIN, First Assistant Secretary, Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet of Australia, thanked the Committee for its attention and said that Australia, like most of the world, was grappling with the issues the Experts had raised. Yes, there was much to be done, but Australia would be persistent in its quest for equity and the end of discrimination against women.

Preliminary report of outcomes. Not an office record at the time of publishing 25 July 2018