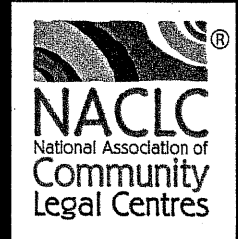


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Oral Statement
Human Rights Council 31st Session
Agenda Item 6, Australian Government Response to Universal Periodic Review
17 March 2016

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Thank you Chair. This statement is made on behalf of the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC), the peak body for community legal centres in Australia. NACLC was involved in coordinating engagement in the UPR by a coalition of almost 200 NGOs across Australia.

Chair, we welcome the Government's acceptance of approximately 150 recommendations. However, we are disappointed with the response in many respects. In particular, we are concerned that in some instances where recommendations are accepted on the basis that it is consistent with existing law/policy/action, that this will mean no meaningful action will be taken to fully implement the recommendation.

Existing approaches are not sufficient across many of the areas in which recommendations were made.

For example, despite the large number of recommendations, the response does little to indicate new and meaningful engagement or action on addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the justice system, or proper funding of, or consultation with, national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies.

While the Government's stated commitment to addressing family violence is welcome, efforts must include substantially increasing long-term sustainable funding for domestic and family violence services, including specialist women's services, community legal centres and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations.

We are also concerned about the lack of willingness to implement recommendations highlighting grave concerns about Australia's approach to refugees and asylum seekers, mandatory sentencing, and access to services including legal assistance.

We welcome the voluntary commitments made by Australia, particularly in relation to a monitoring mechanism for recommendations (which we hope will improve the 10% implementation rate from Australia's last UPR), but look forward to more information about how they will be implemented in practice. Given the limited time for preparation of the response, we also look forward to a more detailed response to the recommendations.

Chair, we acknowledge the Government's engagement with civil society during the UPR process. NACLC and Australian NGOs are committed to working with the Government to ensure proper monitoring and implementation of the recommendations to ensure protection and promotion of the human rights of all people in Australia. Thank you.