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**Statement to the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council: Australia's Universal Periodic Review, 2013 Progress Report**

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Mr President, Distinguished members of the Human Rights Council, ladies and gentlemen.

This statement is made on behalf of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Australia's 'A status' national human rights body.

Following Australia's UPR appearance in 2011, the Commission committed to publishing an annual report on the status of implementation of the UPR recommendations, and that report was duly published at the end of last year.

Over the last 12 months there have been significant developments and achievements in a number of areas. We particularly welcome the launch of Australia's National Action Plan on Human Rights, the commencement of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the appointment of Australia's first National Children's Commissioner.

Of special interest to the Human Rights Council might be the growing role of Parliament in scrutinising the compliance of Australian legislation with human rights. The so-called scrutiny committee is well placed to ensure that all proposed laws, along with current laws, comply with Australia's treaty obligations.

The Commission also applauds the Government's commitment to the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution.

Despite these positive developments, in other areas progress is lacking and much more needs to be done. The ongoing use of mandatory immigration detention and the transfer of asylum seekers including unaccompanied children to third countries for processing remains one of Australia's biggest human rights challenges.

The Australian Human Rights Commission is also concerned at the slow progress towards ratifying the *Optional Protocol on the Convention against Torture*, as well as advancing commitments made in the UPR process to review reservations to treaties.

Australia will appear before this Council for its second review in October 2015. The Australian Human Rights Commission looks forward to continued engagement with the Government in implementing the recommendations from the first review and in preparing for the second.

Thank you.