



31st Session of UN Human Rights Council

Agenda Item 6: **Consideration and adoption of the UPR outcome of Australia**

17 March 2016

Delivered by Mr Budi Tjahjono – Franciscans International

Oral Statement

Mr. President,

The Sisters of Mercy, with the NGO Mining Working Group and the Western Downs and Wider Unconventional Gas Group of Chinchilla, Queensland, Australia, welcome the adoption of UPR recommendations for Australia.

We are particularly concerned with the devastating human rights impacts that our members and partners in Australia have experienced due to coal seam gas mining in Chinchilla. These impacts include damage to potable water resulting from governmental conduct that contravenes its human rights obligations:

The government has refused to offer protection from the hazards of unconventional gas mining; denied what would be the proper people's complaint process and participation; and failed to monitor the safety of food grown in the area and the atmospheric and environmental damage rendering homes unsafe.

Several recommendations ought to have implications for coal seam gas mining. We regret that the Government has refused to adopt an enforceable Human Rights Act, as recommended by at least four States, and we join the broader call from civil society in urging the Government to reconsider.

Improved federal legislation is necessary to comply with the State's obligations to require corporate due diligence to protect its people from harm, and it would ensure access to justice when harm is in fact caused, as is the case in Chinchilla.

Finally, we urge the Government to heed the testimony of the community in Chinchilla at the recent Senate Inquiry on this issue to inform domestic legislation and policy. As Australia seeks a seat on the Human Rights Council in 2018, we will look to the Government to show leadership by addressing the human rights impacts of coal seam gas mining on its citizens.

Thank you, Mr. President.