

Statement at the 38th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

20 June 2018

Speaker: **Lee Jia-Yi Carnie**

Mr Vice President,

We welcome the Special Rapporteur's important report on her recent mission to Australia.

Every year more women are removed from their families and communities and locked up in overcrowded prisons around Australia.

Most of these women are survivors of violence and trauma and Indigenous women are significantly over Rappporteur's report highlights the appalling conditions that women and girls in detention are subjected to.

Routine strip searching is archaic and harmful, yet everyday practice in women's prisons around Australia.

This week alone hundreds of women behind bars who will be forced to remove every single item of their clothing in front of two guards.

The Special Rapporteur warned against the routine use of strip searches against women because these practices are known to exacerbate trauma, particularly for survivors of sexual violence and abuse.

Vicky Roach, an Australian Indigenous activist and former prisoner herself, reminds us that strip searches only serve to degrade and control our naked bodies.

We should be helping women to heal, not harming them further.

There are far more humane and effective alternatives to strip searches such as modern non-invasive search techniques which have been successfully adopted in other states, such as the United Kingdom.

Australian governments could, and should, end this degrading and dehumanising practice today.

We urge governments in Australia to implement the Special Rapporteur's recommendations and finally end this humiliating practice.

Thank you.