

Human Rights Council – 42nd session

General Comment at Action

HRC42 Resolution on the Question of the Death Penalty

27 September 2019

Australia thanks the core group for its work on resolution L.37 and for the open and consultative approach to negotiations, especially in the context of this very important issue.

Australia opposes the death penalty in all circumstances for all people. We believe as a matter of principle that the death penalty has no place in the modern world. It brutalises human society, is degrading, and is an affront to human dignity.

Australia is committed to global abolition of the death penalty. Many others on this Council take the same view. And we are happy to note that the number of abolitionist states grows with each year.

There remain a number of states which retain the death penalty and an even smaller number which actively execute. That's why this resolution is so important. It enables this Council to articulate a view on the death penalty, the desirability of abolition, and the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of those facing the death penalty and of other affected persons.

We should never lose sight of the fact that this is more than a domestic debate, or a question of national laws, or an issue of sovereignty. Use of the death penalty is a human rights issue. When a government takes the life of a human being, it is right and appropriate that the international community pays attention to this. We recall the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action which states that 'the promotion and protection of all human rights is a legitimate concern of the international community'.

This resolution addresses that core human rights question clearly and effectively. Australia strongly urges all members to support Resolution L.37 and to oppose all amendments.