

## **35<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council**

### **Item 6: General Debate**

#### **Human Rights Law Centre statement, in association with Change the Record, Australia**

Thank you Mr President,

At Australia's Universal Periodic Review in 2015, the Council made recommendations about the rights of Indigenous peoples. This statement updates the Council on one key area of concern – the over-imprisonment of Indigenous women.

Australia is fracturing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families by locking up growing numbers of Indigenous women.

Indigenous women are being locked up at 21 times the rate of non-Indigenous women.

Most are mothers and most are survivors of violence. Women are subjected to traumatising prison practices, like strip searching, which replicate the power and control dynamics of family violence.

Indigenous women are often in custody for short periods, including on remand, but this can cause devastating upheaval – children moved into child protection, housing lost, and future employment denied because of a criminal record.

Special Rapporteurs on Indigenous rights and violence against women have this year called on the Australian Government to take steps to address this major human rights concern.

Mr President,

Australia is a candidate for a seat on the Human Rights Council for 2018. We call on the Council and its members to urge Australia to properly implement the 2015 UPR recommendations and better protect the rights of Indigenous women.

**19 June 2017**