

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

### **Items 3 and 5 – Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

#### **Statement by the Human Rights Law Centre, in association with Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory, Australia**

*Transcript of video statement*

Thank you Mr President,

Australia is denying access to basic rights to equality, income and work for people in remote Indigenous communities, through a racially discriminatory social security policy.

The Council has received the report of the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous peoples' rights following her mission to Australia in 2017. This statement addresses one area of concern in the Special Rapporteur's report.

The Australian Government's remote 'Community Development Program' requires people looking for work in remote communities to work up to 760 *more* hours per year for the same basic social security payment as people in non-Indigenous majority urban areas.

The Program discriminates on the basis of race, with around 83 per cent of people covered by the Program being Indigenous.

High rates of financial penalty are leaving families without money for the basic necessities for survival.

The Program denies basic work rights. People are required to do work activities that they should be employed, paid an award wage and afforded workplace rights to do. Instead, they receive a basic social security payment that is nearly half of the minimum wage in Australia.

The Program undermines self-determination and was imposed on Aboriginal communities with very little consultation.

Australia should work with Aboriginal people to replace this discriminatory Program with an Aboriginal-led model that treats people with respect, protects their human rights and provides opportunities for economic and community development.

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 respect rights to self-determination and non-discrimination, and to abandon its racially discriminatory remote social security Program and replace it with an Aboriginal-led model.