



# AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail [australia@un.int](mailto:australia@un.int)

150 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 [www.AustraliaUN.org](http://www.AustraliaUN.org)

## **Fortieth Session of the Commission on Population and Development** 9 to 13 April 2007

### **General debate on national experience in population matters**

**Statement by H.E. Robert Hill**  
**Ambassador and Permanent Representative**  
**Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations**

(Check against delivery)

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Mr Chairman,

This afternoon, I would like to first outline Australia's response to the challenge of an ageing population. Following that, I will focus my statement on the very serious problem of violence against women, in response to the Bureau's invitation to reflect on the issue of violence against women during the general debate of the Commission on Population and Development.

Changing population age structures will continue to affect the way we address socio-economic development, as noted in the Secretary-General's report on world population monitoring.

Australia, like many other countries, is facing the complex challenges of an ageing population. In response, we have put in place a strong foundation of policies based on increasing participation in the workforce, improving productivity and supporting families to ensure sustainable economic growth for our future generations.

Australia is one of the very few developed countries which has seen an increase in its fertility rate in recent times. This can be attributed to targeted measures that support young families, encourage private retirement saving and facilitate workforce participation for women.

We have introduced reforms to help people re-join, and stay in, the workforce. Policies to raise labour force participation help address the slowing of labour force growth associated with an ageing population. These include increasing the participation of women in the workforce, personal income tax cuts and changes to superannuation policies.

To lift productivity to sustain acceptable rates of economic growth, we have implemented policies to create a more flexible labour market and improved links to international markets. By removing unnecessary regulation across levels of government and boosting competition in the areas of energy, transport and infrastructure, we have also improved economic growth. Importantly, we have delivered improvements to human capital.

Every five years, Australia produces an intergenerational report to assess the sustainability of current government policies over the next four decades. The production of this report improves transparency of government and increases our ability to plan for the future. The latest report was released on 2 April 2007 and shows us that while long term fiscal sustainability is improving, the higher proportion of older people in the population and subsequent pressure on health, pension and aged care spending will continue to pose a challenge.

Mr Chairman,

I would now like to make some comments regarding the very serious issue of violence against women. Australia feels strongly that violence against women must not be tolerated in any form.

Nationally, Australia is tackling gender-based violence through a women's safety agenda which focuses on prevention, health, justice and access to services. In Australia's overseas aid program, gender equality is at the centre of efforts to reduce poverty and increase the effectiveness of aid. Violence against women is both a cause of gender inequality and one of its most pervasive symptoms. Our new policy on gender equality in the aid program gives priority to reforming institutions to establish equal opportunities for women and men, including in the areas of protection against violence.

Australia urges all Member States to commit, at the highest political levels, to eradicate violence against women. This includes legislative change, effective law and justice responses, support services for women and children, supporting public advocacy by women's organisations, and community education. Programs that support men to promote gender equality are also needed, as are steps to overcome the social and cultural attitudes within our states that allow violence to continue.

I thank you.