



## **Australian High Commission Colombo**

**1 August 2016**

### **Statement on Defamation Bill in Maldives**

The Australian High Commission notes with concern the Defamation and Freedom of Expression Bill put to the People's Majlis in the Republic of Maldives on 1 August. If passed, this legislation has the potential to significantly erode freedom of expression in Maldives, and to limit Maldivians' ability to exercise rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

The Australian High Commission reiterates the importance of fundamental freedoms, including those afforded to the press. We urge the government of the Republic of Maldives to uphold democracy, transparency and the rule of law and to address concerns about the effect of the proposed legislation on freedom of expression.