

Albert Hall, Canberra

An 'Assembly Hall' for the national capital was a priority as a place for civic and cultural activities to nurture the new city. Construction of the Hall commenced in July 1927 and it was officially opened on 10 March 1928 by Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce, who declared it the 'centre from which will radiate all those aspirations that are truly national'.

As Canberra's only performing arts venue for its first 40 years, Albert Hall influenced the growth of flourishing musical, operatic and dramatic societies, such as the Society for Arts and Literature, Canberra Relief Society and Canberra Repertory Society. It was also the venue for tours by the Royal Ballet and the Australian Ballet, and even housed exhibitions of paintings and sculpture before a national gallery emerged.

On a civic level, Albert Hall was used for many formal public assemblies. The first such event was the British Empire Forestry Conference held in September 1928. During World War II, Albert Hall was the venue for Red Cross fundraisers and in 1945, the unforgettable site of the celebrations of the declaration of peace. In the late 1940s, the first graduation ceremonies of the new Australian National University College were held there. On 3 February 1949, Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell, Mr Justice Simpson and Prime Minister Ben Chifley officiated at Australia's first citizenship ceremony, held in Albert Hall, which was also the venue for annual Australian citizenship conventions.

In 1979, Albert Hall was classified by the National Trust of Australia (ACT) and in 1991 it was included on the ACT Heritage Register. In 2008, Albert Hall celebrated 80 years.

Records relating to Albert Hall

The National Archives in Canberra holds a considerable range of records including files, photographs, and architectural plans and drawings relating to the construction, maintenance, administration and management of events. Management of Albert Hall transferred from the federal government to the ACT Government in 1988.

Correspondence files

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Assembly Hall Canberra – construction of	1926	A1, 1926/3542

<u>Assembly Hall Commonwealth Avenue</u>	1926–27	A281, DGW1927/211
<u>Halls – Albert Hall</u>	1928	CP698/9, 46/5 part 1
<u>Albert Hall – repairs and sundry services</u>	1928	CP698/9, 46/5 part 2
<u>Albert Hall – caretaking etc</u>	1928	CP698/9, 46/6
<u>Letting of Albert Hall for picture show purposes</u>	1930–32	A430, G1214
<u>Albert Hall, Canberra – ACT general administration</u>	1933–57	A431, 1953/2064
<u>Gift of plinth for use as sundial base</u>	1935–38	A1, 1937/12238
<u>Albert Hall – catering and refreshment rights</u>	1937–39	A659, 1939/1/2806
<u>Albert Hall – Caretakers Cottage</u>	1938–40	A1, 1938/9768
<u>Albert Hall Publication of Allocated Bookings</u>	1945–46	A431, 1946/1922
<u>Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II – High Commissioner's reception – Albert Hall, June 1953</u>	1950–53	A3522, 8/31
<u>Royal tour 1954 – Civic ball at Albert Hall</u>	1953–54	A462, 825/2/54
<u>Personal papers of Prime Minister Harold Holt – opening of 1965 Australian Citizenship Convention</u>	1965	M2607, 107

Photographs

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Photograph No. 92 – Albert Hall, May 1928</u>	1923–26	A5342, volume 1 part 1
<u>Albert Hall, under construction</u>	1927	A3560, 7480
<u>Albert Hall and bust of 'Bellona', Roman goddess of war by Sir Bertram Mackennal</u>	1928	A3560, 4238
<u>Interior of the Albert Hall</u>	1928	A3560, 4397
<u>New Australian Festival Canberra – Albert Hall</u>	1949	A12111, 1/1949/17/1
<u>Opening of First Citizenship Convention 1950</u>	1950	A12111, 1/1950/11/3
<u>Albert Hall, Canberra ACT</u>	1950	A1200, L13520
<u>Australian citizenship and naturalisation ceremonies – Albert Hall, Canberra</u>	1955	A12111, 1/1955/12/28
<u>Debutante ball at the Albert Hall, Canberra</u>	1956	A1805, CU77/8
<u>Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet arriving at Albert Hall</u>	1958	A1200, L26934
<u>British sculpture exhibition – January 1964</u>	1964	A7973, INT738/1
<u>National electoral tally room – December 1964</u>	1964	A7973, INT798/3

Architectural plans and drawings

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Albert Hall – sketch plans and elevations of proposed recreation room</u>	c1920–30	A2502, AB228
<u>Albert Hall – perspective</u>	1925–30	A2502, AB667
<u>Architectural drawings – The assembly hall Canberra</u>	1927	A2501, AA368
<u>Albert Hall – details of false floor to orchestra pit</u>	1929	A2502, AB1144

<u>Canberra housing – Albert Hall caretakers cottage</u>	1939	A2617, section 195/10237
<u>Albert Hall – proposed extension to trap door and details of platform under stage</u>	1946	A2617, section 9/16581
<u>Albert Hall – proposed extensions – schemes 'F' & 'G'</u>	1949	A2617, section 9/18946
<u>Temporary alterations to curtain drives</u>	1955	A2445, M8901D