

Australian Atomic Energy Commission

The Australian Atomic Energy Commission (AAEC) came into existence in November 1952 with the appointment of three commissioners – Mr J E S Stevens (chairman), Professor J P Baxter and Mr H M Murray. It attained a statutory basis on 15 April 1953 when the *Atomic Energy Act* (1953) came into effect. The AAEC replaced two committees that had previously advised the government on matters relating to the development of atomic energy in Australia – the Industrial Atomic Energy Policy Committee (CA 343), 1949–April 1952; and the Atomic Energy Policy Committee (CA 332), April–November 1952.

The publication *Australian Atomic Energy Commission, The First Ten Years: 1953–1963* describes the three main responsibilities of the Commission, as follows:

- "to promote the search for, and mining and treatment of, uranium in Australia with power to buy and sell on behalf of the Australian Government;
- to develop practical uses of atomic energy by carrying out and assisting research, constructing plant and equipment and employing and training staff; and
- to collect and distribute information on uranium and atomic energy" (p. 4).

The Commission was advised by a number of sub-committees, including the Business Advisory Committee, Scientific Advisory Committee, and the Advisory Committee on Uranium Mining. A Safety Review Committee was also established in 1962.

The AAEC's most important and best known facility is the Lucas Heights Research Establishment, located in the southern Sydney suburb of Menai. Opened in 1958, Lucas Heights was the site for Australia's first nuclear reactor, known as HIFAR (High Flux Australian Reactor).

The Australian Atomic Energy Commission (CA 278) was replaced in 1987 by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (CA 6329).

Record holdings

The National Archives holds a range of records from the AAEC's Head Office in Coogee New South Wales, dating from 1953. Selected records, including correspondence, ministerial papers, committee records, and project reports and notes, are listed below.

A range of official records maintained by Mr Keith Alder, Director (1962–70) and later General Manager (1976–82) of the Lucas Heights establishment are also held by the Archives.

Administrative records

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Papers of Dr Dalton – Chief Scientist (1959–61) – Australian Atomic Energy Commission</u>	1952–61	C2383
<u>Australian Atomic Energy Commission – research material on the history of the organisation</u>	1952–81	C3138
<u>Minutes of meetings – Mining Advisory Committee</u>	1953–60	C2378
<u>Rum Jungle records</u>	1953–76	C3137
<u>General correspondence files – Australian Atomic Energy Commission</u>	1953–82	C945
<u>Commission decisions</u>	1953–87	C2379
<u>Notes of Commission meetings</u>	1953–87	C2380
<u>Monthly letter to Commissioners</u>	1954	C2490
<u>General correspondence files – Harwell Research Group, UK (see also CA 6772)</u>	1955–57	C2384
<u>Technical reports – Australian Atomic Energy Commission</u>	1955–60	C3404
<u>Confidential Management Committee minutes</u>	1956–87	C2405
<u>Commission memoranda</u>	1958–87	C2381
<u>Minutes of the Building Executive Committee</u>	1958–87	C2491
<u>Consultative Committee meeting minutes</u>	1959–87	C2406
<u>Ministerial papers and correspondence files</u>	1960–81	C1072
<u>Confidential correspondence files – Australian Atomic Energy Commission</u>	1960–81	C97
<u>General directives for the research programme</u>	1962–87	C2493
<u>Membership lists of the Commission and its committees</u>	1962–87	C2494
<u>Project files – Jervis Bay</u>	1969–74	C99

Records maintained by Keith Alder

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Confidential printed reports</u>	1953–84	C2387
<u>Papers on Harwell Research Group, UK (see also CA 6772)</u>	1954–58	C2388
<u>Papers on Lucas Heights</u>	1955–63	C2389
<u>General papers</u>	1956–61	C2386
<u>Minutes and reports (Director's copy)</u>	1957–61	C2390

Further sources of information

Conduct keyword searches on the collection database, [RecordSearch](#), to identify individual record items relating to the role of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission. Keyword terms such as 'atomic energy', 'nuclear energy', 'atomic reactor', and 'lucas heights' will identify records of interest.