NAA
NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

Fact sheet

Melbourne Olympics, 1956

Conducted against the backdrop of the Suez crisis and the Hungarian Revolution, the Melbourne Olympics commenced 22 November 1956. The Games were centred around the Melbourne Cricket Ground and in terms of gold medals, were one of the most successful ever for Australian athletes. Competitors such as Betty Cuthbert, Shirley Strickland, Murray Rose and Dawn Fraser dominated their events and television, introduced in Australia in time to broadcast the events, made sure their success became part of Australian sporting history.

Record holdings

Files held by the Archives though, tend not to deal with athletic successes. The majority are administrative records created by the Prime Minister's Department, which was responsible for coordinating the Commonwealth government's role in the organisation of the Games. The bulk of these records are on our RecordSearch database, which can be accessed in any of our reading rooms, but some selected items are described below.

Examples of Prime Minister's Department and Cabinet Office records

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Olympic Games – Commonwealth financial contribution	1950–54	A463, 1956/1418 part 1
Olympic Games 1956 – Financial assistance policy	1951–56	A4940, C423
Construction of Olympic village – Commonwealth finance	1953	A4940, C682
Olympic Games – Commonwealth financial contribution	1954–59	A463, 1956/1418 part 2
Olympic Games – Film and television rights	1955–56	A463, 1956/1040
Olympic Games 1956 – Publicity	1955–56	A463, 1956/1247 part 1
Olympic Games – Melbourne's preparations and programme	1955–56	A463, 1956/1379
Proposal for issue of Olympic Games commemorative coin	1956	A4940, C1574

Security records

Due to the nature of contemporary world events and the general political climate of the time, a number of files concerning the Games were created by Australia's security organisations, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Commonwealth Investigation Service. These include the following records.

Security records

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Soviet and Eastern Bloc Olympic teams – Germany Volume 1	1955–58	A6122, 1249
Soviet and Eastern Bloc Olympic teams – Hungary Volume 1	1955–56	A6122, 1251
Soviet and Eastern Bloc Olympic teams – Hungary Volume 2	1956	A6122, 1252
Soviet and Eastern Bloc Olympic teams – Russia Volume 1	1956	A6122, 1256
Visit of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh to Australia 1956 – vetting file	1956	A1533, 1956/1518C
Allegations of counterfeit United States currency in Melbourne for issue at Olympic Games	1956	A1533, 1956/3465

External Affairs records

The Department of External Affairs was also involved in the arrangements for the Games. The Soviet Union had not had diplomatic representation in Australia for several years, but the Department sought to have this policy revoked for the duration of the Olympics. The Department was also involved when the Hungarian team applied for political asylum.

External Affairs records

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Olympic Games – policy – general	1954–56	A1838, 1603/1 part 1
Consular representatives in Australia – USSR – re two consular officers for Melbourne Olympic Games	1956	A1838, 1515/1/58/1
Political asylum – Hungarian Olympic Team in Melbourne	1956–58	A1838, 1606/4

Records of Olympic organising committees

Numerous records created by the various committees of the Organising Committee of the 16th Olympiad are also held by the Archives. These records are held within series AA1967/379, and are all listed on RecordSearch. Amongst these records are papers of the following committees:

- Finance and General Purpose Committee
- Executive Committee
- Communications and Broadcasting
- Construction Committee

- Press and Publicity Sub-Committee
- Winding-Up Committee.
- Visual and audio records

Photographs

Use the Archives' PhotoSearch database to locate photographs of the Melbourne Olympics taken by the former Australian news and Information Bureau (ANIB). Relevant ANIB correspondence files are also held in series A6895. Some examples of items are listed in the table below.

Sound recordings

Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) audio recordings of key events from the Olympics are also held. Some examples are listed below.

Files about photographs and film

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Olympic Games – Olympic news releases	1954–57	A6895, N56/182
Olympic Games film	1954–59	A6895, N56/173
Olympic Games – tourism by-products	1955	A6895, N56/180
Lewis Luxton Olympic Games – TV	1955–57	A6895, N56/176 part 1

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Swimming final 100m women's freestyle 1956 Olympics, won by Dawn Fraser [audio recording]	1956	C100, 1666024*
Final 100m women's sprint 1956 Olympics, won by Betty Cuthbert [audio recording]	1956	C100, 1666042*

* located in Sydney

Viewing the records

All records referred to in this fact sheet are available to the public in our research centre in Canberra, except those marked with an asterisk (*), which are located in Sydney.