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Australia and the United Nations

The United Nations was established to present a united front of allied strength against the axis powers in World War II. By October 1943 it had been proposed that the UN become an instrument for promoting international peace. In late 1944 representatives from China, the UK, the USSR, and the USA met at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington DC to draw up a series of proposals for the new organisation. These proposals were circulated for comment among all states at war with the axis powers. Forty-six states sent delegates to the conference which convened at San Francisco on 25 April 1945 to draw up the charter of the United Nations. The charter was signed on 26 June 1945.

Selected series relating to the establishment of the United Nations

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Dumbarton Oaks Plan for the establishment of the UN	1944–45	A4489
Correspondence files maintained by Paul Hasluck [contains material about the San Francisco Conference 1945]	1941–48	M1942
Correspondence files maintained by Paul Hasluck about the Australian Mission to the United Nations Organisation	1945–47	M1943

According to the United Nation's charter, the primary objective of the organisation is the maintenance of international peace and security. The UN has five principal organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, and the International Court of Justice, all supported by a Secretariat. The General Assembly is the only body on which all members are represented. The Security Council consists of some permanent members and other members elected for a fixed term.

Australia, as a founding member state, and as the country which provided the third President of the General Assembly (Dr HV Evatt – see below), has had an extensive and continuing relationship with the UN. This is reflected in the series created by the following agencies

Australian agencies involved with the United Nations

Agency title	Date	Agency no.
Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation)	1947–ongoing	CA 1411

Australian Mission to the United Nations (New York)	1946–ongoing	CA 2758
Australian Delegation, UN Special Committee on the Balkans	1947–52	CA 4431
Australian Consulate – General and Permanent Mission to the Office of the UN, Geneva	1949–ongoing	CA 8164
UN Commission on Indonesia, Djakarta/Jakarta	1947–51	CA 8237

External Affairs/ Foreign Affairs records

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (formerly the Department of External Affairs) has had extensive relations with the UN, documented in the following series. Most items in these series are listed on RecordSearch which includes item level data. The database is available in all research centres.

External Affairs/ Foreign Affairs records

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Correspondence files [Files with the prefix UN46 relate to the UN]	1946	A1067
Correspondence files [Files with the prefix UN47 relate to the UN]	1947	A1068
Correspondence files [Files with the primary numbers 851 to 951 relate to the UN]	1948–89	A1838
Correspondence files [Australian Counsellor, British Embassy, USA]	1939–48	A3300
Correspondence files [Australian Embassy, USA]	1949–51	A3094
Correspondence files [Australian Embassy, USA]	1949–51	A5460
Correspondence files [Australian Embassy, USA]	1952–53	A5459
Correspondence files [Australian Embassy, USA]	1952–53	A5461
Correspondence files [Australian Embassy, USA]	1954–57	A3093
Correspondence files [Australian Embassy, USA]	1954–57	A5462
Inwards and outwards cables between the Minister and the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs	1947–49	A9420

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Dr Herbert Vere Evatt

Possibly Australia's most notable delegate to the UN was Herbert Vere Evatt (CP 7) who played a major role in the development of the UN Charter, was President of the UN's General Assembly in 1948–49, was the first chairman of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission and was the chairman of the United Nations Palestine Commission in 1947. Many records relating to Dr Evatt's work at the UN are listed on the RecordSearch database and can be identified using the keyword 'Evatt'.

Other Australian delegates to the United Nations

Delegate	Person no.	Dealings with the United Nations
Kenneth Bailey	CP 71	Attended San Francisco Conference, General Assembly, 1946–69
Esma Banner	CP 585	Served on UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and International Refugee Organisation, 1944–51
Garfield Barwick	CP 651	Leader Australian delegation during 1960s, member Court of Justice, 1973–74
William Clifford	CP 416	Member of many UN committees and councils, 1964–75
Herbert Coombs	CP 119	Delegate to UN conference on Trade and Employment, 1947–48
Ruth Dobson	CP 561	Attended meetings of the UN General Assembly, 1950–53
James Halligan	CP 159	Representative at Trusteeship Council 1948, 1949, 1952
Leonard Harris	CP 675	UN International Telecommunications Union, 1946–60

Sir Paul Hasluck	CP 115	Head of Mission to UN, 1945–46, 1964–69
William Hodgson	CP 80	Attended San Francisco Conference, Head of Mission to the UN in New York , served on many UN committees, 1945–49
Geoffery Kesteven	CP 638	Fisheries advisor to UN, 1945–70
Dudley McCarthy	CP 44	Member Trusteeship Council and Minister to UN, 1963–66
Charles Morton	CP 280	Delegate to UN Conference on Trade and Employment, 1947–48
James Plimsoll	CP 452	Australian permanent representative to the UN, 1959–63
Arthur Tange	CP 229	First Secretary Australian Mission to the UN in New York, 1946