



United  
Nations  
Association  
of Australia

# A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL'S GUIDE TO UNITED NATIONS JOBS AND INTERNSHIPS





# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION:</b>	<b>4</b>
Matthew Kronborg – UNAA National Executive Director	
<hr/>	
<b>WORKING WITH THE UN</b>	<b>5</b>
<hr/>	
<b>UN OPPORTUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD</b>	<b>6</b>
General UN Positions	6
Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Program	7
Young Professionals Program (YPP)	7
Associate Expert Program (AEP)	7
International UN Internships	8
UN Volunteers	12
Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)	12
<hr/>	
<b>UN OPPORTUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>13</b>
<hr/>	
<b>CAREER TIPS FROM NOTABLE FORMER UN EMPLOYEES</b>	<b>16</b>
The Hon. Melissa Parke MP	
– Former UN Lawyer	16
Major Kel Gleeson	
– Former UN Peacekeeper	19
Brian Gleeson	
– Former Human Resources Director/Coordinator	21
<hr/>	

[www.unaa.org.au](http://www.unaa.org.au)



## > INTRODUCTION:

# MATTHEW KRONBORG – UNAA NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome,

You have just made a good step towards your dream career with the UN. Thank you for your interest.

The UN directly employs around 50,000 people across its core activities in a plethora of fields and in seemingly countless locations around the world. Continually attracting and retaining fresh talent is important to the UN, which is where you come in, the career direction you take and the role you choose is up to you. The journey is yours.

We have prepared this guide to provide you, a talented student or young professional in Australia, with the information and tips you need to get your foot in the door. It is highly competitive and challenging but we believe the rewards and benefits make it worthwhile.

In this guide we begin by covering some background about working with the UN; provide several examples of UN entry level opportunities around the world; move to a handful of UN entry opportunities here in Australia and then close with career insights and case studies from a selection of notable Australians who are former UN employees.

On behalf of the central UN body it is our mission at the UNAA to educate the Australian community and leaders about the work that the UN does, why it is so important and how they can get involved.

Thank you for taking the time to consider a career with the UN.

The world needs to unite in support of the UN now more than ever.

We hope you will join us.

Kind regards,

**Matthew Kronborg**

## > WORKING WITH THE UN

The United Nations' system is comprised of the five principal organs (General Assembly, Security Council, UN Secretariat, International Court of Justice, Economic and Social Council) plus more than 40 bodies, funds, programmes, commissions, offices and specialised agencies. Together they work to facilitate the UN's purposes and principals as defined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The UN currently employs over 44,000 staff members from all 193-member countries. This figure doesn't include peacekeeping forces, of whom the vast majority are seconded from members' own forces. The UN is currently conducting some 16 peacekeeping operations around the world with around 125,000 personnel.

UN employees work across a wide range of roles in offices and field positions all over the globe. The UN's headquarters are located in New York and it has major core offices in Geneva, Paris, Rome, Vienna, and Nairobi. It has Regional Economic/Social Commissions in Geneva for Europe, Beirut for Western Asia, Santiago for Latin America and the Caribbean, Bangkok for the Asia Pacific and Addis Ababa for Africa.

As examples of smaller UN offices in existence; the UN has its International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania.

### ONCE EMPLOYED BY THE UN YOU CAN JOIN ONE OR MORE OF EIGHT MAIN JOB NETWORKS:

- 1 | Economic and Social Development
- 2 | Management and Operations Support
- 3 | Political, Peace and Security
- 4 | Information Systems and Communication Technology
- 5 | Legal
- 6 | Public Information and External Relations
- 7 | Conference Management
- 8 | Safety and Security

As part of a network, United Nations employees can access multidisciplinary opportunities for developing new skills, and gain exposure to the different parts of the Organization. Before applying for a job at the UN it is useful to research these networks and the jobs associated with them, in order to gain a better understanding of the types of roles available and the fields that the UN operates within. Once employed by the UN, these networks will help you with internal job transitions.



## UN OPPORTUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD

### GENERAL UN POSITIONS

After deciding that you want to pursue a career with the United Nations, the next step is to explore the different ways to gain entry to the UN system. A good first step is to visit [careers.un.org](https://careers.un.org). Applications for jobs in the UN are done through the UN's application system Inspira, at [inspira.un.org](https://inspira.un.org).

The United Nations workforce is comprised of five different categories of staff, each with three levels of responsibilities and requirements. The categories are:

- Professional and higher categories
- General Service and related categories
- National Professional Officers
- Field Service
- Senior Appointments

If you are a recent university graduate, the entry-level UN programs may be the most suitable for launching your UN career. These include:

- Junior Professional Officer Program (JPO)
- Young Professionals Program (YPP)
- Associate Expert Program (AEP)

## Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Program

The Junior Professional Officer Program is administered by the JPO Service Centre (JPOSC) for various UN funds and programs, including: the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), UN Women, UNAIDS, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and the World Health Organization (WHO), among many others.

JPOs are offered one year fixed term contracts which are normally renewed for a second year. JPOs serve primarily in one of the country offices of the participating organisations in developing countries.

Australia is currently a partner country for the JPO Program and therefore Australian nationals can apply.

To be eligible for the program sponsored by Australia you must:

- Be an Australian citizen;
- Be under 34 years old; and
- Hold a post-graduate degree in a related discipline to the placement.

See [www.jposc.undp.org/content/jposc/en/home.html](http://www.jposc.undp.org/content/jposc/en/home.html) for more information.

---

## Young Professionals Program (YPP)

The YPP recruits young, high-calibre professionals in an annual entrance examination. To be eligible for the YPP you must:

- Hold a first-level university degree;
- Be younger than 32 at the end of this year;
- Speak English and/or French fluently; and
- Be a national of a country participating in the recruitment exercise (this varies year to year and a list of participating countries can be found on the UN website at [www.careers.un.org](http://www.careers.un.org)).

The purpose of the YPP examination is to recruit people for career positions at the Secretariat. Recruits will initially be given a two-year fixed-term appointment followed by conversion to a continuing contract, provided their performance is satisfactory.

The YPP examination tests your substantive knowledge, analytical thinking, drafting abilities, as well as your awareness of international affairs. If you pass the written exam, you will be invited to the oral part of the examination, an interview in either French or English, to assess your skills, attributes and behaviour.

See <https://careers.un.org/> for more information

## Associate Expert Program (AEP)

Through the Associate Expert Program (AEP), young professionals are recruited under bilateral agreements between the United Nations and donor countries.

The goal of the Associate Expert Program is to provide assistance to developing countries and to offer university graduates an opportunity to get professional experience in the United Nations Capacity Development.

To be eligible for the AEP applicants must:

- Be a national of a current donor country;
- Be under 32 years old;
- Hold a Master's degree (or equivalent combination of degree and work experience); and
- Preferably have a minimum of two years relevant professional experience.

Currently, Australia is a donor country for the AEP and therefore Australian nationals are eligible for the program. For more information on the AEP see [www.esa.un.org/techcoop/associateexperts/index.html](http://www.esa.un.org/techcoop/associateexperts/index.html).

Whilst working at the United Nations may be your ultimate goal, the competition is tough, especially when applying as an entry level, external applicant without experience at the UN. To get your foot in the door you should consider short-term and consultant opportunities. Hiring processes for such positions tend to be less competitive and the on-the-ground experience they provide may give you just the exposure you need to gain familiarity with the culture and structure of the organisation, build your network, and get your name and expertise known.

See <https://careers.un.org/> for more information



## ▶ INTERNATIONAL UN INTERNSHIPS

The Funds, Programs and Special Agencies have offices in New York, Geneva, Rome, Paris and are co-located with the UN in some of their Regional Commissions. A number of them have a strong field presence through their support to developing and middle income countries in all regions of the globe; some with over 100 locations. Job opportunities are widely advertised through their websites, eg UNDP jobs. Information is provided on the minimum requirements needed for the job and the selection process.

### The UN Internship Program (New York)

The UN Secretariat in New York offers an Internship Program for graduate and post-graduate students from diverse academic backgrounds. The program allows interns to develop their knowledge of the work of the UN, and provides the departments at the headquarters in New York with interns' specialist skills from various professional fields.

Interns are assigned to one of the departments within the Secretariat.

The program is full time and interns spend five days a week at the department or office of the Secretariat that has selected them. Each internship lasts for a period of 2 months, although this can be extended. The UN Secretariat has up to 250 interns at any given time.

See <https://careers.un.org/> for more information

---

### Internships at UN Headquarters worldwide

The United Nations also provides opportunities for students to undertake internships in its core offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut and Santiago. The details and requirements of the internships vary between offices.

---

### Internships with other UN funds, programs and special agencies

Many UN funds, programs and special agencies also offer internships. These internships cover a wide range of global issues, and allow interns the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in a specific area of international affairs including international development, economics, environmental sustainability and human rights. The types of internships and the requirements for applicants vary between organisations.



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

## UN SPECIAL AGENCIES, FUNDS AND PROGRAMS OFFERING INTERNSHIPS INCLUDE:



### UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (UNDP)

The UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. Internships can take place in a UNDP country office/ regional centre or at the UNDP Headquarters in New York. You must be enrolled in a graduate-level degree in a development related field such as economics, public or business administration, or environmental studies to apply.

See [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org) for more information.



### UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

UNHCR is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. The UNHCR Geneva and Budapest offices offer internships throughout the year. Some duty field offices also take on interns.

See [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) for more information.



### UN WOMEN

UN Women is the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women internships are only available to currently-enrolled graduate or post-graduate students.

See [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org) for more information.



### WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO)

The WHO is the leader in global public health issues and is committed to building future leaders in public health. WHO internships are either at the head office in Geneva, or at the regional or country offices worldwide. The WHO only accept applications for internships from currently enrolled students.

See [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) for more information.



## **WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP)**

The World Food Program is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide. They provide humanitarian assistance to victims of war, civil conflict and natural disasters, and work towards improving food security. Most WFP internships are located at their head office in Rome.

See [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org) for more information.

---



## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE (ITC)**

The ITC provides technical assistance to aid developing countries and transition economies to promote their exports. The ITC only accept applications for internships from current post-graduate students. The ITC Headquarters are located in Geneva.

See [www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org) for more information.

---



## **UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR PROJECT SERVICES (UNOPS)**

The UNOPS mission is to serve people in need by expanding the ability of the United Nations, governments and other partners to manage projects, infrastructure and procurement in a sustainable and efficient manner. UNOPS internships are available to penultimate and final-year students only.

See [www.unops.org](http://www.unops.org) for more information.

---



## **UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)**

UNICEF works to build a world where the rights of every child are realized, by advocating for children's issues, providing education, medical assistance and humanitarian protection and support. UNICEF internships are only available to currently-enrolled graduate or post-graduate students.

See [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) for more information.

---



## **OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) represents the world's commitment to universal ideals of human dignity. Most internship positions will be at the OHCHR Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

See [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) for more information.



### UN VOLUNTEERS (UNV)

UNV advocates for volunteerism, integrates volunteerism into development planning and mobilizes volunteers to contribute to peace and development. The UNV offers internships in Bonn, Germany.

See [www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org) for more information.



### UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM (UNEP)

UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the environment. The UNEP Headquarters are located in Nairobi, Kenya.

See [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org) for more information.



### UN-HABITAT

UN-HABITAT is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.

See [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org) for more information.



### UN OFFICE OF DRUGS AND CRIME (UNODC)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against human trafficking, illicit drug use, narcotics trafficking, corruption, terrorism and transnational organized crime. The UNODC Headquarters is located in Vienna, Austria. UNODC currently offers a full-time internship program in the Asia-Pacific Region.

See [www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org) for more information.



### UN POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)

The UNFPA works with individuals, communities and governments to develop policies and programs to reduce poverty, support sustainable development and improve sexual and reproductive health. Internships are available in New York.

See [www.web.lb.unfpa.org](http://www.web.lb.unfpa.org) for more information.



UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

## > UN VOLUNTEERS

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide. Almost 8,500 qualified, experienced and committed people of 170 nationalities serve each year as United Nations volunteers in over 140 countries, working in key areas such as poverty reduction, crisis recovery, elections support, governance and HIV/AIDS.

UN Volunteers are supported in several ways, including a monthly volunteer living allowance, annual leave, and medical insurance.

You must be at least 25 years old to apply for UNV programs.

See [www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org) for more information.

## > DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (DPKO)

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is responsible for the planning, preparation, management and direction of UN Peacekeeping Operations.

The DPKO is divided into four main offices:

- **OFFICE OF OPERATIONS** which provides political and strategic policy and operational guidance and support to the missions;
- **OFFICE OF THE RULE OF LAW AND SECURITY INSTITUTIONS** which strengthen the links and coordinate the Department's activities in the areas of police, justice and corrections, mine action, the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants and security sector reform;
- **OFFICE OF MILITARY AFFAIRS** which works to deploy the most appropriate military capability and to enhance performance and improve the efficiency and the effectiveness peacekeeping missions; and
- **POLICY EVALUATION AND TRAINING DIVISION** which develops, coordinates and delivers standardized training.

DPKO positions are generally available in the UN Headquarters in New York, one of the DPKO regional logistics hubs, or in the field peacekeeping operations. While the UN does not have its own military force (it depends on contributions from Member States), there are many diverse non-military-type roles available in the DPKO peacekeeping operations such as radio and television producers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, administrators, police officers, elections experts and economists.

See [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/peacekeeping](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/peacekeeping) for more information.



UN Photo/Bikem Ekberzade

# > UN OPPORTUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA

THERE ARE VARIOUS OPPORTUNITIES TO INVOLVE YOURSELF WITH THE UN IN AUSTRALIA. EXAMPLES INCLUDE:



## UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (UNAA)

### VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNSHIPS

The UNAA National Office in Canberra and the UNAA State and Territory Branches offer a series of internship and volunteering opportunities throughout the year.

See [www.unaa.org.au](http://www.unaa.org.au) for more information.



## UN WOMEN AUSTRALIA

### INTERNSHIPS

The Australian National Committee for UN Women offers an internship program for TAFE and university students and graduates. To be eligible you must also be a member of the National Committee (a \$35 annual fee). Interns will be required for a minimum of two days a week at the National Committee's office in Canberra. Internships are unpaid, and vary in length from 3 to 6 months. The role varies depending on the skills and experience of the intern and current projects being undertaken by the National Committee.

Internships are advertised throughout the year, in three intake rotations.

See [www.unwomen.org.au](http://www.unwomen.org.au) for more information.

## UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE (UNIC)

### INTERNSHIPS



UNIC Canberra offers graduate and post-graduate internship opportunities. Qualifications in communications would be of most interest to UNIC. A background in international relations would also be of value.

The duration of the internship program is two months. However, interns are not expected to undertake the internship on a full-time basis. To qualify, you must have completed at least one year of your under-graduate degree. See [www.un.org.au](http://www.un.org.au) for more information.



## UNICEF AUSTRALIA

### JOBS

UNICEF Australia advertises all vacancies at [www.ethicaljobs.com.au](http://www.ethicaljobs.com.au). UNICEF Australia only accepts applications for employment in response to advertised vacancies.

### INTERNSHIPS

UNICEF Australia offers a competitive internship program during certain periods. Each internship role will vary depending on the skills of the intern and current projects being undertaken by UNICEF Australia. Applicants should be flexible and be prepared to work in areas in which they have had no previous experience or expertise.

See [www.unicef.org.au](http://www.unicef.org.au) for more information.



## AUSTRALIA FOR UNHCR

### JOBS

Australia for UNHCR has about 40 office staff in their Sydney based office. They also hire a team of frontliners who work in small teams in shopping centres and street locations around Australia interacting face-to-face with potential donors to support.

### VOLUNTEERS

Australia for UNHCR takes on volunteers throughout the year in Sydney. Volunteers must dedicate a minimum of three hours a week for two months or more. Volunteers get involved in tasks such as phoning donors to update their information, phoning new donors to welcome them to Australia for UNHCR, preparing mail-outs, filing, and basic word processing tasks.

### INTERNSHIPS

Internships are available intermittently in Australia for UNHCR's Sydney Office.

See [www.unrefugees.org.au](http://www.unrefugees.org.au) for more information.



## UNHCR (UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES) REGIONAL OFFICE

The UNHCR Regional Office for Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific is based in Canberra.

### INTERNSHIPS

The UNHCR regional office in Canberra accepts interns in the Legal Protection Unit and the Public Information Unit.

For internships in the Legal Protection Unit, applicants must hold, or be in the final year of studying to obtain, an Australian or New Zealand law degree. Experience or a demonstrated interest in asylum issues, refugee protection, or human rights is desirable, as is current knowledge of Australian or New Zealand migration law. Legal internships with the UNHCR in Canberra require a full time commitment to work for a period of at least three months.

Internships in the Public Information Unit are open to applicants studying in fields such as international relations, journalism, and communications who have work experience or demonstrated interest in refugee and humanitarian issues. Timing and length of Public Information internships are flexible, however preference is given to candidates who can commit full-time and/or for longer periods.

See [www.unhcr.org.au](http://www.unhcr.org.au) for more information.



# ▶ CAREER TIPS FROM NOTABLE FORMER UN EMPLOYEES

## ▶ THE HON. MELISSA PARKE MP – FORMER UN LAWYER

### UN CAREER

Prior to becoming a Member of the Australian Parliament, Melissa began her employment with the UN peacekeeping mission in Kosovo in 1999, and this was followed by two and a half years working in Gaza for the international legal division of UNRWA, the UN agency that works to assist Palestinian refugees.

In 2004, Melissa undertook a position in the UN headquarters in New York in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management. She was responsible for oversight of the internal system of administration of justice, as well for establishing the UN Ethics Office, including instituting programs for whistle-blower protection, financial disclosure, ethics training and advice and standards of conduct.

In 2006, Melissa took up a legal position in the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC) in Beirut, investigating the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri. Melissa became the UNIIC Deputy Chief of Staff. Upon completion of her role in Lebanon in February 2007, Melissa resumed work in New York before returning to Australia.

Melissa grew up in the south-west of Western Australia on her parents' apple farm in Donnybrook. She holds a Bachelor of Business from Curtin University, a Bachelor of Laws from the University of New South Wales and a Master of Laws in Public International Law from Murdoch University.

Prior to joining the UN, Melissa was a lecturer in the law school at Murdoch University and the solicitor-in-charge at the Bunbury Community Legal Centre. It was in this role that Melissa's strong sense of public service vocation was formed through her



direct experience of working with people who could not afford private legal advice or representation. Melissa was also engaged in community legal education and law reform, and became involved in local community groups concerned about environmental and social justice issues. In parliament, Melissa has served as Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health, Homelessness and Social Housing, Minister for International Development, Shadow Assistant Minister for Health, and on numerous parliamentary committees and groups, including as chair of the UN Parliamentary Group, UNICEF Parliamentary Association and Parliamentarians for Global Action.

## MELISSA'S UN CAREER TIPS

At university you should definitely try to study some subjects with an international focus (for example: international relations, public international law, human rights, sustainable development). The UN is big enough that you could find work within any number of subject areas and locations. Indeed, while most people think the UN is full of human rights lawyers, in fact the UN has a vast array of jobs requiring specialists in finance, health, languages, political affairs, economic development, media, law (all kinds including employment law, contract law, public international law – criminal, humanitarian, refugee, human rights), gender, social affairs, medicine, education, engineering, and logistics.

Most posts in the UN require a **Master's degree (in any subject) as a minimum**. Having working knowledge of **another official UN language** is also helpful (**French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese or Arabic**). I was lucky to have been a Rotary exchange student to France for a year when I was 17 so I speak/write French. In my experience, French and Spanish are the easiest to learn but you may already have some other language skills.

**Getting experience within Australia in your chosen profession** before you apply to the UN is advised – my experience as a lawyer in Australia before going to the UN was definitely seen as a bonus. Getting some **relevant international work experience** whether paid or as a volunteer is also useful - it gives you relevant experience and you can make good contacts. To see examples of the types of humanitarian jobs that are being advertised you can check out vacancies on Reliefweb ([www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)).

In the beginning especially it is important to **be flexible about where you are willing to work** with the UN - I was prepared to work in peacekeeping missions and hardship duty stations such as Kosovo and Gaza - this makes it easier to get into the UN, rather than if you apply for jobs in one of the headquarters locations straight away. It also gave me a huge amount of credibility when I eventually did go to work in the UN Headquarters in New York.

The other thing I would say is that it is advantageous to try to **make contacts within the UN** - this is pretty much how the organisation (like every other organisation in the world) works in reality. With hundreds of qualified people competing for the same posts, this could be what makes the difference. Being active within the UN Association of Australia and meeting visiting UN representatives is a good idea. Ideally you would build up some contacts who are willing to recommend you for UN positions.





## ▶ MAJOR KEL GLEESON – FORMER UN PEACEKEEPER

### UN CAREER

Mr Gleeson retired from the Australian Army in 1994 after 20 years service, having seen active duty in Cambodia. While in Cambodia, the UN civilian component serving in Phnom Penh realised they were lacking an appropriate civilian control unit to reflect how the military functioned. The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) offered Mr Gleeson a job in Cambodia working as an International Civilian. Mr Gleeson worked in the movement control unit for civilian operations for the UNTAC Mission. This role involved deploying the DPKO troops and equipment to the mission, moving them forward to the areas of operations and keeping them resupplied.

Mr Gleeson then served on DPKO missions in Rwanda (1994-96) and Yugoslavia (1996-98). He worked with the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons in The Hague from 1998 to 2001, enforcing chemical weapon treaties and submitting reports to the United Nations Security Council. Mr Gleeson then returned to the DPKO and served in East Timor (2001-03), then following a brief sabbatical, served in Sudan (2004-06). For his service to the DPKO, Mr Gleeson has been honoured with the Australian Overseas Service Medal.



### KEL'S UN CAREER TIPS

As of 2015, the DPKO currently has 16 peacekeeping operations, which include 106,865 uniformed personnel and 5,277 civilian personnel. There are currently 1,846 UN Volunteers contributing to these missions.

There are a number of ways to apply for the DPKO, either by working in the UN Headquarters in New York, one of the regional logistics hubs, or in one of the field peacekeeping operations.

To work in the New York UN Headquarters for the DPKO requires applying online with your resume when an opening is announced on the UN Inspira site. However, it is much harder to get a position in the New York office over a job in the field as there are far fewer positions. There are more job opportunities entering as a P-level Field Services (FS) Operator in a civilian role in the UN peacekeeping missions. These roles are varied and will include employees from law, engineering, transportation, public affairs and administrative backgrounds.

There is also the opportunity to enter through the “back door” of the DPKO as a UN Volunteer. The UN Volunteers offer their services on mission for no pay, however they are awarded a monthly volunteer living allowance, annual leave, and medical insurance. The UN Volunteers will then be able to apply for jobs as they become available, with the advantage of having experience working within the UN and networks within the UN. This greatly increases their chances of becoming a mission contract worker.



UN Photo/Marco Dormino

In terms of working as DPKO troop, the UN does not have its own military force; it depends on contributions from Member States. Any queries about working for the UN in a military capacity should be addressed within an applicant's own country first. All military personnel working under the Blue Beret are first and foremost members of their own national armies and are then seconded to work with the UN for periods normally of up to one year in the field, or two years in the UN headquarters.

### What will give me an advantage over other applicants?

The DPKO is a far more varied organisation than people might think. While Mr Gleeson's service in the Australian Army made it an easy transition into work with the DPKO, the peacekeeping missions also need to hire **lawyers, IT staff, transportation operators, public affairs staff, engineers and administrative staff.**

The two most important aspects of your application are **language and qualifications.** Each mission will have a specified language when applying, make sure you know the language fluently. Identify which job you want and make sure you have the specified qualifications and more. You are competing with everyone around the world so be sure to **differentiate yourself** as much as possible. Within the DPKO there are nationality restrictions to prevent a mission being overwhelmed by staff from a particular Member nation. However, there are not a huge number of Australians applying at the moment, so the odds may be in your favour.

Above all you must also be **young, adaptable and flexible.** You will be working in crisis environments which will present challenges and dangers. As a result, you must be going into missions with a good attitude to go about these tasks. As a civilian staff member you will be rotated every two years, and you will have time off during each mission. As a result, you will have the advantage of travelling the world and see places you may not otherwise have seen.

UN Photo/Marco Dormino



▶ **BRIAN GLEESON**  
– FORMER HUMAN  
RESOURCES DIRECTOR/  
COORDINATOR

## UN CAREER

Brian initially obtained an opportunity to work in the UN through a chance meeting at an international conference in Salzburg Austria where he made a presentation on career development and a UN staff member asked him to join an international expert panel to develop a career development system for the UN. A subsequent six month secondment to the UN in 1995 as the Chief of the Training Service led to an invitation to join the newly elected Kofi Annan Secretary-General's Management Reform Group in 1997.

In 1998 Brian took on a role within the WHO in Geneva as a member of the Director-General's Transition Team and Change Management Facilitator.

In 1999, Brian joined the new UNDP Administrator's Transition Team and from 2000-2004 led the change management process that restructured UNDP HQ in New York and the re-profiling of 135 Country Offices, resulting in significant budget reductions and an enhanced upstream staff capability. From 2004-2006, Brian was the Director Office of Human Resources for the UNDP. Brian then worked as the Senior Advisor of the SURGE Project Bureau Crisis Prevention and Recovery for the UNDP in New York to implement the UNDP's immediate response strategy to ensure more timely capacity support to natural disaster and crisis situations. Brian went on to become the Resident Coordinator in Libya from 2008-2009, and has worked as the Senior Advisor to the Executive Director for UN Women and was a member of the Transition Team that established UN Women.

Brian now works as a UN consultant, having completed a number of consultancy projects for UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF.



UN Photo/Martine Perret

UN Photo/John Isaac



## BRIAN'S UN CAREER TIPS

When applying for a job in the UN or its agencies: **manage your expectations.** The UN is a very competitive environment and you will need a grounding about the reality of its hiring system. You should therefore **target where you apply** – do not target the UN generally, instead choose the agency or department in which your academic qualifications and work experience are most suited. Keep in mind that hundreds of thousands of UN jobs are short-term and consulting roles (these roles include entry-level jobs).

Ensure you **have a career plan** which assesses where are you now and where you want to be (i.e. is there a particular organisation or field, overseas or in Australia, where you aspire to work?). Map out this career plan and identify the gaps you need to fill to go from where you are now to where you aspire to be – do you need to learn a language, study a master's degree, or expand your experience? Address these gaps. Whilst you should be flexible with these goals, ensure you have set goals with achievable timeframes.

Do not underestimate the **importance of the basics** in applying for UN jobs. Ensure you enhance your CV with examples of work experience you have had in fields linked to the position and organisation you are applying for. This could include working for a professor at your university in a relevant field like international relations, international law or health economics. Aim to **have global experiences** in a range of different international contexts, including attending international conferences, volunteering and interning overseas, working in indigenous communities in Australia or working for an NGO. In terms of the interview, ensure you use specific examples from previous roles. Take a proactive approach and attend the interview with **five selling points to market yourself** and ensure you articulate those across points no matter what questions they may ask.

**Fluency in languages** (especially the UN languages of Arabic, Russian, French, Chinese, Spanish and English) is especially helpful where applying for UN and UN agency jobs. Languages are an important asset in opening further doors once working at the UN or its agencies too.

You will need the **appropriate academic qualifications** to enable you to get in the door. Unless you are applying for a junior job a master's degree in a relevant field such as international relations, international law, development, or economics is necessary. Try to specialise yourself for the department or agency you want to work for and go from there.

It is also important to establish a broad **network** of people working with the UN and its agencies. Use this network to facilitate opportunities by asking those people who you should contact and what you should know about the agency. Mentors are also great to have to bounce ideas off, run your CV past, and help prepare for interviews.

Once within the UN, **continuous development is crucial.** Make sure you are continuously assessing the gaps in your career plan and address them accordingly. Enrich your experience and knowledge through looking at furthering your education, learning new languages, and ongoing professional development.

Above all, whatever career you go into, in whichever organisation, ensure you adopt an **appropriate balance between life and work**, always prioritising your health, your family and your friends over your job.



## **UNAA National Office**

Suite 206, Griffin Centre  
20 Genge St, Canberra City, ACT 2601  
admin@unaa.org.au | www.unaa.org.au

Lead Author – Sophie Taylor



**United Nations  
Association  
of Australia**