



United Nations Association of Australia ACT Division

UNAA ACT Newsletter Issue #1

Dear Members,

This is the first newsletter of the UNAA ACT Division, which has the objective of keeping members informed and regularly updated on current and future activities, and outline what is more broadly happening in the UN. It is planned that the newsletter will be issued every quarter and we would welcome your feedback on content and coverage of issues.

The UNAA is in the process of developing an UN Alumni Network, which will cater for current and past employees who have worked in or for the UN. The Network will facilitate opportunities for networking, sharing experiences, being career mentors and for resourcing specific development opportunities. It is expected that there will be an invitation sent out on the Network in coming weeks.

At the national level, the UNAA Board has recently revised its constitution and there are a number of measures to nationalise activities currently undertaken at the State/Territory level. Some other issues discussed – conduct of the National Conference around the SDGs in April next year in Melbourne, exploring the set of an UN Centre of Excellence, reflecting on UN Reform (see feature article) and stressing the importance of doing more on the SDGs.

In closing, I would like to encourage members to support our UNAA activities and to promote them and [membership of the UNAA](#) to your networks.

*Brian Gleeson,
President, UNAA ACT*

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We welcome your feedback on the newsletter and any suggestions for future activities. Email act@unaa.org.au

Upcoming Events:

- *Aid, populism, and foreign policy* - address by Marc Purcell, CEO of ACFID
(**Last chance to buy tickets!**)
Monday 13 May (tomorrow night), 2019, 6pm at the ACT Legislative Assembly. [Read more and buy tickets.](#)
- 29 May, 11am, Peacekeepers memorial Anzac Parade (free event)
- 24 October, 2019, UN Day (details TBC)

UN Reform in Action

Following the General Assembly's endorsement of one of the most significant moves to reform the UN System, the [UN Secretary-General](#) said the reform package paves the way for a new era of "national ownership" of development, supported by the whole UN system.

"It sets the foundations to [reposition sustainable development](#) at the heart of the United Nations," said the [UN Secretary-General](#). "In the end, reform is about putting in place the mechanisms to make a real difference in the lives of people."

The reform process will mean significant changes to the setup, leadership, accountability mechanisms and capacities of the whole UN development system; ensuring it meets national needs not only for implementing the SDGs, but also in meeting the climate change commitments made through the 2015 [Paris Agreement](#).

More specifically, the reform gives Resident Coordinators – the most senior UN development officials at the country level – a dedicated, independent role in coordinating the activities of all the various UN entities working locally, which make up UN Country Teams.

Mr. Guterres noted that being a Resident Coordinator is "one of the most challenging jobs" at the UN, and the 129 Resident Coordinators covering 165 countries are working hard "in some cases against all odds."

In an [interview](#) with UN News, UN Deputy Secretary-General [Amina Mohammed](#) said that the changes will allow "a much more independent and impartial leader" at the country level to pull a team together.

"The assets of the United Nations are its people. We will invest in them. We will try to lead them, inspire them, incentivize them, and create the environments to make them go for gold," she said.

The Global Water Security Crisis: the Role of the UN

The United Nation's annual marking of World Water Day is a reminder of the fundamental importance of fresh water to all life on Earth and that its sustainable management is critical to the well-being of human societies.

This year the ACT Division of the UNAA hosted a round table of expert and distinguished panellists to explore Australia's own water management issues; the global priorities for addressing water security threats; and the strategies to address the crises, including through the United Nations system.

The panel moderator for the event was the Hon Penny Wensley AC - former Ambassador for the Environment and Ambassador to the United Nations; currently Chair of the Australian Institute of Marine Science.

Today water issues are critical in many parts of the world, not least Australia where the crisis in the Murray-Darling system tragically highlights the challenges. Our three panellists provided lively and insightful comment on various aspects of the issues.

Dr Jane Doolan, a Commissioner at the Productivity Commission, and currently working on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan five-year assessment, gave an overview of the evolution of Australia's water management policies and the mechanisms for reconciling conflicting interests. The core challenge was more people, potentially less water and greater demand.

Building on this Quentin Grafton, Professor of Economics at the ANU Crawford School and UNESCO Chair in Water Economics and Transboundary Water Governance sketched the international dimensions of global water crises in the Asia Pacific and beyond: over 500 children under the age of five are dying daily due to water related illnesses. He argued that the crisis had reached a tipping point and demanded urgent and fundamental changes in the ways climate change and attendant water problems are being addressed.

Our third panellist, Professor Nick Schofield, Chief Executive of Australian Water Partnership, explained how Australian know-how was being exported to help solve global water issues. Together with international partners including the UN FAO, the AWP was collaborating with countries of the Indo-Pacific in areas such as modern irrigation techniques; urban water management; water quality and control and catchment management.

The program was rounded off with a Q and A session, reflecting deep concerns that global environmental challenges continue to outstrip efforts to manage them.

Do you know if anyone who may want to join UNAA? Please share the following link to enable them to join – https://unaa-act.tidyhq.com/public/membership_levels