



AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Association of Australia statement on Australia's relationship with the United Nations (UN).

The United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) believes that Australia benefits from actively participating in the UN and that the UN can benefit from effective Australian leadership. Since the UN's inception 75 years ago, the UN has played a special role in bringing the entire world together across all world issues.ⁱ In particular, the UN contributed to a relatively stable international order which allowed for Australia's strong growth.

We believe there are multiple advantages to be gained from increased collaboration between Australia, the UN and Member States including working towards strengthening the UN and its ability to resolve the challenges facing the world. We urge governments to prioritise multilateral approaches to global challenges and commit to actions to:

- engage Australian young people with more UN initiatives and streamline programs for Australians to enter the UN family
- practically implement gender obligations and the Women, Peace and Security agenda
- undertake a greater leadership role on the international stage, supporting multilateral institutions and processes, facilitating collaborations, and sharing science in the pursuit of a safer, fairer, and more sustainable world
- better communicate the benefits Australia stands to gain from increasing UN engagement.

The UNAA contributes to this agenda by convening events, commissioning research, building relationships and participating in national partnerships that engage, inform and inspire Australians about the purpose and programs of the United Nations.

The UNAA notes that:

Australia has historically benefited from its relationship with the UN in terms of its foreign policy, interests, and overall environment.

- The UN was an enabler of Australia's foreign policy, allowing prominent figures such as 'Doc' Evatt, a platform to advocate for small power interests, engage in thought leadership and support a rules-based order.ⁱⁱ
- The UN served Australia's interests. The UN's formation of a reasonably stable world order following World War II allowed Australia to develop without many significant challenges.ⁱⁱⁱ
- It also allowed Australia to rapidly respond to events such as the MH17 flight which killed 38 Australians, through leading efforts on the Security Council.^{iv}

- The UN helped to maintain the rules-based order, which benefits Australia because Australia’s interests are furthered through ‘international norms and rules.’^v

Australia has engaged with the UN on matters of peacekeeping, gender, climate, and the SDGs to various effects.

Australia has engaged more with the UN where Australia’s

1. international interests were prioritized more than bilateral alliances
2. national interests were defined broadly
3. domestic politics supported or were not hostile to furthered engagement with the UN
4. Federal Government adopted a more internationalist policy outlook.^{vi}

Former Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans stated:

“The UN provides fabulous value for what the world spends on it, and that if it ever ceased to exist, we would have to reinvent it.”

UN’s second Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjold, stated:

“The UN was created not to bring us to heaven, but to save us from hell.”

The UNAA urges all Australian political parties to:

A. *Engage Australian young people with more UN initiatives and streamline programs for Australians to enter the UN family*

- Increase opportunities for Australian young people to enter UN initiatives, including creating a UN presence in the Pacific region, and engage and educate more Australian young people in regional and rural areas on the UN’s work.
- Integrate under-represented Australian young people into UN and UN-affiliated stakeholder meetings.
- Streamline and fund pathways and internships for young Australians to enter the UN family, such as providing more low-cost programs with New York and Geneva.
- Advocate for more appropriately qualified Australians to undertake leadership roles at the UN and other international organisations.

B. *Practically implement gender obligations*

- Legislatively implement the remaining six recommendations from Respect@work report of the National Inquiry into Sexual Harrassment in Australian Workplaces conducted by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins.
- Place women at the forefront of building and implementing the new action plan. This includes groups and not-for-profits such as ‘Our Watch’ and Indigenous

groups, using an intersectional approach. It is critical to include women from diverse backgrounds.

C. *Implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda*

- Focus on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda during the 2022 Shangri-La Dialogue and at UN forums.
- Systematically integrate gendered views into high-ranking foreign policy.
- Provide more political and monetary support to local and international women's groups.
- Better link the Women, Peace and Security agenda to Australia's domestic challenges, such as its addressing of Indigenous affairs.
- Facilitate people from regional Australia to have input into the new National Action Plan and its solutions.

D. *Undertake a greater leadership role on the international stage, supporting multilateral institutions and processes, facilitating collaborations, and sharing science in the pursuit of a safer, fairer, and more sustainable world*

- Undertake a strong regional leadership role within the UN framework, through increased transparency and openness regarding policy that could affect regional stability such as the trilateral partnership. It is critical for Australia to build trust with its regional neighbors.

E. *Better communicate the benefits Australia stands to gain from increasing UN engagement*

- Articulate and promote to the wider Australian public the benefits Australia stands to gain from greater engagement with the UN.

Context

This policy statement is based on the research paper prepared by Senuri Perera on the '*UN's importance to Australia and the World in an era of COVID-19.*' This research paper was produced under the guidance and input of the UNAA in 2020 through the Australian National Internships Program.

i UNAA Professional 1, "The UN's Importance to Australia and the World in the Context of COVID-19 and Beyond," interview by author, Canberra, October 16, 2020; Research Paper 2.

ii "UN," Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/international-organisations/un/Pages/united-nations-un;> Research Paper 16-7.

iii Peter Nadin, "The Shape of Australia's Future Engagement with the United Nation," *Lowy Institute*, March 31, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/shape-australia-s-future-engagement-united-nations#:~:text=Australia%20should%20reinforce%20its%20engagement%20with%20the%20United%20Natio>

[ns%20by%3A&text=making%20a%20stronger%20contribution%20to,leadership%20positions%20in%20the%20organisation; Research Paper 17.](#)

iv Ibid.

v Ben Scott, “The Black, White and Grey Defining the “Rules-Based Order,” *The Interpreter*, April 29, 2020, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/black-white-and-grey-defining-rules-based-order>; Research Paper 19.

vi Ibid.



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