The UN's Importance to Australia and the World in an Era of COVID-19 and Beyond

A Research Report for the United Nations Association of Australia

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Executive Summary

The United Nations (UN) is a multi-faceted and multi-layered global inter-governmental organisation that is guided by the fundamental aims and tenets of the UN's founding Charter and comprises of 193 Member States.[1] Formed 75 years ago to create a cohesive structure for global governance and prevent the atrocities of World War II from reoccurring, the UN has overcome many challenges.[2] This includes leading and supporting Member States to achieve positive changes in the world, such as eliminating smallpox on an international scale.[3] However, the global political context has become more complex with rising "East-West tensions", the emergence of non-state actors, the detrimental impacts of climate change, and increasingly assertive regional actors.[4] These factors have affected the UN's ability to respond to modern challenges, and have contributed to it appearing detached, alienated, and "perhaps a bit deaf" to the world's needs.[5] An overwhelming amount of international relations scholarship focuses on the aforementioned shortcomings of the UN, rather than the foundation of why the UN remains important for maintaining peace and security, protecting human rights, and promoting sustainable development. This report, in contrast, will contribute to the narrative of why the UN still matters.

This report from the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) aims to examine the UN's importance in the context of the coronavirus pandemic and beyond. This research was conducted in 2020 with some updates in the course of 2021. One of the report's specific aims is to demonstrate the UN's importance to *Member States* through analysing the UN's relationship with *Australia*. By using a country-specific case study this report will illustrate the UN's value to Member States. Another specific aim of this report is to clarify the UN's role and mandate, which are not widely understood and have in part contributed to negative attitudes and misperceptions about the UN. In addition, there is a lack of material available which detail the UN's successes and contributions, including a lack of easily accessible or promotional material from the UN itself. Therefore, this report will aim to showcase the UN's contributions to States, and subsequently provide a practical take on the UN, its roles, and its place in the world.

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[1] "About the UN," United Nations, accessed September 29, 2020, https://www.un.org/en/about-un/.
[2] John Langmore, "The Attraction of the United Nations," *Social Alternatives* 34, no. 1 (2015): 45.
[3] Ibid.
[4] David M. Malone and Adam Day, "The UN at 75: How Today's Challenges Will Shape the Next 25 Years," *Global Governance* 26, no. 2 (2020): 236.
[5] Langmore, "The Attraction," 49.

This report will argue that despite the UN's shortcomings, it is an invaluable, albeit imperfect, asset to States and the world more broadly. It is difficult to evaluate the UN's importance to States - including its successes and failures - holistically. A more helpful way to approach this question may be through breaking down which areas it has achieved good results, and which areas there is room for improvement, to realise the value it provides to the world and Member States. The UN's importance can be realised through multiple means including, as one UNAA professional observed, the "special role" it plays in "bringing the entire world together across all world issues" in a way that no other organisation can do.[6] Finally, its importance can be realised through its role in helping and supporting Member States to achieve their international and domestic interests, especially during periods of international crisis, such as the current coronavirus global pandemic.

The following summarises each section of the report, and their specific contributions.

Section I outlines the UN's history, purpose, and varying roles in the world. This section provides the positives and negatives of each UN organ to illustrate the value more accurately in the UN's overall contributions to the world. It seeks to clarify current misconceptions about the UN and establish why the UN is important to the multilateral system and to Member States, especially during crises such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Section II concentrates on demonstrating the UN's importance to Australia as a Member State. It does so with reference to the different ways the UN has benefited Australia's foreign policy ambitions, and growth by maintaining a stable international order. This section aims to establish the basis for why there should be heightened UN-Australian engagement.

Section III summarises Australia's past engagement with the UN and identifies the conditions under which the UN-Australian relationship has thrived and waned. First, it examines UN-Australian engagement with a focus on climate change, gender, peacekeeping, and the Sustainable Development Goals. It showcases Australia's progress in some areas, and shortcomings in others. The second part of Section III identifies conditions under which the UN-Australian relationship has improved, and applies these to the current context. This assists the paper in predicting whether it is viable to develop the UN-Australian relationship in the future.

Section IV provides short-term and long-term recommendations to help bolster the UN-Australian relationship and reassert Australia's importance on

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[6] 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.

the international stage. These recommendations are shaped around the findings in the previous sections and are to serve as a guideline for policy makers and government officials.

To summarise, this report will demonstrate that the UN has never been more important to States and the world in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.[7]

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I The United Nations

The UN, as an inter-governmental organisation, is a sum of its parts, and subsequently its work is contingent on its 193 Member States and its organs. Before this report can answer why the UN is important to Australia and the world, it must clarify what the UN is to begin with. As the UN is a sum of its parts it is difficult to answer the research question conclusively. However, it can be helpful to examine the good and bad work of the UN and its sub-bodies, to bring this report closer to answering what value the UN has for the world.

A *History*

The UN was formed in an era where 19th century colonial empires were being disassembled, and the international community began rejecting the notion that violence was an acceptable means of resolving inter-State conflicts, especially after the atrocities of World War II.[8] In 1945, the UN Charter established a set of fundamental rules to govern the behaviour of States creating the United Nations, a formal organization with its own independent powers.[9] The components of the Charter operated to limit State sovereignty somewhat, and created new and useful ways for States to conduct "international politics."[10] This has led some to argue that the Charter *empowers* as well as *constrains* States.[11] Following the Charter's creation, the UN was divided into six main organs with individual specialisations: the Security Council (UNSC), the General Assembly (UNGA), the UN Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the Trusteeship Council. Each organ differs in the power they can assert over Member States which sometimes affects the efficacy of their work. These organs are not just important for the functioning of the UN, but also the functioning of the international order. Ultimately, in the 75th year of the UN, many argue the UN and its components are more important today than ever.

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[8] Gregory V. Raymond, "Advocating the Rules-Based Order in an Era of Multipolarity," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 3 (2019): 220.
[9] Ian Hurd, "The United Nations I: Law and Administration," in *International Organizations: Politics, Law, Practice*, ed. Ian Hurd (Illinois: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 43.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

B *The Organs of the United Nations*

1 *The Security Council*

The UNSC is the main UN organ tasked with maintaining "international peace and security" and managing crises.[12] In the pursuit of its mandate, the Council is empowered to take "decisive and meaningful action" to maintain peace, through placing binding obligations on the UN's Member States.[13] The Council's five *permanent* ('P5') members – France, China, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – and ten *impermanent* members meet often to tackle issues which threaten international security, including everything from natural disasters to terrorism.[14] Some of the Council's day-to-day work includes reviewing UN peacekeeping missions, consulting on country-specific situations, and overseeing the implementation of the UN's sanctions regime through "its sanctions committees."[15] An example of one of the Security Council's successes was its authorisation of a UN peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire, through the UNSC-created body, the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).[16] By deploying over 6000 peacekeepers in 2004, and another 11,792 in 2011, UNOCI was able to disarm and re-integrate 70,000 combatants back into society, conduct 2 presidential and legislative elections - where the opposition took part "for the first time in the 2016 elections" - and bring back over 250,000 refugees.[17] More importantly, the restoration of peace and security to Côte d'Ivoire has enabled it to be one of the "fastest growing economies" in Africa at a rate of 9%, demonstrating that the UNSC's work extends not only to protecting people from violence but also helping countries find their footing.[18] Thus, the UNSC plays an important role in supporting States to achieve peace and stability, ultimately assisting with their long-term development.

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[12] "The UN Security Council," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed 14 October 2020, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/un-security-council.

[13] Jeremy Farrall (in press), "The Populist Challenge and the Future of the United Nations Security Council," *Maryland Journal of International Law* 35 (2020).

[14] Somini Sengupta, "What is the United Nations? Its History, Its Goals and Its Relevance," *New York Times*, September 24, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/24/world/americas/what-is-the-united-nations.html; Council on Foreign Relations, "The UN Security Council."

[15] "The Role of the United Nations Security Council," Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, accessed October 14, 2020, https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/international-organisations/un/unsc-2013-2014/Pages/the-role-of-the-united-nations-security-council.

[16] "United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed October 1, 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/unoci/mandate.shtml.

[17] "Our Success," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed October 1, 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-successes.

[18] Ibid.

The UNSC is criticised by some for its structural challenges in the form of the veto power and permanent membership of only five Member States. The veto power allows the P5 to prevent the implementation of decisive responses to international issues when their interests are not met, coined by some as a system where "might makes right."[19] Sengupta reports that the UNSC is unable to reach a resolution to resolve or alleviate the Syrian conflict because Russia's support for the Assad regime, conflicts with the US, Britain and France's support for opposing rebel groups.[20] More recently, the US blocked a resolution advocating for a "global ceasefire during the COVID-19 pandemic" because it endorsed the World Health Organization (WHO).[21] This demonstrates, as observed by UN P1, how decision making structures within the UNSC are problematic because they do not distribute power and influence "equitably", thus allowing P5 members to stop decisive responses to issues. Looking forward, the UNSC would benefit from involving more developing and less developed nations, nuclear and non-nuclear powers, and expanding permanent membership to allow for the effective use of the veto, as observed by UNAA AM1 and UNAA P1. Overall, while the Council has its structural shortcomings, its role in supporting States to achieve both short-term and long-term peace and security is still important to States and the world.

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[19] Farrall, "The Populist Challenge."

[20] Sengupta, "What is the United Nations?"

[21] Julian Borger, "US Blocks Vote on UN's Bid for Global Ceasefire over Reference to WHO," *The Guardian*, May 9, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/08/un-ceasefire-resolution-us-blocks-who.

2 *The General Assembly*

UNGA is the only international body representative of all Member States, the primary forum for global politics, and advances norms and rules that guide State behaviour. UNGA is the main "policymaking" and "representative" body of the UN and affirms the principle of "sovereign equality" by conferring every Member State a single vote regardless of size, strength, military prowess, or other material factors.[22] Moreover, UNGA acts as a low cost forum for States to meet, discuss and develop approaches for global and regional issues requiring a coordinated response. One example of this was UNGA's collaboration with UNICEF to produce the "first-ever UN Youth Strategy", designed to ensure that young people have opportunities and pathways that enable them to choose "their own futures."[23] This initiative also sparked UNICEF's "Generation Unlimited" - a "multi-stakeholder" campaign to ensure youth are "in school, training, or employment by 2030" - highlighting how UNGA's work can inspire and serve as an example for other UN agencies and organisations.[24] Therefore, UNGA is important because it equitably provides a voice for all Member States and facilitates the development of issues pertinent to the international community.

Some scholars suggest that UNGA's ability to fulfill its mandate is affected by its inability to pass legally binding resolutions. One example of this, was UNGA's resolution concerning the Chagos dispute, wherein 116 States backed a General Assembly motion denouncing Britain's occupation of the Chagos Islands.[25] Despite the overwhelming support and subsequent diplomatic isolation of the UK, British diplomats stated that the resolution "would have little practical impact" as evidenced by Britain's continued occupation of the islands.[26] This demonstrates that because UNGA's decisions have no coercive power it cannot force States to do things against their will, and only serve as recommendations for States to follow. However, even though UNGA does not possess the decision making clout the UNSC does, it can still indirectly influence State behaviour through contributing to the development of "globally shared norms and rules" and international law.[27]

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[22] "Main Organs," United Nations, accessed October 1, 2020, https://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/main-organs/index.html; M.J Peterson, and Lars K.E. Peterson, *The UN General Assembly* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 1.

[23] Chandler Green, "9 Stories of Progress from the UN year General Assembly," *United Nations Foundation*, October 5, 2018, https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/9-stories-of-progress-from-the-un-general-assembly/.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Owen Bowcott and Julian Borger, "UK Suffers Crushing Defeat in UN Vote on Chagos Islands," *The Guardian,* May 23, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/22/uk-suffers-crushing-defeat-un-vote-chagos-islands.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Peterson and Peterson, *The UN General Assembly,* 5.

For example, statements of "goals and methods" on how to achieve certain ideas in its resolutions, are integrated into international treaties or "adopted into State practice" enough to crystallise it as customary international law (CIL).[28] Treaty obligations and CIL will then encourage States to behave in a certain way on a particular issue. Looking forward UNGA would benefit from better communicating its role and work to the world and providing more platforms where people can contribute to UN initiatives. Ultimately, the non-binding nature of UNGA resolutions do not detract from its importance to States and the world in maintaining the international order through regulating State behaviour via norms and rules and providing an equitable voice for all.

3 *The Secretariat*

The Secretariat comprises the Secretary General – currently former Portuguese Prime Minister, António Gueterres – and thousands of other international UN staff that enable the day-to-day function of the UN and subsequently the maintenance of the international order.

In nearly every IO, Member States make the more important rulings, either through an "intergovernmental board, committee or council."[29] However, the Secretariat can indirectly shape State decisions via information asymmetry dynamics, when it is delegated the task of collecting and examining information, including assessing the risks and benefits of alternate action.[30] Hylke stipulates that the Secretariat in carrying out this function can present or exclude information in line with their interests, which may help shape "policy outcomes."[31] This results in the Secretariat being able to have some of their interests reflected in State decisions. However, wealthier States can invest into shadow bureaucracies - a situation where States have the administrative capacity to process information independently of the Secretariat - to offset the Secretariat's informational advantage.[32] Thus, the UN's capacity to influence State decisions as an independent entity is somewhat constrained. Looking forward the Secretariat would benefit from increasing the transparency of its information gathering and revealing the most useful information to resolving present issues. Therefore, while the decision-making power of the Secretariat is secondary to that of States, it still has an important role in shaping UN decisions.

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Hylke Dijkstra, "Shadow Bureaucracies and the Unilateral Control of International Secretariats: Insights from UN Peacekeeping," *Review of International Organizations* 10, no.1 (2015): 23-4.
[30] Ibid 26-7.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

4 *The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)*

ECOSOC is the primary UN organ that organises "policy review…dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues" and the enactment of internationally approved development goals.[33] Through its annual review of global "economic and social conditions", ECOSOC can draw the attention of governments and people to the most pressing threats in that area.[34] For example, in situations such as a world depression or the current global pandemic, ECOSOC is the first body to identify the threat and alert other UN bodies and governments to take precautions.[35] In the case of COVID-19 ECOSOC met to discuss "effective policy solutions for" the "COVID-19 Response", during which it drafted a series of "key messages and recommendations."[36] This included recommendations emphasising how States and other actors should focus more on vulnerable groups in society as COVID-19 has exacerbated "pre-existing inequalities."[37] This demonstrates ECOSOC's important role in conveying and explaining critical information on existent and oncoming economic and social conditions, to support States to make timely and strategic decisions. Looking forward ECOSOC and the different agencies of the UN could benefit from communicating vital information better to people on the ground, including through social media. Ultimately, ECOSOC is important to States and the world because it provides vital information to support Member States address social and economic problems and subsequently helps to maintain the international order.

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[33] James Frederick Green, "ECOSOC: Its Role and Its Achievements," *World Affairs* 115, no. 3 (1952): 74.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] "Presidential Statement on the Occasion of the ECOSOC Briefing on Joining Forces: Effective Policy Solutions for COVID-19 Response," United Nations Economic and Social Council, accessed October 2, 2020, https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2020doc/ECOSOC_Presidential_Statement-COVID1912May2020.pdf.
[37] Ibid.

5 *The International Court of Justice (ICJ)*

The ICJ is the UN organ tasked with applying international law, addressing judicial matters, resolving legal disputes presented to it, and providing advisory opinions on issues provided by "authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies."[38] Some reports suggest that the ICJ's work becomes more effective when States proactively engage with issues of international concern. According to Ibrahim, Gambia in launching action against Myanmar for the Rohingya Genocide, created hope for a legal redressal of the genocide and the proceedings themselves will likely serve to discourage similar "crimes against humanity in the future."[39] This is an example of the ICJ being able to interpret and apply existing international law to resolve pressing issues, due to Gambia's initiation of proceedings. Looking forward the ICJ will benefit from more States initiating the judicial resolution of international issues. Therefore, the ICJ is important to States and the world because it creates, preserves, and interprets international law and is rendered more helpful when States have the political will to engage with international issues.

6 *The Trusteeship Council*

The Trusteeship Council was formed to supervise the transition of eleven territories to self-governing and independent territories, which was achieved by 1994.[40] After 1994, the Council changed its "rules of procedure" from meeting annually to meeting when the situation called for it – through the Council's decision, the President's decision, or because a Member State, the General Assembly or the Security Council has requested it.[41] This highlights that the Trusteeship Council has little practical function or relevance in the modern world and subsequently does not contribute to a large part of UN activities. Looking forward, the Council will likely only function when the need arises. Thus, the Council possesses little importance to States and the world at present given the nature of its role.

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[38] "Main Organs," United Nations, accessed September 30, 2020, https://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/main-organs/index.html.

[39] Azeem Ibrahim, "Other Nations Must Join ICJ Action on Behalf of Rohingya," *Arab News*, September 23, 2020, https://www.arabnews.com/node/1739011.

[40] "Main Organs."

[41] Ibid.

7 Collective Impacts of the UN Organs and their Global Significance

Overall, the examination of the roles, capacities, and work of different UN organs has shown that the UN and its components, still play a vital role in supporting the development and interests of States and maintaining the international order. One main factor to be cognisant of when considering the UN's work is that the UN with all its powers and capabilities cannot force States to do things they do not want to do. Despite this, the UN has found ways to persevere and do good work for the world, from supporting Member States in multilateral cooperation to solving complex regional and global

problems. This includes establishing goals and targets for the future to guide global and national development and bring about a more sustainable world, which will be addressed in the next section.

C The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Some believe that the SDGs are the UN's greatest achievement to date in its synthesis of the ideas of 193 countries into 17 multi-factorial goals, and its contributions to decreased poverty and inequality, and increased prosperity.[42]

Before the creation of the SDGs, UN Member States agreed upon eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), targeted at alleviating poverty and

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[42] UNAA Professional 1, interview; Former Diplomat 1, "The UN's Importance to Australia and the World in the Context of COVID-19 and Beyond," interview by author, Canberra, October 25, 2020.

Fig. 1: Image depicts 17 sustainable development goals. Image downloaded from https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and -disability.html in October 2020.

comprising the world's primary 'set of development goals.'[43] The adoption of the MDGs reflected unprecedented global solidarity, influencing international and national policy, and helping to shape the 'international development agenda.'[44] More importantly, the MDGs were attributed to helping decrease the proportion of people in poverty, child mortality, gradually increasing 'immunisation rates', and other positive factors.[45] Despite these positive trends, the SDGs were launched to 'build upon the MDGs' post-2015.[46] According to the OECD, the SDGs were not a sequel to the MDGs but an attempt to 'reboot' them underpinned by the 'global agenda for development.'[47] They are distinct from the MDGs, in that, the extensive, 'comprehensive' and participatory drafting process recognising certain trade-offs, produced more targets and details.[48] However, some criticise the influence of developed and industrial nations on the SDGs at the expense of the voices of developing nations, and the variance of item targets.[49] Therefore, the SDGs were not produced in a vacuum, and were intended to be a multifaceted set of goals that could provide a better targeted framework for global development and build upon the work of the MDGs.

The SDGs provide States with an "evidence-based framework" of goals and indicators to assist inclusive "national planning and reporting" till 2030.[50] The intentions underlying the creation of the SDGs were that they could help push the world onto a "sustainable trajectory", and be "urgent...change-producing global goals" in light of the pressing issues humanity faces, including man-made climate change and the monumental losses in biodiversity due to unsustainable practices like logging.[51] States, by accepting the SDGs, have agreed to hold regular examinations of progress on a "national, regional and global" scale.[52] Further, the SDGs, as observed by UNAA P1, create an image of what a better future looks like, making it easier for States and organisations to visualise and pursue these goals. The result of this is that while the SDGs guide States towards sustainability, the outcome relies on

[43] Samir Amin, "The Millennium Development Goals: A Critique from the South," *Monthly Review* 57, no. 10 (2006): 1; Erna Solberg, "From MDGs to SDGs: The Political Value of Common Global Goals," *Harvard International Review* 37, no. 1 (2015): 58.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Maya Fehling, Brett D. Nelson and Sridhar Venkatapuram, "Limitations of the Millennium Development Goals: A Literature Review," Global Public Health 8, no. 10 (2013): 1109.
[46] "The 17 Goals," United Nations, accessed September 10, 2021, https://sdgs.un.org/goals.
[47] Jan Vandemoortele, "Are the SDGs a Major Reboot or a Sequel to the MDGs?" OECD, accessed September 10, 2021, https://www.oecd.org/fr/economie/development-posts-sdg-reboot-or-sequel-mdg.htm.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Cameron Allen et al., "Assessing National Progress and Priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Experience from Australia," *Sustainability Science* 15, no. 2 (2020): 521.
[51] Jeffrey D. Sachs, "From Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals," *The Lancet* 379, no. 9832 (2012): 2206-7.
[52] Allen et al., "Assessing National Progress," 521.

States putting work into meeting these goals. For example, more work needs to be done in areas such as climate change to protect the planet and promote a sustainable future. Therefore, the SDGs in providing a framework for States to pursue development and sustainability, reinforce the UN's role as an institution dedicated to *supporting* Member State growth.

D *The UN and COVID-19*

The UN is the sole organisation that can address a virtually unlimited range of policy areas.[53] This has allowed it to adopt a multifactorial response to the pandemic. In particular, the Secretary-General's "policy initiatives" framework from March 23rd to June 19th addressed multiple policy areas including an "Appeal against Hate and Xenophobia", "COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health", and "The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition."[54] On the ground, the UN has helped front-line workers by distributing "medical supplies" and staff, "hand-washing stations", and aiding "local contact-tracing efforts."[55] Its response also manifested in the launch of 'Verified', an initiative encouraging people to distribute "UN-verified, science based content" to their communities to combat misinformation by increasing the amount and span of "trusted, accurate information."[56] The UN has, therefore, taken an active role in combating the virus and aiding people and States to respond to it, in multiple different areas. However, it has also faced some limitations.

The UN response to COVID-19 has been affected by rising nationalism and isolationism that has created a lack of global leadership. Danchin et al., posit that COVID-19 has occurred in a period where contemporary internationalist aspirations of "multilateral cooperation and global governance" are under attack.[57] That is, some States now pander more to patriotism and use IOs as scapegoats for domestic issues.[58] President Trump's statement at the 2019 General Assembly that "the future does not belong to globalists" but "to *patriots*" and the US's subsequent withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and Paris Agreement under Donald Trump, evidences this.[59] However, the US's current intention to return to the HRC under the new Biden administration suggests America may be more open to engaging with

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[53] UNAA Professional 1, interview; UN Professional 1, "The UN's Importance to Australia and the World in the Context of COVID-19 and Beyond," interview by author, Canberra, October 23, 2020.
[54] United Nations, *United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19*, June 2020, 3, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_comprehensive_response_to_covid-19_june_2020.pdf.
[55] Ibid 10.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Danchin et al., "The Pandemic Paradox," 3.
[58] Ibid 5.
[59] Ibid.

multilateral organisations now than before.[60] Consequently, while COVID-19 has exposed the logic and need for a functioning "international legal order", it has happened in a time where IOs are increasingly opposed.[61] Danchin et al., argue this has affected the UN's comprehensive response because IOs, States, and leaders have withdrawn from their responsibility to address the pandemic efficiently and "collectively", creating a leadership vacuum.[62] The absence of an entity to lead the world through the pandemic has made the global response somewhat uncoordinated. The UN has done its best to respond to the pandemic within modern constraints, with noticeable positive impacts around the world. Overall, the UN has never been more important to States and the world in its support of Member State development, and maintenance of the rules-based order.

II Why Should Australia Care about the UN?

Australia as one of the founding members of the UN enjoys a long history with the UN.[63] Before this report can establish why the UN is important to Australia in the context of COVID-19, it needs to examine why the UN has been important to Australia in the past. The following are the three main reasons why the UN has been important to Australia: the UN is an enabler of

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[60] Ted Piccone, "UN Human Rights Council: As the US Returns, it Will Have to Deal with China and its Friends," *Brookings*, February 25, 2021,
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/02/25/un-human-rights-council-as-the-us-returns-it-will-have-to-deal-with-china-and-its-friends/.
[61] Ibid 3.
[62] Ibid 5.
[63] "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.

Australia's foreign policy, the UN serves Australia's interests, and the UN maintains the rules-based order.

A *The UN is an Enabler of Australia's Foreign Policy*

Fig. 2: UN photo depicting Dr Evatt at the San Francisco conference in 1945. Image downloaded from https://www.moadoph.gov.au/blog/dr-evatt-goes-to-san-francisco/ in October 2020.

The UN can be perceived as important to Australia because it has acted as an enabler of Australian foreign policy. A foundational example of how the UN has furthered Australia's foreign policy interests is through "Doc" Evatt's advocacy for small power interests, thought leadership, and support for the rules-based order, as Australia's Minister for External Affairs.[64] Through this Australia was elected onto the first Security Council session and became the General Assembly's third president.[65] Furthermore, the UN is an enabler, in that, it has provided a platform for Australia to undertake a more proactive facilitator role on the international stage. For example, the UN allowed for Gareth Evans' leadership over the mediation of the Cambodian-Vietnamese War resulting in the signing of the 1991 Peace Agreement.[66] Other examples

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[64] Cotton and Lee, *Australia and the United Nations*.
[65] Ibid.
[66] 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

include John Howard's encouragement of leaders to send an "Australian-led" international peacekeeping mission to East Timor, and more recently, diplomats from Australia, Luxembourg, and Jordan developing a strategy to enable "humanitarian access corridors in Syria."[67] This showcases how the UN has enabled the furtherment of Australia's foreign policy goals over the last 75 years, and as such, is of importance to Australia.

B *The UN Serves Australia's Interests*

The UN may also be important to Australia because it can serve Australia's interests. Nadin argues that the UN created a relatively stable post-World War II order that provided Australia the security to develop without any major hurdles.[68] Some ways in which the UN did this was through its elimination of infectious diseases, and efforts to eradicate nuclear weapons.[69] FD1 posits that some of the UN's biggest contributions were preventing a third world war, and helping Australia rapidly respond to the MH17 flight that killed 38 Australian residents. Specifically, the Security Council under Australia's leadership passed resolution 2166 calling on Member States to assist in "civil and criminal investigations", and gave Australia access to the site, structured subsequent investigations, and enabled Australia to send its diplomats to remember the dead.[70] The UN has also enabled Australia to become the first State to successfully extend its continental shelf area, and "rights to the sea floor" which has benefited it economically.[71] This demonstrates how the UN has provided platforms and pathways for Australia to more easily achieve its interests and is therefore important to the fulfilment of Australia's international and domestic interests.

The maintenance of good relations with the UN may also be important to Australia because strained UN-Australian relations could negatively impact Australia's international image. Burchill posits that the Whitlam Government's representation to Jakarta that Australia favoured East Timorese integration into Indonesia, de jure recognition of Indonesia's "illegal annexation" of East Timor, and failure to criticise acts of aggression and "crimes against humanity" - although 50,000 East Timorese died helping Australia fight the Japanese in World War II - created tensions with the UN and some parts of

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=Australia%20should%20reinforce%20its%20engagement%20with%20the%20United%20Nations%20by%3A&text=making%20a%20stronger%20contribution%20to,leadership%20positions%20in%20the%20organisation.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] "UN Ruling Makes Australia an Even Bigger Country," Nature, accessed October 7, 2020, https://www.nature.com/news/2008/080423/full/452925e.html.

the international community, harming Australia's international image.[72] Similarly, McDonald argues that the Abbott Government's "Operation Sovereign Borders" (OSB), in potentially breaching the Refugee Convention, created tensions with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and diminished its international reputation as a State dedicated to preserving "human rights and international law."[73] One weakness of this evidence is that it overlooks how maintaining good relations with the UN could risk Australia's domestic interests. In Whitlam's case, Australia still garnered economic benefits by gaining exclusive joint access to oil and gas supplies in the Timor Sea via the Timor Gap Treaty.[74] While other interests can be served notwithstanding reputational costs, Australia, observes S1, still cares about its international image both in terms of its diplomatic influence and soft power. Therefore, the UN is important to Australia in the sense that maintaining good relations with the UN has positive implications for Australia's international reputation.

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[72] Scott Burchill, "East Timor, Australia, and Indonesia," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 32, no. 1 (2000): 59.
[73] Matt McDonald, "Australian Foreign Policy under the Abbott Government: Foreign Policy as Domestic Politics?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69, no. 6 (2015): 660.
[74] Burchill, "East Timor, Australia, and Indonesia," 59.

C *The UN Helps to Maintain the Rules-Based Order*

The UN can also be important to Australia as it benefits Australian interests through maintaining the rules-based order. The rules-based order is a commitment shared by all States, to behave in a way that aligns with "agreed rules which evolve over time."[75] The pandemic has re-emphasised the need to maintain the rules-based order. In particular, Dobell argues that there are concerns about illiberal States attempting to push misinformation to weaken "liberal democracy" and thereby strengthen their own "authoritarian models."[76] This is of concern to Australia because, according to Burchill, Australia's interests are furthered by "international norms and rules", including rules protecting Australia's security, sovereign rights, those deterring the "use of force", and even broader rules which shape the type of international order Australia desires.[77] Article 1 of the UN Charter does this by preserving "international peace and security", adhering to "justice and international law", producing friendly inter-State relations and global cooperation to solve transnational issues.[78] Moreover, Mehinick argues that being guided by the Charter's principles over the "increasingly weak set of rules" that comprise the "US-led global order", will serve Australia's interests better.[79] Thus, the UN can be important to Australia because it benefits Australian interests by maintaining an international rules-based order in line with the principles of the UN Charter. Overall, the UN has been important to Australia in its furtherance of Australian foreign policy, allowing Australia to achieve its interests and promoting a stable rules-based order.

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[75] Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016), 15.

[76] Graeme Dobell, "The Liberal Party's Rocky Relationship with Multilateralism," *The ASPI Strategist*, June 22, 2020, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-liberal-partys-rocky-relationship-with-multilateralism/.

[77] 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.

[78] Richard Menhinick, "'The Rules-Based Global Order": Be Alert and Alarmed," *The ASPI Strategist*, April 12, 2018, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/rules-based-global-order-alert-alarmed/.

[79] Ibid.

III Australia's Engagement with the UN

A *An Australian-UN Engagement*

Australia's engagement with the UN has varied over time implying that the UN's importance to Australia has also varied. Section A will provide an overview of Australia's engagement with the UN regarding the policy areas of peacekeeping, gender, climate, and the SDGs. Taken together with section B, it will answer SQ2, *why and can Australia engage more with the UN*. Section B will focus on periods where there has been heightened UN-Australian engagement to determine under what conditions the UN has been more important to Australia. The evidence gathered will be used to determine whether UN-Australian engagement will be practical and whether the UN can be important to Australia again in the context of COVID-19 and beyond. In doing so, these sections will help answer the overall question of *how and why the UN is important to Australia in the context of COVID-19.*

1 *Peacekeeping*

When Australia has engaged with the UN in peacekeeping, there have been positive outcomes as well as negative. Australia was able to garner a reputable "record in international peace and security" through its peacekeeping operations.[80] For example, Australia's peacekeeping work in Somalia, in which 990 ADF staff were deployed to distribute aid, assisted in distributing food, building hospitals, establishing educational initiatives, and kindling "some kind of hope" within Somali communities, according to one Somali refugee.[81] More importantly, because Australian peacekeepers were known for their "friendly and approachable reputation" among Somalis they were "welcomed by everyone" and subsequently better able to engage with those communities.[82] However, according to FD1 the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations relies on a "clear and effective" mandate, suggesting that the successes and failures of Australia's past peacekeeping work has also depended upon specific mandates, and actions taken to fulfill

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[80] Dominic Cansdale, "Former Somali Refugee Praises the UN Peacekeeping Mission 25 Years Ago but Says More Can be Done," *ABC News*, January 15, 2018,
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-15/australia%E2%80%99s-forgotten-mission-in-somalia/9317204.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

them. Therefore, Australia's past engagements with the UN in peacekeeping has been marked by some successes, which vary according to the situation.

2 *Gender*

Australia's engagement with the UN on gender issues have yielded varying successes because while Australia's understanding of such issues have been sound, it has been unable to reflect these concepts through practical measures. Australia has represented that its work on the "Women, Peace and Security Agenda," (WPS) is particularly strong, pointing to its global "activism" on gender problems, its commitment to the "UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women" (CEDAW), and its implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 through its "National Action Plan" (NAP).[83] Australia's first NAP demonstrated sound insight into gendered issues such as the importance of involving women in "post-conflict peacebuilding processes", however, failed to apply this discourse practically.[84] This was due to various bureaucratic challenges, misperceptions around the WPS agenda in the public sector, and, as Lee-Koo states, a troubled "culture" of "sexual misconduct, harassment…and sexual abuse" within the Australian Defence Force.[85] Nonetheless, Australia is set to release its second WPS NAP soon which will likely include a revised strategy for implementing the agenda in multiple departments and agencies.[86] Ultimately, as Allen posits, for Australia to have credibility on the WPS agenda, advancing women's rights should be at the forefront of its internal and external policies.[87] Therefore, Australia's engagement with the UN on gender has been marked by strong rhetoric but an absence of effective practical measures to reinforce this.

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[83] Katrina Lee-Koo, "Implementing Australia's National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 2 (2014): 300.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid 301.
[86] Louise Allen, "Australia Needs to Walk the Talk on Women, Peace and Security," *The ASPI Strategist*, February 19, 2020,
https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australia-needs-to-walk-the-talk-on-women-peace-and-security/.
[87] Ibid.

Australia's practical engagement with UN commitments on gender has been varied, especially under the current pandemic. According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), Australia's 'national gender pay gap' increased by 14.2 per cent from 13.4 per cent six months prior.[88] In addition to the increasing gender pay gap, COVID-19 has also exacerbated pre-existing gendered violence with eminent non-profit group 'Our Watch' revealing that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were '11 times more likely' to die of assault than non-Indigenous women.[89] More recently, the sexual assault of former political staffer for the Morrison government, Brittany Higgins, reveals the continued pervasiveness of gendered violence in all tiers of Australian society.[90] However, there has been some progress reflected in the Women's Safety Summit. So far, the government has invested $1 billion of its budget into women's safety, and enacted legislation based on 6 out of 12 recommendations provided by 'sex discrimination commissioner, Kate Jenkins.'[91] Thus, Australia's progress on gender issues has been varied with COVID-19 continuing to exacerbate gender issues and inequalities despite some efforts to implement commitments.

3 *Climate*

Australia's engagement with the UN on climate action has varied because of the differing motivations of past Australian administrations. FD1 posits that Australia accepted an obligation to implement its climate commitments when

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[88] Sally-Anne Henfry, "The Growing Gender Pay Gap is a Wake-Up Call for the Next Generation," *The Canberra Times,* August 31, 2021, https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7409007/the-growing-gender-pay-gap-is-a-wake-up-call-for-the-next-generation/.

[89] "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women 'Nearly 11 Times More Likely to Die' Due to Assault," NEWS, last modified September 8, 2021, https://www.news.com.au/national/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-women-nearly-11-times-more-likely-to-die-due-to-assault/news-story/ef336fa0c768e60c1b189fd2a2093e80.

[90] Paul Karp, "Bruce Lehrmann to Plead Not Guilty to Alleged Sexual Assault of Brittany Higgins," *The Guardian,* September 16, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/16/bruce-lehrmann-to-plead-not-guilty-to-alleged-sexual-assault-of-brittany-higgins.

[91] Stephanie Dalzell and Nour Haydar, "National Summit on Women's Safety end in Stoush, with Federal Government Criticised for 'Platitutdes'," *ABC News*, September 7, 2021, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-07/states-critical-of-federal-government-at-womens-safety-summit/100442004.

it signed the Paris Agreement, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Kyoto Protocol. However, under the Abbott Government Australia shut down the "Climate Commission" - a body dedicated to providing climate science to the general public - and placed a "prominent climate denialist" as chair of the "20 per cent target."[92] Likewise, according to UNAA AM2, the Morrison government is unlikely to take a "strong stance on climate change" attributable to "long-systemic partnerships" built between the Government and "farmers as well as businesspeople" across Australia who are not supportive of the "climate change mission." Despite this, the "younger generation", according to UNAA AM1, are "very much involved in climate change", voicing their views through rallies and exerting strong leadership on this matter. Therefore, Australia's reduced engagement with the UN in climate suggests that it needs a plan to better implement the climate obligations it has agreed to. That said, positions are increasingly changing with local states, businesses, and industry associations signing on to the Net Zero by 2050 target, and other ambitious targets for 2030.

4 *Australia's Performance on the SDGs*

Australia's progress toward achieving the SDGs while strong in some areas still has a long way to go in others. Australia, out of 166 States was ranked 37th with an index score of 74.9, demonstrating that its performance is neither excellent nor extremely poor.[93] Table 1 summarises Australia's progress on the SDGs according to different SDG Indicators.[94] As Table 1 represents, Australia's progress on just one SDG (SDG 3) demonstrates its commitment to the goals and implementation of the goals domestically could be improved.

Table 1: Australia's Performance on the SDGs according to the Transforming Australia Report released in 2019

- 🔴 *Off Track*
- 🟢 *On Track*
- 🟡 *Needs Improvement*
- 🟠 *Stagnating*

SDGs	Australia's Performance according to SDG Transforming

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[92] McDonald, "Australian Foreign Policy," 661.

[93] Jeffrey Sachs et al., *The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19: Sustainable Development Report 2020* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 26.

[94] Monash University, *Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report* (Monash: Sustainable Development Institute, 2019), table 1; "SDG Progress Report," Sustainable Development Goals: Transforming Australia, accessed October 10, 2020, https://www.sdgtransformingaustralia.com/, table 1; Sachs et al., *The Sustainable Development Goals,* 43, table 1.

	Australia
SDG 1: No Poverty 🟡	**Off track** • Indicator 1.3 NEW regarding adequacy of welfare payments is off track • Newstart and other payments falling behind the poverty line.
SDG 2: Zero Hunger 🔴	**Off Track** • Indicator 2.2.2ALT regarding the prevalence of obesity in Australia is off track
SDG 3: Good Health 🟢	**On Track** • Indicator 3.4.NEW2 regarding life expectancy is on track • Australia, out of other developed countries, has the highest life expectancy
SDG 4: Quality Education 🟡	**Needs Improvement** • Indicator 4.1.NEW regarding 'PISA results' for readings, maths, and science needs improvement • Relative decrease of student performance in maths, science and reading
SDG 5: Gender Equality 🟠	**Breakthrough Needed** • For indicator 5.2.1 regarding number of women and girls over the age of 15 subject to 'physical, sexual or psychological violence' by a former or current partner in the last 12 months, a breakthrough is needed.
SDG 6: Water 🟡	**Off Track** • Indicator 6.1.NEW regarding the affordability of water is off track.
SDG 7: Energy 🔴	**Off Track** • Indicator 7.1.NEW1 regarding the affordability of energy is off track.
SDG 8: Economy 🟠	**On Track** • Indicator 8.1.NEW1 regarding per capita 'real net national disposable income'' is on track. • Indicator 8.5.NEW1 regarding 'employment to population ratio' is on track. **Off Track** • Indicator 8.1.NEW3 regarding household debt as a percentage of GDP is off track.
SDG 9: Infrastructure & Innovation 🟠	**On Track** • Indicator 9.1.NEW2 regarding 'logistics performance index' is on track. **Off Track** • Indicator 9.5.2.ALT1 regarding investment into

	'knowledge-based capital' as a percentage of GDP is off track.
SDG 10: Inequality 🟠	**Work Needed** • Indicator 10.2.NEW regarding 'share of income and share of wealth' within different 'quintiles' needs work. **On Track** • Indicator 10.1.1 regarding rates of growth of household income within the 'bottom 40% of the population and the total population' is on track.
SDG 11: Cities 🟡	**On Track** • Indicator 11.1.NEW2 regarding the ratio of 'established house price' in comparison to 'household disposable income' is off track.
SDG 12: Consumption & Production 🔴	**Needs Improvement** • Indicator 12.c.1.ALT regarding total support for fossil fuels as a percentage of total tax revenue needs improvement.
SDG 13: Climate Action 🔴	**Off track** • Indicator 13.1.1 regarding the amount of people directly impacted by disasters 'per 100,000 population' is off track.
SDG 14: Life Below Water 🟠	**On Track** • Indicator 14.4.1.ALT regarding the 'status of Australian fish stocks' is on track. • Indicator 14.5.1 regarding the 'coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas' is on track. **Off Track** • Indicator 14.2.NEW regarding biodiversity in the Ocean with respect to the hard-coral cover in the Great Barrier Reef is off track.
SDG 15: Life on Land 🟠	**On Track** • Indicator 15.a.1 regarding 'official development assistance and public expenditure' for the conservation and sustainable use of 'biodiversity and ecosystems' is on track. **Off Track** • Indicator 15.1.1 regarding the 'total forest area' is off track.
SDG 16: Governance 🟡	**Needs Improvement** • Indicator 16.1.4.ALT regarding the amount of people in Australia who 'feel safe walking alone at night' needs improvement. **On Track** • Indicator 16.1.1 regarding the number of victims of

SDG 17: Partnerships 🟠	'intentional homicide' is decreasing and on track.
	Needs Improvement/Not on track ● For indicator 17.14.1 regarding tools to 'enhance policy coherence of sustainable development' a breakthrough is needed. **Off Track** ● Indicator 17.1.1.ALT regarding 'total government revenue and expenses' is off track.

B Conditions Underpinning the UN-Australian Relationship

There are certain conditions under which Australia has engaged more with the UN and where the UN has been more important to Australia. This section intends to directly answer the research question of how and why the UN can be important to Australia in the context of COVID-19 and beyond, and whether Australia can engage with the UN more. It is premised on the idea that in social sciences there are no unconditional laws, meaning that events do not occur in a vacuum and require the presence of specific conditions to occur.[95] Similarly, this section cannot determine the likelihood of future UN-Australian engagement and whether the UN can be important to Australia again during COVID-19 and beyond, without identifying the past conditions under which the UN-Australian relationship has thrived. It will do so with reference to two main case studies, Australia's Security Council seat and the history of its rejectionist and internationalist policy outlook.

1 Australia's Security Council Seat

Fig. 3: Image shows Julie Bishop as Council President in 2013. Image downloaded from https://www.unaa.org.au/learn/australia-and-the-un/australia-and-un-security-council/ in October 2020.

In periods where Australia has held a Security Council seat, its engagement with the UN has increased and the UN has been more important to Australia. In 1946, Australia gained a seat through the support of New Zealand, smaller European powers and some Middle Eastern and Latin American

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[95] Robert O. Keohane, "Understanding Multilateral Institutions in Easy and Hard Times," *Annual Review of Political Science* 23, no. 1-18 (2020): 7.

States who appreciated Doc Evatt's defence of their interests at the San Francisco Conference.[96] Similarly, during its 2013-2014 term it played a significant role in responding to the West African Ebola crisis, the MH17 flight crash, and responding to the Libyan and Syrian conflicts.[97] In contrast, Australia was unable to gain a seat in its 1996 campaign bid. Mickler argues one of the factors that limited Australia's chances of winning, was its failure to win African votes, particularly those of Lusophone and Francophone African States.[98] Other factors that contributed to this failed bid was Australia's unwavering support for the US's air strikes against Iraq, and Australia's recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor.[99] This highlights how Australia's engagement with the UN and the UN's importance increased in periods where it represented the interests of other nations, and involved itself in issues of international concern. Contrastingly, Australia's engagement was precluded under conditions where it prioritised its bilateral alliances over other international interests. Therefore, one potential condition derived from this evidence may be that Australia must take more interest in international affairs and focus more on its international interests and less on its bilateral alliances with States such as the US.

2 Rejectionist v Internationalist Policy Outlooks

Rejectionism

Periods where rejectionist policy outlooks have prevailed are marked by a turn inward, and decreased engagement multilaterally, suggesting that the UN has been of less importance to Australia.

The Abbott Government's rejectionist policy approach was heavily viewed through a domestic political lens, and consistent with other "conservative foreign policy" agendas.[100] There is also evidence to suggest that other foreign policy decisions such as OSB were also influenced by domestic attitudes, as 70 per cent of Australians favoured OSB in 2014.[101] The result of such conservative influences was Australia's lowered engagement with the UN under the slogan, "*more Jakarta, less Geneva*", and promises that Australia would focus less on performing on "the international stage", and more on its bilateral alliances, immediate national interests, and security

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[96] Cotton and Lee, *Australia and the United Nations.*

[97] "Australia and UN Security Council," United Nations Association of Australia, accessed October 1, 2020, https://www.unaa.org.au/learn/australia-and-the-un/australia-and-un-security-council/.

[98] David Mickler and Nikola Pijović, "There are no votes in Africa? Australia, Africa and the UN Security Council," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 66, no. 1 (2020):133.

[99] Ibid.

[100] McDonald, "Australian Foreign Policy," 660.

[101] Ibid.

issues.[102] Similarly at this time, Australia's commitment to climate change solutions also decreased with the drafting of legislation to repeal the "Clean Energy Act."[103] This was consistent with domestic sentiments where 16 and 15 per cent of people in 2013 and 2014 respectively stated that until global warming was declared a certain threat, economically costly steps should not be taken.[104] Similarly, 44 and 38 per cent said global warming should be addressed gradually through low-costly steps.[105]

Brief periods of heightened engagement with the UN may have also been influenced by domestic politics. In 2014, Australia increased its engagement with the Security Council, largely due to domestic pressures calling for inquiries into the 28 Australian deaths on the MH17 flight.[106] The Abbott Government's response appeared to achieve "genuine international cooperation" but at the same time pandered to the fears of the Australian audience.[107] This demonstrates that rejectionist liberal government policy towards the UN and multilateralism – where the UN has been less important to Australia – and also brief periods of heightened engagement, were largely influenced by domestic political factors and the narrow interpretation of national interests. Thus, two potential conditions derived from this evidence is that national interests be construed more broadly, and domestic political factors be conducive to or supportive of heightened engagement with the UN.

Internationalism

"It is through membership of the United Nations that Australia best asserts its national independence and international identity."

Hon Gough Whitlam
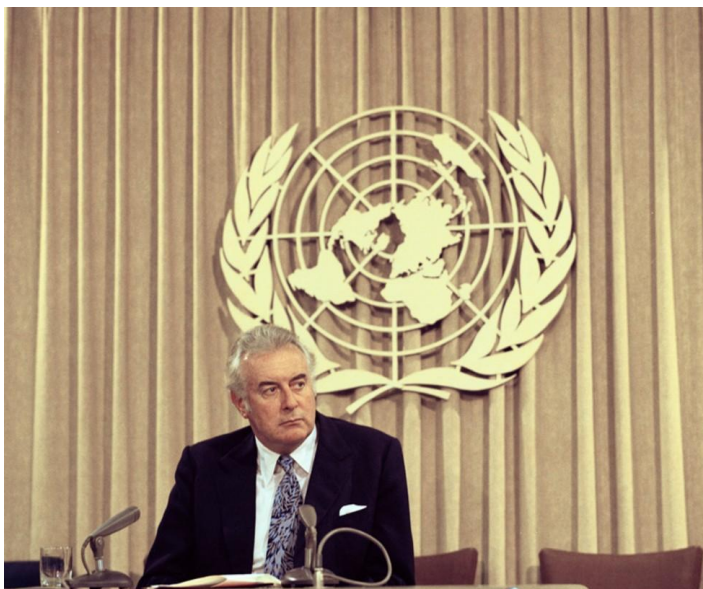
Internationalist policy outlooks are marked by heightened engagement

essed 10 October, 2020,

ed 10 October, 2020,

with the UN and support for multilateralism, suggesting that the UN has been more important to Australia.

The Whitlam Government, in particular, proactively engaged with the UN and incorporated a "multilateral approach" to basic engagements with other States.[108] For example, Australia began contributing to UN funds meant to facilitate the development of South African people, - evidencing Australia's first "practical engagement" with the UN - ensured Australia was represented at conferences concerning South African "victims of colonialism and apartheid", and prohibited "racially -selected South African sporting teams" entering Australia so long as South Africa remained an apartheid State.[109] This demonstrates how Australia's actions were guided by the broader international context. Interestingly, Kirby argues that multilateral and bilateral approaches have been distinguishing features of Labor and Liberal governments.[110] This suggests that Labor governments are more likely to adopt a multilateral approach and engage more with the UN.

Fig. 4: Hon Gough Whitlam attending a UN Convention in 1974. Image courtesy of the National Archives of Australia. NAA: A8746, KN12/11/74/28. Image downloaded from https://www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resource-themes/government-and-democracy/prime-ministers-and-politicians/prime-minister-gough-whitlam-speaking-united-nations-convention-usa in October 2020.

One counterargument to this is that the Labor Government's policy outlook was heavily influenced by Whitlam's personal beliefs. For example, Whitlam vocally asserted his favouring of multilateral interests, and criticised the Federal Government for not working with the UN more during the Vietnamese War after his tenure as Prime Minister had ended.[111] Another counterargument is that some Conservative Liberal Governments have heightened their commitment to the UN in areas like peacekeeping. For example, in the 2000s a conservative Liberal Government led large-scale peacekeeping missions in Papua New Guinea, "East Timor, and [the] Solomon Islands" for roughly ten years, albeit the fact that internationalist ambitions of actors like Evatt and Evans were replaced by a "tight regional focus."[112] Thus, a conservative Liberal Government in power does not "set in stone" lowered engagement with the UN.[113] Therefore, the potential condition

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[108] Michael D. Kirby, "Whitlam as Internationalist: A Centenary Reflection," *Melbourne University Law Review* 39, no. 3 (2016): 887.

[109] Ibid 887-8.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid 888.

[112] Peter Londey, "Australia and Peacekeeping," *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 18, no. 3-4 (2014): 176.

[113] Student 2, "The UN's Importance to Australia and the World in the Context of COVID-19 and Beyond," interview by author, Canberra, October 15, 2020.

derived is that Australia's policy outlook needs to be more internationalist than rejectionist, which is still possible under a liberal government.

3 *COVID-19 and Beyond*

Through examining available literature on the Australian-UN relationship, this report sourced four main conditions under which Australia has engaged more with the UN. The first condition identified is that Australia take more of an interest in international affairs and prioritise its international interests over its bilateral alliances. The second condition is that national interests be defined broadly to include international interests, rather than immediate concerns. The third condition is that domestic political sentiments support or at least are not hostile to furthered engagement. The final condition is that the Federal Government have a more internationalist policy outlook, and while this has been done more by Labor Governments, it does not mean that a Liberal Government cannot. It is important to note that while these conditions are simplified, they act as quasi-indicators for the trajectory Australia needs to take to deepen its relationship with the UN. Due to word restrictions this report will address conditions two, three and four. Ultimately, the identified conditions demonstrate the complexity of Australia's relationship with the UN and serve as a guide for assessing the likelihood of heightened engagement, and whether the UN can be important to Australia again.

Can national interests be defined more broadly?

"COVID-19 is a shared crisis – a reminder that many problems are best solved or, indeed, can only be solved through cooperation. At the heart of successful international cooperation is the concept that each country shares rather than yields, a portion of its sovereign decision-making. And in return, each gets something from it that is greater than their contribution." [114]

Marise Payne, 16 June 2020

Australia may be able to define its national interests more broadly during COVID-19 and beyond. Foreign Minister, Marise Payne, in her recent speech "Australia and the World", stipulated that IOs, especially "international standard-setting bodies" formed rules and norms important for Australia's "security, interests and prosperity", and that Australian interests would not benefit by withdrawing multilaterally and allowing others "to shape [the]

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[114] Dobell, "The Liberal Party's."

global order for us."[115] Payne's address seems to demonstrate a broader conceptualisation of Australia's national interests, especially the implication that Australian interests would be served through actively engaging with the shaping of the international order through multilateral organisations. Dobell argues that Payne's speech was intended to combat the Liberal Party's sustained rejectionism since Howard and offer a "bridge" for liberals by highlighting that multilateralism can serve national interests.[116] Consequently, the connecting of Australian interests to multilateral organisations, and attempt to reshape liberal attitudes towards multilateralism suggests that the Liberal Government may more broadly conceptualise Australia's national interests. Thus, condition two could be met.

Is domestic politics favourable to the future of the UN-Australian relationship?

The Australian Government may have scope getting domestic support for heightened multilateral engagement during COVID-19. A series of 2020 Lowy Institute polls show 70 per cent of Australians say globalisation is largely beneficial to Australia.[117] While 66 per cent of respondents say the Government should "prioritise Australia's domestic interests over reaching a global agreement" through multilateral forums like the UN.[118] S1 attributes these sentiments to the fact that COVID-19 has made people more concerned about putting "food on the table", while UNAA AM1 posits that the weakening of the Australian dollar and the economic downturn after lockdown, have increased nationalist sentiments and made Australians "less global, more local." UN P1 argues that Australia has a strong "culture of charity" towards its own backyard, and for a lot of Australians the UN is not specifically relevant. Thus, there is a tendency for Australians to not see how international factors directly impact them, accounting for potential lowered support of multilateral institutions.

However, UP1 also maintains the pandemic has shown how "incredibly integrated" the world is, and how the actions of other States directly impact Australia. As such, they hope that people coming out of COVID-19 will

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[115] Marise Payne, "Australia and the World in the Time of COVID-19," (speech, National Security College, Canberra, ACT, June 16, 2020), Minister for Foreign Affairs, https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/speech/australia-and-world-time-covid-19.
[116] Dobell, "The Liberal Party's."
[117] Natasha Kassam, "COVIDpoll: Lowy Institute polling on Australian attitudes to the coronavirus pandemic," *Lowy Institute Polling*, May 14, 2020, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/covidpoll-lowy-institute-polling-australian-attitudes-coronavirus-pandemic.
[118] "Domestic Interests and Global Cooperation," Lowy Institute Poll 2020, accessed October 3, 2020, https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/charts/domestic-interests-and-global-cooperation/.

recognise this inter-connection. More importantly, they argue that countries producing a vaccine for COVID-19 in isolation would be fruitless, and that Australia benefits from playing an important role in equitably distributing a vaccine and other medical technology to the world. Overall, this data suggests that the economic effects of COVID-19 may make it difficult for Australians to support more *costly* multilateral engagement. Nonetheless, as UP1 puts it, there is more than one way of engaging with the UN including through leadership. Similarly, the Lowy results show there is still general support for globalisation and multilateralism indicating no overwhelming hostility towards the UN. Thus, it is unclear whether condition three is fully satisfied, but Australia may still have scope to engage more with the UN.

Can the government adopt a more internationalist policy approach?

Australia may not be able to prioritise an internationalist policy outlook but may be able to look more regionally. The Liberal Party's trend of 'national interest bilateralism' for the last 30 years – engaging internationally only when national interests were served – emphasises the unlikelihood of a strong internationalist stance.[119] Moreover, Scott Morrison's recent comments on climate change, and 'reticence to commit' demonstrates government policy is still driven by short-term political goals shaped by the domestic political narrative and private interests.[120] According to Verrender, climate commitments have been a 'career killer', and Australia's loose climate targets reflect the gravity of upcoming elections.[121] In line with the aforementioned section, gradually increasing domestic pressures and constraints may also discourage the government from adopting an overtly internationalist policy approach.

Nonetheless, S2 posits that given the Australian government has made commitments regionally, it will likely make this a future priority. Similarly, S2 speculates that the main priority for Australia in terms of the UN will be distributing development aid to nearby Pacific nations. This is consistent with the policy outlooks of past conservative liberal governments who have adopted a more "tight regional focus" rather than the internationalist ones undertaken by labor governments.[122] More importantly, some interviewees argue that in light of the financial constraints imposed by COVID-19, a

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[119] Graeme Dobell, "The Liberal Party's Struggles with Multilateralism and the UN," *The Strategist*, February 1, 2021, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-liberal-partys-struggles-with-multilateralism-and-the-un/.

[120] Ian Verrender, "Scott Morrison's Climate Change Policy is Being Left Behind by Corporate Action," *ABC News*, April 26, 2021, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-04-26/business-climate-change-action-leaves-morrison-behind/100094616.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Londey, "Australia and Peacekeeping," 176.

regional policy approach may be more practical than an internationalist one. Therefore, Australia may not adopt an overtly internationalist policy outlook during COVID-19, but beyond that may choose to focus on its regional environment, potentially with the help of the UN.

C Conclusions

These sections taken together have helped answer the question of *how the UN is important to Australia,* and *can Australia engage with the UN more in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.* The context-specific analysis of conditions has demonstrated that Australia has scope to further engage with the UN, and that it is possible for the UN to be important to Australia again during COVID-19 and beyond. Overall, section B has highlighted the complexities and nuances of the UN-Australian relationship thusfar. These complexities are important to consider when deriving potential recommendations and conclusions aimed towards bettering engagement and realising the importance of the UN to Australia and the world.

IV Recommendations

The UN's importance to Australia and the world, and heightened engagement between the UN and Australia, can be realised through the implementation of the following multi-scale recommendations.

A *Short-Term Recommendations*

These recommendations are designed for the Australian Government to credibly convey to the UN and the world its commitment to engaging and addressing matters within the UN agenda. These short-term recommendations for Government action aim to inform and influence further long-term recommendations.

More UN initiatives to engage Australian youth and streamline programs for Australians to enter the UN family

1. Increase opportunities for Australian young people to enter UN initiatives. Some ways of achieving this include creating a UN presence in the Pacific region and engaging and educating more Australian young people in regional and rural areas on the UN's work.
2. Integrate under-represented Australian young people into UN and UN-affiliated stakeholder meetings.
3. 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.

Comments made by S1, S2, and UN P1, reveal that people with less experience, interest in and knowledge of the UN – such as those living in areas without a strong local UN presence – were less likely to appreciate the UN's work. In Australia's case, the UN is not a large presence which is exacerbated by Australia's geographical isolation from the rest of the world. This recommendation is to "bring the UN home" to Australians, as put by UN P1, and make it more relevant.

4. 'Advocate' for more appropriately qualified Australians to undertake leadership roles at the UN and other international organisations.

In January 2021, Natasha Stott Despoja AO was appointed to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women following the

Australian Government's support for her candidacy.[123] She is the first Australian in nearly 30 years to join the committee and is now able to impart her 'wealth of experience and expertise to the Committee.'[124]

Practical implementation of Gender Obligations

5. Legislatively implement the remaining 6 recommendations from the sex discrimination commissioner, and place women at the forefront of building the new action plan - including 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.

Women, Peace and Security Agenda

6. Position the WPS agenda as the priority for the 2022 "Shangri-La Dialogue" and other UN forums.
7. Systemically integrate gendered views into high-ranking foreign policy.
8. Give more political and monetary support to local and international women's groups.
9. Better link the WPS agenda to Australia's domestic challenges such as its "Indigenous affairs."[125]
10. Allow people from regional areas to have input into the new NAP and its solutions (UNAA AM1).

The Australian Government claims it has a strong reputation regarding the WPA agenda, yet the NAP did not practically implement the agenda. The Government could credibly convey its commitment to implementing items on the UN agenda, through ensuring the second NAP include practical measures for all societal sectors.

B *Long-Term Recommendations*

These long-term recommendations follow on from the short-term recommendations and are designed to improve Australia's international footprint and to allow it better access to shape the international order that inevitably affects its development and work in line with its interests.

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[123] "Natasha Stott Despoja Begins 4-Year Term with CEDAW," Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, last modified January 29, 2021, https://www.pmc.gov.au/news-centre/office-women/natasha-stott-despoja-begins-her-4-year-term-ce daw.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Allen, "Australia Needs to Walk the Talk."

Australia should undertake more leadership on the international stage

11. Undertake a strong regional leadership role within the UN framework, by being more transparent and open with policy that could affect regional stability, such as the trilateral partnership. It is critical Australia build trust with its regional neighbours and form stronger alliances.

This pandemic has highlighted the lack of global leadership, resulting in a largely uncoordinated response. Australia may have scope to undertake more leadership at the UN because it is afforded more "latitude" at the UN as a middle power. [126] According to FD1, in the past, Australia used this latitude to act as a "facilitator." For example, its "Africa Strategy" – as part of its 2029-30 Security Council campaign bid – was able to work because it emphasised that it had no "baggage" associated with Africa, unlike other Western States. [127] However, for Australia to realistically lead it must be *credible*, and thus must practically engage with UN agenda issues as detailed in recommendation 1.

Australia's recent trilateral defence pact with the US and UK upset its relations with France, who labelled its move a 'stab in the back', while the European Union's foreign affairs representative expressed disappointment at its exclusion from negotiations leading up to the partnership.[128] The pact, while contributing to instability in the Asia Pacific region, may also create tensions on a multilateral level affecting Australia's credibility as a state obligated to uphold nuclear non-proliferation.[129] However, New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, affirmed that the trilateral partnership was not a 'treaty level arrangement' and would not influence the Australia-New Zealand relationship, including defence partnership 'Five Eyes.'[130] This suggests Australia has scope to maintain and improve its regional alliances and leadership, and regain stability within the region.

[126] Nadin, "The Shape of Australia's Future."

[127] Mickler, "There are no votes," 135-6.

[128] Kathryn Diss, "US to Send More Planes, Including Bombers, to Australia under Defence Pact," *ABC News*, September 17, 2021, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-17/us-raisesconcerns-about-china-economic-coercion-of-australia/100469360; Angelique Chrisafis and Daniel Boffey, "Stab in the Back: French Fury as Australia Scraps Submarine Deal," *The Guardian*, September 16, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/16/stab-in-the-back-french-fury-australia-scraps-submarine-deal.

[129] "Treaties and Initiatives," Nuclear Issues, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, accessed September 18, 2021, https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/security/non-proliferation-disarmament-arms-control/nuclear-issues/treaties.

[130] Praveen Menon, "NZ says Australia's New Nuclear Submarines Must Stay Out of Its Waters," *Reuters*, September 16, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/china/nz-says-australias-new-nuclear-submarines-must-stay-out-its-waters-2021-09-16/.

Better link the benefits Australia serves to gain from increasing engagement with the UN

12. Articulate and promote the benefits Australia serves to gain from engaging with the UN more to the wider public.

Recognising thus far that recommendations have been practical, recommendation twelve provides direction for future research and policy making approaches undertaken by businesses, stakeholders, and government agencies. S1 observed that the attitudes of Australians towards the UN may be shaped by the fact that the link to how benefits from engaging with the UN flow back to Australia, is not well defined. The issue here is that people need to know that the benefits of engaging with the UN will not just flow one way.

V Conclusions

Overall, this report used a qualitative research method and a case study of Australia to conclude that the UN has never been more important to States and the world, because of the opportunities, benefits, and ideals it provides. The report found that the question of the UN's importance has multiple different components. Part III examined the UN not as a single entity but as a sum of its parts inclusive of its Members States, and its primary organs. This established a better illustration of the UN's good and bad work and its strengths and weaknesses. Part III found the organs were important to States

and the world because they supported States to achieve their short-term and long-term interests and maintained the rules-based international order. Part IV found the UN was important to Australia because it enabled the furtherance of Australia's foreign policy, served Australian interests, and benefited Australia by maintaining the rules-based order.

Section A of Part V examined UN-Australian engagement in peacekeeping, gender, climate, and the SDGs. It found engagement on these policy issues varied because of factors such as conflicting government interests with the UN and unpractical application of UN agenda items. Section B used Australia's UNSC seat and its two principal policy outlooks, to analyse successful engagement and periods where the UN was more important to Australia. This determined conditions where engagement has thrived and where the UN has been important to Australia. The conditions sourced are as follows:
- Taking a larger interest in international affairs, and more prioritisation of international interests over bilateral alliances (Condition 1)
- Broad definition of national interests (Condition 2)
- Complimentary domestic political attitudes (Condition 3)
- Adoption of an internationalist policy outlook, over a rejectionist one (Condition 4)

Conditions were then examined in the context of COVID-19 and beyond, to find there is scope for Australia to engage more with the UN and for the UN to be important to Australia again. Taken together all these sections helped answer the question of why Australia should engage more with the UN, and ultimately how the UN is important to Australia and the world in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.

Finally, this report set out a series of short-term and long-term recommendations, including three practical measures and one theoretical measure, targeted to help Australia (and those within Australia) to further their commitment to the UN during the pandemic and beyond. Overall, this report has found that the UN is a unique, resilient, and imperfect institution, that supports Member States in their development and growth, and assists the world's progression despite the unprecedented challenges it faces. Australia and other States serve to gain from their continued support of the UN, multilateralism, and the rules-based order, not just to resolve transnational problems, but also to maintain the principles on which the UN was founded and continues to work towards – *dignity, service, and human perseverance.*

In the words of Gareth Evans and the UN's second Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjold,

"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."
…
"The UN was created not to bring us to heaven, but to save us from hell."[131]

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[131] Gareth Evans, "Valuing the United Nations," *Project Syndicate*, March 26, 2013, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/value-for-money-at-the-united-nations-by-gareth-evans.

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VII Acknowledgements

VIII Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1) Thinking back to your earlier years, can you remember what your first thoughts were about the United Nations (UN) and its earlier work?

    a)   Why do you think it was more popular/unpopular back then?

    b)   How have your ideals about the UN's role and operation changed since then?

2) Keeping in mind that the UN was created after World War 2 to uphold peace and order, how has your view of the UN changed and what does it symbolise/represent to you now?

    a) Tell me what comes to mind when you think of the UN?

    b) What does it mean to you?

3) [Aimed towards academics/experts] In your opinion, which part or parts of the UN's role and capabilities is most significant now and why?

    a) For example, what are some reasons you may prefer its efforts in global cooperation or policymaking, over other areas like norm entrepreneurship, and representation of issues?

    b) How successful do you think the UN has been in achieving its mandate in recent times?

4) A recent survey by the Lowy Institute found that 70% of Australians find globalisation largely beneficial, and 53% say more global cooperation is needed. What are some reasons why you think Australians may have the same or differing attitudes towards the UN?

    a) Where do these attitudes derive from?

    b) What are some of the benefits for Australia if it engages more with the UN?

5) [COVID-19 Response - Academics/Experts] How well do you think the UN has done in helping States deal with the coronavirus pandemic? Tell me more about what you think about Australia's response

a) Why (or why not) is it important for Australia to be coordinating with the UN during the pandemic?

b) Could you give me an example of another global challenge where the UN has successfully interacted with States to bring about a solution?

c) What is Australia's perspective in all of this?

6) [Climate Action section] What are your thoughts on Australia collaborating more with the UN on climate action?

a) What are some ways Australia can do this?

7) [Peacekeeping operations - Academics/Alum] Australia's peacekeeping track-record has been mixed. How do you feel about its operations in places like Sudan and Cyprus?

a) What are some of the reasons for why you think/you do not think Australia should take more leadership in the area of peacekeeping?

b) Tell me a bit about how this could help Australia's relationship with the UN?

8) [Gender] How, in your opinion, has the UN helped resolve gender-based issues in Australia?

a) What are some current initiatives being run, and their progress?

9) [Youth] How successful do you think the UN has been in including youth narratives into the broader global conversation?

a) How have you seen your ideas reflected in the work of the UN?

b) How has the UN tried to involve Australian youth into its programs?

c) What are your feelings on representation for Australian youth on the global stage?

(1) What ways do you suggest we rectify this?

10) How do you feel about the recent UN reforms, and what do you think about there being more post-pandemic?

a) Tell me more about the areas you would want to see a change in

b) What advice would you give to the UN and Australia on what needs to be done post-pandemic?

11) Imagine you are at the 75th Session of the General Assembly representing Australia at the UN, what would you say?

Appendix B

This report used qualitative research methods to answer the following research question (RQ) and sub-questions (SQs):

- RQ1: *How and why is the UN important to the world in the context of COVID-19 and beyond?*
- SQ1: *How and why is the UN important to Australia?*
- SQ2: *Why and can Australia engage more with the UN?*

This method was selected because it allowed for subjective and context-based explanations of phenomena, and an exploration into the conditions which facilitate the occurrence of such phenomena.[132] This provided the report scope to examine the research question in the context of COVID-19 and allowed it to enquire into the conditions that are conducive to heightened UN-Australian engagement. Within this method, a literature review was conducted to analyse the perspectives of academics and professionals regarding the UN's work, role, and importance now and into the future. Additionally, seven qualitative interviews were conducted with five females and two males, referred throughout the report as the following: Former Diplomat 1 (FD1), UN Professional 1 (UN P1), UNAA Professional 1(UNAA P1), UNAA Academic Members 1 and 2 (UNAA M1, M2), and Students 1 and 2 (S1, S2). This report intentionally included more female participants to allow more female perspectives to contribute to this research area, something which this field and the UN itself lacks despite promoting diversity and gender inclusivity as core values. One potential shortcoming of this method is this report's limited reach in being unable to thoroughly examine more areas of the UN's work.

The interview questions were organised around the themes of the UN, gender, climate action, peacekeeping, and youth, and were deliberately open-ended to elicit nuanced and thoughtful answers, rather than a simple "yes" or "no."[133] The following is an example of one of the questions used: *"Thinking back to your earlier years, can you remember what your first thoughts were about the United Nations (UN) and its earlier work?…What do you think made it more popular or unpopular back then?"*[134] Data from the interviews was examined using thematic analysis to identify and analyse

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[132] Natasha Mack et al., *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide* (North Caroline: Family Health International FHI 360, 2005), 1-2.

[133] Ibid 4; Allison Tong, Peter Sainsbury, and Jonathan Craig, "Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ): A 32-Item Checklist for Interviews and Focus Groups," *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* 19, no. 6 (2007): 351.

[134] **For the full interview schedule please see appendix A.**

certain patterns.[135] Similarly, gathered non-numerical data, concepts from the literature review, and the report in its entirety, were further analysed through three targeted working groups involving members of the UNAA Academic Network. This allowed for an exploration of the sub-issues within the research question and introduced new perspectives to the report.[136] One potential shortcoming of this method, is the effect of human biases in interview data on the report's objectivity. To offset this, the interview data was paired with objective and numerical data such as statistics. Overall, the use of these qualitative research methods have allowed this report to provide nuanced and humanised answers and recommendations to the question of the UN's importance to the world.

Appendix C

Application of the Research Method

This report used a qualitative research method to evaluate the research question. It used a range of academic literature on the UN, the rules-based order, and international organisations (IOs). It also used data from seven participants sourced through interviews which were structured around a fixed set of qualitative, open-ended questions. Gathered data was then analysed using thematic analysis. The participants consisted of one former diplomat, UN and UNAA professionals, and Australian National University students. This report intentionally chose to select more women participants than men to include more female perspectives, something which current international relations scholarship lacks. The findings suggest hostile Australian attitudes to the UN are shaped by a lack of knowledge of the UN - amplified by the UN's geographic distance from Australia - and less UN engagement with the Pacific in comparison to areas such as Europe and the United States of America. To rectify this, it is recommended that the UN engage more with Australian youth, particularly in regional and rural areas, through educational programs similar to the Model UN program, and provide easier pathways for Australians - especially under-represented Australians, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - to work with the UN and its agencies.

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[135] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 6.
[136] Tong, Sainsbury and Craig, "Consolidated Criteria," 351.

This project was approved by the ANU ethical board (protocol 2020/562).