

# EXCLUSIVE: IA Interviews Richard Woolcott about UN

*By Barry Everingham*

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***In a rare exclusive interview, IA senior correspondent [Barry Everingham](#) speaks to distinguished diplomat Richard Woolcott, who says he is going into bat for Australia again to help his beloved nation win a prized place on the UN Security Council.***

[Richard Woolcott](#), who represented Australia on the UN Security Council from 1984 to 1986 while serving as our Permanent Representative at the UN, is again on his way to New York to assist in this country's quest for a seat on the Council.

He says he is "quietly optimistic" of success but points out the other serious contenders, Finland and Luxembourg, will have the support of members of the European Union.

He is one of Australia's most respected diplomats, having represented this country in Moscow, Ghana, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, as well as many international organisations. His stellar career ended with his appointment as Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The first Prime Minister he served under was Robert Menzies, his last was Robert Hawke.

There were four Australian diplomats on the Security Council before Woolcott was appointed.

He points out that two Howard Government ministers, Alexander Downer and Robert Hill, are active in New York seeking support for Australia's bid, and that former

Treasurer Peter Costello is also backing the effort.

"I will be assisting them, along with two former DFAT colleagues; Bill Fisher, whose contact with French speaking African countries is second to none, and one of our most experienced former officers — John McCarthy," he said.

Woolcott, ever the diplomat, would not go so far as to say whose vote was locked in.

"We just don't know," he said, however he has mentioned India, Pakistan and several island nations in the Pacific region.

Our generosity in distributing aid to various countries and UN and other international bodies will, of course, help — but it shouldn't be inferred that the aid will assure our success.

"And in the UN" he says, "it's anyone's guess who will win."

Woolcott's eldest son, Peter, has followed in his father's footsteps, and is currently Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN and the Conference on Disarmament, based in Geneva.

Richard Woolcott says he has no patience with people who say if we are outvoted by a country smaller than Tasmania, meaning Luxembourg, it will demean us — they really have either not done their homework or are

poorly briefed.

He didn't mention Tony Abbott by name, however, as this argument is regularly put by the Leader of the Opposition when making opportunistic anti-Government speaking points.

Says Woolcott: "Our history with the UN is long and distinguished."

[Dr HV Evatt](#) was the President of the UN General Assembly from 1948 to 1949, when he helped draft the [Universal Declaration on Human Rights](#) before returning to Canberra, where he became Leader of the Opposition for many years, eventually ending his career on Bench of the NSW Supreme Court.

Finally, he said it was self-evident that an Australian presence on the Security Council will introduce a South East Asian focus to the membership which, in the main, has previously been Eurocentric.



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