

THE RUN OF THE HOUSE



Welcome

Welcome to the April 2009 edition of 'The Run of the House'.

As of 9 May 2009 Old Parliament House begins a new exciting chapter as the *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House*.

As one of Australia's most important heritage buildings, Old Parliament House has housed the highs and lows of historic events and witnessed the compelling stories of our nation for over 60 years. The next exciting chapter for the House will be to tell one of the most important stories in our development as a nation—the story of our democracy.

The *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House* will be the only museum dedicated to telling the story of Australian democracy, where the visitor experience will change the way you think and feel about democracy. Everything you love about Old Parliament House's tangible sense of history and historic ambience has been preserved yet the experience will be tantalisingly 'hands on' and engaging. Touch, see, hear, feel and be truly immersed in what democracy means, beyond just a word for the political system we have, but something we live day to day.

Please join us on Saturday 9 May 2009, and take part in the official opening of the *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House* and discover where we've come from, why we're here and get involved in where we're headed.

Jenny Anderson, Director, Old Parliament House

WELL-KNOWN AUSTRALIANS ARE REVEALED TO DEBATE THE TOPIC 'ON AUSTRALIA'S MIND'

New voting begins at the 'What's on your mind?' campaign.

What does news presenter Tracey Spicer, radio host Bianca Dye and business woman Sue Ismiel all have in common? The trio are just some of the well-known Australians that could be participating in the *What's on your mind?* debate in the House of Representatives Chamber on Friday 8 May.

The *What's on your mind?* debate is designed to involve everyday Australians in the democratic process in a fun and engaging way. Until now, people have been able to suggest well-known Australians they would like to see participate in the debate, vote on social and cultural topics, and comment on these topics. Now Australians can vote for who they would like to see debate.

Australians have participated in the campaign by voting for the topic 'most on their mind'. To date, the top four topics on the minds of Australians are:

- Does 'work / life' balance exist for Australians today?
- Is technology helping or hindering our relationships?
- Have Australians become too caught up in consumerism?
- Are children acting their age?

A potential debater, Tracey Spicer is excited about bringing democracy to life for Australians. She said; "I've got two young children and as a family we use our democracy as part of our everyday life having discussions about what to do at the weekend and what to eat for dinner. It seems simple but it's important for me that my children get a chance to voice their opinions and thoughts. I'm really excited about the *What's on your mind?* campaign and would encourage Australians to log on and vote for me and their favourite topic at www.whatsonyourmind.moad.gov.au."

The *What's on your mind?* website has a number of tickets available for Australians to be part of the audience for the debate at the *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House* on Friday 8 May. For your chance to secure your seat at the debate and to vote for your favourite topic and well-known Australian visit: www.whatsonyourmind.moad.gov.au.

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OPEN DAY AND OFFICIAL OPENING

The *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House* will be launched officially with a public open day and a series of special events on Saturday 9 May.

The day will start at 9.30am with an outdoor breakfast concert, featuring choirs, the Royal Military College Band and Australia's "true blue" balladeer John Williamson singing songs of influence and pride.

Leading up to the official opening, a free breakfast for the first 1,500 visitors, a Welcome to Country, roving performers, an outdoor broadcast by ABC 666 and tattoos by the Gecko Gang will make this a fun event for the whole family.

After the official opening, the new museum will be open for you to explore. Extra family-friendly activities will include storytelling, face painting, a badge treasure hunt and badge making throughout the day—help us make 15,000 badges for a new exhibition that puts you in the picture!

There will be plenty to eat, see and do, so join us for a fun day of exploring the museum. Please note, the breakfast concert is an outdoor event, so we recommend you wear a hat and sunglasses.

Saturday 9 May 9.30am–4.00pm (doors open to the public from 11.00am)

Free entry
Free breakfast for first 1,500 visitors

SNEAK PEEK AT A SELECTION OF OBJECTS

In the last edition of *The Run of the House* you were given a sneak peek of the new exhibitions that will be available at the *Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House*. In this edition we would like to provide you with an advanced look at some of the exciting objects that will be on display from 9 May.

Bust of Thomas Muir

The bronze cast of Thomas Muir, created by one of the world's leading bronze portrait artists—Professor Alexander Stoddart from Paisley University, Scotland—will be a highlight of the *Australian Democracy: more than 2000 years in the making* exhibition.

So what does Muir have to do with democracy?

The French Revoluter inspired supporters of parliamentary reform all over the world. One supporter Thomas Muir (1765–1799), known as the Father of Scottish Democracy, was involved in political reform in Scotland, the United States, France and Ireland. In 1793 Muir was charged with, amongst other things, circulating and encouraging the study of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. He fled to France and on return to Scotland was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to 14 years transportation to Australia. His sentence evoked anger across Britain but the Home Secretary, Henry Dundas, wanted to make an example of Muir and his supporters, who later became known as the Scottish Martyrs.

Bust of Perikles, 2nd century AD Roman

The bust of Perikles, which was made with Jesomite, was created for the Old Parliament House collection by the British Museum and will be on display in the *Australian Democracy: more than 2000 years in the making* exhibition.

Perikles (495–429 BCE) introduced many political reforms, including payment for political and jury service and the participation by Athenian citizens in the governance of their city—systems we still practise today in our modern democracy.

The ancient Athenians evolved a system of government based on rule by the people, which they called 'demokratia' from the Greek 'demos' (people) and 'krato' (power). Ancient Athens was not a democracy as we define it today, however, citizens participated in decision-making, but only free men could be citizens. Women and slaves, more than half the population, were excluded from formal participation.

"It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few."—Perikles

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

A first edition (1792) of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* will be on display in the *Australian Democracy: more than 2000 years in the making* exhibition.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, written in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) argued that women should have the right to participate in economic and political life on an equal basis to men.

Wollstonecraft argued women must claim their equality without being distracted by emotions. Romance and attractiveness were not the natural conditions of female existence but rather the socially imposed means by which male domination enslaves them.

This was written 110 years before women were able to vote in federal elections in Australia.

Fragment of the Berlin Wall

A fragment of the Berlin Wall supplied by Checkpoint Charlie Museum, Berlin will be on display in the *Australian Democracy: more than 2000 years in the making* exhibition.

At the end of the Second World War, the Allied powers divided Nazi Germany into four occupation zones. West Germany became a capitalist democracy and East Germany developed into a communist society.

By 1961, up to 1,000 people a day fled East German communism for the democratic capitalist West Germany.

To stop this, on 13 August 1961, the East German government commenced construction of a 43 kilometre wall that divided the people, both physically and politically for 28 years.

The Berlin Wall symbolised the division between two dominant post Second World War powers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union. It is also a symbol of the stark difference between democracy and communism.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Little Builders Tours

Tuesday 14 to Friday 17 April
10.00am and 11.15am
Suitable for ages 3 - 7
Bookings 6270 8294
Free after entry

Put yourself in the picture – craft activity

Tuesday 21 to Friday 24 April
2.00pm - 3.30pm
Free after entry

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House – Grand opening

Saturday 9 May
9.30am - 4.00pm
Free

The Artist and the People

Sunday 10 May
5.30pm - 7.00pm
Bookings Canberra Ticketing 6275 2700
\$35 / \$28

Café in the House

Visitors can enjoy dining at Café in the House.

Café in the House features a creative and exciting Modern Australian menu that draws on fresh seasonal produce. Take a table inside, or in the Café courtyard, and you'll be taking your place in surroundings that made Australian history.

Open daily 7.30am – 5.00pm. Phone 02 6270 8156.

For the latest information on upcoming events and current exhibitions, please visit: www.oph.gov.au or phone 6270 8222.



Tracey Spicer



Bianca Dye



Sue Ismiel

"It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few."
Perikles



Johanna Parker, Senior Curator with the Thomas Muir bust



Cast made for the Old Parliament House Collection by the British Museum



A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with strictures on political and moral subjects



Fragment of the Berlin Wall supplied by Checkpoint Charlie Museum, Berlin

