

Major New Exhibition Opens

The Art of the Possible: Creating an independent Australian foreign policy

On 14 February the JCPML's major exhibition was launched by the Governor of Western Australia. *The Art of the Possible: Creating an independent Australian foreign policy* explores Australia's growing independence in the realm of foreign policy from 1935 to 1950.

The opening of the new exhibition forms part of a program of events commemorating the 60th anniversary of John Curtin's death in office on 5 July 1945.

In opening the exhibition His Excellency, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, AC, said: 'What is truly gratifying about the period that this exhibition celebrates is not so much the individual acts and statements made by Curtin during the transition to an independent foreign policy, but the overarching strategic awareness that it portrays of the changed nature of the postwar world and the need for Australia to engage in a way that could give her some influence in shaping the outcomes.'

The Governor concluded that the exhibition was a timely reminder that strategic surprise is always around the corner. 'Our historical predilection to follow the strategic interests and policies of those who live on the other side of the world should be tempered by the same sort of hard nosed view of our future that grew out of the crisis of 1942 and



From left to right: Curtin Vice-Chancellor Prof. Lance Twomey, His Excellency, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, AC, JCPML Director Imogen Garner and Curtin Chancellor Dr Eric Tan.

was played out with such commitment and passion for Australia and its people by Prime Minister John Curtin and his wartime cabinet,' he said.

The exhibition was inspired by the recent donation of records comprising the working papers accumulated in the course of preparing the 16-volume publication *Documents on Australian Foreign policy, 1937-1949*. These records were created by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and transferred to the JCPML by DFAT and the National Archives of Australia (NAA) in 2004. The research potential of these records is significant as only

about 10% of the working papers were used in the published volumes and the contents and subjects covered are broad. A small sample of these documents is on display in the exhibition or the documents can be perused at leisure in the JCPML reading room.

Amongst the documents featured in the exhibition are the significant cablegrams between Prime Ministers Curtin and Churchill which were exchanged during the week 17 to 22 February 1942. On 17 February 1942 Curtin asked for the return of the 6th and 7th Divisions to Australia; on 19 February Churchill

Continued on page 3

Australia Post Sponsorship

To help commemorate the 60th anniversary of John Curtin's death, Australia Post has sponsored limited edition souvenir stamp sheets. Only 400 numbered sheets were printed for sale during 2005 and the stamps have proved extremely popular.

The design of the stamp sheets includes a formal photograph of John Curtin on the tab of the stamp plus a relaxed image of the prime minister against the Australian flag. The stamp used for this sheet is the 50c Kangaroo and Flag (Celebration & Nation, January 2003).

A special presentation of the stamps was made to John Curtin's



From left to right: JCPML Director Imogen Garner, Beverley Lane, John Curtin, Barbara Davidson and Australia Post Sales Manager for WA Michael Clarke.

grandchildren by Michael Clarke, Australia Post Sales Manager for WA at the launch of the JCPML's new exhibition in February.

The JCPML also welcomed Australia Post as a major sponsor of *The Art of the Possible* exhibition. The

Australia Post sponsorship allowed the JCPML to develop a major theme in the exhibition on communications during World War Two.

DFAT and JCPML Partners in Touring Exhibition

With support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) the JCPML is marking the 60th anniversary of the death of John Curtin in 2005 with a touring exhibition, *The Art of the Possible: Creating an independent Australian foreign policy*. This sponsorship continues the partnership between DFAT and JCPML which commenced with the significant donation of material comprising the working papers for the publication *Documents on Australian Foreign policy, 1937-1949*.

The touring exhibition is focussed on Australian foreign policy between 1935 and 1950 and is based on the JCPML's new major exhibition of the same name. The centrepiece of the travelling exhibition is the group of three 30 cm high bronze figurines of John Curtin during his prime ministership. The figures capture John Curtin in three typical poses – giving a public speech; reading over his notes; and in a relaxed pose, at the end of a hard day. These bronzes were commissioned by the JCPML in 2003 and completed in 2004 by Canberra-based sculptor Peter Latona. Peter is a well-known Australian sculptor who has previously produced pieces for The Australian Ballet, the Australian War Memorial, the Sydney Opera House, Royal Australian Mint and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The exhibition initially toured to Washington in March 2005 to be displayed in the Australian Embassy and Georgetown University. From July the exhibition will be in Canberra where it will be hosted by a number of venues including Old Parliament House, National Archives of Australia, Parliament House and the DFAT building during the remainder of 2005.

THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE CREATING AN INDEPENDENT AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY



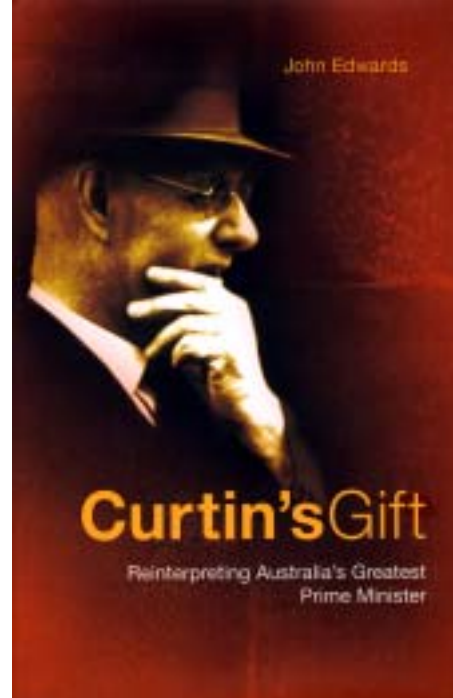
Resounding success: Curtin's response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, which led to Australia's formal entry into the war. Curtin's leadership during the war, and his role in the formation of the post-war world. The exhibition also features a large-scale map of Australia, showing the country's strategic importance during the war. The exhibition is a must-see for anyone interested in Australian history and foreign policy.

John Curtin's Gift

Four years ago when JCPML Visiting Scholar for 2000, Dr John Edwards, presented his public lecture *In Search of John Curtin*, he was so intrigued by the material he uncovered in his research that he felt the only way to do justice to it was to write a book. After much further research, particularly using material from the Tom Fitzgerald papers in the JCPML, *Curtin's Gift: Reinterpreting Australia's Greatest Prime Minister* is now in the bookshops.

John Edwards took an original approach to John Curtin's life. In his book he offers a reinterpretation of the wartime leader, challenging our understanding of Curtin's place in Australian history as an accidental hero and a reluctant prime minister. Instead, John Edwards portrays Curtin as a deceptively cunning player in the chess game of politics and argues that as well as refocussing Australia's defence and strategic alliance, Curtin more importantly paved the way for the internationalist economic policies of the Hawke and Keating Governments.

For more information on John Edwards' book see enclosed flyer. To read John Edwards' lecture, *In Search of John Curtin*, go to <http://john.curtin.edu.au/events/speeches/edwardsj.html>



Continued from page 1

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requested the forces be diverted to Burma and Curtin refused; on 22 February when Curtin learnt that Churchill had diverted the 7th Division to Burma without permission he immediately cabled Churchill, forcing Churchill to give way and the convoy sailed on to Australia.

The development of the audio visual component of the exhibition continues the unique creative partnership between JCPML and the Perth Theatre Company, which in 2003 produced the award winning play *Shadow of the Eagle*. JCPML and Perth Theatre Company combine in the current exhibition to generate an innovative and striking juxtaposition of images and information on two large video screens. One displays original archival documents, photographs and film, while the other features footage of actor Geoff Kelso re-enacting important scenes from Curtin's life.

JCPML Historical Consultant Professor David Black, who wrote the indepth essay which formed the basis for the exhibition, said: '*The Art of the Possible* tracks the nation's progression from dependence on Britain to a more independent foreign policy in the period during and immediately following World War Two.'

'Under John Curtin's skilled and pragmatic leadership, Australia refused to see itself as a colonial outpost serving British interests and forged its own direction in foreign policy. This shift in thinking has helped shape Australia's foreign policy as we know it today,' he said.

Curator of the exhibition, JCPML Public Programs Coordinator Lesley Carman-Brown, explained that the central problems facing the nation during World War Two closely resemble those issues faced by Australia in the current global climate.

'We are still grappling with the need to resolve our geographic position in Asia with our European background,' she said. 'Australia also remains preoccupied with a need for security as an active member of the international community. World War Two was a catalyst for Australian foreign policy and John Curtin's Government put in place many developments to help deal with a more complex postwar environment.'

The exhibition is open to the public throughout 2005 and entry is free.



Exhibition Designer John Davies and Curator
Lesley Carman-Brown



Contributions and Support since December 2005

David Black

Debbie Hindley

Carolynne McCallum

His Exc. Lt. Gen. John Sanderson, AC

JCPML has *A Brush With Politics*

A brush with politics: the life and work of John Frith celebrates the work of one of Australia's leading cartoonists of the 20th century and illuminates Australia's cultural and social history through the medium of his powerful and insightful cartoons.

John Frith was a talented artist and an astute observer and had an uncanny ability to capture the essence of a character or situation in his cartoons and caricatures. He worked alongside Norman Lindsay at *The Bulletin* and was the first daily cartoonist to work for the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The JCPML is very pleased to be hosting this travelling exhibition from Old Parliament House, Canberra, featuring selected material from Frith's time with *The Bulletin* and *Sydney Morning Herald* during the 1930s and 1940s.

The exhibition was opened on 10 March and the JCPML was delighted to welcome Alex Frith, John Frith's grandson, as a guest speaker at the event.

Alex spoke of his fond memories of his grandfather and of the wonderful artistic gift he shared with his family.

Also speaking at the event were JCPML Historical Consultant Prof. David Black and Curtin University's Prof. Richard Lowe. Prof. Black spoke on the difficulties encountered by students when interpreting cartoons, while Prof. Lowe discussed his study of cartoon interpretation and his development of ways to improve the interpretive skills of students, or what he calls their 'graphicacy'.

The official launch was accompanied by a workshop for teachers which explored cartoon interpretation, using examples from the exhibition.

A brush with politics will be on display at the JCPML until 22 May. The exhibition is supported by Visions of Australia, an Australian Government program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of cultural material across Australia.

JCPML Challenge Bank Reading Room Visitors

Margaret Allen

Susan Allen

David Baird

Gill & Russell Baird

Leslie deSilva

Alan Fenna

Alex Frith

Catherine Jackson

Bruce W. S. James

Yves Chan Kam Lon

Ester May

Robin K. McClellan

Sally Mansfield

Diana & Terry Tapscott

Jacqueline Woodman



JCPML Education Officer Ros Marshall (left) and Jan Bishop, Committee member of the History Teachers' Association of WA, deliver the cartoon workshop for teachers

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