



**JOHN CURTIN PRIME  
MINISTERIAL LIBRARY**

## JCPML celebrates Federation and John Curtin Day



JCPML Director Dr Vicki Williamson and Federal Member for Swan Kim Wilkie open the new JCPML exhibition, *Shaping the Nation: John Curtin and Australia*

*Shaping the Nation: John Curtin and Australia* is the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library's major new exhibition developed to celebrate the Centenary of Federation next year. The exhibition was officially opened by Mr Kim Wilkie, Federal Member for Swan, on 6 October. The opening was part of the celebration for John Curtin Day which commemorates the anniversary of John Curtin becoming Prime Minister of Australia.

In following the development of John Curtin's political thinking and career, the exhibition explores the theme of what it means to be a nation. John Curtin's experiences during the early years of Federation reflected those of many working Australians and drove him to fight throughout his life to attain basic securities for all workers. As a wartime leader he bore the strain of a man leading his country towards an independent identity and in providing it with a vision for the future.

Generous support from the Curtin University Library and Information Service and a Commonwealth grant helped in the development of the exhibition. According to Mr Wilkie, who was actively involved in facilitating the Commonwealth's Federation

Community Project grants, "The exhibition is an exciting and valuable project which has the potential to involve many thousands of people as visitors throughout our year of celebrating the Centenary of Federation. When I visited the JCPML shortly after my election as the Member for Swan I was impressed by the JCPML's very active education program and their outreach activities involving the community. To me, the exhibition program met the ideals of the Federation Community Project."

The support and leadership of Dr Vicki Williamson, JCPML Director, was invaluable in ensuring the success of this undertaking. The exhibition team comprised Kandy-Jane Henderson who oversaw the project from conception to completion, with Drs Andrea Witcomb and Bobbie Oliver from the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage being commissioned to act as curators. Curatorial support was provided by JCPML staff member Lesley Carman-Brown with assistance from Lesley Wallace and David Wylie. Alan Muller Design was appointed exhibition designer.

The exhibition serves as a showcase for material in the JCPML collection, including photographs, documents, oral histories, speeches by Curtin, audiovisual material and special items such as John Curtin's gold watch. Other institutions including the National Archives of Australia, the National Library of Australia and the Australiana Fund have also contributed material for display.

**Entry to the exhibition is free. The exhibition is situated in the Wesfarmers Gallery on level 2 of the John Curtin Building and is open Tuesday to Friday between 10.30 am and 5.00 pm and on Sundays from 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm. The exhibition will be closed over Christmas.**



## History is in the air!

Over the past few months several events have served to reinforce for me, and I hope also for some of our future community leaders, just how dynamic and relevant history can be to all our lives.

First of all, the Centenary of Federation is now on our doorstep with celebrations planned throughout Australia to mark this special anniversary in January 2001. The JCPML's contribution is a major new exhibition which was opened on John Curtin Day. We feel this is an exciting community project with the potential to involve thousands of visitors. Our last exhibition was on display for two and a half years and recorded 37,000 visitors from all over the world. We extend a warm welcome to all members of the community to come and visit our new exhibition.

For the third consecutive year, the JCPML has collaborated with the History Teachers Association of WA in hosting the National History Challenge and I was privileged again this year to be one of the judges. The standard of work being produced and the level of historical interest displayed by students is truly remarkable. This combination is particularly exemplified by a very talented young historian, Alysia Debowski, who is the National winner in the JCPML special category this year.

Turning young children into historical sleuths is the aim of a new education initiative the JCPML has developed, the Treasure Box. Filled with a range of primary resources and a variety of activities to stimulate young minds, the aim of this educational tool is to give students in remote WA areas an equitable opportunity to participate in the JCPML education program.

It was very special for the JCPML Foundation Staff Team to receive news of our Vice Chancellor's Award for Excellence and to receive a visit from our Foundation Patron, the Hon Gough Whitlam, all in the same week! These two special events cap off a busy and successful year and will inspire us to further efforts next year.

Vicki Williamson  
JCPML Director

## National Winner a Talented Historian

The 2000 National winner for the JCPML's special category in the National History Challenge, *Achievers and Achievements through the life and times of John Curtin*, is 15 year old Alysia Debowski from Presbyterian Ladies' College in Perth. According to judges Alysia's essay, *A Rare Achiever*, was of a remarkably high standard and would do credit to a tertiary level student.

Despite her young age, Alysia is an experienced researcher with an avid interest in history. This is the third year she has entered the National History Challenge and she was awarded prizes and commendations in 1998 and 1999. Alysia was also the recipient of one of the Simpson prizes winning a trip to Gallipoli this year and was one of 30 students selected to participate in the Sir Charles Court Young Leaders Program run by the History Teachers Association of WA and Curtin University of Technology.



National History Challenge winner, Alysia Debowski (centre) with her teacher Jan Bishop and Deputy University Librarian, John Frylinck

Pondering her entry for this year's NHC while she was in Turkey earlier this year, Alysia was struck by the difference that influential people can make to history. When she discovered the JCPML's special John Curtin category, she decided that the wartime prime minister would make the perfect subject given his impact on Australian history.

While Alysia undertook many avenues of research her most valuable source was the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. Her teacher, Mrs Jan Bishop, made a special appointment to bring Alysia into the research rooms and JCPML staff took the time to show her the oral histories, secondary resources and how to use the JCPML website and Electronic Research Archive (ERA). By the

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end of the project Alysia had collected four scrapbooks full of material and from there it was a matter of distilling the information into her prize-winning essay.

“The JCPML website and ERA were so incredibly convenient,” said Alysia. “Even when I was stuck at home with no transport to get to the library I had all the information at my fingertips.”

In reading through Curtin’s letters, reproduced in the digital resource, *John Curtin: A Prime Minister and his People*, Alysia said that what came through clearly was his concern about the average Australian’s well-being. “This concern is what particularly endeared John Curtin to me,” she said. “The most fascinating information I discovered about John Curtin was how he rose above his circumstances – poverty and lack of formal

education – to become a powerful prime minister capable and visionary enough to change the government system.”

As the national prize winner Alysia wins a trip to Canberra to be presented with her award. The bonus is that she will have a reunion with two friends she made on her trip to Gallipoli as part of the Simpson prize, and who are also National History Challenge prize winners. “Tess lives in Darwin, so we never get a chance to meet even though we talk all the time on the phone,” said Alysia. “This will be a great opportunity to catch up in person. I’d like to thank the HTAWA and JCPML for giving such marvelous chances to students and for exciting them about history.”

Congratulations Alysia!

## 2000 National History Challenge

The National History Challenge (NHC) encourages students from years 5 to 12 throughout Australia to take on a research task which explores some aspect of Australian history. Students may enter the National History Challenge as individuals or groups of up to four students. The work may be presented as an essay, in multimedia format, as a performance or as a museum display.

This year the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library sponsored a prize for the National History Challenge in the special category, *Achievers and Achievements through the life and times of John Curtin*. The focus of the JCPML’s Special Category was aimed at encouraging students to concentrate on the life and times of Prime Minister John Curtin. John Curtin was one of Australia’s greatest prime ministers and achieving this high position in Australian history was the culmination of many years of struggle by Curtin who had to overcome hardships such as poverty and lack of formal education. As prime minister, he led Australia through the crisis of World War Two and played a pivotal role in laying the foundation for the nation’s social services in postwar Australia. He was an ordinary man doing an extraordinary job in the face of adversity.

Staff from the History Teachers Association of WA and JCPML worked together again this year to ensure the smooth running of the NHC judging and awards ceremony.

## Treasure Box for students

Thanks to a grant from the Public Education Endowment Trust, the JCPML has been able to develop the concept of a “Treasure Box” to travel throughout the state in an attempt to give primary school students in remote and regional areas an educational experience comparable with a visit to the JCPML premises. The Treasure Box will take students on an historical journey using archival resources. They will investigate the life and times of wartime Prime Minister John Curtin and find out what life was like on the homefront for ordinary Australians during World War II.

The provision of comprehensive resources and detailed lesson plans means that the Treasure Box is self-contained. This is particularly important for schools in remote and regional Western Australia where resources are often in short supply.

Primary sources, including letters, newspaper articles, advertisements, cartoons, photographs, recordings of

speeches, archival video footage and artifacts from the period, will feature in the 10 different activities included in the Treasure Box. Amongst the activities provided students will explore rationing, coupons and other austerity measures; they will learn about pounds, shillings and pence; use a CD Rom and cloze (comprehension) activity; and complete a profile of John Curtin using the JCPML website. Students have the opportunity to listen to important speeches given by Curtin and view archival footage of him. They will play the John Curtin edition snakes and ladders game, while special jigsaws will lead them into an investigation of important events and people.

The Treasure Box will be available for the schools program from first term next year and demand is expected to be brisk, so schools are encouraged to book early. For further information and booking forms please contact the JCPML office on (08) 9266 4205.

# Collection Development gets a Boost

The role of Collection Development Librarian at the JCPML is both challenging and interesting. Filling this position is Lesley Wallace, a Library and Information Service staff member who has been assigned to the JCPML to assist the Archivist with collection development and research services, including ERA; documenting donations; and resolving copyright issues.

The JCPML collection continues to grow with a current focus on obtaining copies of relevant material housed in other institutions, both within Australia and overseas. Lesley then undertakes the systematic recording of donation and copyright documentation from individuals, government departments, companies and organizations which is a significant and time-consuming task.

As well, Lesley responds to research enquiries, is involved in tailoring material for web projects and makes use of her teacher-training to act as a back up person for the delivery of the JCPML's education program.



*JCPML Foundation Team members receive congratulations on winning the Vice Chancellor's Award of Excellence from Foundation Patron the Hon. Gough Whitlam and his wife Margaret. From left to right: Ms Henderson, Ms Carman-Brown, Mrs Whitlam, Dr Williamson, Mr Whitlam and Mr Wylie.*

## Award for Excellence

On 6 November the JCPML foundation staff team - comprising Dr Vicki Williamson, Kandy-Jane Henderson, Lesley Carman-Brown and David Wylie - was presented with the Vice Chancellor's Award for Excellence in recognition of their outstanding service to Curtin University of Technology. The award is an acknowledgement that the group was instrumental in bringing to reality the vision to create Australia's first prime ministerial library. The team's capacity for innovation has resulted in a number of new programs and services and the JCPML has become a benchmark for other prime ministerial libraries being developed in Australia.

## Contributions and Support since August 2000

Dr Bob Bessant  
Ass.Prof. David Black  
Considine & Griffiths Architects  
Mr Robin Glenie  
Mrs Hazel Hawke  
Mr Tony Rafty  
Ms Sally Robinson

## Visitors to the JCPML Challenge Bank Reading Room

Venetia Beale  
Vivienne Chang  
Stella Colwell  
Jim and Rita Coulter  
Ainslie Dewe  
Elaine Haigh  
Peter V Jones  
Rory Lamont  
Patricia Layzell Ward  
Christopher Lewis  
Bob Naylor  
Ngu Ling Ngee  
Jan Partridge  
George Paspalis  
Ron and Connie Paxton  
Sam Rigg  
Donna Runner  
Robyn Sandes  
Krish Sappal  
Verena Schindler  
Thwaites family  
Gough and Margaret Whitlam  
Peter Wilshaw  
Gordon and Marjory Wise  
John Wylie

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