

Ten thousand people ponder Magna Carta and medieval life

What do the movie *The Castle*, the Yirrkala Bark Petitions and Albert Langer have in common?

Magna Carta: An Australian Story answers this question and showcases how an 800-year-old document is relevant to Australians today. The exhibition is currently open to the public, following the hugely successful Medieval Fest on Monday 8 June, and ahead of the official 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta on Monday 15 June 2015.

Magna Carta: An Australian Story offers visitors to the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House the opportunity to explore the history and relevance of Magna Carta from an Australian perspective, highlighting why all Australians should care about Magna Carta.

“Magna Carta is the bedrock of our democracy,” said Libby Stewart, Creative Producer and Senior Historian. “It established the rule of law as the highest ideal, something that has made Australia what it is today.”

The exhibition links eight Australian stories with the ideas and spirit of this historic document to show how it is still current today. These stories are brought to life through an exciting touch screen interactive, complete with the Latin original and English translations of the 1215 Magna Carta.

Stories include: Miners fighting for their rights in **Eureka, 1854**; the exploration of freedoms in time of war in the **War Precautions Act 1914-1915**; Darryl Kerrigan’s fight for his home in Australian movie classic ***The Castle***; and Magna Carta’s relevance for Indigenous Australians through the **Yirrkala Bark Petitions, 1963**.

Ms Daryl Karp, Director of the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House said ***Magna Carta: An Australian Story*** is a great example of how the museum is committed to developing engaging and creative content which all visitors can relate to.

“At a time when everyone is focusing on Magna Carta and its significance to the Westminster system, we have set out to look at it through an Australian filter,” said Daryl.

“With stories and quotes from eminent Australians such as Chief Justice Robert French AC, Mr Geoffrey Robertson QC and Attorney General George Brandis QC, we want all visitors to be as inspired by this great document as we are.”

Magna Carta: An Australian Story has been developed in collaboration with the British Library, and will be on display until June 2016. A website adapted from the exhibition interactive will also be launched in July 2015.

Additional information:

Other items on display in ***Magna Carta: An Australian Story*** include: illuminated digital copies of three versions of Magna Carta 1215 – 1297, collection items relating to Eureka in 1854 and the Communist Party Reform in 1950, “*The Great Charter and Charter of the Forest...*” by William

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Blackstone 1759, “*A Plea for the Constitution...*” by Jeremy Bentham 1803, short animations and images from the British Library and quotes from eminent Australians.

As part of the museum’s extended Magna Carta celebrations, a Medieval Fest was hosted on Monday 8 June. Working with the Society for Creative Anachronisms, the event brought the thirteenth century to life through combat displays, dance and music, lifestyle and clothing displays and plenty of children’s activities. Over ten thousand visitors attended the Medieval Fest, and pondered what life was like around the time of Magna Carta.

On the official anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta, Monday 15 June, Human Rights Commissioner Professor Gillian Triggs, will deliver the Alice Tay Lecture in Law and Human Rights: ‘*Magna Carta: How relevant to Australia and Human Rights?*’ Presented by The Herbert & Valmae Freilich Foundation at the ANU, the lecture is a free public event which begins at 12.30pm in the Members’ Dining Room, (bookings not required).

A national icon, a place of great beauty, magnificent design and historical significance, Old Parliament House is home to the Museum of Australian Democracy. Celebrating the spirit of Australian democracy and the power of people’s voices within it, the museum highlights the value of the democratic principles of equality, freedom, justice and representation. Open to the public daily from 9am–5pm with a range of exhibitions, events and public programs, and a great café. For more details visit moadoph.gov.au

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For further information, interviews or photos opportunities please contact:
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