

## **The gift of democracy; transcending generations, shaping the future**

*“You are the future of Australia, enrich it ...”* reads one of the hundreds of cards written to new Australian citizens by visitors to *The Gift* exhibition at the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD).

This powerful exhibition acknowledges the role migrants have played in shaping the social, political and cultural fabric of Australian life. Visitors to the exhibition have been invited to write messages to new citizens on gift cards provided by MOAD. The artists from *The Gift* exhibition were filmed reading a handful of these cards out in a moving [video](#).

“This exhibition brings contentious issues back to the personal. It is telling from the responses in these cards that the hearts and minds of visitors have been opened by what they have experienced here in this space.” Says Daryl Karp, Director of MoAD.

An invitation to participate in this activity was extended to women at an International Women’s Day lunch hosted by Maria Vamvakinou MP, Federal Member for Calwell, early in the year. Ms Vamvakinou distributed the cards to the women at the event, many of whom were refugees and had experienced the impact of humanitarian immigration to Australia first-hand.

“These cards signify hope and give strength to our future Australians, while at the same time giving our newest Australians a powerful voice,” says Ms Vamvakinou.

Ms Vamvakinou also distributed the cards to students of Meadows Primary School, a culturally diverse school in her electorate of Calwell.

Mary Elizabeth Calwell, daughter of Australia’s first Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell, also wrote a message of hope. She wrote:

*“My father welcomed hundreds of thousands of people after 1945 to Australia and millions have followed, so we welcome you to our great South Land.”*

The exhibition opens with Isobel’s Koala, a gift to a World War 2 migrant from Arthur Calwell.

Ms Karp reflected on Australia’s legacy of migration.

“Democracy is a fragile gift that we must continue to nurture. Ms Calwell’s contribution is a reminder of how the gift of democracy continues be shaped by new generations,” said Ms Karp.

Ms Vamvakinou will formally hand the cards from the International Woman’s Day lunch and from Meadows primary school over to MoAD on Tuesday 22 May.

A selection of the gift cards will then be given to new Australian citizens at a ceremony later that day.

“The sentiments of *The Gift* extends beyond its gallery space. I am very proud of that,” said Ms Karp.

The Museum of Australian Democracy celebrates the spirit of Australian democracy and the power of your voice within it. Open 9am to 5pm daily. For more information visit [www.moadoph.gov.au](http://www.moadoph.gov.au).

# MEDIA RELEASE



**Ends**

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For further information, interviews or photo opportunities, please contact Monica Glasgow: [monica.glasgow@moadoph.gov.au](mailto:monica.glasgow@moadoph.gov.au), (02) 6270 8120 or 0416 249 522.

Penni Pappas, Office of Maria Vamvakinou MP, [penni.pappas@aph.gov.au](mailto:penni.pappas@aph.gov.au), (03) 9367 5216 or 0416 481 626

## **NOTES TO THE EDITOR:**

Media are invited to attend the handover of the cards to MoAD at 8.30am on Tuesday 22 May 2018. The handover will take place in the Gift exhibition space at MoAD, Old Parliament House.

## **INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:**

- Daryl Karp, Director of MoAD
- Maria Vamvakinou, MP, Federal Member for Calwell

## **ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL:**

High res images of exhibition objects are available here:

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/n7zcu7or54n0npe/AAAvE\\_9-Vv6F3hhQ66GIU\\_Ira?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/n7zcu7or54n0npe/AAAvE_9-Vv6F3hhQ66GIU_Ira?dl=0)