

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 3 December 2015

Exhibition highlights the dangerous reality of being a political cartoonist

At 10am today, Thursday 3 December, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, will launch ***Behind the Lines 2015: The year's best political cartoons*** exhibition at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House.

Behind the Lines 2015 celebrates the role of satire and political cartoonists in Australia and highlights the power that their drawings have in contributing to our daily political and social discourse.

"Satire is controversial, it's provocative, it offends all religions, all political parties, nothing and no-one is spared. (It) is a counter-balance against power," said Ms Bishop on her visit to the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in April 2015.

As part of the launch, award-winning political cartoonists Cathy Wilcox, First Dog on the Moon and Fiona Katauskas will take part in a robust panel discussion, moderated by acclaimed journalist Karen Middleton: "*When did political cartooning become a dangerous pastime and are they rebels or realists in how they portray our political landscape?*"

The discussion will delve into the power of political cartooning to push social boundaries and question national policy but also highlight the dangers of political cartooning, as witnessed by the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks on 7 January 2015.

Australian journalist and award-winning writer Peter Greste has written the foreword in the ***Behind the Lines 2015*** catalogue and says, "In the hands of a great cartoonist, a simple line drawing has extraordinary power to slice through political spin and rhetoric; to clearly illuminate an otherwise hidden truth,

"If the work you see here doesn't make you smile one moment and grimace the next; if it doesn't make you angry or infuriate you at some level, or push you to reconsider some of your most dearly held beliefs, then it will have failed. But somehow I suspect it will do all that and a good deal more."

With a selection of 80 of the best cartoons from 39 cartoonists, this year's exhibition displays some of Australia's most controversial cartoons that test the boundaries of free speech and the freedom of the press.

"Australia's political cartoonists are well known for their sense of humour and, although they don't have all the answers to the political issues, they know how to use ridicule to probe for answers to legitimate questions," said Exhibition Curator, Tania Cleary.

This year's exhibition does not just celebrate one 'Cartoonist of the Year', but celebrates the community of political cartoonists in Australia, in memory of the tragedy at *Charlie Hebdo*.

Ms Daryl Karp, Director of the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House says "As we reflect on the events from earlier this year and the amazing talent and passion our cartoonists have for their work, we are constantly reminded about what a profoundly lucky country we live in, where cartoonists can poke fun at our politicians, and push the boundaries on a daily basis,

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“As our most popular exhibition, *Behind the Lines 2015* exemplifies our vision in celebrating the spirit of Australian democracy. We want our visitors to stop and think about the role of political cartooning in this country, and reflect on the overwhelmingly important power of one’s voice,” said Ms Karp.

Behind the Lines 2015: The year’s best political cartoons will be open to the public from 3 December until 20 November 2016. A travelling version of the exhibition will also tour the following regional cultural institutions:

- Ipswich Art Gallery, Ipswich, QLD: 23 Jan – 6 March 2016
- Parramatta Riverside Theatre, Parramatta, NSW: 29 March – 20 May 2016
- Pine Rivers Heritage Museum, Whiteside, QLD: 29 May – 3 July 2016
- Museum and Gallery of Northern Territory, Darwin, NT: 23 July – 25 September 2016
- Waneroo Library and Cultural Centre, Perth, WA: 28 October – 26 November 2016

Old Parliament House is home to the Museum of Australian Democracy—celebrating the spirit of Australian democracy and the power of your voice within it. www.moadoph.gov.au

Ends

For further information, images or interview opportunities, please contact:
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Interview opportunities from 9.15am on Thursday 3 December 2015

- Fiona Katauskas, author and political cartoonist
- Cathy Wilcox, author and political cartoonist
- First Dog on the Moon (Andrew Marlton), author and political cartoonist
- Tania Cleary, Exhibition Curator for Behind the Lines 2015
- Daryl Karp, Director, Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
- Michael Evans, Head of Content and Executive Producer for Behind the Lines 2015, Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
- Libby Stewart, Senior Historian and Internal Curator for Behind the Lines 2015, Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House
- Peter Greste (phone interviews only, requests approved on a case-by-case basis)

Accompanying material

- Tania Cleary’s top 5 cartoons
- Peter Greste’s foreword from the exhibition catalogue
- High res images of cartoons can be supplied on request