

MoAD visitors walk in footsteps of first female parliamentarians at new exhibition

Bestselling author Kathy Lette will launch *Breaking Through: 75 Years of Women in Parliament* at MoAD (Museum of Australian Democracy) on Saturday, 25 August 2018.

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the first women elected to Australian Federal Parliament, the *Breaking Through* exhibition at MoAD explores the journeys of 11 trailblazers, who were each the first to hold particular parliamentary positions.

The stories told in the exhibition are stories of resilience, perseverance and ground-breaking achievements. Women featured in the exhibition include:

- Dorothy Tangney and Enid Lyons, the first women elected into Parliament in 1943;
- Julia Gillard, the first female Prime Minister elected in 2010; and
- Janine Haines, the first women to lead an Australian political party.

The exhibition recognises the significant contribution these women made in Australia's democracy.

It gives visitors the opportunity to look back on their lives, uncover their motivations and what they view as their greatest accomplishments.

Breaking Through also uncovers some of the darker sides of being a woman in parliament.

Despite the first women being elected into parliament in 1943, the first ladies toilet was not established in Parliament House until more than 3 decades later.

This toilet only came about after much complaining from two female parliamentarians who were not happy that they had to go to the lower floor to use the toilet. A urinal was eventually boxed in and converted to a female toilet in 1974.

The press gallery on the top floor of parliament house did also not have a female toilet until the early 1970's. Women were expected to walk downstairs if they needed to use the bathroom.

This was one of the many forms of discrimination these women faced in Parliament. Another was their portrayal in the media.

During the launch of *Breaking Through*, Ms Lette, a much loved feminist icon, will discuss the media's portrayal of women in parliament and the impact it has on their careers.

Ms Lette, who shot to fame with her first novel, *Puberty Blues*, at age 17, will be joined at the launch by the director of MoAD, Daryl Karp.

Daryl has always been passionate about showcasing the obstacles the women who originally worked in Parliament House faced.

"*Breaking Through* is a multi-faceted experience that takes visitors on a journey through the entire museum, allowing them to walk in the footsteps of the first women Parliamentarians. The women weren't just confined to the Chambers, but needed to access all areas. But the building wasn't built for them and they still had to fight to get equal opportunity, even for basic amenities like toilets." said Ms Karp.

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MoAD is currently running a series of tours called Mystery Tour: Daring Dames. These tours give visitors a behind-the-scenes look at the working conditions of the 'daring dames' who worked in parliament house during the mid-twentieth century.

About MoAD

The Museum of Australian Democracy celebrates Australia's proud history as a democratic nation and actively promotes the participation of its citizens in determining its future.

MoAD is a museum not just of objects but of ideas. In our iconic heritage building, we tell the story of Australia's journey to becoming one of the world's most vibrant and multicultural democratic nations.

MoAD is a place where stories, conversations and narratives from myriad perspectives can be heard and discussed.

ENDS

For further information, please contact Annika Scott, annika.scott@moadoph.gov.au, (02) 6270 8120 or 0400 946 608

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- Daryl Karp, Director, MoAD
- Sharon Bulkeley, Exhibition Curator