

# MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 2 May 2017



## Golden key opens door to Australia's democratic history

A 14-carat gold key used by the Duke of York to open Old Parliament House in 1927 is the centrepiece of a new exhibition opening today at the Museum of Australian Democracy.

**The Opening Day: 9 May 1927** exhibition celebrates the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Old Parliament House and showcases an important chapter in Australia's democratic history from the perspective of onlookers in the crowd.

The Hon Tony Smith MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives and a Presiding Officer of Parliament, will officially unveil the golden key as part of the launch of the exhibition. He will be joined by Walkley award-winning journalist and author Paul Daley for a candid conversation about the role of the Speaker today, the significance of Old Parliament House and their mutual love of the AFL.

The Hon Tony Smith MP says the impartiality of the Speaker is important for the integrity of Parliament and the functioning of Australia's democracy.

"In an Australian sporting context, the Speaker's role is to umpire the chamber. This is a deeply entrenched feature of our parliamentary democracy and one that began with the opening of Old Parliament House and continues to be built on up the hill," said the Hon Tony Smith MP.

Paul Daley will share the story of Jimmy Clements and John Noble, two Indigenous men who attended the opening of Old Parliament House in 1927, and the unanticipated way that many in the crowd responded to their presence.

"The police thought Jimmy Clements and John Noble, in their bare feet and with their wild hair and unkempt clothes, were best kept away from the royals. But many in the crowd seemed to disagree and their support for these men demonstrated that traits regarded as quintessentially Australian - belief in the right to a fair go and to respectful defiance - were demonstrated at this event in 1927 even though Indigenous Australians continue the struggle for both 90 years later," says Paul Daley.

The 'In Conversation' event will also include a speech by Dr David Kemp, Chair of the Australian Heritage Council, who will discuss the significance of our national heritage and the value it brings to the nation.

*The Opening Day: 9 May 1927* marks the 90th anniversary of the opening of Parliament House and tells the stories of the people who witnessed a historic chapter in Australia's democratic story. Through the photographs, recollections and memorabilia of onlookers at the opening ceremony, the exhibition reveals rich stories about the life and times of the nation.

"The opening of Parliament House represented Australian nationhood, identity and ideals. On its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is important we commemorate this important chapter in Australia's democratic history," says Ms Daryl Karp, Director of the Museum of Australian Democracy.

The golden key will be on display for six weeks as part of **The Opening Day: 9 May 1927**. The exhibition will be open for 12 months at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House. Entry is free after museum admission. For more information visit: [www.moadoph.gov.au](http://www.moadoph.gov.au)

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## NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Media are invited to the unveiling of the key with the Hon Tony Smith MP, Dr David Kemp and Ms Daryl Karp at **10.30am**. Media are also welcome to stay for the 'In Conversation' with the Hon Tony Smith MP and Paul Daley that will begin at **11.00am**.

**VISUALS:** Unveiling of gold key  
In Conversation event  
*The Opening Day: 9 May 1927* exhibition (archive images also available)

**INTERVIEWS:** The Hon Tony Smith MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Mr Paul Daley, Walkley award-winning journalist and author  
Dr David Kemp, Chair of the Australian Heritage Council  
Ms Daryl Karp, Director of the Museum of Australian Democracy  
Ms Stephanie Pfennigwerth, *The Opening Day* exhibition curator, Museum of Australian Democracy

**Ends**

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For further information, interviews or photo opportunities, please contact Alice Brown: [alice.brown@moadoph.gov.au](mailto:alice.brown@moadoph.gov.au), (02) 6270 8120 or 0410 997 741.