



# PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

13 APRIL 1978

## NOLAN GALLIPOLI EXHIBITION

There are few tasks I enjoy more as Prime Minister than accepting on behalf of the Australian people valuable works of art which will be cherished and loved by generations to come, especially when our acquisition does not enlarge the deficit by a single cent.

Sidney Nolan is of course one of the greatest artists this country has produced and in donating this famous series of paintings and drawings to the trustees of the Australian War Memorial, he has demonstrated wonderful generosity to his country.

Mr. Nolan's works have often sparked controversy in the past, and there will be those who will still prefer the more literal depictions of battle which are to be found in many of the other paintings in the War Memorial's collection of over 12,000 works of art. But of course it is the very originality and creativity of Sidney Nolan's works that make them such a valuable addition to the collection.

Mr. Nolan had originally, I understand, intended to create a series of works on the ancient struggle which took place at Troy, almost within sight of Gallipoli, but the impact of the ANZAC legend proved to be stronger and the result of years of labours has been this magnificent Gallipoli Series.

There is a haunting emotional impact of this series which in some way enlarges our understanding of what happened in that terrible theatre of war just over 60 years ago.

These paintings and drawings differ greatly from the documentary records of Australia's official artists of the 1914-1918 War, yet both are complementary, for Sidney Nolan's Gallipoli Series captures the emotional response of a whole generation of Australians to the sacrifices made by the ANZACS.

The 252 works which make up this exhibition cover two decades of the artist's activity and document his changing responses to a national legend which he first started to paint while serving in the army in 1942. Sidney Nolan has been adding to the series ever since -- most recently in February this year -- and this exhibition is the first public viewing of the entire series.

Last year, the Chairman of the Memorial's Trustees, Sir Thomas Daly, approached the artist to find out more about his plans for the Gallipoli series. Sidney Nolan's prompt and generous response was to announce that he would donate the entire series to the nation through the War Memorial in memory of his brother, Raymond, who drowned accidentally at Cooktown in 1945 while returning from service in the Pacific.

Both my Government and the Memorial Trustees are deeply grateful to Sidney Nolan for making such an extensive and important series available. We have been given an excellent opportunity to enrich the nation's collections and by doing so enriching the lives of Australians and our many overseas visitors who visit the War Memorial.

It gives me great pleasure in declaring the Memorial Exhibition of Sidney Nolan's Gallipoli Series open.

\*\*\*\*\*