



PRIME MINISTER

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
INAUGURAL BULLETIN - BLACK AND WHITE ARTISTS AWARDS
1 NOVEMBER 1985 - SYDNEY

Mr and Mrs Kennedy, Honoured Guests,

I very much appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight for this, the inaugural national awards for Australian cartooning, sponsored by "the bulletin" and named in honour of the great Stan Cross.

I say I appreciate the opportunity because, at the very least, being here tonight gives me the chance to turn the spot-light on to a few of those who have so unkindly, and terribly unreasonably (!)....., put me in the spot-light over the last few years.

I understand that in the audience tonight are, for a start, the cartoonists from most of the major metropolitan dailies. excellent. I can expect to see blank spots next to the editorial columns tomorrow.

As a politician, most interest for me tonight extends to the award for the best political cartoon. because I'm not a financial member of the black and white artists, I'm not eligible to vote. Although, since I feature so much in your work, perhaps you should give me honorary membership.

Of course, if I, had that membership, I might be more inclined to vote for an artist - there must be some around - who spends more time analysing the obvious deficiencies of some of my esteemed opponents, than on noting any passing foibles on the part of me or my colleagues.

As I say, political cartooning is the area of principal interest for me.

Cartoonists have developed their talents in the field of political analysis for hundreds of years. In Australia, we have been particularly blessed - or cursed, depending on your perspective - with a long history of biting, satirical political commentary in the form of cartoons. One cartoon can leave an impact more potent and longer lasting than a 1,000 words.

Since 1855, with the arrival of "Melbourne Punch", Australians have been offered incisive social commentary by a vast range of black-and-white artists, enlivened by the wit of a brash new colonial culture.

The pace of Australian cartooning picked up further with the advent of "The Bulletin" in 1880.

There could be no more appropriate sponsor for tonight's awards than "The Bulletin". Its association with the cream of Australia's literary and drawing talent extends over more than a century, and has been described - accurately, in my view - as providing the literary genesis for a substantial part of Australia's national culture.

The famous black-and-white artists of early "Bulletin" history are legendary figures in the history of Australian drawings and cartoons. Livingstone Hopkins or "Hop" as he was known to many - Phil May, Will Dyson, Norman Lindsay, and the great David Low all received their early chance at success, and the basis for illustrious careers, from "The Bulletin".

In later years, others arose to take their place including of course, Stan Cross whose classic sketch forms the physical representation of tonight's awards.

Stan Cross is probably best known for "The Potts" family, a series which continues even today, a testament to Stan Cross' judgement of the humour which appeals to all Australians. His "Dad and Dave" works, during the depression years, their bittersweet humour an accurate reflection of the times, they live on today untarnished by time.

And later of course, "Wally and the Major", commenced early in World War II, became an institution for Australian newspaper readers.

The famous sketch which is physically represented in tonight's awards is rightly recognised as encapsulating all the essential elements of genuine wit as it has developed - uniquely - in Australia. Although it first appeared over 50 years ago, this classic scene of two of Australia's early larrikin construction workers, dangling precariously and without ceremony or safety from the beams of a partly-completed skyscraper, retains its full measure of humour and social commentary today. (perhaps they were hanging up a Eureka Flag). that the humour of the piece exceeds its social commentary is perhaps a further apt comment on the Australian ethos. We admire most in ourselves the ability to recognise the humour of a situation, even in adversity.

The issues of the day in Australian cartooning have varied little over the period since this sketch was first published in 1933: pollution, corruption, women's liberation, immigration, sport and of course politicians have all stood the test of time and remain as much with us today as they were then.

And the talent of Australian cartoonists, with their sharp pencils and sharper wits, exposing the pomposity, self-delusion and plain bad judgement which so often has characterised debate on questions such as these remains with us also.

I have no doubt that the recipients of awards here tonight, and indeed all members of the Black-and-White Artists' Club, will maintain the high standard established by their illustrious predecessors, encouraged by the judgement of their peers on occasions such as this.

It is now my great pleasure to open these envelopes containing the winners' names and to present the awards.
