



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
ADDRESS AT PRESENTATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS
CREATIVE FELLOWSHIPS, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA,
MONDAY, 17 OCTOBER 1994**

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Thank you very much Michael (Lynch), my colleague Michael Lee, Hilary McPhee, Senator Kernot, distinguished ladies and gentlemen and awardees, fellowship winners. It is a great pleasure to be here on yet another occasion associated with the fellowships and thank you Hilary indeed for the invitation.

I am so chuffed these days about the Australia Council and the way it has changed over the years, adapted to the needs of this country, to the arts, to the community and one doesn't have too many occasions to say nice things about people, but let me say, I generally try and make them you see. Let me say though I am delighted with the leadership which Hilary McPhee and Michael Lynch are providing and to have people of this calibre follow Rodney Hall and Max Burke and them following after Donald (Horne) that continuity, that tremendous commitment which they bring gives the Government, I think, great confidence that the arts are in very good hands in this country.

So, thank you indeed for your efforts, both of you, and for the Council in, again, stewarding the change through this year and for bringing these fellowships on. I am hoping that the coincidence of the awards and the fellowships and tomorrow's statement on the arts will mean that this is a great week for the arts in Australia because rarely does a Government have an opportunity to make a contribution, a renewed contribution to the arts in this country. We already have this week the Australian National Festival of Theatre on, so many people connected with the arts are in this city and we have our distinguished artists this morning and the Tasmanian Symphony and it should be, I think, a great occasion tomorrow. I hope it is and I want it to be because what the statement is about is not some routine announcement or some routine change, but rather a statement that the arts and the belief of the Government that the arts are not peripheral to Australian life, but central to it. And, that is the cause of the statement being made and to redefine and redirect the way in which the arts are funded by the Commonwealth and how

we can do co-operative things around the country with the arts community and with the States to redirect artistic endeavour in this country.

So, I hope when this time tomorrow comes those of you who have been waiting for it will be pleased with it and that we will truly have an opportunity to make very clear that the arts are entirely central to Australia and matter to us economically and socially to our identity et cetera.

When Governments make statements they get a lot of press and, of course, everyone expects them to be economic statements or mechanical statements, things about industry policy and the like. Well, there is going to be a lot of that in there too, but it is about the essence of the defining nature of the arts in Australia and the definition it brings to this country.

The Fellowships are part of that, of course, as well. And, what they are about is saying clearly and I hope lucidly that for people who have made a contribution to the arts and to the culture of this country that they are important and that the Government wants to continue to support them, to make a contribution so that their commitment to date can be continued for them often in mid career. This is essentially a scheme for artists of accomplishment in mid career and I am delighted that the quality of it, that the people who have been awarded the fellowships, now 45 of them since its inception, have been of such a high calibre that the prestige of the scheme remains as it was on the day it was first announced. As a consequence, we have seen people develop themselves, to take either the time out from an active and busy career or to continue as they had been, doing things that they might not have otherwise been able to do, but needing to worry about funds and money and how they can keep their life together.

These are for two years, three years, up to five years, they are now at \$66,000 a year which is an income which will encourage, we hope, those artists who have already, as I said, made a substantial contribution and who already are noteworthy for their work to continue on.

So, it is a great pleasure to me that there has been so much interest in the Fellowships by the artistic and cultural community in this country and that they remain, in a sense, the prestige and important awards that they are.

I hope that we will see these grow in the future, we are even saying something about them tomorrow and as I say, at this time tomorrow I think these awards and that which they stand for, but the arts in this country in general will have been seen by the community as being supported by the Government because of their innately important role in our society. Thank you very much for having me along.

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