



13

PRIME MINISTER

5/96

**STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA**

The next major extension stage of the National Museum of Australia will be the development of the social, political and constitutional theme at Old Parliament House.

A national competition to build the environmental component of the National Museum network at Yarramundi in Canberra will also be held.

The National Museum of Australia will be a museum which reaches all Australians in their own communities, their schools and libraries and on their own computers - and in Canberra, other capitals and regional centres.

Exhibition sites will be developed in Old Parliament House, at Yarramundi and at the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia on Acton Peninsula. The Museum will also produce on-line and interactive material which will be widely available in all schools and libraries and will develop partnerships with State and regional museums to operate an extensive program of travelling exhibitions and educational projects.

As part of the first stage of the physical network of the National Museum of Australia, *Creative Nation* announced that the Government will build the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia on Acton Peninsula. A new facility for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies is to be co-located with the Gallery. Building will commence on the site later this year.

Old Parliament House holds great significance for all Australians and the Government will provide \$12 million over 3 years to extend exhibition areas for the National Museum of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery and the Australian Archives. This will allow the Museum to develop exhibitions which are specifically designed to explore Australia's social, political and constitutional history in the Old Parliament House context.

A similar extension of the National Portrait Gallery and the Australian Archives will complement the National Museum presence and confirm Old Parliament House as a vibrant celebration of our history.

The Government is also foreshadowing the stage three development of the National Museum at Yarramundi in Canberra. The site and nature of the facility is such that the Government will organise a design competition for this building and site landscaping.

The Yarramundi facility will provide an environmental focus on our history and contemporary life. This will be developed so as to provide links with the National Botanical Gardens and to develop public programs in conjunction with bodies such as the CSIRO, the Australian Heritage Commission and Greening Australia. The 88 hectare site at Yarramundi provides an outstanding opportunity to explore, illustrate and educate on environmental issues.

To further extend access to the Museum beyond Canberra, \$6 million will be allocated to the Museum over the next three years to facilitate the funding of a number of specific partnership projects with State and regional museums, to increase the rate of their digitising program to enable more Australians to get in touch with their cultural heritage and to extend the range of travelling exhibitions developed and toured by the Museum.

It is critical that in addition to a strong Canberra base, the Museum should work collaboratively with State and selected regional museums to develop a national network which maximises the effective use of the distributed national collection and recognises the significant and active role which regional centres have to play in Australia's cultural life.

Since the *Creative Nation* commitment to extend access to our national collections through new communications technology, the National Museum has worked within the *Australia on CD* program and will have a critical role in the recently announced \$10 million program, *Australia's Story - Our National Collections On Line*, which will begin the task of digitising the collections of our national cultural institutions.

The Government believes that a modern National Museum must go beyond the notion of a single facility in the National Capital. The National Museum of Australia will give all Australians everywhere the opportunity to experience their country's cultural heritage.

CANBERRA
25 January 1996