

MEDIA ALERT

Thursday 13 May 2021

***HiveMind* – new exhibition creates a buzz in Canberra ahead of World Bee Day**

Canberra's latest exhibition, *HiveMind: Honeybees, Democracy and Me*, launches at MOAD on Tuesday 18th May 2021 and is set to sweeten your day

HiveMind is a quirky look at a little known history of Australia's federal parliaments - a delightful story of passion, serendipity and bees.

William Yates, a Liberal backbencher in the 70's, tricked Speaker Billy Snedden via an April Fools style prank into giving permission for beehives to be officially established for the first time at Old Parliament House. His passion for democracy and bees was apt.

"Bees provide a template for democracy, the 'sweetspot' of collective decision making," said MoAD's Director, Daryl Karp. "They are nature's example of democracy in action, and we hope to take visitors to the real heart of what democracy is in a way that, hopefully, surprises and inspires," she said.

"The Yates family is delighted that the role of bees and beekeeping and their connection to our democracy is being celebrated," said Peter Yates AM, son of William Yates MP. "The fact that our father, William Yates, was determined to bring his joy of beekeeping to Parliament House is a wonderful reminder of his passion, humour and approach to problem solving," he said.

Australia was one of the first countries in the world to allow beekeeping on Parliament House grounds with William Yates MP beekeeping in 1976 to 1980. In 2017, the tradition of beekeeping at Parliament House was reignited by Cormac Farrell following a parliamentary report on honeybees and, today, the honey is often gifted to dignitaries.

The stories will be brought to life at the exhibition opening on Tuesday 18th May, with William Yates' son, Peter Yates, part of a panel discussion facilitated by Walkley-winning journalist, presenter and commentator, Jan Fran. She joins Peter Yates, Member of the Order of Australia and Australian Academy of Science Medal 2019, and current Head Beekeeper of Parliament, Cormac Farrell.

The panel will discuss the history of beekeeping at Parliament, collective decision making among honeybees and what that can teach us about democracy.

EXHIBITION LAUNCH – MEDIA EVENT

WHAT: *HiveMind: Honeybees, Democracy and Me*

WHERE: MoAD Old Parliament House, Kings Hall

WHEN: 11.00am Tuesday 18th May - The exhibition launch event including in conversation. The Exhibition runs from 18th May.

Interviews available with: Ms Daryl Karp, MoAD Director, Mr Peter Yates OAM (son of Victorian MP and first beekeeper in Parliament), Mr Cormac Farrell (Head Beekeeper, Australia's Parliament House).

Exhibition Background

William Yates MP

When Victorian Liberal backbencher William Yates asked Speaker of the House, Billy Snedden, if he could keep bees on Parliament Grounds on April 1st 1976, the Speaker thought it was an April Fool's joke and granted permission to play along with the joke. But Yates was not joking and brought his bees to the Capital and Australia became one of the first countries in the world to allow beekeeping on the grounds of its national parliament.

"The Yates family is delighted that the role of bees and beekeeping and their connection to our democracy is being celebrated," said Peter Yates AM, son of William Yates. "The fact that our father, William Yates, was determined to bring his joy of beekeeping to Parliament House is a wonderful reminder of his passion, humour and approach to problem solving," he continued.

Canberra local **Cormac Farrell** re-established the tradition of beekeeping at Australia's home of Parliament (APH) in 2017 following a parliamentary report on the plight of honeybees in an effort to increase awareness of this cause and educate parliament on the industries that rely on bees. Honey from these hives now appear as gifts for visiting dignitaries and groups.

The HiveMind Art Installation started as a collaborative art piece constructed by members of the public during the Enlighten Festival in March 2020. Members of the public could write words of advice or life lessons on hexagonal panels to become part of a honeycomb puzzle. These public submissions will be displayed in the **HiveMind: Honeybees, Democracy and Me** exhibition as part of a honeycomb covering the walls of MoAD. The exhibition then leads to *Your Faithfully*, an interactive activity inspiring the public to write a letter to their local MP that MoAD will send to the addressee.

HiveMind: Honeybees, Democracy and Me will be open for from 18 May 2021, this is a free, non-ticketed exhibition.

About MoAD

The Museum of Australian Democracy celebrates Australia's proud history as a democratic nation and actively promotes the participation of its citizens in determining its future. MoAD is a museum not just of objects but of ideas. In our iconic heritage building, we tell the story of Australia's journey to becoming one of the world's most vibrant and multicultural democratic nations. MoAD is a place where stories, conversations and narratives from myriad perspectives can be heard and discussed.

MoAD is open 9am to 5pm daily. For more information, please visit moadoph.gov.au.

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For further information on this release and exhibition launch, Kailey Tonini, Threesides Marketing on behalf of MoAD, Kailey.Tonini@threesides.com.au or 0459 467 909.

Images are available via [Dropbox](#).