

Under embargo till 12pm Saturday 17 January

Old Parliament House announces new developments

Canberra's much loved heritage-listed landmark, Old Parliament House, today announced an exciting new visitor experience is currently being developed within the existing building. Scheduled to open in May 2009, the new experience will transform Old Parliament House.

"Since 1927 when the building opened as Provisional Parliament House, there has been much debate about the role and function of Old Parliament House after the Federal Parliament's move to the top of Capital Hill. Over the past 20 years this debate has intensified with people from around Australia sharing ideas and dreams about what Old Parliament House should be used for," said Kate Cowie, Deputy Director of Old Parliament House.

"Our plans are now becoming a reality with the creation of a unique and exciting visitor experience that will preserve the historical and architectural significance of the House.

"Specific plans for Old Parliament House are in the final stages of development and will be announced next month," said Ms Cowie.

"We welcome visitors to continue to enjoy all the House has to offer, particularly over this summer and school holiday period. We have a full schedule of activities, so get in quick to be one of the first people in Australia to take a brand new Little Builders tour, or see the popular *Billy Hughes at War* exhibition before it closes on 1 February," said Ms Cowie.

Old Parliament House is an award-winning tourist attraction that brings to life the stories of Australia's political past. Visitors to the House can enjoy a range of tours, events and exhibitions from 9.00am–5.00pm. For more details visit www.oph.gov.au

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For more information or to arrange an interview with Kate Cowie:

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Notes to editor

A number of exciting exhibitions and activities will run throughout the summer and school holiday period at Old Parliament House including:

- Little Builders – Monday 12 to Friday 16 January, Monday 19 to Friday 23 January, 10.00am and 11.15am for ages three to seven
Enjoy a special tour of Old Parliament House especially for children, then play in King's Hall and build the House out of building blocks.
- *Billy Hughes at War* exhibition until 1 February 2009
Come and visit *Billy Hughes at War* exhibition before it closes on the 1 February 2009! It explores William Morris (Billy) Hughes's leadership as Australian Prime Minister during the First World War. Original artefacts including Hughes's fountain pen, walking stick and false teeth are on display, and are complemented by multimedia and interactive components.
- 'Super Sleuth' – Daily 9.00am to 5.00pm for ages seven plus
Discover the secret password from clues hidden around Old Parliament House.
- 'House Play' – Daily 9.00am to 5.00pm for all ages
Travel back in time and learn about the history of Old Parliament House through costume dress-ups.
- Old Parliament House Tours – Daily 9.00am to 5.00pm
Old Parliament House is filled with stories of the drama and passion of politics. Discover these stories on a guided tour of the House. Daily tours every 45 minutes.
- Press Gallery exhibition – Daily 9.00am to 5.00pm
Walk through the offices and corridors where Australian political events, leaks, scoops and scandals were reported. Interview a politician in a real recording booth and discover how the press used to interact with politicians to inform Australians about political issues.
- The Australian Prime Ministers Centre exhibition – Daily 9.00am to 5.00pm
Do you know which former prime minister was present at the hanging of Ned Kelly? Visit the Australian Prime Ministers Centre to discover this and many more quirky facts about our former Prime Ministers. Interactive displays and personal objects will give you a look into the fascinating lives of these men.
- Cafe in the House – open daily 9.00am to 5.00pm
After your visit, enjoy a coffee or a meal.