



a House for the NATION

The history of the House of Representatives is now more easily accessible, thanks to a unique multimedia project on the House's first century.



Alfred Deakin, Australia's second Prime Minister, loved books and letters, kept an extensive diary of his spiritual reflections and believed firmly in ghosts.

That's one of the revelations in a new four episode documentary—*A House for the Nation*—that traces the development of the House of Representatives from 1901 to 2001.

Just released for public sale through Ronin Films and to be screened on the Sky News channel in December, the documentary looks at what has shaped today's House of Representatives and how the House has helped to shape Australia.

It's part of a multimedia project that includes a comprehensive CD-ROM, a website and a touch screen kiosk—all aimed at making the history of the House more accessible.

The project, produced by the Department of the House of Representatives in association with the Department of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff and Swish Australia, combines historic and contemporary film and photos with specially commissioned research. Interviews with current and former members of the House provide a unique insight into the people, events and issues that have helped make the House of Representatives what it is today.

The CD-ROM *A House for the Nation*, released earlier in the year through educational publishers Pearson Education Australia, is already attracting significant interest from universities and schools. It was selected as a finalist in the Australian Teachers of Media awards in the category of best tertiary educational resource and has been adopted by a number of universities as part of their course material for 2004.

With detailed information on all aspects of the House's workings and history, the CD-ROM includes more than 500

images gathered from various national collecting institutions, around 45 minutes of historic and contemporary video footage, virtual tours of the House of Representatives chamber, and a series of essays that explore some of the key influences on the House of Representatives, such as its relationship with the Senate and the media. Case studies help to illustrate how issues affecting the House have played out over its first 100 years.

Historical gems on the CD-ROM include:

- recording of the first broadcast of Question Time and the first speech given in the House by Dame Enid Lyons, the first woman elected to the House of Representatives;
- video footage from the inauguration of the Commonwealth in 1901, the naming of Canberra in 1913, the opening of the provisional (now old) Parliament House in 1927, the retirement of Australia's longest serving Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, in 1966 and the dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975;
- video footage of the famous political campaigns of the 1970s—'It's Time' and 'Memories'; and
- biographies of all Prime Ministers with rare footage dating back to 1929.

"We see this as a unique, very impressive and highly sophisticated, richly resourced multimedia product that acts as an extremely valuable supplement to our existing politics textbook product," said Dr Karen Hutchings, Higher Education Acquisitions Editor for Pearson Education Australia. "The strength and appeal of the *A House for the Nation* CD-ROM is its interactivity and presentation of a range and depth of material that would otherwise remain inaccessible to students. University lecturers in particular often find that students have very little prior knowledge of



political processes but are not often motivated to extend their knowledge beyond what can be found in their prescribed text. *A House for the Nation* CD helps our lecturers overcome this issue by giving students a very user friendly and interesting introduction to Australian federal politics that they can keep coming back to as a reference and revision tool. The CD has had a very enthusiastic reception at many institutions that are prescribing and/or recommending this resource to their students."

The documentary *A House for the Nation*, narrated by *Lantana* star and AFI award winner Rachael Blake, is also attracting much interest from the educational sector, just weeks after its release.

"I was immediately impressed by the lively way in which a potentially dry subject was explored both for adult and young audiences," said Ronin Films Managing Director Andrew Pike. "I didn't expect to find such a clear-sighted, lucid and interesting story being told. I believe that, as more and more schools—teachers and students and parents alike—begin to discover the excellence of these four short films, their use in educational contexts will expand. Already orders are rolling in, suggesting a wide demand and need for digestible, entertaining information on the parliamentary system."

The four episodes of the documentary examine four key issues that have influenced the development of the House of Representatives during its first century. The documentary:

- considers the rise of political parties and their impact on the ideals and workings of the House of Representatives;

- looks at the increase in the power of the federal government over national affairs and the changing role of the House of Representatives in Australia's federation;
- traces the struggle of women to gain a voice in the House of Representatives and asks what makes the House representative of all Australians; and
- examines how members have reshaped the House of Representatives to meet the challenges of a changing nation.

Featuring historic footage from ScreenSound Australia, *A House for the Nation* captures many of the significant moments in the House's history, providing access to rare video footage and photographs from the House's past.

Linking the CD-ROM and documentary is a website at www.houseforthenation.gov.au that provides previews and more information on the project, including access to a virtual tour of the House, a quiz and online ordering information. Additional educational activities will be included on the website in the future.

The final aspect of the project, a touch screen kiosk located in the first floor public area of Parliament House, provides access to a range of historical material that previously was not available to visitors to the building.

Links and contacts

Visit the *A House for the Nation* website at www.houseforthenation.gov.au

For more information contact the House of Representatives Liaison and Projects Office by email liaison.reps@aph.gov.au or phone (02) 6277 2122.



CD-ROM orders

The CD-ROM *A House for the Nation* is available for \$29.95 (including GST) with a special discount price of \$19.95 each (including GST) for purchases of 10 or more. Order online at www.pearsoned.com.au/peopleshouse or mail, fax or phone your order (quoting ISBN 174091077X or ISBN 0922844003 for the 10 pack) to:

Customer Service
 Pearson Education, Locked Bag 507 Frenchs Forest NSW 1640
 Phone: (02) 9454 2222 Fax: (02) 9453 0093

Documentary screening and orders

The documentary *A House for the Nation* is screening on the Sky News channel at 1.30pm on Sunday 7, 14, 21 and 28 December and is available from Ronin Films at www.roninfilms.com.au or order by email: orders@roninfilms.com.au

Top: Moments from history captured in *A House for the Nation*—(left to right) Prime Minister Billy Hughes in 1919; opening of the provisional Parliament House in 1927; Dame Enid Lyons (first woman elected to the House of Representatives) and Senator Dorothy Tangney (first woman elected to the Senate) in 1943; House of Representatives chamber in 1950; dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975; opening of the new and permanent Parliament House in 1988. Photos: by permission of the National Library of Australia