

Speech

ADDRESS BY

HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE QUENTIN BRYCE AC CVO

GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

ON THE OCCASION OF

LAUNCH OF PEDDER DREAMING

THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, CANBERRA

17 SEPTEMBER 2011

Ladies and gentlemen, I acknowledge the traditional keepers of this land and pay my respect to their ancestors.

I am thrilled to join you here in our wonderful National Portrait Gallery.

It is such a perfect space.

I also have enormous pleasure in launching this very special work of Natasha Cica.

Friends, I first met Natasha back in 1989 when I was Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner. She was part of a delicious bevy of bright and beautiful university students here in Canberra. Young women full of promise and eager to make their mark.

I dubbed them the Lara's and the Sara's.

They had romantic names from the great novels - and of course long tresses!

Some 20 years on, I'm delighted to say they not only fulfilled that early promise, but grew into warm, intelligent and successful women.

I have followed their careers with interest ever since, and have smiled with pride at their achievements.

Some are here today to share in Natasha's triumph. Friends back then and, I am certain friends for life.

Natasha, this is a beautiful book.

It begs the reader to enter its pages, and get lost in its breathtaking beauty.

It is a scholarly and insightful exploration of a man, and his passion for the environment. In this case, the world of his adopted Tasmania.

Olegas Truchanas was truly 'an incorruptible man'. It is a poignant and inspiring tale of his tenacity, fervour and artistic talent.

His camera captured the beauty of a now-lost perfect wilderness.

You have shown us the tragedy of that loss by faithfully collecting his material, and that of the water colourists of the Sunday Group. Their collective fight to save Lake Pedder has been retold with vitality for new generations of Australians. It is a cautionary tale for all of us, who treasure the many natural wonders of this great nation.

Natasha, Pedder Dreaming is a celebration of your profound love of country.

Your Tasmania, your 'heart-shaped home of islands'.

As a fifth-generation Tasmanian on your mother's side, it is your spiritual home.

But you also understand the European sensibilities of a post-World War II refugee through your father's history.

The empathy you feel with Olegas shines through your writing.

Friends, Pedder Dreaming pays homage to the special part of Australia that is Tasmania.

The light and landscapes are different in our southernmost State. Lakes, forests, mountains and cool streams. No red dust.

The clarity and softness of the Tasmanian light, ideally complement both the lens and the artist's brush.

A gentleness that strangely gave strength to the photographs - and depth to the paintings.

The creation of a Salon South - as you describe your second Chapter.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to compliment The University of Queensland Press, who should take much pride in their design and layout.

The quality of the reproduced photographs and watercolours invite the eye to caress the images, and to marvel at the majesty of the pristine wilderness.

The publication is an artwork in itself.

I congratulate you Natasha. We are the lucky recipients of your painstaking research, personal interviews, and attention to detail.

Many Australians will now gain new insights into the Lake Pedder saga, and those who sought to save it.

It is an important contribution to our nation's rich library of stories.

I have much pleasure in launching Pedder Dreaming.

Thank you.
