

OFFICIAL LAUNCH: A CENTURY OF PICTURES

FRIDAY DECEMBER 5 2008

REMARKS OF LLOYD WHISH-WILSON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND PUBLISHER

NSW AND ACT METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPERS

Paul Berkelouw, our thanks and congratulations to you. There are few pursuits as important in life as reading, and Berkelouw Books has this magnificent new store. I know it will give a great deal of pleasure to your customers, and we wish you every success.

I am just delighted to be here today on behalf of Fairfax Media and the Sydney Morning Herald, in the presence of the Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, to launch *Century of Pictures: 100 Years of Herald Photography*.

My congratulations to Mike Bowers, who edited this magnificent book, to Fairfax Books' team and to Penguin / Viking, the publishers.

As Mike notes in his introduction, "The Right Picture"

"It can define a moment, a year or a generation. It can highlight injustice, being down the careless politician (present company excluded of course Prime Minister) lift a weary spirit and forever change the way we look at the world by shining a light into dark places."

Mike points out that for the first 75 years of the Sydney Morning Herald, no photographs graced its pages, even though photos had been published in other Sydney newspapers since the 1880s.

It took the biggest event since Federation, the arrival of President Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet, to induce the Herald to capture that momentous event, and the

crowds that lined the foreshore, with photographs for the readers of the Herald and eternal history.

This wonderful collection is distilled from the 16 million negatives and photographs in our photo archive in Alexandria. I daresay it is the largest photo archive in the Southern Hemisphere and it constitutes a national treasure.

Our words tell stories, but it is photographs that capture the stories and produce their own conclusions.

As Susan Sontag wrote in her famous series of essays, *On Photography*:

“Photographs furnish evidence ... A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened ... A photograph ... seems to have a more innocent, and therefore more accurate, relation to visible reality than do other mimetic objects.”

And so photographs embellish, and document. They are literally eyewitnesses no less than the scribes with their pens and Blackberries.

What we have here, in a *Century of Pictures*, is not just the way we were, but who we are: the stuff of what this nation is made of, and how we pursue our lives.

All of the things that make Australia so Australia and Sydney so Sydney – the sand and the sea ... working men and women ...

Sport ...art ... architecture ... fashion ... politics ... transport ... technology ... and vice:

They are all here on display...

and so is our Prime Minister. And there is a photo of him in this book.

Towards the back.

One other point I want to make.

This is not just photography, but photo-journalism. And the freedom to capture and publish photographs is just as important as the freedom to write and publish words.

I therefore want to take this opportunity to commend the Prime Minister for his leadership of press freedom issues – the legislation introduced last week to abolish roadblocks to government documents under the Freedom of Information laws, and to his Government’s commitment to further reforms in this area next year.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured to introduce the Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd.

REMARKS OF PRIME MINISTER KEVIN RUDD

**ADDRESS TO THE LAUNCH OF
*CENTURY OF PICTURES: ONE HUNDRED YEARS
OF HERALD PHOTOGRAPHY*
SYDNEY
5 DECEMBER 2008**

I acknowledge the First Australians on whose land we meet, and whose cultures we celebrate as the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

I know this is a tumultuous day for those in the Fairfax stable.

It's been a tumultuous year, with four of our leading metropolitan dailies changing editors in just four months.

We are in a very tough economic environment.

Nevertheless the event that brings us here this afternoon reminds us of the lasting importance of the newspaper business.

The business must continue to embrace change, but it must always maintain its fundamental commitment to quality and to excellence.

As the book we're launching today reminds us, this is a very longstanding tradition at the Herald.

A tradition of which the Herald can rightly be proud.

It's important, even in these challenging times, to be reminded of the importance of a diversity of voices in our media, and diversity of ownership, in sustaining a vibrant Australian media.

One that keeps governments accountable, that keeps public institutions accountable, and that serves the Australian public.

I am delighted to join you here in this outstanding renovation, the latest addition to the sprawling Berkelouw empire.

I was delighted when the Berkelouws opened a book barn in Eumundi in Queensland – the town of my childhood.

Opening Berkelouw Books in Eumundi in 2007 was sort of forty years late.

When I was a kid at the Eumundi State School in the 1960s, there was a little room at the end of the verandah that was referred to reverentially as “the library”.

Only problem being, kids were as a rule not allowed.

It had to be kept tidy.

Grade 7 kids were allowed in on special occasions.

A lot has changed in forty years.

But one thing is unchanged – that books truly are a window to the world.

Ten years ago at the height of the dot com revolution, we were all being told about the “death of newspapers” and the “death of books”.

Newspapers were going to die.

Books were going to die.

Bookstores were going to die.

And booksellers were going to die.

Oh, and movie theatres were going to die as well.

It hasn't quite worked out that way.

Australians are now actually buying *more* books.

The Berkelouws have gone from just a couple of bookstores to nine, as of today.

And Paul, Robert and David are all looking pretty healthy.

This is a resilient family – if you can survive almost two hundred years in the book business; if you can survive the total destruction of your business in the bombing of Rotterdam in 1942; and if your business can survive being moved half way round the world from Rotterdam to King Street, Sydney, in the '50s – then you can survive a change as modest as the arrival of the Internet.

The Internet has not killed books, bookstores, booksellers or newspapers.

But it has changed all of those businesses. It has challenged each of them, and raised the bar for each of them.

Some of those challenges are difficult, as anyone in the newspaper business can attest.

But they also create opportunities.

The book business is one example – with online catalogues search engines, it's now much easier to locate rare and antique books.

The result is, more sales.

And when you specialise in those sorts of books – as Berkelouw always has – that must be good news.

The fact is, people still want to read good books – books that inform them, challenge them, entertain them and open up their world.

I don't think that is going to change.

People also want to come into bookstores.

And often they're not just rushing in to buy a book and then rushing out.

They want to be able to browse, to pick a book up and to leaf through it.

They want to find something unexpected - something that spikes their curiosity, or takes them in a new direction.

They're also looking for a bit of an escape.

Almost twenty years ago the writer Ray Oldenburg coined the expression the “third place”, to describe the special place where people can get away from the busyness of work and the busyness at home.

My local café bookstore, Riverbend Books in beautiful Bulimba in beautiful Brisbane – has for our family been a real “third place”.

A place to nourish the soul in an otherwise crowded world.

A place where time can stand still for a bit.

A place where the mind can roam free and, at its best, serendipitously find fresh nourishment.

With this outstanding renovation, Berkelouw Books really has built a new “third place”.

So I wish this endeavour well.

As you can see, I can spend a fair bit of time in bookstores.

And the Government is supporting businesses like this one - next Monday, two million Australian families and four million pensioners will receive their lump sum payments under the Government's

Economic Security Strategy.

I hope you see some of them dropping in to buy some good Australian books for Christmas.

For anyone looking for a good book for Christmas, they'd do well to pick up a copy of *Century of Pictures*.

It's a remarkable collection of images that just how Australia has changed since our earliest days of nationhood.

Mike tells a terrific tale in the opening pages about just how conservative the Herald was in those early days of photography.

We learn that the Sydney Morning Herald didn't publish even one photograph during its first 75 years.

In fact even other Australian newspapers were publishing photographs, the Herald resisted using them for another twenty years.

Now I understand why the early Labor leaders used to complain about the Herald's conservatism.

Apparently, as Mike says, the Herald management didn't think photographs were part of the future, so they stuck to illustrations.

To us today, that sounds something like refusing to connect to the Internet, on the basis that the mail is more reliable.

It's a good thing that the Herald's editors finally relented.

Because as you can see from this book, the photographs taken in the past century by Herald photographers are a vital record of this city's history and our nation's history.

Mike Bowers and his team have done an outstanding job in assembling this collection of rarely-seen images – many of them, just ordinary people doing things they'd have thought very ordinary. But today, so many of those things are so removed from our world that they are nothing short of extraordinary.

These are images that capture our history, our nation and our people – and capture them in ways that go beyond words.

They depict Australians growing up and making their way through a century of remarkable change.

- A nation at peace and a nation at war.
- The sprawling city and the unruly bush.
- A city at play and a city at work.

- The times of prosperity and the times of poverty and despair – like the poignant photograph of young children in a Surry Hills back street in the ‘20s.
- Images of Sydneysiders partying, playing, and protesting.

The photographs of working life are especially striking – like the images of workers doing the tough jobs that helped build our nation in those years:

- stoking a ship’s coal-fired steam engines;
- loading a ship with massive bales of wool, and
- coming out of the coal mines at Lithgow, with their kerosene lamps on their heads.

The photographs also hint at many of the social changes of the past century.

- We see the changing role of women as a result of war, shown by the girls being taught motor engine maintenance.
- We even see the early bikinis of the late 1940s.

There are images of emergencies – fighting fire and flood.

There are less well known images of celebrities like a young Mick Jagger, a young Richard Nixon and a younger Frank Sinatra.

Some of the images are surprising:

- Like the image of the three young sportswomen padding up for a women’s cricket competition in 1933.
- Or the striking photo of West Papuan villagers entranced by television in an electronics store.

This book is a fitting tribute to the photographers who have built the Herald’s fine reputation of capturing so many of the images that define Sydney life – George Bell, Frederick Halmarick, George Lipman and Kenneth Stevens – who of course are only representative of many, many more skilled artists.

The book also reminds us of the importance of the photo journalism profession, something that Mike Bowers has helped do on the Sunday morning *Insiders* program.

Like conventional journalism, photo journalism help defines our lives and the great debates and events of our times.

Indeed those defining images often stay with us even more powerfully than words.

Photography is an art – and one that demands real skills.

It helps define who we are – both to ourselves, and to future generations.

Unfortunately it sometimes defines those of us in public life, in ways we'd rather it didn't.

To Mike Bowers and the team – I can't imagine how exhaustive the process must have been.

And also how painstaking, given the fragility of the old glass plates from the earlier times.

But having seen Mike on *Talking Pictures* for so many years, I can imagine the team also had quite a lot of fun – and quite a bit of drama, too, as you discovered images unseen in sixty, seventy, eighty – even one hundred years.

This book is a great accomplishment for the Herald, and I hope a great encouragement too, to the photographers of today working in the digital world.

It is with great pleasure I launch *A Century of Pictures: 100 Years of Herald Photography*.

REMARKS OF MIKE BOWERS

CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Brian McCarthy, Lloyd Wish-Wilson distinguished guests and photographers. Especially the photographers, today you are not the side dish, you are front and centre, the main dish. Can I thank the Berekelouw Family for the use of this wonderful venue, this is a fantastic book store and as a local, I live two blocks away, I will be back here, I love books.

16,000,000 negatives live at our warehouse in Alexandria.

151011 per year 12,584 per month; 3146 per week or 449 for every day of the past 100 years, it was hard to know where to start.

The numbers are meaningless except to note that the sheer volume of negatives have harbored the 'gems' for all these years. It did make the task seem enormous and overwhelming.

If a book on 100 years of Herald Photography was to do justice to the remarkable men and women who have swung glass for a living we had to unearth new and unpublished treasures from the collection and not rely on our famous images that have been well celebrated over recent anniversaries.

Once the treasures began to emerge it became almost impossible to stop.

One of my good friends who happens to write for a living is always telling me I'm lazy. "You generally get 1 or 2 pictures run in the paper every day right?"

"Well Yes Paul"

"That means you have completed your days work in 250th of a second, Lazy! It takes me hours to craft my prose"

This is generally finished off with a colourful description of my chosen profession as a whole.

He is of course technically correct, dam him. The rivalry between the written word and the picture is never far from the surface.

Sometimes a months work will boil down to 1/250th of a second, the resulting picture can however define a moment, a year or sometimes even sum up the whole generation.

When we are at our best photography at the Herald can change the way we look at the world and shine a light into the darker places. It would be inconceivable today to think that any story would not contain some element of photography, Pictorial considerations are factored into the planning for all stories and yet this was not always the case.

In its first 75 years The Herald did not use a single photograph, even 20 years after the first Australian newspapers had run photographs, the Herald remained unconvinced that photography would be part of its future. It took the biggest gathering of people in our young nations history, when teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet sailed through the heads in August 1908.

Having an each way bet The Editors of the day obviously didn't trust the new process and commissioned a half page drawing in case the new photo process wasn't a success.

The man who worked the bulky wooden cameras on the Harbour foreshores on that spring day was George Bell

His career at Fairfax all started with a sober memo to an accountant that was dutifully filed, god bless the accountants.

Mr George Bell of 15 Waverly Road Woollahra Is appointed photographer to the office at a salary of 4 pounds per week and enters upon duty today 31st January 1898, this was a full 10 years before the Herald ran its first picture, George would produce photographs for our weekly sister publication the now defunct Sydney Mail before working as the Herald's first photographer.

George traveled the length of this country, on horseback.

His horse which was supplied and paid for by the company received 5 pounds per week 1 pound more than George himself.

Georges trips would last for sometimes many months, having to carry the bulky equipment and incredibly fragile glass through the scrub along with all the essentials needed to survive makes our modern photographic adventures look lame.

Bell spent many months with the surveyors who were mapping the route for the North Coast railway, his pictures are credited with helping to populate those areas that the railway opened up.

He was also a pioneer in Aerial Photography taking to the skies for the first time in a flimsy Bristol Biplane. Bell would later complain of the complete lack of anything to hold on to, how he managed his very heavy camera and glass negatives is hard to imagine. In true newspaper style his colleagues took great pleasure in the obvious fear that Bell showed, trying to pull the plane up on landing by leaning back wildly. Bell set the standard for innovation and pushing pictorial boundaries, he along with others virtually invented the profession in Australia taking photography from a Victorian parlour curiosity to the profession that it has become today.

Unfortunately the standards he set for sartorial elegance have not been adhered to as closely as his work ethic.

Bell's true legacy is the fragile collection of Glass Negatives that remain as part of the collection, it truly is a remarkable collection and deserves to be digitized so that future generations can share in the Australia that was when he was operating, ironically the glass has fared far better than some of the later negatives from the 30's and 40's that are now in deterioration and becoming unusable due to a phenomenon called "vinegar syndrome"

Bell was responsible for appointing another trail-blazer in photojournalism Henry Herbert Fishwick. Sitting in the cricket stands at The SCG HMF as he signed his negs was incredibly frustrated with the small lenses available to him to photograph cricket, enormous enlargements were required which produces grainy and ill-defined cricketing pictures.

He talked the company into allowing him to order a telescopic lens from The famous optical makers Ross and company in London. The cost at the time was enormous. The 43 inch lens transformed forever cricket photography and was soon applied to a number of other sports, the resulting pictures of the 1920-21 season caused a sensation in London when copies were taken back with the touring team, pretty soon

Fishwicks design was accepted practise for a number of sports, if only we had patented the design!

Cricket Australia tightens the restrictions it places on still photographs every year, it no longer allows the wire services access, lets be very clear on this point, its about chasing more money and control of their image. Somewhere down the line the consumer will be forced to pay, we at the Herald have played a large role in the history of that sport, the images should be available to all and not just those that can afford to pay. All sporting organisations watch each other closely on terms and conditions of photography so as soon as one makes a ruling and gets away with it all of them will follow suit. The industry needs to be united in its opposition to these sporting bodies that want to control every aspect of their respective sports. If not by London in 2012 then certainly by the next Olympics I believe that the still picture rights will be bid for like the TV rights now are, in their chase for the mighty dollar something important will be lost to our readers and history.

The memory of Cathy Freemans 200M win in Sydney is to me a still image not a TV image, I believe this to be the case for most people, we think in stills.

As with all projects of this nature there are people who were instrumental in bringing the book to fruition. Max and Judy Prisk for their advice and support, Our team at the Fairfax research Library, Lyn Milton, Sally Kundra and Deborah Brown. Pat Sabine, Ian Affleck and Shaune Lakin at The Australian War memorial in Canberra, Australia is so lucky to have this invaluable resource and the people who staff the memorial are always willing to go out of their way to get it right for you and I thank them very much.

The Fairfax Books squad, Michael Johnston, Paul McLean and Jennifer Valciukas. The team at Penguin Books. I especially wanted to thank former Editor Alan Oakley who supported this project from its inception and gave me the time off from desk duties to work on the book. My fellow editors on the picture desk had to pick up the slack during my absence, Dan Ross Verity and Sandra all had to pick up the slack and I thank them. And now we get to the Century of Pictures Team The imaging of these pages is superb, that was done in house by The Fairfax imaging department, Kirsten Greaves, Diana Panayi and Jeff Smith. The heavy lifters who completed many hours of tireless research were Anna Kucera, Ross Duncan and the incomparable Flicc Walsh, this book is as much yours thank you all. Finally my Family Paula and Oscar for putting up with me during a tough year.

The real stars of today are of course those extraordinary men and women who have swung glass for a living over the 100 years, the exploits of the editors, managers and writers have all been well documented over our 177 year history. Thanks to our Historian Gavin Souter for his invaluable work Company of Heralds which I relied on heavily for historical context.

It's timely at this point when there is so much doubt about the future of the still picture that we pause to salute their work.

Prime Minister thank you very much for taking the time to launch this book, I appreciate it very much.