

MAY I EXTEND A VERY WARM WELCOME TO ALL OF YOU HERE TONIGHT FOR OUR 40TH BIRTHDAY PARTY, A MOST IMPORTANT OCCASION FOR THE AUSTRALIAN TAPESTRY WORKSHOP.

I WANT TO START BY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT WE ARE HERE TODAY ON THE LAND OF THE YALUKIT WILLAM CLAN OF THE BOON WURRUNG PEOPLE AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THEIR PAST AND PRESENT ELDERS

THE ELEVATED AREA ON WHICH THIS BUILDING AND THE FORMER SOUTH MELBOURNE TOWN HALL STAND WAS INDEED A MAIN CAMP SITE FOR THE YALUKIT WILLAM.

THIS AREA HAS NOW BECOME A THRIVING CENTRE FOR THE ARTS WITH THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC, MULTICULTURAL ARTS VICTORIA, SHORT BLACK OPERA AND ARTS ACCESS LOCATED CLOSE TO THE WORKSHOP.

SO NOW IT'S OUR TURN FOR A CORROBOREE FOR OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY.

THIS ANNIVERSARY IS SO IMPORTANT THAT WE ARE CELEBRATING IT TWICE. THE GOVERNOR OF VICTORIA, THE HONOURABLE LINDA DESSAU, VERY KINDLY HOSTED AN OFFICIAL CELEBRATION FOR US IN DECEMBER.

AND THAT WAS PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE BECAUSE IT WAS AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE THAT LADY DELACOMBE, THE WIFE OF THE THEN GOVERNOR, AND DAME ELIZABETH MURDOCH HATCHED THE PLOT TO START THE WORKSHOP MORE THAN 40 YEARS AGO, ENCOURAGED BY THE PREMIER DICK HAMER.

THAT WAS A VERY BOLD AND BRAVE INITIATIVE THAT COULD EASILY HAVE FAILED WERE IT NOT FOR THE COMMITMENT AND CALIBRE OF THE FOUNDERS, STAFF AND MANY GREAT SUPPORTERS WHO HAVE STAYED THE COURSE.

TODAY, HERE IN SOUTH MELBOURNE IS THIS UNIQUE INSTITUTION THAT IS WORKING WITH LIVING ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS TO USE THIS ANCIENT ART FORM IN WAYS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SEEN BEFORE. OUR SMALL TEAM LEAD BY OUR DIRECTOR ANTONIA SYME IS CREATING ASTONISHING RESULTS WHICH YOU CAN SEE AROUND YOU

THERE IS A LEVEL OF SKILL AND INNOVATION IN TECHNIQUE AND DESIGN THAT ARE TRULY WORLD LEADING AND WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED AS SUCH. INDEED WE ARE RECOGNISED AS AN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN TAPESTRY.

THIS BUILDING HAS BEEN OUR HOME FOR THE FORTY YEARS OF OUR EXISTENCE – THE SOLE SUCH WORKSHOP IN AUSTRALIA AND ONE OF ONLY A HANDFULL WORLD-WIDE

WE ARE IN THIS BUILDING TODAY THANKS TO THE HUGE CONTRIBUTION OF THE TAPESTRY FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA AND ITS CHAIR JANET CALVERT-JONES WHO HAS CARRIED ON THE GREAT WORK OF HER MOTHER DAME ELIZABETH.

THESE LOOMS HAVE SEEN THE CREATION OF MORE THAN 500 WONDERFUL PIECES THAT ADD TEXTURE, WARMTH AND CHARACTER TO BUILDINGS AROUND THE WORLD

AND IN THE PROCESS, WE HAVE WORKED WITH SO MANY TOP AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS, A LIST TOO LONG TO RECITE.

SO TONIGHT WE CELEBRATE WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN THOSE 40 YEARS. AND IT IS REMARKABLE

BUT WE KNOW WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO TO LIFT AWARENESS OF THIS STILL TOO HIDDEN A GEM.

TO THIS END, WE NOW HAVE AN EXCELLENT BOARD WHICH INCLUDES PEOPLE FROM ADELAIDE, BRISBANE, CANBERRA AND

SYDNEY TO REFLECT OUR NATIONAL STATUS AND HELP US ENGAGE MORE FULLY WITH THE DESIGN AND ART COLLECTING COMMUNITIES IN ALL OF THOSE CITIES

AND BUILDING OUR INTERNATIONAL PROFILE IS ALSO A HIGH PRIORITY WITH PLANS TO PARTICPATE MORE ACTIVELY IN THE KEY ART EVENTS IN ASIA AND EUROPE TO WIN NEW WORK.

WE HAVE TO THINK LIKE A COMMERCIAL ORGANISATION. OUR CONTINUING SUCCESS DEPENDS ON WINNING COMMISSIONS. IT CAN BE HARD WORK TO WIN NEW PROJECTS

RIGHT NOW WE ARE FOCUSSED ON A TAPESTRY FOR THE SIR JOHN MONASH CENTRE UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN VILLERS-BRETONNEUX IN FRANCE TO COMMEMORATE THE MANY WHO DIED IN WORLD WAR 1 IN THAT REGION.

WE WERE APPROACHED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE A LARGE TAPESTRY FOR THE MONASH CENTRE, PROBABLY COSTING IN THE ORDER OF \$600,000. BUT THEIR CHEQUE IS STILL IN THE MAIL SO BOARD AND FOUNDATION MEMBERS ARE WORKING HARD TO SECURE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR WHAT WILL CERTAINLY BE A VERY IMPORTANT AND CELBRATED WORK.

IT WILL BE A TRIBUTE TO SIR JOHN MONASH AND TO OUR TOO MANY COMPATRIOTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES. I DO ASK EACH OF YOU TO THINK ABOUT HELPING US TO ACHIEVE WHAT WILL BE A SIGNATURE TAPESTRY AND COMMEMORATION.

JUST WAITING FOR CUTTING OFF AND ON DISPLAY HERE IS THE FANTASTIC 'GORDIAN KNOT' DESIGNED BY KEITH TYSON, AN OUTSTANDING WORK THAT SHOWS WHAT AMAZING EFFECTS OUR WEAVERS CAN ACHIEVE. ALSO THE SUBTLE JANET LAURENCE 'LISTEN TO THE SOUND OF PLANTS'. WE RECENTLY

COMPLETED OUR NINTH JOHN OLSEN FOR THE PETER MCCALLUM CANCER CENTRE.

AND LOOK AT THOSE COLORS! OUR DYER, TONY, ACHIEVES AN EXTRAORDINARY COLOR RANGE WITH THE BEST AUSTRALIAN WOOL. I SUSPECT THAT WE PUT AUSTRALIAN WOOL TO ITS HIGHEST VALUE USE!

THANKS TO THE WORK OF SO MANY PEOPLE AND SO MANY HANDS, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF OUR HIGHLY SKILLED WEAVERS, WE ARE INCREASINGLY RECOGNISED AS THE LEADING WORKSHOP IN THE WORLD FOR THE CREATION OF CONTEMPORARY TAPESTRIES.

OUR INTERNATIONAL REACH GROWS MONTH BY MONTH.

THE SECOND ITERATION OF OUR ARCHITECTS DESIGN PRIZE EARLIER THIS YEAR BROUGHT 117 SUBMISSIONS WITH THE WINNER FROM SINGAPORE. THE DIRECTOR IS NOW SEEKING FUNDING FOR THAT DESIGN TO BE MADE AS A TAPESTRY, JUST AS THE FIRST WINNER WAS.

OUR RECENT SEARCH FOR WEAVER TRAINEES RESULTED IN 120 APPLICATIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD FOR THREE POSITIONS.

WITH FUNDING FROM THE PRATT FOUNDATION AND THE TFA, WE ARE THRILLED THAT WE NOW HAVE THREE EXTRAORDINARILY TALENTED AND PASSIONATE TRAINEES, KARLIE, LEITH AND SOPHIE, BEING TRAINED BY SUE BATTEN AND JOY SMITH AND WHO, ON COMPLETION, WILL BE WORKING ALONGSIDE OUR FANTASTIC SENIOR TEAM OF CHRIS, PAMELA AND CHERYL AND JENNIFER WHO WILL RETURN SOON.

OUR ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM PROMPTED 79 APPLICANTS INCLUDING FROM RUSSIA, NORWAY, POLAND, GERMANY, THE UK AND THE USA.

WE ARE CERTAINLY SPREADING OUR WINGS.

EVERY ONE OF YOU HERE THIS EVENING HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN OUR SUCCESS. HUNDREDS OF OTHERS HAVE MADE SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OVER THOSE 40 YEARS.

IN PARTICULAR I WANT TO THANK OUR GREAT GROUP OF VERY ACTIVE 'FRIENDS' LEAD BY ALEXANDRA MERRETT AND THE SO MANY OF YOU WHO SUPPORT US THROUGH THE 'GIVE AN INCH' PROGRAM

SO MANY PEOPLE AND SO MANY HANDS WORKING IN COLLABORATION

I MAKE NO CLAIM FOR MYSELF BUT I DO ACKNOWLEDGE THE WONDERFUL WORK OF MY PREDECESSORS - PETER WILLIAMS, FRAN AWCOCK, DAVID PITT, JACK O'CONNELL AND ARNOLD HANCOCK - AND I AM DELIGHTED THAT SO MANY OF THEM ARE HERE THIS EVENING.

BUT BEHIND ALL THESE ACCOMPLISHMENTS, IT HAS BEEN THE GREAT SKILL, ENERGY AND DETERMINATION OF OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS THAT HAVE GUIDED THESE MANY HANDS AND BROUGHT US TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY. SUE WALKER, WHO LEAD THE TEAM FOR AN AMAZING 28 YEARS AND IS HERE TODAY, SUSIE SHEARS AND CURRENTLY THE WONDERFUL ANTONIA SYME WHO IS ATTRACTING OUTSTANDING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS AND COMMISSIONS AND BUILDING SO STRONGLY ON THE FOUNDATIONS LAID BY HER PREDECESSORS

THESE ACHIEVEMENTS ARE DOCUMENTED IN WONDERFUL STORIES AND PICTURES IN OUR EXCELLENT NEW BOOK 'MANY HANDS – THE FIRST 40 YEARS OF THE AUSTRALIAN TAPESTRY WORKSHOP' PRODUCED BY OUR TEAM WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE TAPESTRY FOUNDATION. INDEED IT WAS THE FOUNDATION

CHAIRMAN WHO SUGGESTED THE BOOK TO MARK OUR ANNIVERSARY.

AGAIN, SO MANY HANDS HAVE WORKED ON THIS SUPERB BOOK – THE AUTHORS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS TO DOCUMENT THE HISTORY AND THE ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS. I HOPE TO SEE EACH OF YOU WALKING OUT WITH A COPY!

AS YOU ALL KNOW, DAME ELIZABETH CONTINUED TO PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE WORKSHOP AS PATRON, A ROLE NOW IN THE VERY CAPABLE HANDS OF BAILLIEU MYER.

BAILLS HAS BEEN A STAUNCH AND SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORTER FOR VERY MANY YEARS INCLUDING FOR THE KEMP TAPESTRIES IN THE NGV AND THE EMBASSY TAPESTRY SERIES.

IN HIS SPARE TIME, HE HELPS TRAIN THE NEW WEAVERS!

IT IS NOW MY GREAT PLEASURE TO INVITE BAILLS TO SPEAK.