



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION

PRETORIA

Address at official opening of 'Home and Away: A Return to the South'

**Old Fort, Constitution Hill, Johannesburg
Monday 14 June 2010**

Remarks by Ms Kate Ellis, Australian Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth and Minister for Sport

Thank you very much for inviting me and for the honour of officially opening this important exhibition - 'Home and Away: A Return to the South'.

I particularly acknowledge the presence of Awaiting IFA Lethu Advice

I am delighted to be back in South Africa for my second visit, and am particularly excited to be here during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Already South Africans have shown they can really welcome the world and throw a great party and I am certainly looking forward to the rest of the month-long tournament.

Australia hopes to be able to do the same in 2018 or 2022 as we make a bid to host the FIFA World Cup.

On both of my visits to South Africa, I have been fortunate enough to visit schools in Cape Town and Johannesburg. As part of the Australian Government's development assistance program to South Africa I have had the privilege of handing over Lapdesks to disadvantaged students. These Lapdesks are educational tools designed to help give the kids a fair go for their future.

The visits have been an eye-opener for me and a reminder of some of the tragic realities of the apartheid system and the unequal legacy – including in education – of that system. I have been reminded that the system robbed the majority of South Africans not only of their education opportunities but also their dignity and human rights, including of course the right to freedom of expression.

As many of you know better than I, faced with this apartheid system, many talented South African artists sought refuge in art as a form of protest and political expression, and for many also as a form of healing. They produced, in a

hostile political climate, some emotionally powerful and visually impressive pieces of art, as we see tonight.

But these pieces of art, like the artists who created them, did not receive their due recognition at that time. Like many South Africans, the art was also, in a way, forced into exile.

Thousands of paintings, sculptures and art objects created by black artists were taken out of South Africa during this era, often bought by foreign diplomats, business people or other visitors.

Just as many countries around the world welcomed the exiled South Africans during apartheid, so too did many individuals from all around the world seize the opportunity to act as guardians for these exiled South African art works.

It was the decisions of these individuals that led to the birth of the Ifa Lethu Foundation in 2005.

With the coming of democracy and the end of apartheid, many of these 'enlightened guardians' saw the value in returning these artworks to South Africa – to be admired and cherished by those who had lived through what the art represents.

The Ifa Lethu Foundation now manages the largest heritage repatriation effort in South Africa, with the repatriated collections now totalling over 320 works from eleven countries.

The honour of opening this exhibition accorded to me, as the Australian Government representative, is a reflection of the integral role that Australians have played in supporting the important work of the *Ifa Lethu Foundation*.

Two in particular – Diane Johnstone and Bruce Haigh – were the inspiration behind Ifa Lethu. It was their personal gesture to return their South African artworks, collected during their time in South Africa as Australian diplomats during the mid 1970s, despite their personal attachment to it, that led to the founding of the organisation.

As a fellow Australian, I am so proud of their generosity and it is a personal pleasure for me to meet them tonight.

A number of other Australians also kindly donated their art collections to the Foundation, including Steve Etheridge, Sue Scott, Laurence and Ann Coutts, Margaret Johnson, amongst others.

And of course, many other individuals from ten other countries have also contributed substantially to the repatriation effort. Many of the artworks here tonight in the Ifa Lethu collection owe their presence to the generosity of these individuals. Their efforts have helped to ensure that the experiences of those years will never be forgotten.

Australia remains proud of the role it played in the anti-apartheid struggle. Many South Africans were exiled in Australia or studied in Australia. Sanctions and sporting bans, coupled with widespread community support, contributed to the international pressure that helped successfully bring apartheid to an end.

We are also proud of the present role we are playing in South Africa.

As I mentioned, this is my second visit to South Africa. Clearly, the 2010 FIFA World Cup has much to do with my visit this time, but my visit also reflects a strengthened high-level engagement between our two countries.

With more high-level political visits between Australia and South Africa in the last year than in the last seven years, Australia and South Africa have re-affirmed their strong bilateral partnership and highlighted the value in working cooperatively together on issues of global importance – such as climate change, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and economic development.

Australia is also working on strengthening its relationships with African countries more broadly, including through increased political and diplomatic contact and through our expanding development assistance program to Africa.

In each of the past two years, we have increased our development assistance to Africa by 40 per cent and 23 per cent respectively.

Australia wants to use our experience and expertise to make a unique and positive contribution to Africa's development, principally in the areas of agriculture and food security, maternal and child health, water and sanitation, and human resource capacity building through the Australia Awards program.

This is part of a broader commitment to increasing the Australian Government's aid budget overall with an aim to deliver assistance equal to 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income by 2015-16.

As I mentioned, a principal area of focus of Australia's development assistance program is capacity building through tertiary education. Australia recognises that many countries in Africa face serious skills challenges. Addressing these human resource capacity constraints is crucial to Africa's future. Australia wants to be part of that future.

Australia has provided more than 3,600 tertiary scholarships to Africa since 1960. We have pledged to increase by 10-fold the number of scholarships we offer to African students - from 100 each year in 2008, to 1000 each year by 2012-2013. It will be a huge challenge for us to upscale to that extent, but we are determined to grow our partnership with the continent in tangible and sustainable ways.

As Australia's Minister for Sport, it would be remiss of me not to mention the very positive sports cooperation we share with South Africa. And I stress cooperation because it is not all about competition on the rugby, cricket or soccer fields (although of course that is important!).

On Saturday, I visited the *Gamalakhe* township south of Durban where the German and Australian Sports Commissions are capitalising on the fever surrounding the FIFA World Cup by running a life skills program for underprivileged young people.

As South Africa knows only too well, sport is the great unifier and can act as a positive platform to build unity and common purpose. I am pleased that Australia, through our sports cooperation programs, can play a small but important part in promoting such commonality.

In the context of the strengthening relationships we share with South Africa and other African countries, I'm pleased also that our cultural cooperation is going from strength to strength.

Australia and South Africa have recently concluded negotiations on a bilateral film co-production agreement that will make it easier for jointly scripted, financed and produced feature films to be made in either country. We are finalising arrangements with the South African Minister for Art and Culture and I hope to sign that agreement with her later this week.

Next week, an Australian-South African film co-production will officially open the Africa on Screen and Soccer Film festivals here in Johannesburg. The film – 'The Team that Never Played' – is about apartheid-era football players that never, due to the sporting sanctions in place, were able to showcase their talent at a FIFA World Cup.

It is an excellent example of the potential for our countries' filmmakers to work together, and we certainly hope that, once signed and entered into force, the film co-production agreement will act as a catalyst for further co-productions.

In addition, the National Arts Festival of South Africa commencing next week in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape will feature an Australian theatre group – Urban Theatre Projects – in their presentation of 'Football Diaries'.

With the FIFA World Cup in full swing, we hope the play, a solo performance by a young Sri Lankan – Australian will really resonate. It has been described as 'a meditation on art and sport in which an engaging personal story merges with new dance, popular culture and contemporary life in Australia and Europe'.

There will also be showings at the Football for Hope festival here in Johannesburg and at the Market Theatre in Newtown, Johannesburg in early July.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I feel honoured to be part of tonight's event and to view these impressive art works. I feel honoured to know of the part that Australia and Australians have played in bringing it all together and I feel very honoured to be in South Africa at such an exciting time in your country's history. I expect that the hosting of this World Cup will be a triumph for South Africa and Africa as a whole and Australia is proud to be part of it.

Thank You