



Constitution
Education Fund
Australia

Governor-General's Prize

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Awards Ceremony for the 2017 Governor-General's Prize at Government House

On Tuesday, 29 August 2017, the Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove and Lady Cosgrove hosted a highly successful reception at Government House, Canberra, for the finalists in the 2016 Governor-General's Prize. The finalists were Rose Mackie from the University of Tasmania, Jarryd Roberts from the Australian National University, Murphy Bong from Monash University and Timothy Smartt and Matthew Patterson from the University of Sydney. Speakers at the event included the Governor-General, High Court Justice Stephen Gageler, who chaired the judging panel for the Governor-General's Prize, CEFA Chair Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery AC, AO(Mil), CVO, MC (Retd), the Attorney-General George Brandis and CEFA CEO Kerry Jones. Sir Peter said:

The work of the Constitutional Education Fund comes to the fore ... because you stimulate debate and encourage learning.

You take something that could be abstract and the esoteric – the domain of a privileged few – and you ensure it remains relevant, accessible and of service to all.

Because... a Constitution that is appreciated and understood... a Constitution that is pertinent and informative to contemporary issues... and a Constitution that is both respected and critically evaluated ... is a Constitution that is not just the foundation of who we are – it is also the foundation of who we will become.

Justice Gageler also praised the Governor-General's Prize. He said:

Maintaining our constitutional values and fulfilling our national destiny relies on life and soul

continuously being breathed into our constitution by each new generation.

The young women and men whose achievements we celebrate today are part of the next generation who will shoulder that continuing responsibility. To read the essays they contributed to be judged for the Governor-General's Prize, and even more so to meet with them to discuss those essays, is to recognise that our future is in safe hands.

Senator Brandis thanked CEFA for its important constitution education work. He said the Government was pleased to support CEFA's latest effort in collaborating with the High Court of Australia to build the Australian Constitution Centre. He also expressed his personal thanks for the vision and commitment of CEFA's CEO Mrs Kerry Jones to ensuring the Australian Constitution and its contemporary relevance is well understood and appreciated by young people and the general public at large.

General Jeffery added his congratulations to the finalists and winning students. He thanked the Governor-General for his ongoing support of CEFA's work and expressed his gratitude to Justice Gageler and the final judging panel for its work in the Prize. He also thanked Mrs Kerry Jones for her leadership and the CEFA staff. He told the audience CEFA looks forward to staging the 2018 Prize and to working with the High Court of Australia to deliver the much needed Australian Constitution Centre in the New Year.

Mrs Jones thanked the Governor-General for his patronage of CEFA and Senator Brandis and the Australian Government for their support for the Australian Constitution Centre. She congratulated the winning students for their wonderful efforts and



told the audience she and the team at CEFA is deeply honoured to be working with the High Court of Australia to inaugurate the Centre in 2018. Mrs Jones also thanked the CEFA benefactors who make our programs possible and particularly mentioned the Ainsworth Foundation, Mrs Joy Chambers-Grundy and Lady Potter.

Following the speeches, the Governor-General was invited to award the George Winterton Cup for equal first place to Rose Mackie, who studies at the University of Tasmania, and Timothy Smartt, who studies at the University of Sydney. These first placed students were also given an opportunity to speak. Ms Mackie was unable to attend and her speech was read out by Meg Walker and Mr Smartt spoke about the process of writing his essay. Timothy Smartt, spoke first and said:

Unlike other countries – which have had centuries to work out their constitutional arrangements – we are just beginning. And, to make the connection that I said I would, that is one important reason why constitutional education is more important than ever. Every person gathered today, in different ways, has a role in shaping the future path of our young country, and more knowledge of where we've come from and who we are, is an important tool in exercising those roles.

For that reason, and for the amazing experience this

competition has been for all us, I'd like to conclude by thanking everyone who made the competition possible, including the Constitutional Educational Fund Australia for organising the process from start to finish, the judging panel who read our essays, the judges on the interview panel who gave up their time to interview us, and everyone gathered here today at this once-of-a-lifetime ceremony.

Ms Walker then delivered an address prepared by Rose Mackie. Ms Mackie entered the Governor-General Prize to further her research skills and found the experience provided the 'autonomy' and 'intellectual freedom' she had never experienced previously. In her concluding remarks, she said:

Participating in the competition led me to reflect on constitutional education. In my view, the role of the CEFA is crucial. As Australians, the Constitution connects us to our history and embodies our most fundamental values. In doing so, it guides us as we move into the future. Now more than ever, this guidance is crucial. The CEFA's work is therefore vital for our democracy.



The Governor-General, the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Rtd), addressing the CEFA audience at the awards ceremony



Sir Peter giving his address



CEFA'S Chairman, Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery AC, AO (Mil) CVO MC (Rtd) speaking at the ceremony



CEFA'S Chief Executive Officer, Kerry Jones speaking at the ceremony



Chair of Governor-General Prize Final Judging Panel, the Hon Justice Stephen Gageler AC speaking



The Governor-General presenting equal first prize winner Timothy Smartt with the Winterton Cup

Ms Mackies address continued:

On a more personal level, when I was younger it was issues like the Tasmanian Dams case and the Dismissal that first sparked my own fascination with the law. I therefore believe that the CEFA's work with young people, in particular, will help to inspire Australia's next generation of public lawyers.

I would like to warmly thank everyone involved in the competition for creating an experience that will always hold a very special place in my heart.

The finalists in the Governor-General's Prize took the centenary of World War 1 as an opportunity to reflect on the Constitution in times of war and to appreciate the impact of these trying circumstances on the development of Australia's system of government.

They wrote essays from a range of questions touching on topics such as:

- 1916 and 1917 conscription plebiscites
- Australian Delegation's role at the Paris Peace Conference
- impact of war on the relationship between the States and the Commonwealth
- scope of the Australian Parliament's defence power
- role of Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Defence Force

Ms Mackie's award winning essay was about the impact of the experience of war on the development of the vertical fiscal imbalance between the Commonwealth and the States. This is a topic which, she explained, is a problem about which her fellow Tasmanians are acutely sensitive today.

Mr Smartt's award winning essay argued that the Australian Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 punched above its weight in terms of what is achieved, given Australia's constitutional status prior to the First World War. He became fascinated by the difficulty of identifying whether there has been a moment when Australia acquired independence.

The Governor-General and Lady Cosgrove mingled with guests after the ceremony in the dining room at Government House.

Other attendees of the event included Mr Dick Smith AC and Mrs Pip Smith, members of the Flynn family, High Court of Australia CEO, Mr Andrew Phelan, AEC Commissioner Mr Tom Rogers, Senior Adviser to the Attorney-General, Dr Don Markwell and former NSW parliamentarian Mrs Helen Sham-Ho. They were joined by representatives from a range of government agencies that support CEFA's constitution education work, including from the

Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, the Department of Education & Training, the Australian Electoral Commission and the High Court of Australia. Two other members of the final judging panel for the Governor-General Prize, Professor Fiona Wheeler of the Australian National University and Mr George Harris of Baker & McKenzie also attended the ceremony. CEFA Director Peter Lindsay was also in attendance.

CEFA is proud to have created opportunities to recognise the achievements of Australia's future leaders through the Governor-General's Prize for over a decade.

The questions for the 2018 Essay Competition will be released with the launch of the Australian Constitution Centre at the High Court of Australia on Monday 9 April 2018.

Constitution Education Fund Australia

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