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COMMISSION  
LAUNCH OF *THE MIGRATION MUSEUM BOOK*  
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MIGRATION MUSEUM OF SA, KINTORE AVENUE

The Migration Museum has always enjoyed tremendous support from both community organisations and individuals.

Last year, I was delighted to work with the Museum in the organisation of workshops for ethnic communities to support them in recording their stories.

We were overwhelmed by the level of interest.

This enthusiasm is a product of the Museum's willingness to engage over many years with community groups.

And I would like to especially thank the Museum's Director, Viv Szekeres, for her vision and hard work in building these relationships.

On the wall behind you are plaques laid in memory of the suffering and sacrifice of refugees who have arrived in this land from all over the world.

One of these plaques is a memorial to the Vietnamese community in Australia. Personally, this is a reminder that our story – as someone who arrived here by boat – is not unique.

We are one of many.

Indeed, the theme of travel and migration is a common thread that runs through the histories of the people of Australia.

Our national history is diverse and complex and the Migration Museum has always excelled in allowing the many voices that shape our nation to be heard. The history of this country is one of travelling cultures that have collided, intertwined and negotiated this place we all call home.

As you can see by wandering through the galleries, the Museum does not shy away from the conflicts and controversies that characterise our immigration history, and the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples.

It is the way in which we continue to share this space, with the traditional owners and the new migrants arriving each year that will determine our future prosperity and harmony.

South Australia has always been at the forefront of multiculturalism, and in 1986 we were the first state in Australia to open a Museum dedicated to the documentation and preservation of our immigration history.

Over the past 22 years, the Museum has presented a vibrant, creative and popular program of changing exhibitions, educational tours and special events. The Museum has published several books in the past that have since sold out. But I am told that there is one book that visitors have consistently requested – and that is the souvenir guide to the Museum and its displays.

The generosity of the Migration Museum's Foundation, combined with the completion of the recent development of the main galleries funded by the State Government, have made this book possible.

The book gives a colourful guide to the history of immigration and settlement in South Australia, recorded as a walk through the Museum's galleries.

There is a look "behind the scenes" at some of the remarkable objects that the Museum has in its collection, and why it collects what it does.

Readers are also introduced to the Migration Museum's Foundation, of which I am delighted to have been a member, that funded the production of the book.

Written by Christine Finnimore, who is Senior Curator in the Museum, the book includes contributions by Viv Szekeres and Jill Mackenzie.

Printed by Hyde Park Press, the design work has been done by Linda Vulfs and the photographs are by Rachel Harris.

I extend my congratulations to everyone involved.

It gives me great pleasure to announce the book officially launched.

I hope you enjoy it as much as I have.

Sadly for us, Viv will be retiring in November.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about Viv and her outstanding contribution to multiculturalism and to our State.

Viv understands what it means to leave your home and start a new life in a new country, having arrived in Adelaide from Birmingham in 1971 with her husband and daughter.

She studied history, politics and English at Adelaide University, and later lectured in Education.

Viv became the first curator of the Migration Museum in 1986 and the Director in 1987.

She once wrote that “History is not fiction. It happens to real people”.

As someone with a Jewish identity, whose grandparents were forced to leave Lithuania and Russia at the turn of the century, she knows the power of history and what is at stake in its telling.

And while history may not be fiction, the so-called “Father of History”, Herodotus, had the twin title, the “Father of Lies”.

If history is written by the “victors”, Viv has dedicated her life to giving a voice to the persecuted and the poor . . .

. . . to the history of women, children, working men and people living on the cultural margins . . .

. . . such as the women who lived and died in the destitute asylum where we stand today – women who barely left a material trace.

Viv has breathed life into their stories, just as she has brought to life our immigration history.

And she has done this not only within the walls of this museum, but by reaching out to the many communities that make up South Australia.

To quote Viv in her 2005 Hawke Lecture:

“If your aim is to collect people’s stories, then you must go out into communities. I believe this has the effect of turning the institution outwards towards society.”

Viv has overseen the re-development of the Museum, featuring a new interpretation of the history of both twentieth century and twenty-first century migration up to the present day.

She has left a lasting legacy that has deepened our understanding of our past and also shaped the way we think and act in the present . . . to become a more just and culturally inclusive society.

We will dearly miss her energy, enthusiasm and ability to work across organisations and communities to realise her vision.

Viv, we thank you for all your work that has contributed enormously to the social harmony and to enhance and enrich the substance of cultural diversity in our state.

I wish you all the very best in your new life.