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Speech at Young Artists' Award presentation, Art Gallery

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN, AT YOUNG ARTISTS' AWARD
PRESENTATION. ART GALLERY.

11.12.74

Judge Ligertwood, Mr. Baily, Mr. Trost, ladies & gentlemen :

Thank you very much for asking me to present these awards.

Firstly, I want to give Channel 10 a sincere and unsolicited plug. Their patronage of this new award - and of the parallel Young Film-Makers Competition - is public spirited and generous. I'm more delighted still to learn from Mr. Trost that it is to be an annual event.

South Australia traditionally has a lively interest and involvement in the arts - a record of consistent public patronage. Only last night - at another Gallery opening - I spoke of the need for public support to be supplemented by private patronage both through galleries and to artists directly. The Young Artist's Award is a welcome and ideal example of this.

The artists here are exhibiting in the Gallery for the first time. Awards like these not only enable them to do so - but the exposure - and for the few - the prize money will help them acquire the extra skill that will undoubtedly help to make some of them future permanent exhibitors.

I'd also make the point that this exhibition highlights the emerging role of the Gallery in the life of Adelaide.

It's true - as I said - that we have a history of public support of the arts. But it is only very recently that we have begun to shed our 19th century attitude which saw Galleries as places which must educate and above all Improve The Mind.

It followed that exhibitors must be established and preferably highly respectable.

Happily this has now changed and places such as this are playing an increasingly prominent part in the daily life of the city.

This is inevitably a process that will further evolve. This exhibition is another step along the way.

By the time the artists whose work we see on display have graduated the Gallery will be fulfilling a whole series of vital new functions.

I'd better explain right here and now that this doesn't mean the Government is squandering public money on fripperies at a time of crisis. Numbers of these things can be done without additional cost - in other cases we are now doing no more than to commence the essential planning without any financial commitment.

The Gallery is already remarkable: it is the most accessible in Australia and it is on one of the most beautiful streets in Australia.

As has already been announced, a new Museum building is to be built to properly house its collections and to allow for expansion of the Gallery.

Medium term planning will soon begin to rationalise the Gallery and Museum premises to provide an architectural link between them and to create new galleries and other facilities.

It is also intended to develop gardens, sculpture courtyards and restore the historical buildings on the site.

The Art Gallery Act has always limited the Board's responsibilities to the location on North Terrace.

I am now proposing to change the Act so that the Director and the Board can look beyond the Gallery walls to other parts of the city and the State to provide for community involvement in the visual arts.

The Gallery will be able to take initiatives and make proposals for the setting up of regional galleries and help with their planning.

The expanded role will mean that the Gallery will be able to take on responsibilities for the commissioning of sculpture, fountains and the like for public places.

With the old Archives Building now an historical museum as an indication of what can be done, I think we can look forward to seeing the other historical buildings in the area similarly restored and turned to useful purposes.

The Gallery has a wealth of historical paintings, drawings, prints and applied arts objects relating to South Australia and it is possible that the present Historical Museum, the Old Barracks Building, the old police dormitories and even the old chapel on Kintore Avenue could become a complex of colonial architectural treasures housing various historical collections.

We have a unique opportunity to make our Art Gallery the most attractive in Australia.

We intend to grasp it.

It's also very obvious from a look at this exhibition that we shall be able to continue to assume the existence here of a community of diverse and talented artists.

Again my congratulations to Channel 10 on organising this competition and it's now my very great pleasure to announce the names of the winners.

Thank You.