

Proximity Round 18 February 2025

Friends of the State Library of SA

Greg Mackie OAM

Transcript as adapted for text

Rick Sarre

Well, greetings everyone and welcome to the State Library of South Australia. My name is Rick Sarre and I am the President of the Friends of the State Library. We are meeting here in the traditional lands of the Kaurna People, whose spiritual connection with this land is as strong today as it has been for tens of thousands of years. And it's important to note that the sort of thing we're doing here with this series of lectures, is exactly what Kaurna people would have been doing here on the banks of karrawirra parri for all these tens of thousands of years - having discussions, raising issues, and sharing culture.

Knowledge is what this series is all about: this is called the Proximity Round, where we gather people from, typically, this precinct, North Terrace, to come and talk about their specialty - to bring their knowledge and to invite discussion. It's called the Proximity Round because it relates to people who are proximate to this place where we are. We presented eight of them last year - and we have eight of them this year. Of course, I was going to give it the name 'Gather Round', but Mali rang me and said 'sorry, mate, that's been taken'. So we have called it the 'Proximity Round', and we have people from a whole range of North Terrace precincts to come and speak with us.

And tonight, we have someone very, very special: Greg Mackie OAM, and I'm delighted that Greg is here tonight. I could spend the next 15 minutes saying something about his antecedents and background and work history, but I don't want to take up 15 minutes of your time because you wouldn't hear as much from him.

But let me give you a quick little two-minute snapshot of the many ways that this particular individual has adorned Adelaide, and raised the profile of this fair city, in monumental ways. I first met Greg when he was the co-proprietor of Imprints Booksellers, but that goes back a long time. That might be a lot of your first experience of him as well, but in between times, here's a quick little dot point journey: founded the Adelaide Festival of Ideas; co-founded the Adelaide West End Association; Executive Director of Arts SA; Flinders University Distinguished Alumni Award recipient; the Rann Government's Deputy Chief Executive of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Adelaide City Councillor (twice); one of the brains behind Adelaide Thinkers in Residence; head of the Office for Ageing; CEO of the History Trust. A former board member of Feast Festival, former board member of the Don Dunstan Foundation, established the Dame Roma Trust Fund for Children & Young People; a Trustee of the Adelaide Festival Centre; member of the Council of Uni SA Writers, Week Committee, Libraries Board of SA, inaugural recipient of the Bettison and James Award. The only thing he hasn't done is played

football for the Crows. But you never know. That might be something he does after his semi-retirement! He's going to publicly share more some time during the course of this year. Ladies and gentlemen, what a pleasure it is to have such a son of South Australia. Please welcome Greg Mackie.

Greg Mackie

Well, thank you very much, Rick. I'm exhausted just hearing your roll-call, and all I can say is the list is long - and so too are the years!

So good evening, all. I echo Rick's acknowledgement that this land always was and always will be Kurna Country. And I'm delighted to acknowledge the valued esteemed colleagues, peers and friends from the cultural sector, former customers of Imprints - and all. Chookas also to Elaine Bensted, soon to be departing Zoos SA and soon to be gracing this very venue with her own Proximity Round contribution. Beverly Voigt Manager of Heritage, SA is here, as is Megan Berghuis - our newly-minted State Library Director, and of course, many beloved History Trust colleagues, former History Trust colleagues, future History Trust colleagues - and esteemed History Guardians.

Many of you would have heard me bang on at some point over the last nine years at the helm of the history Trust of SA, that I am not, nor have I ever pretended to be an historian. I respectfully defer to the professionals and enthusiasts, the curators and storytellers with whom I've had the privilege to serve in my role over the last nine years. This being so, if I've erred this evening in any recollection of a date or sequence of events, I humbly beg your indulgence and invite your correction during the discussion part of the evening.

In this evening's allocated time, it's my intention to offer a set of reflections on this place - the North Terrace Cultural Precinct, as it is commonly referred to these days, and in times past, also known as the North Terrace Cultural Campus.

I'd like to dedicate this talk this evening to the memory of the late Hannah Schultz, who died a couple of years ago. A beloved colleague of ours at the History Trust, Hannah passed while serving as my Executive Officer and Manager, Major Projects with the History Trust. Before that, Hannah was Arts SA's Director of Cultural Heritage and Major Projects, and way back before that, she served as Manager of HR in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. I knew back then that Hannah was someone special, and I convinced her to step away from HR and join the team at Arts SA. I think that everyone Arts SA, and certainly at the History Trust, who had the joy of working with and learning from Hannah found friendship and solidarity. That was very, very special.

Back in 2006-07, in my capacity as 'Arts Supremo' Hannah project-managed for me, the first ever major review of the state's collections storage facilities. The price scared - and has since scared every government of the day until, the Marshall government saw the opportunity to get a budget commitment through, under the cover of a COVID stimulus budget process. While under my leadership at Arts SA, Hannah also undertook a major review of all the arts statutory authority legislation, and this brought all the arts and cultural acts that were under the Ministerial Delegation of the then Premier, Hon. Mike Rann, and his Minister Assisting in the

Arts, Hon. John Hill, into alignment on matters of government policy such as gender balance and board size. Hannah died unexpectedly a couple of years back and is still greatly missed by me and my senior colleagues. So much so that in fact, the boardroom of our new headquarters on North Terrace has been named after Hannah Schultz in her memory.

In my past journeys over the decades, when ask me 'what do you do', I have tended to revert to 'I'm a practitioner of cultural development'. Being a bookseller, as Rick referred to, I've hosted literary public events, and led the programming and presentation of Adelaide Writers' Week, been a member of the Libraries Board - to 'Arts Supremo' - yadda yadda yadda. And then up the slippery pole to Deputy CE in Premier and Cabinet, and over to Health and Ageing. In the latter two roles in Premier and Cabinet, I was effectively the line manager to the directors of the State Library, the SA Museum, the Art Gallery of SA, Carrick Hill and ArtLab Australia, as well as a small phalanx of executives in Arts SA itself. Incidentally, I was never formally the line manager of the CEO of the History Trust of South Australia. As my predecessor in this role at the History Trust, Margaret Anderson, was wont to remind me - and quite frequently - I was 'never my boss, Greg'. She had me hoodwinked on this for nine years, and insisted that, as she worked for a Trust, she was different. I indulged her recalcitrance, but also noted wryly that, every single time Margie had a problem, it was to me she turned for a fix over those years. And my extra assistance to the History Trust extended to sourcing additional funds. In the mid-2000s for: the redevelopment of the Migration Museum's permanent 19th and 20th century galleries; the rescue of the Nelcebee from sinking in the inner harbour at Port Adelaide, and the securing of dedicated annual funding for the History Festival. So I'd like to think that I've been a friend to the History Trust - and to South Australian history - for a very long time.

In a very real sense, the History Trust was the 'runt of the litter' - it was the youngest and the smallest state collecting institution in terms of budget and body count. But in terms of footprint, with multiple sites and many State Heritage Listed buildings, it was actually only beaten by the Libraries Board of SA - through its Local Government partnership with the Public Libraries Network.

Given the ambit of my talk today - namely the precinct or the proximity of the North Terrace Cultural Precinct, I'm choosing to recklessly ignore the chronometer and move now to the late 70s, and will then hippity-hop up and down through the decades.

Following the resignation of Hon Don Dunstan, and the short-lived Premiership of Des Corcoran, by the late 70s, the then Tonkin Liberal Government's Minister for the Arts - the first ever dedicated Minister for the Arts (following Don Dunstan's nurturing of a portfolio from his own department) was the Hon. Murray Hill MLC, who held the fledgling arts portfolio and a Department. His Advisor, for those with long memories, was none other than the now Hon. Dr Diana Laidlaw AM, who herself was later to serve two terms as a much respected Minister for the Arts in the Brown-Olsen era. But I digress - back in 1979, Minister Murray Hill commissioned Dr Robert Edwards to undertake a major review of the North Terrace Cultural Campus institutions. It was entitled '**Museum Policy and Development in South Australia**'.

Because we are a history organisation, we actually held not one, but two print copies of the report, which, apart from those with long memories of service to the cultural heritage sector, had been lost in the annals and records of the South Australian Public Service. And so we decided to sacrifice one copy in order to scan it page by-page in its entirety, as a PDF - and the

interested public can now access that report through the History Trust's website [HERE](#) (insert web link to Edwards Review).

At the time of the Edwards Review, the South Australian Museum which, to all intents and purposes, this review was fundamentally focused, sought to resolve the dilemma of a troubled South Australian Museum. And I preface this with a caveat: I love the South Australian Museum. For most of us SAM holds very fond cultural memories from childhood visits. But as an institution, it had not kept up with the times. And there are many factors that have contributed to that malaise. At the time of the Edwards Review, the South Australian Museum was deficit ridden and failing to achieve its statutory purpose, that being, to exhibit and collect in areas of natural science research, ethnography and social history. The final report was delivered in June 1981.

The Edwards Review interim recommendations had commenced implementation in late 1980, with the repeal of the Constitutional Museum Trust Act, and introduction of the History Trust of SA Bill, which was enacted with unanimous bipartisan support in 1981. Included in the Review outcomes, was the first time amalgamation of the objects conservation units of each of the big three collecting institutions, to establish ArtLab Australia, a wholly government-owned enterprise under the Minister for the Arts. The Edwards Review had recognised that a major malaise had befallen the SA Museum: low morale, debt - and mission failure. Sound familiar? It was decided that the SA Museum ought be relieved of its hitherto unfulfilled social history ambit, transferring

With the approaching 1986 sesquicentenary of the 1836 Proclamation of Government in the Province of South Australia, the History Trust of South Australia was established - taking over the Constitutional Museum at Old Parliament House, and was charged with establishing the South Australian Maritime Museum at Port Adelaide. And the Museum of Migration and Settlement, both as sesquicentenary projects. Added to this portfolio was the beleaguered Old Birdwood Mill Museum, a privately owned operation, rescued from failure by Don Dunstan in 1976, with ministerial ownership transferred to the History Trust. In 1988, the Old Birdwood Mill Museum's name was changed to the National Motor Museum of Australia, which in that very classically Australian way has been abbreviated to the National Motor Museum - or NMM for short.

Of course, former Premier John Bannon held the arts portfolio and continued what was, back then, the largely bipartisan project to grow the cultural infrastructure of the state. The Edwards Review recommended that a State History Centre be established under the direction of the History Trust, and it was envisaged that it would be located in the Mortlock Chamber of the Jervois Building, now known as the Mortlock Building. This was resisted at the time, and much of the focus was on the malaise at the South Australian Museum. Despite incredible collections and despite very passionate and committed professionals, something was not working.

Fast forward to 2024-25 and it is Deja-vu. A Legislative Council Statutory Authorities Review Committee review established into both the South Australian Museum and the Art Gallery of SA, and a Premier's Review of the SA Museum. And while this week the media have literally turned their collective eyes to golf, things are far from resolved. I do not propose to venture further into the specifics, or speculate as to what, when, and how our collecting institutions might dig themselves out of the structural and budget malaise in which all find themselves.

Regrettably, decades of budget cuts later, and despite a significant top-up of funding in 2014 -

only then to be regressively removed in the ensuing years in the name of 'efficiency dividends' - suffice to say, each of our state collecting institutions are today, a sadly diminishing version of that which once they were.

We also await with interest the long-promised and much-delayed 'arts policy'. I do remember, in my Role Statement as the new 'arts supremo' I was tasked with developing a 10-year strategy for the arts a Rann Labor election commitment in 2002. At the first meeting I had with Premier and Minister for the Arts, Mike Rann, I went in and said to him. 'Premier, I can deliver you a 10 year plan, but what I have to tell you is that, politically, you won't like what you hear - because at this stage pretty well everything is broken, either technically insolvent (and as a statutory authority you can't actually become insolvent because cash-flow and treasury guarantees ensure survival). I want to venture some careful reflections on the recent and current state of our cultural sector and I do this not in my capacity as CEO with the History Trust of SA, rather with the benefit of having once worked up in the helicopter, as some would describe it and others 'the ivory tower'.

I have been privileged to both serve - and observe - our cultural sector from several vantage points over the past 40 years. And so I offer these observations very carefully and as a long time practitioner of cultural development. Ever mindful of my contractual obligations as a public sector executive, but perhaps with a modicum of courage that comes with being only 132 more sleeps - or sleepless nights away from my personal risorgimento - otherwise referred to as retirement, as was touched on in Rick's introduction.

I've been a long time in service and endured the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and misfortune, whether that having been as the co-proprietor of imprints or as a cultural programmer. A belief in the dignity of service has been at the core of my ethos, and it needs to remain at the core of a public sector which becomes increasingly fixated on mobility. While I absolutely understand the importance of public sector mobility, my cautionary note is that, what that means - and it is particularly more pervasive among younger workers - you stay in a job for two years, things get tricky, and so one moves on, cans get kicked down the road, and nobody ends up taking ultimate responsibility for fixing things.

While the History Trust was established with the ambition to see a dedicated general social History Museum realised, timing as I have come to learn, is everything in showbiz - and politics. The Marshall Liberals promised in 2018 to work with the History Trust to develop the business case for an Adelaide Museum of South Australia's History - AMoSAH. Some of you may have heard me bang on about this over the years. An AMoSAH outline business case was duly delivered to the Marshall government in January 2022. For anyone interested in interrogating the underpinnings of that business case, it can be found on the History Trust website. The change of government in March 2022 brought an end to that vision.

One of the realities of being beholden to a statutory government-appointed board is we too are beholden to the government, and must therefore not to make waves. I honestly think that this is how our friends at the SA Museum got into the mess in which they now find themselves. When I cast my mind back to 2004 and my first year as Executive Director of Arts SA, and as was alluded to earlier - we had a technically insolvent Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, a biennial Adelaide Fringe that was reeling from a \$375,000 operating loss, a technically insolvent Adelaide Festival Centre Trust, an Adelaide Festival of Arts that was debt-laden in the aftermath

of the Peter Sellars 2002 festival imbroglio. And a State Theatre Company that was on its knees, and an Australian Dance Theatre on its knees. Despite the many, many good things that had occurred in the arts in the 90s - politically, you can't love all your children equally. Whomever the minister of the day is, difficult choices need to be made. The cultural system has developed what's called arms-length peer assessment - and we are seeing this played out in the national arena at the moment, where a decision is taken and then, at the end of the day, someone objected and that decision has been reversed. Arms-length peer assessment is the best system but only because it is the least worst system. And the alternative is to let the 'Duck Trumpeters' of the world take unilateral decisions, such as we are now reading and watching on a daily basis.

ArtLab Australia by 2002 was also in deep doo-doo. As is the nature of things, the State Library redevelopment project faced all kinds of unthinkable 'value management' compromises. And I have first hand memory as a member of the Libraries Board from around 2000 to 2003. The newly-minted Premier and Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Mike Rann, endured the ignominy of a public remonstrance at the official launch of the State library redevelopment by none other than Rupert Murdoch. That insult so outraged Mike that relations with the Libraries Board reached a nadir. The Premier offloaded ministerial delegation for the State Library and its Public Libraries Network to the Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts, Hon. John Hill. Great man, wonderful minister. I served him with great pride. And he had more time to nurture the arts portfolio than Mike, who was also Premier and Minister for five other portfolios while trying to re-establish the state's Triple A credit rating. Two votes in cabinet!

So, I invite you now to cast your minds back to the early noughties. Ron Radford reigned supreme at the Art Gallery, and Professor Tim Flannery was Director at the SA Museum. No question that Tim was other than a brilliant and effective science communicator. I loved him, but he had absolutely no idea how to run a complex business and cultural institution like a museum. And so, this being before my time at Arts SA, the Liberal Government created a new position that had never previously existed - that of General Manager to actually do all of the accountability stuff. By the time I was heading up Arts SA in 2004, Flannery had managed to throw his considerable influencing ability around sufficiently to extract concessions from both Di Laidlaw as Minister, and then Mike Rann. In fact, part of Mike's riding instructions to me at the beginning of 2004, included 'keep Tim Flannery happy, Greg'.

Over the years, the SA Museum leadership sometimes behaved abominably. And I can say this with first-hand confidence. But I can also say that, even though I'm publicly critiquing a fellow a collecting institution, because I've already said it in Hansard, in the Statutory Authorities Review Committee evidence, in our desire to keep Tim happy, Mike Rann provided the SA Museum with \$240,000 to establish a dedicated scientific press. The money was provided and yet Endeavour Press never materialised following Tim's departure to greener pastures back in New South Wales. Unbeknownst to Arts SA, General Manager and successor diverted \$140,000 per year ongoing, that had been specifically appropriated in a state budget process to support Ara Irititja, which is a world leading South Australian APY Lands community Indigenous cultural knowledge database and repository. The then museum management diverted the funding to pay the museum's electricity bill. And it never again reached its intended beneficiary. I only innocently discovered this last year, yet another sleight of hand and a tragically missed opportunity for Anungu. The fact that Ara Irititja has continued to flourish on project funding is

not only testimony to the commitment and passion of its advocates and protagonists, John and Dora Dallwitz, but also to the enduring cultural value that it is delivering for the people of the APY - Anungu.

So how, you might well ask, do such things escape the scrutiny of DPC-Arts SA monitoring, the Auditor-General's annual audit, and the ongoing museum statutory board oversight? Well, I can only conclude must be 'clever accounting' - the old pea and thimble trick. Suffice to say, this is possibly but the tip of the iceberg, and I'm not laying all blame at museum officers and managers. In recent years, the Auditor-General has delivered adverse findings for our friends at the SA Museum.

I do want to segue briefly to the History Trust's varying fortunes. How is it that the History Trust has managed to traverse the privations of life as an under-resourced statutory authority? Well, when I chose to apply for the role of CEO and walk away from my stint as interim director of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium, was, in part, because I like a challenge! Maybe I'm just a masochist with a degree in history, and, in part, because I deeply believed then, as I still do now, in the purpose and mission of the History Trust of South Australia. For years, as 'el-supremo' at Arts SA and beyond - up and down the slippery pole - I saw just how resourceful and impassioned was this small team with big purpose. And I was determined to turn the mouse that squeaked into an entirely more effective beast - if not quite the Tassie Devil that screeched, or the dingo that howled. So I applied for a job that I knew would pay less than two-thirds of my previous package as a public sector senior executive, or even that which I was earning as a freelance consultant in the three years from 2013-2015. In essence, I was missing the challenges of organisational leadership.

So fast forward two more years to 2018, and the prospect of a change of government honestly scared the bejesus out of me. And then, in mid-2018, some three months after the Marshall Liberals were elected, a phone call came one morning, and it was the recently-minted Minister for Education, John Gardner. He told me that he was in Cabinet and that the Premier had asked him to step out and give me a call to float an idea that the History Trust, Carclew and Windmill be 'MoG-ged' (machinery of Government) over to him as Minister for Education. To a part of me, the notion of breaking up the arts family was shocking. But, in a nanosecond of pragmatism, it occurred to me that the Minister for Education's budget is the second largest bucket of money in the government. And so, 'well, Minister' I opined, 'this is a novel idea, but I'm sure that with goodwill and good management, any machinery of government changes can be made to work... when do we move!' The rest, as they say in the classics, is history.

And with every privation that has befallen the arts sector, including our beloved collecting cousins along the North Terrace Cultural Precinct, the wisdom of that decision has given me pause for gratitude. And thanks, not only from me, but from my senior colleagues and our Board of our Board of Trustees too.

So, to the future - what fates await our precious cultural institutions? I guess in a sense, we'll have to wait and see the long-promised arts policy, a work-in-progress draft of which, I have to say, for the first years of its development, never really used the words 'cultural heritage, or 'collections', or 'museums'.

While I may be exiting stage left in a few short months, I leave a History Trust that is well governed, well managed and well led. My senior colleagues and their teams of energetic and passionate people will continue to make a difference. And, as per our Highlights 2023-24 publication demonstrates, we are resourceful. We are spreading what is, at the end of the day, about \$6.5 million a year of taxpayer funds. We are growing that with earned income and we're making a difference.

There's so much more about which I could riff, and so I extend a wee plug for my next public outing. As part of South Australia's History Festival 2025, the next instalment of 'The Selected Thoughts of Gregushka' awaits, in a central location that, when announced, will surprise many, but hopefully delight most. Keep a watch out for the History festival programme later in March and keep your May calendar clear of other distractions

'Live long and prosper' and I'm really happy to take questions. Thank you.

Rick Sarre (Question 1)

Thank you, Greg. And I want to encourage questions. I'm going to ask the first question. Wearing your history hat for the moment. You've seen the decimation of history departments in academia across the university sector. What are your reflections on that, given your passion for history and festivals around the country?

Greg Mackie

Thanks, Rick. That is a perfect segue to another favourite soapbox. History is a threatened species. History is in alarming decline in the academies. History is therefore in decline in terms of graduating teachers with some kind of basic grounding in the discipline. Now anybody can pick up the Australian Curriculum and pick up teaching resources that have been developed on the eastern seaboard, and that talk about all the things that we probably grew up learning about in South Australia - about the convict colonies, the Eureka Stockade and the gold rush. At the History Trust - and this is one of the dividends of actually being under the delegation of the Minister for Education - he actually gives a **** about our history. His dad was a history teacher. And before Blair Boyer, John Gardner in the Marshall Government also cared a damn about our state's stories.

Education is important to the History Trust, and it's not just us genuflecting to our political masters. We care about our stories. And when we were taken from Arts South Australia, we were, quite frankly, relieved. We were spared one of the most vicious budget cuts to the History Trust that was left by the Weatherill government - it was about \$0.5m per year. And when we moved to Education, the then Minister, John Gardner, understood the impact this would have had on our ability to fulfil our statutory purpose.

I make the following observation in an entirely non-partisan manner - whether you're a Labor voter, a Liberal voter or a Green, I don't care. There are good people and there are not so good people on all sides of politics. John Gardner protected us by allocating some of his Ministerial Discretionary Funds to offset the cuts that had to be 'rendered unto Caesar'. And he did the same for Carclew and Windmill. We did find \$0.4m out of our \$6.5m budget through a combination of intelligent savings and increased earned income, and thus we were able to be

spared the knife. What we did was internally reprioritise so that we increased our impact in the education program space. Having previously focused for decades just on in-museum group learning, we are developing extensive online resources that are both Australian Curriculum compliant, and that are South Australian story-centred so that our kids - your kids, your grandkids can grow up through the education system learning the kind of skills that that the curriculum is designed to develop, but actually with South Australian history and South Australian stories at its heart.

Question 2 - Regan Forrest

Thank you. I am Interested in the life experiences and learnings that speakers can share in these situations. What would be your top three?

Greg Mackie

Thanks Regan. Good question. Political cycles and the times and contexts in which political cycles occur. Over the last 50 years, for example, there have been different times for different points of emphasis. I think at the moment, whomever governs - and this not in any way, a partisan reflection - these days political parties are very politically far smarter and far more focused on how to win marginal seats and therefore achieve a parliamentary majority to reduce the need for deal-making and compromise. I think there is a great hope - I'm not trying to make a political comment - but there is great hope and potential benefits for local communities to be gained through the expansion of the independent voice to diversify the points of advocacy and the points of agency - and influence.

Now, if anybody who's known me for any amount of time will know that, by and large, I am a product of the Whitlam and Dunstan era, and came through adolescence to political consciousness from a working class background, in the heady days of the 70s. I consider myself to be, at heart, a good social democrat, but I am also a pragmatic business operator and a cultural thinker - a deep cultural thinker.

In the case of collecting institutions around the country, most of them are in fact statutory entities, and that means that governments of the day politically appoint the boards. In different jurisdictions, and at different times, the agents of influence on those decisions have varied. So I can look back, and I know this will sound like me just remembering the good old days, but I can remember working closely with Mike Rann and John Hill. We would have as a standing item on our agendas - board appointments, renewals, replacements. And by and large, the process had been essentially politically colour-blind - or at least non-partisan. Where the Minister of the day had confidence and respect for the head of his or her cultural agency, and where a board was considered to be governing well, the tendency was not to rock the boat. And there's a few people here this evening - Jan Gaebler-Smith I am looking at you, a former Trustee of the History Trust, who continued to serve through regime change. At times, good board appointments are made, and at other times, it's like 'where the hell did that decision come from?' And at other times one could not know the wheels within wheels that are often at play.

I would still argue that, because collecting institutions, which hold gifts from citizens in trust for future generations, those boards should remain accountable to and appointed by Executive

Council. But not every cultural organisation necessarily needs to be a following that governance model in South Australia.

I remember having lunch with Don Dunstan a gazillion years ago - we had come to serve together on the Adelaide Writers' Week Committee - I asked him why it is that SA has a higher proportion of statutory arts entities relative to any other state or territory? Don responded (and we were probably quite a way into a couple of good bottles of red when Don looked over his bifocals and said: 'Well, my dear, it's very simple. The Barbarians are always at the gate, and so if you want something to endure, you legislate it into existence, so that it's not as vulnerable to the whims and predilections of one minister, or one government in one term - it is to the Parliament that such decisions must come'. Yes, you can starve a statutory authority into submission by turning down the money tap. But the optics, the public attention and the networks of influence that attach, over centuries now for some of our cultural institutions, is so deep and so profoundly connected and influential, that a government dare not tamper too much with something. If it ain't broke....

Question 3 - Evan Moroney

Greg - do you have any thoughts about the place of intangible cultural heritage in protection of culture?

Greg Mackie

Full disclosure here, this is Evan Moroney, one of the chief influencers around the whole 'Save the Cranker' campaign. Full credit to you Evan and your colleagues, because what you did was manage to influence a Premier who has, in fairness, many, many strengths, but actually really caring about heritage, maybe not so front and centre in his priorities. And he heard you and he acted.

Internationally there is a thing about cultural heritage, that is not just about the built environment, architecture, design and heritage character. It is also about the purpose to which a place has evolved and been dedicated, and therefore cherished, valued and loved - and this is known as the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. And in Australia, international conventions need to be owned and signed by the Commonwealth. We have not, as yet, been signatories to this International Convention. I would hope that, if the Albanese government is re-elected, they will turn their minds to it.

Inevitably, there are things that a new government can do in a second term that you can't do in a first term. I remember, so clearly - and forgive my discursiveness here - that Mike Rann and Kevin Foley had to return South Australia's Triple A credit rating, because it was absolutely important to our state brand, to Labor's brand, and to lower the cost of interest on borrowings to service debt, and to be seen as responsible economic managers in the wake of the State Bank Disaster.

At the end of the day, sovereign governments should borrow to build infrastructure, should borrow to create the 'common wealth', the benefits of which will endure beyond one electoral cycle or one generation. While they were busy doing that, and remembering they were a minority government, Rann and Foley really had no wriggle room.

When when I first met with Mike Rann about three weeks in to my time as Executive Director of Arts SA, I said Mike Premier 'sorry Premier, the 2004 Wagner Ring Cycle opera budget has blown out by another \$8million. And that was a pretty hard thing to hear when the state had already put \$8 million on the table for a cycle of opera that was, while really important to the European canon of opera. Mike was not a trasher - he was not a destroyer. He could have chosen to actually exploit the fact that that was a pet project of his Liberal arts predecessor, Diana Law, and he chose not to. He went to Kevin Foley and then later at a drinks party. Foley, who as we might all remember loved a tippie, waddled up with his tinny in one of those little foam sleeves, and said 'hey Mackie' and this was Christmas 2003, he said. 'I understand you're not even in the job yet and you're into me for another \$4 million!' and. I said, well, Treasurer I that is correct' and he said, '...and I also understand if I don't give it to you, we're gonna sink the \$4 million we've already put in!' I said 'yes Kevin, I understand that's right'. And he said, 'well, I guess you don't give me any choice - Merry Christmas!' That was in the 'noughties'. And once we regained the Triple A credit rating, this was, indeed, the best of times. Revenues were growing at a steady four per-cent every year. Of course, the cost of health was escalating at twice that rate, but fundamentally, the coffers were growing.

Now, of course, sovereign governments around the world, and certainly here in Australia, are grappling with debt that was incurred to get us through COVID, and are grappling with the inflationary environment that has come from supply chain interruptions. I'm not trying to dance around it, these things are connected. The butterfly that beats its wings in the Amazon that causes the tsunami in the Pacific. You know this, this kind of stuff in economics is real. And so, we had to temper our cultural enthusiasms, and choose our timing, It cost \$60 million to fix the technically insolvent arts organisations.

And so, back to the thing I started to comment about the fact that I never deliver a published arts policy. I said to the Premier, 'I can deliver on what you've promised, but I have to counsel you that there are cultural and political risks in so doing. Yes, the chorus for almost the entire eight years, the Liberals didn't deliver an arts policy. And then, six months before the 2004 election that they lost, 'Arts+Plus' was delivered. I said 'Premier, you will get a sugar hit for a nanosecond, but then I can guarantee you that every organisation and every individual practitioner who's not singled out for special treatment will then hate you forever'. I said 'so mate, you're damned if you do, and you're damned if you don't.' I went on to say 'what I will do for you is commit to making the arts more meaningful, and more accessible to more people, more of the time. And I think that's consistent with a Labor set of principles - and that's actually what we did. Sorry, I know I'm just turning back the hands of time now, but it's not well understood. It's not well understood, but it is what happened.

Rick Sarre

Two more questions.

Francene Connor

Say you had about \$16millions to give away. Can you name something you would do for each of those major North Terrace Institutions - something out of the hat?

Greg Mackie

Hmm, that's a that's a a big curly question. So if I could play god, you know, that's one more sleepless night - but a good sleepless night to have! I would say, in terms of the subject of this proximity round, and its focus being the collecting institutions in this precinct. Governments have never provided funding for collection development. I was on the Library's Board of South Australia and so some 25 years ago we had, I think around \$750k per year for the entire public library network collection. The costs today of simply maintaining digital journal subscriptions would well and truly eat that up. But there has been no more money provided, and endless budget cuts.

The Art Gallery of South Australia relies on the kindness of benefactors. The History Trust and the SA Museum have no funds for acquisition. We too rely on the kindness and generosity of private and corporate philanthropy, and the very occasional selective moments of political largesse, to grow the collection. So even though that would not necessarily fix underpinning problems. An acquisitions fund would target the very purpose for which these institutions were established - namely to develop, conserve, hold, interpret and share.

Those collections are for the benefit of the people of SA and our visitors. If I had time to think more about it, I might have come up with something sort of more just something different. Thank you.

Rick Sarre

This is the last question.

David Lewis

Greg, do you think, especially given these uncertain times, that South Australians are increasingly *resistant to change*?

Greg Mackie

Thank you, David. Now we do have history together - we both served contemporaneously: David in the political side with Mike Rann and other ministers including Jane Lomax-Smith, and me in the public service.

Mike Rann said to me once, 'Greg, you've got to understand. Everybody wants things to be better, but nobody wants anything to change'. It is a deep paradox, the solution to which Mike found during his years, was you commit to 'pilots'. So we're going to have a pilot extension of the tram to the Adelaide Railway Station. We're only going to go from Victoria Square to North Terrace. The community gave him permission for that inconvenience, and then the next spend was to take it to the Entertainment Centre at Hindmarsh. People accepted incrementalism.

Had Mike remained in power, he would have introduced a tram loop around the city, which back then, and you'll roll your eyes in disbelief. This was going to cost a mere \$65million. And Pat Conlon, his Minister for Transport and Infrastructure knocked it out. And the cost today of implementing that piece of public transport infrastructure would be dramatically greater.

We are all wont to say that, in Adelaide one of the great things is the 'one degree of separation' If you need to speak to anybody, you can find a way to connect to them. Now, while that may one of the best things about Adelaide, it is also one of the worst things about Adelaide. Because, with that connectedness, that special connectedness and permeability, comes groupthink. And when groupthink takes over, forget about the facts - forget about the truth. It becomes a compelling self-perpetuating narrative, and sometimes not-so-good decisions are taken.

So, there ends 'The Selected Thoughts of Gregushka' - And can I just give a special shout-out - during the Camelot era when I was Deputy Chief in Premier's, we had a whole lot of heady thought leadership stuff going on: Adelaide Thinkers in Residence; Adelaide Festival of Ideas; the Capital City Committee Directorate; the Social Inclusion Unit; the Economic Development Board and the Executive Committee of Cabinet (ExComm), to name just a few. There was a swag of innovative things we made happen: the Integrated Design Commission; the RI Aus; the Australian Science Media Centre; the Goyder Institute; the SAMSTAG Art Museum, and the Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding. One of the people who put the wind beneath my wings back in the day is here tonight: Shane Webster. Shane is now the Chief Executive of Jarwon Aboriginal Corporation and is doing amazing things around the country. Shane would have been a youthful 23 year old - something like that when he came to me saying 'I wanna work with you' and eventually he came to work with me and we made good things happen.

And finally - please look on on your seats for your personal copy of the History Trust annual Highlights 2023-24. You might have picked up some media over the last eight months about our acquisition of the original Priscilla bus and our project to restore that bus and to build an incredible interactive permanent exhibit for it up at the National Motor Museum. We are completely committed to this. It's pop culture and so some might look down their noses at it, but it was in its time 31 years ago, transformational and there were other pieces of Australian cinema that had a similar impact. Priscilla in terms of promoting tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the immediate post-HIV-AIDS world, set an international benchmark. So we're committed to that.

And my parting pitch - the Migration Museum. Back in the noughties, I had helped get around \$900K or something like that, to renew the permanent exhibits in the museum. That is now 20 years ago, and the Migration Museum's permanent exhibits are tired and reflect last century museology. They are analogue compared to current digital potential for storytelling. We've done a massive community engagement amongst the CALD communities, and we will be banging the doors of the Malinauskas and Commonwealth governments about the importance of investing in the renewal of the Migration Museum.

Here endeth the lesson.

Rick Sarre

And Greg, this has been a lovely evening. We've had a marvellous truth telling - a sense of what it's been like. In these last 30 or so years, Greg has been a supremo in a range of areas

working close to government and trusted by everyone to make sure that our history, our arts sectors have been well served. As I said, he's a wonderful son. But not only that, he's got the history festival coming out for all of May, so please keep an eye out for the program.

Greg is taking leave of his working life, but not of his senses. So we're waiting - what does the next chapter hold? I've been delighted to to have him address us tonight.