

PRESS RELEASE

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Stories Indigenous Australians of Filipino Descent Shared with Canberra in celebration of 70 Years of Philippines-Australia Diplomatic Relations

CANBERRA, Australia – H.E. Minda Calaguian-Cruz, Philippine Ambassador to Australia, and First Assistant Secretary Allaster Cox of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) co-hosted the exhibit “Re-imagining Australia: Voices of Indigenous Australians of Filipino descent” in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Australia on 28 November 2016 at the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA).

The exhibit, attended by over 100 guests, is based on the book by Filipino-Australian Dr. Deborah Ruiz Wall OAM with Dr. Christine Choo.



H.E. Minda Calaguian-Cruz, Philippine Ambassador to Australia, Author Dr. Deborah Ruiz Wall OAM and First Assistant Allaster Cox launching the exhibit and book “Re-imagining Australia: Voices of Indigenous Australians of Filipino descent” on 28 November 2016.

In her opening remarks, Ambassador Calaguian-Cruz said that while official diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Australia started 70 years ago, people-to-people relations started much earlier. She said the exhibit shares the stories of the first Filipinos to arrive in Australia in the 1860s called the *Manilamen*. First Assistant Secretary Cox commended Deborah for her in-depth research and important contribution in deepening understanding of the historic linkages between the Philippines and Australia.

Author Dr. Deborah Ruiz Wall, the keynote speaker during the event, shared her journey in documenting, through oral history, the stories of the descendants of Filipino pearl divers in Broome and Torres Strait. She said this mode of storytelling complemented a narration of Australia's social and economic policies and a review of legislation that had an impact on the lives and fortunes of *Manilamen* pearl divers and their descendants.



Guests of the exhibit, "Re-imagining Australia: Voices of Indigenous Australians of Filipino descent" on 28 November 2016

Artist Denise Ann Barry was also present during the event and her works, inspired by the *Manilamen* and Aboriginal art, were shown as part of the exhibit.

Guests toured the exhibit highlighting the stories of the *Manilamen* and their descendants and had copies of their books signed by Deborah.

This exhibit is dedicated to the next generations of Filipino-Australians who we hope will be inspired by the stories of Indigenous Australians of Filipino Descent to celebrate their Filipino identity and the warm friendship between Filipinos and Australians which will endure and strengthen in the years to come. END