

**The Honourable Mr Annesley, NSW Minister for Sport and Recreation, Mr Tony Issa, MP for Granville, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thank you for giving me the honour of speaking on the occasion of the opening of our Museum's exhibition "One Hundred Years of Professional Golf in Australia".

I must immediately pay tribute to our Patrons – Dan Cullen DFC, who is with us tonight and Kel Nagle, winner of the Centenary British Open in 1960. Sadly Kel has apologised for being unable to attend tonight – his health is not all that good.

Also to our longest serving Australian Professional, and great supporter of our efforts – Mr Al Howard. I'm not sure whether Al is 89 or 98, but he did play in the 1931 Australian Open. To be associated with these gentlemen is an absolute privilege and delight. I speak as a proud member of 58 years of a truly wonderful organisation.

The PGA in Australia was founded in 1911, and our Centenary is something that is being well and truly celebrated throughout Australia, as it should be. I believe it is incumbent upon every present day Golf Pro to pay homage to those men who made it all possible.

The PGA was formed in 1911 by some 15 dissatisfied Golf Pros who objected to the treatment given to them at the Australian Open being played at the Royal Sydney Golf Club. They were denied entry to the clubhouse, having been given a tent to eat in and get changed.

Leading players in those days were mostly wealthy amateurs who could afford to travel the world, whilst golf professionals were often referred to as "glorified caddies".

Most golf professionals would have been club professionals who had a job at a Club teaching, selling, and repairing clubs with little chance to play for the small amount of prize money available. Some were even greenkeepers, and their wives were caterers at the club where they were attached.

These men – in true Australian tradition – saw themselves as pursuing an honourable profession, and refused to put up with such treatment.

Their story is one of a great and fascinating journey to have reached a position where golf pros today find themselves as part of a respected world-wide profession. Golf professionals in Australia today – who are the beneficiaries of the struggle of the pioneers – should pay great homage to these men.

I believe it represents "The Australian Story". A country where success for effort is amply rewarded. They played in some money tournaments, but they were few and far between.

Joe Kirkwood became the first Australian born Open winner in 1920. Joe has never been given the respect or recognition he deserved. His wonderful mastery of the game was legendary. His ability to play all the shots, left or right handed, high and low, probably led to his downfall as a player. It was said that he could not decide which type of shot to hit.

He did manage to come third in the British Open won by the legendary Bobby Jones, but his efforts to popularise the game in Australia have largely gone unrecognised. For it was Joe who attracted Gene Sarazen and Walter Hagen to tour Australia in the early 1930's which really ignited interest in

the game. Joe continued to travel the world spreading interest in the game with his exceptional trick shot routine.

The first truly exclusive tournament pro did not come until the 1930's when Norman von Nida burst on the scene. Pros took the game to all parts of the country, spreading the game by assisting clubs with the layout of courses, and teaching the fundamentals of the game. Their living in country areas would have been more precarious, making good money when the seasons were right, but otherwise a meagre return when the seasons took bad. Dan has told me that at the end of the week when all expenses were paid, he would be lucky to have one shilling – or ten cents – left over.

Their progression is one of gradual uplifting of themselves, and by sheer efforts of their combined personalities. To put it succinctly "They pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps".

Early pros like Fred Popplewell, Don Spence, Carnegie Clark, Tommy Howard, Lou Kelly, Billy Bolger to name but a few saw themselves as experts in their chosen profession and demanded that they be treated accordingly. Later, our Patron Dan Cullen, Al Howard, Colin de Groot, Eric Cremin, Ossie Pickworth, Jim Eve, Roy Canvin and Kel Nagle took up the reins and continued the progress.

Along the way they were able to gain the support of powerful men in the community, Sir Dallas Brooks, Governor of Victoria, Sir Les Herron, Lieutenant Governor of NSW, Clare Higson, Jack Chown and many others who admired their attitude and respected their ability to teach and play golf. These men helped push the status of the professionals.

At the Museum here, the Australian Golf Heritage Society – which is made up of keen golfers from all over Australia – is determined to conserve, respect and display Australia's wonderful golfing history.

Starting from humble beginnings in 1973, we have gradually progressed to the stage where – with great help from Denis Brosnan of GolfMart who has donated this space free of charge, financial sponsorship from the P.G.A., GolfNSW and Museums and Galleries NSW, and many willing helpers – we are able to showcase our display here tonight.

The highlight of our collection must be the clubs owned and used by founding member Carnegie Clark to win his three Australian Opens - they are on loan from the "NSW Hall of Champions" – and the toolbox of another founding member, Dan Soutar.

Dan was a carpenter when he arrived in Australia, before turning professional. We also have a copy of Dan's book "The Australian Golfer". It is believed to be the first golf book published in Australia in 1906.

To try and thank everyone who worked tirelessly to put this exhibition together would be fraught with danger, although I must single out our curator Emma Williams, who worked around the clock to have everything ready for tonight. TAKE A BOW EMMA.

Could I just say a sincere and heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who gave so freely of their time and sponsorship? Without exception, everyone to whom I mentioned we were thinking of holding an exhibition said "How can I help?"

We are proud of what we have achieved, and hope you will share with us or celebration of "ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL GOLF IN AUSTRALIA".