

## Minister Souris to unveil prized Australian treasure in Newcastle

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**NSW Arts Minister George Souris will unveil an extraordinary piece of Newcastle's colonial history in a special event at Newcastle Art Gallery on Monday 20 February at 10am.**

A previously unknown album of drawings from 1818, including landscapes and portraits of Aboriginal people from the Newcastle region, recently purchased by the State Library of NSW, will be displayed at Newcastle Art Gallery from 20 to 26 February.

"This remarkable album is a vital piece of colonial history for Newcastle and Australia, and I commend the State Library of NSW for securing it for the nation after it was discovered in the back of a cupboard in Canada last year," says Minister Souris.

"The album has a strong link to the people of Newcastle and the local Indigenous communities, so it is wonderful that local residents have been given the first opportunity to view it at the Newcastle Art Gallery."

According to Dr Alex Byrne, NSW State Librarian and Chief Executive: "The Wallis album is a sensational new addition to the Mitchell Library collection, the world's largest and most renowned storehouse of records relating to the history of our nation."

"The State Library is absolutely committed to connecting the original documents of Australia with local communities, and we're thrilled to be partnering with the Newcastle Art Gallery in sharing this object that has obvious historical and emotional significance to Newcastle," says Dr Byrne.

"We are thrilled and honoured that the national launch of such a significant historical document – the Wallis Album – is here at Newcastle Art Gallery," says Ron Ramsey, Director of Newcastle Art Gallery. "Newcastle welcomes back this incredible album illustrating the original people and landscapes of our region after almost 200 years overseas."

The album was compiled by Captain James Wallis, who was Commandant of the Newcastle penal settlement from June 1816 to December 1818. Of the 35 works, the album features many by convict artist Joseph Lycett whom Wallis developed an association with after he was sent to Newcastle in 1815 for re-offending.

# Media Release



For the week of its display, the album will be opened at a Lycett view of Sydney Cove and a named portrait of Awakabal Aboriginal people from the Newcastle region made by Wallis in 1818.

“The Wallis album really is without a doubt the most significant pictorial artefact to have been made in colonial NSW during the 1810s, and is also the only known collection that relates so directly to Wallis’ time in NSW,” says Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian.

“Portraits of Aboriginal people from this region and era are extraordinarily rare, and it shows that Wallis enjoyed a certain familiarity with the Indigenous people during his time in Newcastle,” says Mr Neville.

“In fact, we have a letter in the Library’s collection where Wallis talks fondly about the beauty of the Newcastle district and his pleasurable hunting expeditions with Burigon, who is featured in this portrait.”

Newcastle residents will be fascinated to learn that the Wallis album includes early sketches of paintings by Lycett that are featured on the Macquarie Collector’s Chest c. 1818, which Wallis gave to Governor Macquarie to thank him for his patronage.

**Richard Neville is available for interviews**

**For more information, images and interviews please contact:**

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