

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGO – Monday 22nd February 2016

Official exhibition opening Thursday 3 March at 6pm – invitation only

**Otto Frank's lost letters found!
Otto called Australian woman Anne Finlayson, "the other Anne."**

In May 2015, The Sydney Jewish Museum and Holland's iconic Anne Frank House launched a search for a series of typed and hand written letters that Anne Frank's father, Otto had written to Australian pen pals in the 1950's, 60's and 70's.

Following the publication and translations of 'The Diary of Anne Frank', hundreds of young people around the world had reached out to Otto, the sole surviving inhabitant of the 'secret annex.' Otto replied to every letter and kept all correspondence sent to him. Unfortunately his replies were not copied or archived.

The search has resulted in locating two Australian 'girls' who had written to Otto and kept and treasured his letters.

Museum Volunteer Anne Slade spearheaded the campaign to locate the Australian letter writers after she visited the Anne Frank Museum in Holland with her husband Alan last year.

"We were surprised and fascinated by this unknown Australian connection and wanted to do what we could to help track the letters down. The connection is also a powerful one for my husband, who lost many relatives in the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp, where Anne and Margot also died," explains Anne Slade.

Anne Finlayson (now Anne Skurray) read the Diary in 1955. She was so moved and overwhelmed by the book that she wrote to Otto and then visited him and his second wife Fritzi in Switzerland many times, continuing a correspondence with both. They became "loving and intimate" friends. Otto called Anne Finlayson "the other Anne." He also confided that he blamed himself for the fate of his late wife and daughters.

Diana Munro (now Dr Diana MacLean) said that "the power of the book was that the writer was a young girl of approximately my own age. To think that Anne had similar feelings about the future and similar hopes and dreams meant it had a strong impact on me."

At the age of 17, (on the 4 Feb 1963) Diana Munro wrote to Otto Frank: "This intimate Diary did to me what no other book has ever done – it awakened in my heart a spark of love for mankind. Before that time I was very narrow-minded in my outlook towards others but now my great ambition in life is to improve the conditions of the under-privileged, especially the children.

I would be extremely proud to have corresponded with the father of the young girl who showed the world the futility of war, which amounts to wilful murder when a war-crazied people turn to killing innocent children whose only crime is birth. The Diary will never be forgotten as it is a conscience to people in the four corners of the earth.”

In November 1963 she was thrilled to receive a reply from Otto. He wrote that her letter had impacted him deeply; especially knowing the letter had ‘changed her outlook on life and influenced her decision to become a doctor’. He also noted, “Believe me it is always only the individual who is able and willing to help in creating a better world, never the masses.”

The letters will be displayed in a world-first, at *Anne Frank – A History for Today* exhibition at the Sydney Jewish Museum running February 15-September 30th 2016.

Anne Skurray and Dr Diana MacLean are available for interview

Media please contact Jackie at Jackie Evans Publicity on 0407 776 222 or jep.pub@bigpond.net.au

Exhibition: Anne Frank – A History for Today

When: Opening 15 February – 30 September 2016

Official launch Thursday 3 March at 6pm invite only – media please RSVP: Jackie Evans 0407 776 222

Where: Sydney Jewish Museum

Address: 148 Darlinghurst Road, Darlinghurst.

What: *Anne Frank - A History for Today* is returning to the Sydney Jewish Museum by popular demand. For the first time, visitors can view the lost Otto Frank letters received by two Australian girls which form part of this mini-exhibition and highlight our connection to this very special story. It is a thought provoking exhibition exploring the life and times of the young girl whose voice survived the Holocaust. Photographs, letters and excerpts from Anne’s own diaries bring the families extraordinary years in hiding to life, while drawing comparisons with the tragedy of the Holocaust unfolding across Europe.

Recommended Adult Visiting Hours: Monday to Thursday 1pm-4pm. Friday 12pm-2pm.

Closed Saturdays and Jewish Holy Days. Sunday 10am - 4pm. Free entry first Sunday every month.

Museum entrance fee includes entry to exhibition.

Website: For further exhibition and museum information visit: www.sydnejewishmuseum.com.au

Upcoming Event:

Sunday 13 March at 2.30pm *Uncovering Otto: The Lost Letters of Otto Frank* .This special afternoon will include insights into Otto, provided by letter writer Dr Diana MacLean and Leven Rouw, the Manager of Educational Projects at the Anne Frank House in Holland, and a special reading of the letters by Sydney actor James Bean. \$10 Members/ \$15 General Admission. RSVP: rsvp@sjm.com.au

From March 2016, the Sydney Jewish Museum will be undergoing a major upgrade of its Holocaust exhibitions. In lieu of this closure, visitors will have access to the Signs of Life, Anne Frank and Serving Australia exhibitions only. The museum team look forward to bringing you a renewed and re-energised exhibition space from November 2016.

Media please contact Natalia Thomas nthomas@sjm.com.au or phone 02 9360 7999