



A new online exhibition, *A Thousand Words*, invites the public to become curators in sharing their responses to historical photographs from two of NSW's richest and most significant collections.

'A picture tells a thousand words' is the premise of an exciting, new online exhibition that places people at the heart of the curatorial journey. ***A Thousand Words***, marks the first collaboration between two of Australia's leading cultural institutions; Sydney Living Museums and NSW State Archives and features 100 of the most compelling photographic images from the collections.

Unlike conventional curated exhibitions, *A Thousand Words* invites the public to respond to these extraordinary images of people, places and events in NSW spanning 100 years from 1880 – 1980.

In 2019, two social media campaigns titled #OneWordWednesday and #SayItOnSaturday were launched with images from the exhibition published each week. Audiences were invited to contribute a one-word comment or emoji. With hundreds of one-word responses per image, 'word clouds' have been generated to reveal the range and frequency of the contributions. Emotional, nostalgic and imaginative, the 'crowd sourced' responses have been translated into *A Thousand Words* online exhibition design.

"The enthusiastic response shown from the public has been unprecedented for both SLM and NSW State Archives," said Penny Stannard, Head of Curatorial, Sydney Living Museums and NSW State Archives. "This exhibition confirms that people from all sorts of backgrounds want to have a say in how we understand and interpret our histories."

As part of the exhibition, in partnership with WestWords literary organisation in Western Sydney, new works have been commissioned from ten early career writers and artists who have each selected an image from the exhibition and crafted their unique perspectives, from the personal to the political.

A Thousand Words has also ignited the imaginations of some of Australia's most exciting contemporary creatives, including visual artist Blak Douglas and writer/director/librettist Pierce Wilcox. Intriguing and varied responses have been provided by broadcaster, performer and academic Sunil Badami; historian and artist Vanessa Berry; author and creative producer Kiriaki Koubaroulis; historian and disability advocate Dr Naomi Malone; and barrister, true-crime writer and photographer Mark Tedeschi QC AM.

"We are always looking for ways where audiences can be active partners in our work," said Adam Lindsay, Executive Director, Sydney Living Museums and NSW State Archives. "We have found that commentary from the responses to the images reflect people's feelings about current times as well. *A Thousand Words* is documenting history upon history which makes for a fascinating exhibition."

***A Thousand Words* online exhibition launches on 9 May** offering the first 20 images plus public responses and commissioned works. Each month 20 additional photographs will be released culminating to the full 100 images, responses and official back stories by 18 October.

See how technology and visitor engagement can connect images and words together to harness not just the power of 'a thousand words', but a million stories. Get involved and have your say. Visit: **atwonline.com.au**

* 16 March 1932, Belmore North Public School girls about to cross Sydney Harbour Bridge. © NSW State Archives