

MEDIA RELEASE

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James and Diana Ramsay's \$38M Philanthropic Masterpiece to the people of South Australia

Today the Premier, the Hon Steven Marshall, announced that South Australia will be the beneficiary of one of Australia's most generous cultural gifts: a \$38 million bequest towards the development of the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) bestowed by Diana May Ramsay AO (1926 - 2017) and James Stewart Ramsay AO (1923 - 1996).

The bequest of James Ramsay was established by his last Will in 1994 just two years before he passed away, and some fourteen years prior to the establishment of the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation, which was established by Diana in 2008. His bequest came into effect following the passing of Diana, and, in combination with Diana's, is one of the greatest cultural legacies in Australia's history – it is profound and catalytic for South Australia.

AGSA Director Rhana Devenport ONZM says 'The extent of James and Diana Ramsay's support of AGSA is breath taking. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and registers the most generous donation in the Gallery's history'.

Sarah Davies, CEO of Philanthropy Australia was thrilled to hear about this inspiring gift, saying "This is an exciting and significant announcement – one of the largest cultural gifts in Australia's history. And, in addition to this, the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation was set up in 2008 to continue their long tradition of giving in perpetuity. The vision and foresight is absolutely inspiring".

For James, son of distinguished surgeon Sir John Ramsay and nephew of the celebrated artist, Hugh Ramsay, love for the arts and medicine started early. He was a Life Member, Founding Donor and Patron of a large number of organisations in South Australia as well as in his home town of Launceston and the vast majority of funds forming this bequest have come from his estate. Diana's love of art was ignited at the tender age of ten, when escorted through the South Australian Gallery by her father, she fell in love with a Nora Heysen painting, *Scabious*.

Their visionary gift is for the purchase of major works of art. AGSA's collection is already one of South Australia's greatest and most valuable assets, and James and Diana's generosity will ensure it not only retains its position of national and international significance, but will catalyse major growth for the collection, attracting even greater visitation to the State.

The scale of their legacy is comparable to Australia's most generous cultural gift of all time - The Felton Bequest, gifted to the National Gallery of Victoria in 1904. The James and Diana Ramsay Foundation Executive Director, Kerry de Lorme says, 'It was in fact the Felton Bequest that inspired James and Diana's philanthropic support to the arts, and Diana was well aware of the transformative impact of the Felton Bequest. Now she and James have gifted a tremendous legacy that will ensure the excellence of AGSA's collection for generations to come.'



In 2009, in her speech at the launch of the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation, this bequest and the long-lasting legacy she had hoped for their Foundation, was at the forefront of Diana's mind: *"Decades ago, James and I admired the Felton Bequest but we knew we could never match that, so we just thought along those lines as a guide on a very small scale, and have managed to assist in areas where we possibly could".*

Foundation Chairman Nicholas Ross says "little would James and Diana have known at the time of pledging their gifts, that this legacy stands to rival The Felton Bequest that they had such high regard for. We believe that this bequest will be the largest single cash donation ever given to an Art Gallery or Museum in Australia, which is extraordinary. It is a very large capital fund that will continue to grow for the benefit of the community, and has the capacity to transform the Gallery's collection" says Nicholas Ross.

This gift builds on the Ramsay's fruitful and long-time relationship with the Gallery. Since 1972, James and Diana have assisted the Gallery in multiple ways, particularly in acquiring over 80 works of art for the collection. The James and Diana Ramsay Foundation has also provided further support for the highly successful children and family programs, which have seen over 300,000 children and families visit the Gallery since inception in 2013. On the occasion of Diana's 90th birthday, the AGSA and the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation launched the \$100,000 acquisitive Ramsay Art Prize in perpetuity, one of Australia's most generous and dynamic art prizes, which will also enhance the collection of the AGSA.

Sarah Davies added "Over the next 20 years, it is estimated that Australia will see an intergenerational wealth transfer of \$2.4 trillion as wealth is passed from one generation to another. Let's hope this outstanding example of generosity and vision inspires others to do something similar and leave their legacies for future benefit" she said.

Kerry de Lorme, Executive Director, James and Diana Ramsay Foundation
Rhana Devenport, Director, Art Gallery of South Australia

Image 1: James and Diana Ramsay at Government House on the occasion of receiving their Order of Australia Day medals in 1992

Image 2: Scabious, 1930, oil on canvas by Nora Heysen, Australia, 11 January 1911 – 30 December 2003. Gifted to the Art Gallery of South Australia by the Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund 1934