

## **Speech by John Richards**

**At the official opening of the *Windows on Europe* Film Festival, Dendy Cinema, Brisbane**

**19 February 2010**

Welcome everyone. I should like to acknowledge:

Hon John Mickel – Speaker of the House

Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk – Minister for Disabilities & Multicultural Affairs

Mr Tim Nichols, Shadow Treasurer

My colleagues from the diplomatic corps

This is the 5th year of the *Windows on Europe* Film Festival. The festival started out in Canberra but due to its popularity has spread to other Australian cities. Last year we screened the festival for the first time in Brisbane and Sydney. This year, the festival will again be screened in Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra, and, for the first time, in Melbourne and in Auckland.

The *Windows on Europe* festival could only happen in Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane with the help of Dendy Cinemas and I should like to extend a huge vote of thanks to Dendy, and in particular to Eddy Garcia-Grant here in Brisbane and to Nick Hayes, the National Operations Manager. Dendy's generous support has allowed us to present this festival in state of the art venues, such as this one tonight.

I should like very much to thank my colleagues from the Member States, without whose help and cooperation this event would not be possible.

And my thanks go as well to Elfi Massey, President of the Australian Council for Europe, for her tireless work in promoting the European Union in Queensland.

What makes this festival unique is that it brings together films from across Europe into one festival, demonstrating the European Union's rich and diverse culture. Nearly 500 million citizens in 27 Member States spanning the Atlantic to the Black Sea and the Baltic to the Mediterranean, with a broad diversity of culture and backgrounds, have the right not just to travel freely but to find work and establish themselves anywhere in Europe.

This finds a strong echo in Australia, with its own cultural diversity, and strong multicultural society, in which Europe is of course strongly represented, not least my own Member State of the United Kingdom.

The seventeen films in this year's festival are a celebration of that diversity. The Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Luis Zapatero, speaking at a reception for the winners of the Goyas – Spain's Oscars – described the medium of film as on one hand a 'fábrica de sueños' – a factory of dreams – but on the other one of the most persuasive and effective vehicles to project an image of a country to the world.

The films on show in the coming days have won awards at various film festivals across Europe. They include dramas, comedies, action, romance, and documentaries. In short, there is something for everyone and I encourage you to see as many of the films as you can during the coming days.

This festival is not the only way we encourage the art of cinema in Australia. For several years now, we have been in partnership with the Australian Film, Radio and Television School - and the Manager of the Queensland Branch (Ms Alex Daw) is here tonight - where we present an award to an emerging Australian talent to participate in a European film festival.

This year, we have already had a young director from AFTRS (Lucy Gaffy) attend the DocPoint Film Festival in Helsinki which is famous for its focus on documentary film, and later this year, another young director (David Edwardz) will go to the Helsinki International Film Festival with its focus on European feature film.

These are just some of the ways that the European Union Delegation tries to broaden and deepen our relations with Australia, in areas going beyond our traditional robust ties, important as they are, in trade and investment, and foreign policy.

Indeed, the range of our bilateral cooperation – now under the umbrella of the Australia-EU Partnership Framework - grows larger every year and this can only be to the good of both sides.

But to come back to the moment at hand, tonight, you will be viewing the Spanish film *Hector*, chosen in recognition of the current Spanish EU presidency.

Gracia Querejeta is one of the finest contemporary Spanish directors and "Hector", her fourth film, won't disappoint the viewer.

The high point of the movie is the work of the excellent actors, with Nilo Mur as Hector, and Adriana Ozores his aunt.

It is a very touching film, which I hope you will all enjoy. Thank you all very much for coming this evening.