



Government  
of South Australia

**State Funeral for Hugh  
Reskymmer (Kym)  
Bonython AC DFC  
AFC KStJ**

**St Peter's Cathedral, North Adelaide**

**Tuesday, 29 March 2011**

**Hon Mike Rann MP**

**Premier of South Australia**

**Minister for Economic Development**

**Minister for Social Inclusion**

**Minister for the Arts**

**Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change**

*(Check against delivery)*

Employing characteristic understatement, in his 1980 autobiography Kym Bonython reflected "I feel that I have led a full and satisfying life, packed full of interest for as long as I can remember".

Then, for good measure, over the next three decades, he went about living another one.

Such was Kym's preparedness to push the limits, to serve as a patron of Adelaide's pleasures and its thrills, and to embody the very essence of public citizenship it was the living he crammed into 90 years that was, perhaps, the greatest of so many significant achievements.

His was a surname famous in three centuries and, in his time, he played many parts.

As a buccaneer of the arts, in his galleries, and in his radio broadcasts.

In bringing to our attention, and to our shores, Satchmo, the Duke, and Dizzy Gillespie.

In his energetic promotion of Arthur Boyd, Sidney Nolan and Pro Hart.

In his chairmanship of our Jubilee 150 celebrations.

And in the rich and long-loved canvases that adorned the walls of his home in North Adelaide.

A collection that, at one stage, included one of Boyd's typically sweeping Wimmera landscapes that had been boldly touched up by Kym's young son, Tim, using his mother's nail polish.

Kym Bonython was a man of daring; a man who did a lot, and who inspired others to get a lot done.

A nobleman with a larrikin streak, as comfortable in the bosom of his Rowley Park Speedway fans as he was at gallery openings and jazz clubs.

Born into privilege, but no stranger to misfortune.

The hellish Ash Wednesday fires of 1983 destroyed not only his beloved family home, Eurilla, but the irrecoverable artefacts of memory that it housed.

The photographs, movie reels and Christmas toys of another time.

Irreplaceable pieces created by Australia's finest artists.

**A collection, unsurpassed in our nation, of thousands of jazz records, many bearing the signatures of his mates, Chet and the Duke, and 'Brother' Ray Charles.**

**I remember visiting the fire fields with John Bannon on the day that followed.**

**It was eerily silent.**

**Even the birds and the insects had perished.**

**Miles of ash had settled like freshly-fallen snow.**

**The horror of the fire still glowing in our memories - orange and umber; blackened fences against a sorrowing sky.**

**A scene taken from a painting by Russell Drysdale, Kym's great friend.**

**Prince Charles and his young bride, Princess Diana, visited the blackened ruins of the Bonython family's dream.**

**But Kym remained philosophical.**

**He knew others had lost so much more.**

**Nature had robbed his family of all but the clothes they stood up in, but within days, Kym was back in circulation, attending functions in borrowed garments provided by generous friends.**

**As ever, the show would go on.**

**Kym Bonython bravely served his country overseas.**

**His passion for the arts and for motorsport carried him around Australia, and for a while he lived in Sydney, running his Paddington Gallery.**

**But his heart forever remained here in South Australia, and he soon returned.**

**This was his place.**

**His heritage.**

**His home.**

**It was Kym's grand vision to focus world attention on our State for its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations in 1986 that ultimately brought the Formula One Grand Prix to Adelaide.**

**Emanating from elsewhere, this idea for a one-off, internationally-renowned motor racing event would have been quickly, and loudly, laughed off.**

**But Kym had the capacity to not only generate ideas.**

**He could infuse his ambition and his enthusiasm into all those around him.**

**Suddenly, the implausible became feasible and, with John Bannon taking up the cause, the race arrived, a year earlier than planned.**

**Kym was equally successful, and just as visionary, as the Chairman of our Jubilee 150 Committee.**

**He would rumble up to Board meetings astride his powerful motorcycle.**

**And it was his connectedness with so many diverse South Australian communities - sporting and cultural; top end and grass roots; that helped ensure it became such an inspiring and inclusive celebration.**

**As he wrote in his autobiography: "Showmanship is the name of the game, from ballet to bull-fighting, and the public always responds to glamour, drama and excitement."**

**Affable and approachable, a tee-totaller who was the life of every gathering, Kym was truly liked and admired by all who met him.**

**He was not much into politics, but he loved parties.**

**His ideology lay in sourcing and showcasing the very best talent for the widest possible audience.**

**The measures of his successes were the diversity of honours bestowed upon him.**

**Recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Force Cross.**

**National speedboat champion, and inductee into the Australian Speedway Hall of Fame.**

**Winner of the Premier's Lifetime Achievement at South Australia's arts industry's Ruby Awards.**

**A great friend to the greats - Gene Krupa and Dave Brubeck, Brett Whiteley and Sir Jack Brabham, John Laws and Barry Humphries.**

**And holder of our nation's highest honour.**

**These are but moments of a good life we all might envy.**

**A combination of Biggles, Hemingway, Fangio and Peggy Guggenheim.**

**Like his forebears whose name adorns landmarks throughout our city, Kym Bonython's legacy endures.**

**He was a monarchist, of course, but he lived both in the centre, and at the edge.**

**He believed good luck was a gift that should be tested.**

**He risked his life perhaps too often.**

**But that was his way.**

**He knew that we sojourn but once on this earth, and must savour its beauties and high adventures when we can.**

**On the sea, on land, in the air.**

**In foyers and at gallery openings, and in the joys of conversation.**

**He showed us how to live and, in his 90 years, lived well.**

**His was a life that counted.**

**A life to be celebrated.**

**On behalf of the people of South Australia, I extend my condolences to Julie, such a loyal and loving support to Kym through so many busy years.**

**Also to his children Robyn, Chris, Michael, Tim and Nicole, to 15 grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, countless friends, and as many admirers.**

***(ends)***