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RARE PRESS GALLERY ARTEFACTS REVEALED

Long before laptops and live blogs, the front row of democracy was occupied by journalists equipped with pen and paper, recording parliamentary debates as they happened.

[Images. Credit Parliament of NSW](#)

To mark World Press Freedom Day on the 3rd of May, the Parliament of NSW is shining a light on the people and analogue practices behind parliamentary reporting, releasing images of historic press gallery artefacts used long before laptops, social media, live blogs and mobile devices transformed journalism.

The images show a series of finely crafted timber writing slopes made by early Sydney cabinet maker H.T. Jones and Sons, dating from the mid to late 19th century.

Designed to give journalists a steady surface for rapid note-taking during debates, the slopes were used by members of the NSW Parliamentary Press Gallery.

Newspaper labels, handwritten markings and visible signs of wear speak to decades of daily use at the very front line of democratic accountability.

“These items help us understand the role of the media in reporting what happens in the chamber and at the Parliament,” said Brittany Allen, Parliament of NSW Collections and Heritage Coordinator.

“They show a snapshot of press gallery life before journalism became digital.”

The images also show shorthand notebooks, loose notes, personal ephemera and sketches left behind during long sitting days, offering a vivid picture of the practical realities of parliamentary reporting before digital recorders, email and smartphones.

The artefacts are preserved by the Parliament of NSW’s Collections and Heritage team, which documents and safeguards the material history of parliamentary life. See more items from the Parliamentary Collections and Archives this July at the [Parlamento Exhibition](#).

World Press Freedom Day is observed annually on the 3rd of May and recognises the importance of a free and independent media in democratic societies.

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