

Sculptor Linda Klarfeld works with Tony Abbott in his office as she makes his bust for the Prime Ministers Avenue.



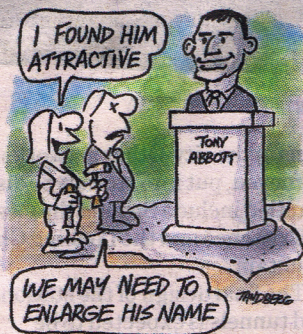
## Ballarat or bust: sculptor gets

**Tom McIlroy**

Tony Abbott's face might be one of the most recognisable in Australia, but sculptor Linda Klarfeld found herself caught off guard after sitting with the former prime minister for more than an hour.

Mr Abbott's distinctive ears and Roman nose - prime fodder for the nation's cartoonists and photographers for decades - were almost too attractive to sculpt.

Commissioned by the Victorian goldfields city of Ballarat to create a bronze bust for its Prime Ministers Avenue, the Czech-born sculptor wanted to avoid a predictable caricature.



"It wasn't an easy one. I personally think he's quite attractive, and I always say attractive people are hard to sculpt because it's hard to make them look real," she said.

"He has a Roman nose, his ears

are not big and I don't know why the cartoonists always pull them out the way they do, but for sculpture they're very good.

"All his features are very strong. He has a chiselled face, which is very good for sculpture."

Australia's prime ministers are immortalised in the collection of busts established by Federation politician Richard Armstrong Crouch and, after months of work, Klarfeld will become the first woman to contribute.

Her \$25,000 commission has been sent to a Melbourne foundry and is expected to be unveiled later this year. The final design is a closely guarded secret.

## measure of the man

Klarfeld said the former leader was patient while she made a plasticine maquette model, praising Mr Abbott's appreciation of civic art and a bust of Winston Churchill in his Parliament House office.

"It's almost like a preparatory sketch a painter makes on the spot, but three-dimensional in my case," she said. "I wanted the bust to be very real. Of course it's realistic, but I've worked hard to capture a sense of him as a human being and not just a prime minister."

Busts of the first six prime ministers were unveiled by Victoria's governor Sir Winston Dugan in 1940, with the Crouch bequest providing funds for their successors.

Ballarat mayor Samantha McIntosh said an unveiling date for Mr Abbott's bust was being negotiated, coming after former Labor leader Julia Gillard took part in a ceremony in 2014.

"It is a significant avenue and one that many people admire and love. There have been large crowds at all the unveilings that I've witnessed and it's undoubtedly a source of local pride that former prime ministers come and visit," she said.

Mr Abbott described working with Klarfeld as "a pleasure".

"I feel thrilled and humbled to be on the avenue of the prime ministers and am looking forward to seeing it in the future," he said.