

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 22 September 2014

Regional schools travel from afar to experience Queensland Theatre Company's powerful *Black Diggers*

Regional Queensland students will soon have the opportunity to see a unique stage depiction of the untold story of Indigenous diggers during the First World War in a simultaneous live telecast on Wednesday 8th October. The powerful play will be telecast from the live performance on the evening of 8th October at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre in Brisbane to the Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre.

Students and teachers from regional schools, as far afield as Proserpine and Bowen, will gather at the Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre for this unique experience. The travel costs of some student groups have been supported by Queensland Government funding, making such an opportunity more accessible for schools that must travel some distance to include experiences such as this in their curriculum. Minister Assisting the Premier on the Anzac Centenary Mr Elmes said Queensland Government funding of \$300,000 to support the telecast is part of \$49.3 million the Queensland Government is devoting to Anzac Centenary commemoration events and projects during 2014-2018.

"The play's power comes from its exploration of the mateship between black and white soldiers on the front line contrasted with the discrimination felt by Indigenous soldiers on their return to civilian life," Mr Elmes said. "*Black Diggers* uncovers the contribution of First World War Indigenous soldiers, following their exceptional stories from their homelands to the battlefields of Gallipoli, Palestine and Flanders. I hope it will provoke dialogue about a little-known part of Anzac history. The production draws from interviews with the families of 15 Indigenous soldiers who heard the call to arms – men who will step from the blank pages of history to share their compelling stories. After the curtain falls, we will remember them."

Comprehensive education notes have been provided to attending schools in order to make the most of the experience back in the class room. There will also be follow-up workshops for students and teachers with Indigenous actors from the cast. From the theatre, to the classroom and workshops with the cast, this is truly a full circle educational experience for our region's students, on such a relevant and important topic.

Black Diggers is written by Australian playwright **Tom Wright** and directed by Queensland Theatre Company Artistic Director, **Wesley Enoch**, who said the play was long overdue.

"One hundred years ago, men all over the world enlisted to fight in the First World War – including hundreds of Indigenous Australians," Mr Enoch said.

"Shunned in their own country, they took up arms to defend the free world. For them, the horror of war on a Gallipoli beach was an escape from the shackles of racism at home. Drawing upon new research and extensive consultation, the production reclaims a forgotten chapter of the story we tell ourselves about Australia's wartime legacy, shying away from none of it."

Admission \$10 Adult | Students and children Free

Wednesday 8th October – MECC Plenary Halls

Tickets: dial & charge on 4961 9777 | www.mackaytix.com.au

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