



Media release

The Honourable Glen Elmes MP

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

Minister assisting the Premier

Anzac play *Black Diggers* for regional Queensland

Regional Queenslanders will get 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 later this year.

Minister Assisting the Premier on the Anzac Centenary Glen Elmes said a Brisbane production of the critically-acclaimed Queensland play, *Black Diggers*, on 8 October will be telecast to venues in nine major regional centres.

Mr Elmes said the powerful play would be telecast to theatres in Ayr, Bundaberg, Cairns, Gladstone, Mackay, Mount Isa, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Townsville.

“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.”

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.”

Mr Elmes said Queensland Government funding of \$300,000 to support the telecast is part of \$49.3 million the Queensland Government was devoting to Anzac Centenary commemoration events and projects during 2014-2018.

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Media Contact: Peter McCarthy (0408) 835 548