



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard 10 November 1999

THE SUNSHINE CLUB

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (11.13 p.m.): I rise tonight to speak to the House about a wonderful event that was held in Cairns last Thursday, 8 November, that is, the world premiere of the Queensland Theatre Company's *The Sunshine Club*. I would forgive honourable members of this House for thinking that, yet again, this will be a speech about how wonderful Cairns is, but it is not. It is a matter of good fortune for Cairns that it hosted the premiere of this important and wonderful musical by the Queensland Theatre Company.

All who attended the first night shared the privilege of enjoying the brilliant work of writer and director Wesley Enoch, the musical compositions of John Rogers, the choreography of Steven Page, and the brilliance of script consultant Nick Enright, production designer Richard Roberts and lighting designer Matt Scott. The full cast and crew were excellent. It is a wonderful production.

Of course, it is usual for such productions to premiere in Brisbane at least, if not in Sydney. It is a determination of this Government that regional Queensland will share fully, with the capital city, in arts programs and thus the production was premiered in Cairns. I commend this production of *The Sunshine Club* to the House. It is exciting, it is good fun, and it is truly about Queensland, our culture and our history. At the same time, it brings us exciting music and dance.

The Sunshine Club presents an inspiring story based on real events. The story is set in the dance halls of the 1940s and 1950s at a time when Aboriginal people did not have full citizens' rights. Black and white Australians came together to socialise at the dance halls. The early scenes in *The Sunshine Club* show Australian soldiers marching in uniform as though coming home from the Second World War. It was a surprise for the audience to see that of those five soldiers, two were indigenous Australians—black faces. Somehow it came as a shock to see indigenous people so clearly representing their efforts on behalf of our country.

This is the story of the post-war years when Aboriginal men who had served our country attempted to reintegrate into an Australia that had not yet fully recognised their rights. While that serious, sad and hurtful part of our history is represented, the human spirit of joy and loving, regardless of cultural or racial barriers, is also represented.

The dancing skills of the cast are tremendous. In 1991, leading American ballet director Martha Graham said—

"Think of the magic of that foot, comparatively small, upon which your whole weight rests. It's a miracle, and the dance ... is a celebration of that miracle."

This is a musical to enjoy. It has wonderful songs, wonderful dances and wonderful actors. It does not have one or the other, but all three rolled into one. The production is also a testament to the Goss Government's investment in the Queensland Theatre Company. The production has taken over three years to come to the stage. It takes courage for a Government to invest in the arts for the future, knowing that the outcome is uncertain and unpredictable, and that the benefits may not be reaped till many years down the track. The Goss Government deserves credit for doing that.

The schedule for *The Sunshine Club* is to move from Cairns to Mackay and then to Townsville. From there it will travel to Brisbane to commence its season there in December. I encourage all honourable members, their families and friends to go along for a wonderful night's entertainment. I guarantee that they will enjoy it. In January, as Queenslanders, we can proudly enjoy *The Sunshine*

Club's premiere at the Opera House in Sydney, where I am sure it will be received very well indeed. My own prediction is that this particular production will become an Australian classic and a Queensland classic in particular. It will be something that the Government—the former Goss Government and the present Government—can be proud of.

I pay particular tribute to Robyn Nevin, who was the Queensland Theatre Company's director during the period when this production was commissioned and substantially produced. She has now completed her contract and has moved back to New South Wales. As Queenslanders, we can be proud to recall our history.

Time expired.
