



Speech by

**GARY FENLON**

**MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES**

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Hansard 14 April 1999

**ABORIGINAL CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**

**Mr FENLON** (Greenslopes—ALP) (11.27 p.m.): Tonight it is a pleasure to rise to speak about one of Queensland's best kept secrets. I am referring to the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts. In April 1998 the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts opened its doors on the fourth floor of the Metro Arts centre at 109 Edward Street. Twelve months on, the centre has staged its first wholly student-written, directed and performed musical theatre production, *Rainbow Blessing*, in the Metro Arts theatre. This is a remarkable production and a remarkable achievement.

The centre offers an accredited two-year Advanced Diploma in Performing Arts, nurturing young indigenous performers in preparation for careers in the industry. This rigorous program, developed by the centre's director, Michael Leslie, offers 17 core modules and electives in acting, singing and dance strands. The course is tough. It is designed to instil self-confidence and self-discipline in graduates who are motivated to succeed in the demanding film, television, theatre and recording industries, and their performances are testimony to the success of the program.

The Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts is a vital response to an identified lack of training opportunities in Australia for indigenous artists. The brainchild of Michael Leslie, himself a Churchill Fellowship recipient, the centre also recognises Aboriginal culture as a powerful creative force unique to the Australian performing arts. I was delighted to be in the packed house for the preview of *Rainbow Blessing* on 29 April and to share the unique musical theatre experience with the talented and highly trained team. That was the third occasion that I was able to attend very enjoyable performances at the centre.

Powerful direction by Kamahi and individual performances by Elaine Crombie and Juanita Burr are proof of the success of the centre. The program is fulfilling its objectives. These students will make their mark on the stages of the world. Queensland has an Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts of which we can be immensely proud.

Time expired.

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