




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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ADJOURNMENT

Black Diggers

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (8.47 pm): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the highlights of a recent telecast of the *Black Diggers* play, which was aired at the Toowoomba Empire Theatre, attended by over 300 people. It was actually aired in the new Armitage Centre, which is a new part of the theatre that was built, with over \$2 million raised in the local community. In a state-wide first, this live telecast to regional Queensland is one of the key components of the Queensland government's Anzac centenary commemorative events program. Coming live from the Playhouse at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre in Brisbane, this performance of *Black Diggers* brought people together from across the state in nine venues—at Ayr, Bundaberg, Cairns, Gladstone, Mackay, Mount Isa, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Townsville.

The production was directed by Wesley Enoch and written by Tom Wright. *Black Diggers* uncovered the fearless contribution that Aboriginal men made to Aboriginal history and followed their journeys from their homelands—some in Queensland—to the battlefields of Gallipoli, Palestine and Flanders. To mark 100 years since the outbreak of the First World War, *Black Diggers* explores the untold exceptional stories of Indigenous Australian soldiers who fought for the British Commonwealth. Shunned and downtrodden in their own country at that time and banned from serving in the military, Aboriginal men stepped up to enlist and take up arms to defend the free world in its greatest time of need. Grand in scale and scope and drawing upon new research and extensive consultation with veterans, black diggers' families, historians and academics, this all-male, all-Indigenous cast evoked the memory of these heroic men, largely unknown to history.

I had the pleasure of attending with my school captains from both campuses of Toowoomba State High School: Josephine Burton, Lyndon Enright, Lilly Goddard and Alex Stephens. It was interesting to talk to them about how they felt after they had seen the play. I would also like to thank the principal, Chris Zilm, for contacting them whilst they were on holiday to get them to come along. The audience was very impressed with the telecast and was very emotional. I have even been contacted by a local school asking if the recording of the performance would be available as a resource for the school.

I congratulate the Anzac Centenary Coordination Unit and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on the delivery of such an outstanding performance. I would like to mention to Minister Walker that if they would like to do a live performance in Toowoomba and telecast it for those people living in regional Queensland and particularly here in Brisbane, we would only be too happy to host them in Toowoomba and telecast it back for them to enjoy the experience we had in Toowoomba.