

Question on Notice

No. 883

Asked on Wednesday, 6 June 2007

MR WEIGHTMAN, Member for Cleveland asked the Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services Queensland, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth (**MR PITT**) –

Will he tell the people of Cleveland, in particular the people of North Stradbroke Island, how the State Government is supporting the project to honour the remarkable life of Oodgeroo Noonuccal, a long time resident of North Stradbroke Island?

ANSWER:

2007 marks the 40th anniversary of the historic YES vote to remove references in the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. On 27 May 1967, more than 90 percent of Australians voted to allow the Australian Government to make laws for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and for Indigenous Australians to be counted in the Census.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal was a renowned leader and a writer whose influence has permeated many aspects of Australian life, particularly through her literary art and her commitment to Aboriginal culture and education. The Queensland Government recently contributed \$100 000, comprising \$50 000 from the Department of Communities and \$50 000 from the Department of Education, Training and the Arts, to support the commissioning and staging of the Oodgeroo Project, a theatre production which is based around the life of Oodgeroo Noonuccal and her role in the 1967 Referendum YES campaign.

The Oodgeroo Project was instigated by Mr Sam Watson, a well known Aboriginal leader and playwright. The Oodgeroo Project will be developed in collaboration with La Boite Theatre and will be presented in 2009 as part of Queensland's 150th birthday celebrations.

There is a strong Queensland connection to this project as Oodgeroo played a leading role in the success of the YES vote in the 1967 referendum. The project will trace the life of this great Queensland woman from her birth on Stradbroke Island with the Noonuccal people, through her experiences in World War II, her leadership within the Queensland Council for the Advancement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and her literary career. Oodgeroo made her name as a writer with the novels *We are Going* (1964), *Dawn is at Hand* (1966), *My People* (1970), followed by many other short stories, essay and poems such as *Stradbroke Dreaming* and *Father Sky*.

The Oodgeroo Project presents a significant opportunity for the Queensland Government to acknowledge this great Queenslander and to celebrate the importance of the YES vote in the 1967 referendum.

I launched the Oodgeroo Project at a function on Monday 28 May 2007 at the Queensland State Library, on behalf of my colleague the Minister for Education, Training and the Arts, the Honourable Rod Welford, MP.