

HAL December 2016 Yugambah Youth Choir Fundraiser *Why Indigenous Languages Matter*

Friday, 9 December 2016

The Hon Justice A Philippides Court of Appeal

Your Honours, honoured Elders, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen – it is my honour to acknowledge and pay my respects to elders past and present and the community today.

This evening's function is the fifth event held by the Queensland Chapter of the Hellenic Australian Lawyers Association since its launch in January last year. Well over one thousand people have now attended events of the Hellenic Australian Lawyers Association held in this very important public space. The topics covered have been varied, but an important thread has been the diverse influences *on* our legal system and the importance *for* our legal system of embracing and understanding our diversity.

And, so it is with this evening's function. As you will have appreciated, tonight's event is more than a fundraiser. Its focus is to raise awareness of the importance of indigenous languages and to reinforce that it is essential that we, in the law, understand why indigenous languages matter. We have had a wonderful opportunity to do so by listening to the astonishing Yugambah Youth Choir sing in language. Rory O'Connor and Candace Kruger have explained why language matters very potently and better than I can hope to.

We are enormously privileged and honoured that they have shared their extraordinarily rich culture with us. The performance tonight of the powerful *Call to Corrobboree*, is the first time, since its revival, that it has been performed in a public community space. And it is important that that space is the heart of this building that houses the Supreme Court of Queensland. We do understand how precious and generous the sharing of your culture with us this evening is.



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This evening provides an opportunity to take a constructive step in the important work of reconciliation of cultures. Its purpose is to do what we can in a concrete way by empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and, above all, their youth through acknowledging and respecting the importance of indigenous language and culture. This ancient and continuous culture, understandably, is a source of inspiration and pride to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

By promoting the preservation of indigenous language and culture, we all benefit. We all have an opportunity to see what is around us through a different prism. Seeing through that prism adds a new layer of understanding, a new appreciation and connects us more deeply to each other. Auntie Delmae and William Barton, thank you for shining a light into that prism for us.

Indigenous languages are part of our everyday life, in the place names around us: Indooroopilly, Toowoomba, Boonah, Mooloolaba, Tallebudgera, Tamborine.

Preserving indigenous languages is a collective responsibility. This evening is about that collective responsibility. It is about empowering the indigenous youth of Yugambah to share their language and stories with us. It is, quite literally, about giving the voices of indigenous youth an opportunity to be heard. In our efforts towards reconciliation, I say let us be one.

In the Turrabul language – *Kunnar mallera ngalingi*

In the Jagera language – *Ngali yagarr ganarri*

I want to wish you all season's greetings and best wishes for the New Year. And, in honour of the Yugambah Youth Choir, I invite Candace's father, Mr Ian Levinge, a proud Yugambah man, to express those sentiments in the Yugambah language.

Before I finish I want to pay tribute to Mrs Patricia O'Connor of the Yugambah Museum – it all started with her.