

MEDIA RELEASE

1 May, 2015

Cabaret shows nation's soul

SOME of the nation's finest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entertainers are bringing their comedy, poetry, music and dance to East Gippsland this month.

Blak Cabaret artists will perform at the Esso BHP Billiton Wellington Entertainment Centre in Sale on Thursday, May 21. The experienced performers have been selected not only for their talent, but also their commitment in shaping Australia's cultural identity.

In the lead-up to the performance, two Blak Cabaret artists will hold FREE community workshops in Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance and Sale.

Legendary singer/songwriter Kutcha Edwards will hold a community songwriting workshop at Esso BHP Billiton Wellington Entertainment Centre in Sale, from 7pm to 10pm, on Tuesday, May 12 and at Forge Theatre & Arts Hub in Bairnsdale, from 4pm to 7pm, on Wednesday, May 13.

Former *So You Think You Can Dance* hip hop dancer Nikki Ashby will teach hip hop dance at Lakes Entrance Mechanics' Hall, from 4pm on Wednesday, May 13 and at Esso BHP Billiton Wellington Entertainment Centre in Sale, from 6pm on Thursday, May 14.

Malthouse Theatre engagement officer and **Blak Cabaret** producer Jason Tamiru said both artists were experts in their craft.

"Kutcha Edwards is a proud Mutti Mutti Aboriginal man who sings for his family and people," Mr Tamiru said. "He is an experienced music workshop facilitator who gets results. He uses music as a medium to tell the stories of today and yesterday. Nikki Ashby is a hip hop specialist and movement teacher - an outstanding professional dancer."

Mr Tamiru describes the Blak Cabaret show as funny, moving, heart-warming and very entertaining.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people come from an oral history and **Blak Cabaret** plays to that strength," Mr Tamiru said.

"**Blak Cabaret's** established performers have been entertaining audiences for more than 30 years, creating contemporary songlines throughout the country. Our emerging performers are continuing the story, forging their own footprints."

The Sale show will be MC'd by actor and director Kylie Belling, whose extensive work across theatre, film and television includes feature film *The Sapphires* (2012) and television series *Redfern Now* (2013).

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Kutch Edwards and Nikki Ashby will perform alongside some of Australia's best Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers - musician Bart Willoughby, variety act Black Elvis, gum-leaf player Uncle Herb Patten, comedian Shiralee Hood and soprano Shauntai Batzke.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said **Blak Cabaret**, which is funded under VicHealth's Arts about Us program, takes audiences on a heart-warming journey into our nation's soul.

"Since its debut in 2012, **Blak Cabaret** has toured Victoria to entertain and move audiences in regional areas. It's fantastic to see it on the road once more for this special performance in East Gippsland," Ms Rechter said.

"**Blak Cabaret** is more than top class entertainment from Australia's finest Aboriginal performers. It's a funny and moving commentary about where we come from, who we are, and most importantly, a celebration of the richness and diversity of all Victorians."

Blak Cabaret performance and community workshops are presented by Malthouse Theatre, East Gippsland Shire Council, Wellington Shire Council, with support from VicHealth and Artistic Merit.

The Blak Cabaret concert will be at Esso BHP Billiton Wellington Entertainment Centre, Sale at 8pm on Thursday, May 21. Tickets: \$19-\$37. Bookings:
www.ebbwec.com.au/item/blak-cabaret

To book a FREE songwriting workshop with Kutcha Edwards or hip hop dance workshop with Nikki Ashby at Bairnsdale or Lakes Entrance, call 5152 1482 or visit
www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/forgetheatre

To book a FREE songwriting workshop with Kutcha Edwards or hip hop dance workshop with Nikki Ashby at Esso BHP Billiton Wellington Entertainment Centre, call 5143 3200 or visit www.ebbwec.com.au

To arrange interviews or images, please contact:

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