

Spear a high point for film

By KEIRA JENKINS



A FOOT in each world. A heart in none. That's the tagline for Bangarra artistic director Stephen

Page's first feature-length film, *Spear*.

The film tells the story of a young man named Djali (played by Hunter Page-Lochard) finding out what coming into manhood means as a member of an ancient culture living in a modern world.

Spear's producer John Harvey, from Saibai Island in the Torres Strait, said it was an interesting and new experience for the film crew to work with dancers and vice versa.

"It was a unique process. The dancers had to learn how to use a film schedule and learn how to work with the film medium," he said.

"But the film crew also had to understand the dancers and when they could work or couldn't for their safety.

"Usually you start a few more months out when you're making a film but we couldn't this time because we were working with the dancers. It was a learning process for everyone."

Mr Harvey's background is in theatre production, but since moving to film he has written and



Dancer Yolande Brown performs as the Earth Spirit in *Spear*. It was filmed on location in Dhalinybuy, Northern Territory. Picture: Jacob Nash

directed documentaries for the ABC and NITV as well as directing music videos.

He has worked with Mr Page on short films before, including *Sand*, which is based on a Tim Winton story.

The award-winning producer said the entire team involved in the film was committed, and

working with Mr Page again was brilliant.

"It was a great experience and we had a similar team to the one we worked with on *Sand*, so we already had a good working relationship," Mr Harvey told the *Koori Mail*.

Spear is the first Australian film to be produced by an

Indigenous person, and Mr Harvey said he is proud – and disappointed – to be that person.

"It's fantastic and exciting, but if you think about how long Australian film has been going – *Jedda* was the first colour film in 1955 – it's taken too long," he said.

"We have such important

stories and hopefully this will help emerging Indigenous producers if I pave the path a little bit."

Mr Harvey said one of the most important things to come out of *Spear* was elevating film as a medium for Indigenous storytelling.

"We are proud of what we have achieved, but we understand that we were ambitious and were standing at a cliff's edge and just had to jump," he said.

"But it's been a wonderful experience and all the positive feedback has exceeded our expectations.

"The most warming thing for me, though, is that we've had such a positive response to an Indigenous style of storytelling."

Spear opens for a limited season across Australia from March 10.

Performers include actor Aaron Pedersen (*Mystery Road*), Yolngu songman and Bangarra cultural consultant Djakapurra Munyarryun (*Ochres*), and the dance ensemble of Bangarra Dance Theatre.

It was co-written by Stephen Page and Justin Monjo (*Peter Allen: Not the Boy Next Door*).

The film will be shown in Perth, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Sawtell (NSW) and Nambour (Qld). Screening details at www.spear-film.com.au

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Men aiming for a treaty

By DARREN COYNE



IT'S 25 years since Yothu Yindi sang out for a treaty.

Their song was in response

to a promise Prime Minister Bob Hawke made at the Burunga festival in the Northern Territory, that a treaty would be signed by 1990.

A year on from that promised date, nothing had happened, and the song *Treaty* was written.

Twenty-five years on, still nothing has happened.

But the chorus continues, and will ring out again on March 14 when hundreds of Aboriginal men and their supporters will converge on Redfern in Sydney, once again calling for a long-awaited treaty between the colonial governments and the country's traditional owners.

Narungga Elder Tauto Sansbury, from South Australia, is among the line-up of speakers who will address the 'Men speak out for Treaty' public forum.

Mr Sansbury told the *Koori Mail* that a recent vote of 200 First Nations people in Victoria

to reject constitutional recognition and the Victorian Labor Government's willingness to discuss a treaty had added weight to calls for treaties at both a national level, and with all states.

"A great outcome of the forum would be to form a delegation of grassroots representatives to approach Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull about a treaty," he said.

"I'd also like to see the Government of South Australia, and the other states follow suit and begin considering this seriously."

"Growing call"

Mr Sansbury said the Federal Government needed to "listen to the growing call for a treaty", rather than continue the push for constitutional recognition.

"The current people they are negotiating with are not the people being invited to treaty discussions because we know already where they sit ... with the Recognise movement, which has been rejected by the grassroots," he said.

"They (the Government) need to talk to serious Aboriginal people and look at what a treaty has done in

places like Canada and New Zealand."

Mr Sansbury's fellow speakers include Yolngu Nations Assembly spokesperson Yingiya Mark Guyula, Stronger Smarter Institute founder Chris Sarra, Wiri barrister Tony McAvoy, and Terry Mason, an Awabakal man.

Mr Sansbury said the absence of a treaty in Australia was a sad indictment on the country and its leaders.

"This has allowed the Australian Government to continually force harmful policies on Aboriginal people, such as the Northern Territory intervention," he said.

"This punitive initiative and its later incarnation – Stronger Futures – has not only failed to improve the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal people, it has compounded the harm of 228 years of colonial dispossession."

Mr Guyula said, "That thing called Closing the Gap is getting wider and wider, and what they are doing is against our will."

Organised by the Stop The Intervention Collective, the public forum will be held at the Redfern Community Centre at 6pm for a 6.30pm start.