

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cooktown Cantata – a botanical reflection

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Two cultures will come together in reconciliation and song at a special performance in the Botanic Gardens as part of the three-week Cooktown Expo 2020.

The Vera Scarth-Johnson Gallery Association commissioned renowned librettist Jan Black and composer Dr Louise Denson, in collaboration with local elder Willie Gordon and local musicians Derek Rosendale and Dora Gibson to write the unique musical cantata.

“We have commissioned the Cooktown Cantata especially for Cooktown Expo 2020,” Vera Scarth-Johnson Gallery Association president Jean Stephan said. “The cantata brings together, over time and cultures, renowned botanical illustrator and beloved Cooktown resident Vera Scarth-Johnson, Guugu Yimithirr elder and artist Tulo Gordon and the naturalist aboard Captain Cook’s *Endeavour*, Joseph Banks.”

“Evocative poetry encompasses the coming of Cook’s ship through the eyes of the First Nations people, the Guugu Yimithirr and their story of Waalumbaal Birri, or the Endeavour River. It also brings to life Vera’s extraordinary life, her friendship with Tulo and her fascination with Banks.”

The Cooktown Cantata – Botanic Reflections will be performed at Nature’s PowerHouse in the Botanic Gardens on July 24 and 25, with tickets available via the Cooktown Expo 2020 website. The Expo runs from July 17 to August 4, and commemorates the 250th anniversary of James Cook’s arrival in Cooktown aboard the *HMB Endeavour*. The subsequent 48-day stay of Cook and the *Endeavour*’s crew was characterised by scientific discoveries and peaceful interactions with the local Indigenous people, including the first recorded act of reconciliation.

Cooktown Expo 2020 is proudly supported by the Queensland Government and Cook Shire Council. For more information on Cooktown Expo 2020, visit the website at www.cooktown2020.com or contact the Expo team via email at info@cooktown2020.com or phone on 4082 0500.

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