

Media Release No.462

For release: Monday 30 July 2012

The Purple Spider Dance Team, from Ugar, has performed at the 2012 Henley Festival in Oxford, England, giving a world audience insight into the rich and vibrant culture of the Torres Strait.

Held annually in July on the banks of the River Thames, the Henley Festival is a major international event that presents a mixture of music, visual art, culture, food, wine and street theatre.

This year the festival also coincided with the lead up to 2012 London Olympic Games.

Members of Purple Spider, accompanied by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Portfolio Member for Culture, Art and Heritage, Mr Phillemon Mosby, travelled to England for the performances, for which they have been preparing since the beginning of the year.

The TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris, congratulated the dancers on their attendance at the prestigious event.

“The Purple Spider Dance Team has represented the Torres Strait with a passion and dedication that is to be admired”.

“The TSRA is pleased to have been able to support them in this endeavour”, Mr Kris said.

This trip was made possible through a partnership between the Henley Festival organising committee and the TSRA.

The TSRA provided funding through the *Torres Strait Dance Strategy* – an initiative that offers a strategic approach to the development and promotion of Torres Strait dance.

Support was provided last year for 15 members of Arpaka Dance Company, from St Paul’s community, to perform at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair.

An art exhibition was also developed to accompany the dance team to the Henley Festival, with contributions from Torres Strait artists including Flora Jo, Jimmy Thaiday and George Nona.

Headed by coordinator, Rocky Stephen, the Purple Spider Dance Team impressed audiences in their debut international appearance following an official reception by the Australian Deputy High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Mr Adam McCarthy.

The team performed twice per night over the five day festival, which also included acts by notable artists Sting, Lulu and Australian, Tim Minchin.

They were also guests of honour at the British Museum, where they performed a traditional *kab karr* and island hymn to pay respects to their ancestors.

The experience has been reported as having been very humbling, spiritual and emotional.

The Purple Spider Dance Team's voyage from Ugar in the Torres Strait to Oxford, London will be the focus of an NITV documentary to air later this year, thanks to the support of the TSRA and Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).

The documentary will be one of the first to air on SBS's new national free to air Indigenous Television service.

For more information on the Henley Festival visit www.henley-festival.co.uk. To learn more about the *Torres Strait Dance Strategy*, contact TSRA Cultural Development Officer on 07 4069 0873.



Caption: Members of the Purple Spider Dance Team with TSRA Portfolio Member for Culture, Art and Heritage (CAH), Phillemon Mosby, and CAH staff.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact – Ken Orr (07) 4069 0700 or 0448 005207