



CULTURAL LINK: The \$13 million redevelopment of Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Park was officially opened by The Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove, pictured above with the Tjapukai performers and (below) Tjapukai performers tell the Creation Story.

Main picture: BRENDAN RADKE

Tjapukai a gateway to understanding

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OUR future depends on understanding, appreciating and exploring our past, according to Governor-General Peter Cosgrove, and yesterday he unveiled an "eye-opening gateway" to doing so.

Cairns indigenous tourism experience, Tjapukai, yesterday opened its doors fresh from a \$13 million redevelopment carrying a new theme "Tjapukai - where Australia begins", with Sir Peter acting

as witness to what he described as a "rebirth" of a place he said was "telling indigenous stories as they should be told" for domestic and international tourists alike.

"This centre should be a gateway to understanding indigenous culture that goes back many thousands of years, and what better place to start than this part of the world where you have such a wonderful meeting of ecology, culture and climate," he said.

"Let's not let this go."

Indigenous Business Australia chief operating officer Leo Bator said Tjapukai had always been one of the "must-dos" for visitors to Cairns, but "the most significant investment in indigenous tourism and entertainment in the country in many years" would soon see it become a "must-do" for visitors to Australia.

About 160 indigenous elders, local leaders and community body heads turned out to bear witness to the relaunch of the 28-year-old tourism

icon, including Cairns Mayor Bob Manning who labelled the centre a critical link in Cairns' cultural heritage.

The centre now features the story of the Djabugay people in a new theatre with 360-degree screens, including the floor, involving live performers and striking images and animation. It also has new exterior and interior designs, theatres and restaurants and a refurbished range of productions, tour operations and packages.

