

# Ernie Dingo returns to a role he first played 30 years ago



Rehearsals are underway in Broome for the revival of Australia's first Aboriginal musical, *Bran Nue Dae*. Ernie Dingo is set to return to a familiar role as part of the revival of one of Australia's most loved stage musicals. (Supplied)

By  
Brooke Fryer

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Popular Aboriginal actor and TV presenter Ernie Dingo is set to return to a familiar role in the 30th anniversary revival of one of Australia's most loved stage musicals.

Ernie first played the role of Uncle Tadpole in the musical *Bran Nue Dae* three decades ago and is now gearing up to reprise the much-loved character as the production prepares to embark on its 30th-anniversary tour in 2020.

"I love the show... there is so much wealth of knowledge and teaching in *Bran Nue Dae* about the lifestyle of an individual or a community," he said,

"It is the teaching of how things work and how things are [in Aboriginal communities] and the best thing about it is being able to laugh and to laugh at all the things around you that are hurting."

The musical, written by the late composer Jimmy Chi, first featured at the Octagon Theatre in Perth in 1990 and is a coming-of-age story which takes audiences back in time to life during 1960s Western Australia.

Ernie said the story still resonates with audiences today because, like 30 years ago, there is still a long way to go towards achieving a reconciled nation.

"There hasn't been much change... we have accepted a lot of things about non-Indigenous lifestyle and ok fair enough, but there is still a lot of people who do not understand about Indigenous culture, Indigenous lore or Indigenous practices or Indigenous people," he said.

Rehearsals are currently underway in Broome with a fifteen cast ensemble, many of who will be making their professional debut. One newcomer is Teresa Moore who will be debuting as Rosie as part of the musical.

Yawuru and Wadjarli woman and associate director, Naomi Pigram, said the musical coming back to life brings with it "hope, encouragement and pride".

"It also brings back the celebration of our mob and the strength of them as people," she said. "I think that is the main reason why it should come back.

"There's no better way to tell a story than through music and dance and it translates through generations because it is a universal language."

The tour will be Ernie's third time playing Uncle Tadpole. He played the role for the second time in the 2009 feature adaptation film which was directed by Rachel Perkins and starred Jessica Mauboy as lead actress.

The musical is scheduled to travel Australia from January, opening in Sydney's Parramatta and then onto Perth, Geelong, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and Adelaide across the year.