



Chairman's Award winners:
Judy and Don Freeman

“ They started on the career path they are known for today... their ability to collect an eclectic group of people who have little or no theatrical experience and turn it into an extravaganza

Apart from being on the TTNQ Board for 10 years, Mark was chairman of the Cassowary Coast Development Bureau, on the steering committee for the development of the Great Green Way and many other committees. In fact, the list is endless.

The Chairman's Award for Excellence was awarded to **Don and Judy Freeman**, well known in the region for their contribution to the tourism industry.

Mr Gregg said Don and Judy Freeman were chosen for the Chairman's Award for Excellence because they were inspirational leaders whose efforts had succeeded in making Australia, and the world, recognise the richness of Australia's indigenous culture.

As individuals this dynamic couple were well-established in their respective countries before meeting in South America in the late '70s.

In 1982, with their family, they

relocated to North Queensland and in 1987 opened the first Aboriginal tourist attraction in Australia, Tjapukai Dance Theatre, combining their love of theatre and a rich ancient culture.

They had moved to another exotic location and together started on the career path they are known for today... their ability to collect an eclectic group of people who have little or no theatrical experience and turn it into an extravaganza.

After nine successful years they moved down the range to a 10ha site and opened a Cultural Village including a restaurant, retail and Creation Theatre depicting the wondrous legends of how the world began, known today as Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park.

In 2002 they hosted Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, achieving world press with all the publicity.

Mr Gregg said they had also overseen the training and

employment of hundreds of young Aboriginal people and helped them to achieve economic independence, and injected more than \$35 million into the local community.

Don and Judy have also won more than 27 awards and were recognised as the national ambassadors for Australia's Aboriginal cultural tourism.

They sold their interest in 2009 and, moving on, they are now tourism consultants and event organisers, especially in Indigenous Tourism projects.

Don and Judy were appointed business mentors under the Australian Government's Business Ready Program for Indigenous Business and were commissioned to write a comprehensive paper on Best Practice Cultural Tourism Attractions in the world today.

Stephen Gregg,
Tourism Tropical North chairman



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