

‘How North Queenslanders reacted to the 1967 Aboriginal Referendum to shape Australian public policy’

North Queensland today may seem distant from the centre of political decision making in Canberra, but fifty years ago it was a very isolated part of the country so that local people were especially cynical about decisions made “down south”. Yet an unlikely coalition of citizens combined with indigenous people to challenge the extremes of discrimination and violence at a landmark inter-racial conference.

“We the Australians-What is to follow the Referendum” was held in December 1967 to chart a new direction in public policy. The results were much more far-reaching than any of the participants or organisers could have imagined.

Local initiative saw the development of a strong cultural shift in expectations and led to a successful Australian High Court challenge which recognised indigenous native title.

This joint presentation by Professors Henry and Margaret Reynolds will present an assessment of this reformist period of Australian history in which they both played an active role.

Henry Reynolds is a well-known historian whose lifetime work reinterpreted Australian race relations.

Margaret Reynolds’ career in community activism culminated in a parliamentary career and opportunity to progress a human rights agenda.