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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Land Council congratulates NRL's 'common sense' decision to Aboriginal Flag.

1 May 2009

The State's peak Aboriginal representative body, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, has congratulated the National Rugby League in overturning its ban on Preston Campbell wearing headgear featuring an Aboriginal flag.

Campbell wore the headgear against the Cowboys in round five, only for the NRL to prevent him repeating the practice against Canberra the following week. This ban was overturned by the NRL prior to last weekend games.

In a letter to league boss David Gallop, NSWALC's Chairperson, Bev Manton, congratulated the NRL for a 'common sense' decision in allowing the Titans livewire to display his pride in his Aboriginal heritage.

"Preston is an outstanding role model for all Australians - black and white - and his profile only raises the Aboriginal community's interest and love for Rugby League," Ms Manton said in the letter.

"Preston is an awe-inspiring flame for reconciliation."

"His heroic efforts on and off the field are indelibly etched into the memory of his people."

Ms Manton noted that the Aboriginal flag is an officially recognised flag under the Australian Flags Act.

"The recognition of our culture in the dancing scenes, the smoking ceremony and the acknowledgment of our flag and other symbols demonstrates true and proper respect for our people and their culture."

“Aboriginal people throughout the State also greatly appreciated Mr Gallop ready acknowledgement and comment that there was a real need to respect not just Preston Campbell’s position - but those of all other Aboriginal athletes in finding a practical way forward,” she said.

Ms Manton said it was hoped that future NRL guidelines would provide the right for Aboriginal players to display their flag.

“I have written to Mr Gallop congratulating him on his handling of this issue,” Ms Manton said.

Further information: Peter Windsor 0400 554 603