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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

# media release

## NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

June 16, 2010

### **PRAISE FOR TIMANA. LET'S KICK OUT RACISM**

Bev Manton, Chairwoman of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council has praised rugby league star Timana Tahu for standing up against racism in sport.

“Congratulations Timana Tahu on your brave stance against racism in rugby league,” Bev Manton said today.

“The risk that you took was enormous. So was the price that you have paid. But the courage you have shown is even bigger.

“Your actions have provided inspiration for Aboriginal people not just in NSW, but across the nation. You are more than just a role model for our children – you are a young leader with the courage of your convictions who is prepared to pay a personal price on the basis of your beliefs.”

Ms Manton, who is the sister of league legend Eric Simms, said racism has been a problem in league for many years.

“Some people have said in relation to this latest incident that there’s no place for racism in this day and age.

“I’d suggest there was no place for it 10 or 20 years ago either.

“In fact, there has never been a place for it, although unfortunately it has been around as long as the game has.

“When my brother played professionally, he suffered a great deal of racism, and the worst of it came from some of the top names who are still involved in the game today,” Ms Manton said.

“That said, I acknowledge the work of the ARL and the NRL in trying to stamp out this sort of behaviour.

“But administrators are wasting their breath unless they can get the message through to people like Andrew Johns.”

Ms Manton said she was particularly heartened by Timana’s stance given his age.

“This is a young person taking a stand, and I find that very inspiring.

“Too often, the fight for black equality has been left to older Aboriginal people. I hope Timana’s actions will ignite in young Aboriginal people a stronger will to stand up against this sort of racist behaviour.

“The Aboriginal contribution to rugby league has been enormous over the years. So has the contribution from Polynesian and Maori players.

“For someone like Andrew Johns to demean it in the way he has is disgusting.

“Some people have suggested Andrew Johns is not a racist, but said racist things. The fact is, if people say these sorts of things, then it’s in their thought process. It’s a part of their psyche.

“You either use this kind of language or you don’t. It’s no accident if you do.

“Some people have even suggested this is not the sought of thing you say in the company of Aboriginal people.

“It’s not alright at any time.

“It’s also time all Australians started facing up to this problem. It is not simply going to go away by pretending it doesn’t exist.

“I also hope that players across rugby league in general will stop and think about how they might support Timana’s brave stance into the future. It’s time to kick out racism from a game we all love.

“And whatever you do in support of Timana, I hope all members of our community – black and white - remember that if you stand up for black Australia, you stand up with black Australia.

“The last words, appropriately, belong to Timana: ‘This isn’t about me or Andrew Johns. It’s about arresting racism and standing up for my beliefs.’

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