

7 September 2015

MEDIA STATEMENT –

Runners become WARRIORS! Community spirit ignited at inaugural WARRIOR Run

A traditional Indigenous smoking ceremony marked the beginning of the first ever Indigenous Marathon Foundation's (IMF) Father's Day WARRIOR Run in Centennial Park on Sunday.

The event was a major fundraiser for the IMF, a not-for-profit charity organisation that uses running the marathon to celebrate Indigenous resilience and achievement.

Mother Nature rained on the parade, but not even she could extinguish the flames of culture and community spirit at the event aimed at celebrating great men, fathers and significant male role models.

Attended by nearly 700 people from across the country, the event included 5km and 10km distances attracting people of all ages and abilities from elite to recreational runners and walkers.

All runners lined up at the start line and linked arms to display unity and strength to support each other and be noble Warriors.

Kids beat their dads across the finish line to claim bragging rights and all finishers were awarded a specially designed medal featuring the face of Charlie Maher, Australia's first Indigenous Australian to finish the world famous New York Marathon in 2010 as part of IMP's (a program of the IMF) first squad.

It was a medal steeped in pride, culture and a lifelong reminder of the capacity our Indigenous Australians have to achieve while overcoming incredible challenges.

The crowd embraced traditional Indigenous culture, with faces painted in traditional Warrior markings.

IMF Director and world champion marathon runner, Robert de Castella, said the WARRIOR Run was crucial to acknowledge the positive impact men have in their families and communities.

"It's important we start focussing on promoting and celebrating the great qualities of strong and positive men in our lives, whether it's a father, brother, uncle, grandfather or a male role model.

"Men have long been regarded as strong leaders, resilient, and protective – a noble WARRIOR.

"However in recent times, especially in some Indigenous families and communities, the role, respect and value of some men has been eroded and some are losing their value, self-respect and significance.

"This must change and we wanted to highlight exceptional men and focus on their positive attributes, to celebrate and promote what it means to be a good man.



“Nearly 700 people braved the wet and cold conditions to embrace the meaning and importance of what the event is about and I am so proud of everyone who participated in the event and supported such a significant occasion.

“We are determined to make it an annual event and one of the biggest running events on the calendar,” he said.

Uncle Terry from The Glen Mens’ Group performed traditional Aboriginal dance and song, and also taught some traditional dance moves to kids.

IMF Ambassador, world paralympian and father of one, Kurt Fearnley, shared Rob’s vision.

“This is another fantastic initiative by an organisation that continues to create opportunities and drive social change.

“Father’s Day is the opportune time to remind all the men in our lives just how influential and important they are. As a father myself, I am passionate about being a leader and teacher for my son so he can grow into a great man with strong morals and sense of character.

“I was honoured to be part of such a significant day that will continue to grow right around the country in years to come.”

The event was supported by high profile Indigenous leaders including Tribal Warrior CEO, Shane Phillips, Australia’s first Indigenous Olympic commentator, Charlie King, and Australia’s first Aboriginal man to finish the New York City Marathon and 2010 IMF Graduate, Charlie Maher – who was also the face of the inaugural Finishers’ Medal.

IMF ambassador and TV personality, Dan MacPherson, along with fellow IMF Ambassador and Australian long-distance runner, Ben St Lawrence, were also part of the inaugural event that is set to become a staple in running calendars nation-wide.

The event would not have been possible without the incredible support of the following organisations:

Major Sponsors: Rebel Sport, ASICS

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Community Partners: South Sydney Rabbitohs, Tribal Warrior, NSW Police Association, Recognise, The Colour Run, Centennial Parklands, the Australian Olympic Committee, AFL

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For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Communication and Fundraising Manager: Kellie O’Sullivan (02) 6162 4750 or 0437 699 950. More information about IMF can be found at www.imf.org.au or visit our Facebook page, The Indigenous Marathon Foundation.

