

EVENT	Melbourne Press Club Michael Long address and lunch
LOCATION	RACV Club, Rooftop Room, Queens Street, Melbourne.
DATE	24 February 2005
TIME	12.30pm
SUMMARY	Michael Long has long been famous for his playing skills with the AFL, and now more recently for his walk to Canberra to discuss Aboriginal issues with the Prime Minister. Speakers: Michael Long, Essendon Football Club; Paul Briggs, Victorian Elder; Jon Faine, 774 ABC Melbourne presenter.

IAN HENDERSON:

... will be as keen as I will be to hear Michael Long's story firsthand. There's the walk to Canberra and the road that lies beyond it. As my kids would say, Michael Long is a legend throughout Australia; Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. An all-Australian footballer and Norm Smith Medallist, he's delighted us all with his grace and skill on the field even if we'd been barracking for the other side.

But he's not just a footballer; Michael's resolute stand against racial abuse on the footy field gave rise to the AFL's racial vilification code in 1995. He's chairman of the AFL's indigenous foundation which fosters Aboriginal talent in the league, and we're learning now he's a pretty effective politician and diplomat as well, even though it sometimes involves some undiplomatic language. Forgive me, Michael, but in 2001 you famously called the Prime Minister a cold-hearted prick ...

[Laughter]

... for not apologising to the stolen generation. I wish I could use language like that on television.

[Laughter]

But here's the interesting reversal; Michael then apologised to the Prime Minister in the interests of getting a dialogue going. His long walk to Canberra helped put Aboriginal health and welfare issues back on the front page after they'd fallen off the political radar for several years. He's a remarkable man, who's now become one of the most substantial indigenous spokesmen of his generation.

So, what's next? Well, he'll be telling us in a short while. For the moment, please extend him a very warm welcome to the Melbourne Press Club.

[Applause]

We're also privileged to have with us today several distinguished guests from the Koori community. Paul Briggs, a senior Victorian elder. Dr Geraldine Atkinson who's chair of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association and Wendy Brabham who's director of Deakin University's Institute of Koorie Education.

Welcome, we're honoured to have you all here.

[Applause]

And a special welcome to 774 ABC Melbourne's Jon Faine who will be Michael's interlocutor and interviewer, and, I hasten to add, not interrogator, after lunch. As you are probably aware Jon has come off air so it's kind indeed of him to jump back into the saddle for us here to day. Jon, many thanks and welcome.

[Applause]

A couple more special hellos. To Peter Maher and his legion of guests from Rehome. Peter really put the shoulder to the wheel to help us get today's function organised and we're delighted to see you and all your guests here, Peter. Thank you.

[Applause]

Also a big hello to the big contingent from Kilvington Girls Grammar School. I've no doubt you'll find this, as I said, far more educational than your classes, good as your classes may be. Welcome girls.

[Applause]

And thanks too to our loyal sponsors who make events like today's possible. From our principal sponsor, Tattersall's, it's great to have with us today Michael Mangos and Peter Franwich (ph.sp.). Representing our premium sponsors we also have with us Jeremy Blackshaw from Minter Ellison, John Rees and David Cumming from the RACV, and Craig Wishart, Julia Mason (ph.sp.) and Giselle Switzer (ph.sp.) from Sensis. To all of you a very big welcome.

[Applause]

Our major sponsors are also well represented here today. You all know who you are - Telstra, Smart Works, Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Channel Nine, Channel Seven, Herald and Weekly Times, The Age - quite a list isn't it. To all of you, your blood is worth bottling. It wouldn't be a press club without you, thank you very much.

[Applause]

Now, before I leave you to your lunch today, just a couple of quick plugs for some of our forthcoming functions. On Wednesday, the ninth of March we have our Tsunami Report lunch at the Medallion Club over the Docklands Stadium. We have a panel of four journalists who covered the aftermath of the

Tsunami, Brett McLeod from Channel Nine, Claire Brady from Channel Seven, John Hamilton from the Herald-Sun and Farah Farouque from The Age. And the ABC's Barrie Cassidy will be a very able moderator. You really will hear some extraordinary tales there so mark that one in your diary; Wednesday the ninth of March, for lunch at The Medallion Club.

And please also don't forget our tenth anniversary Quill Awards at Zinc in Federation Square on the evening of Friday, March the eighteenth. For those of you who don't know, the Quill's are the Press Club's annual journalism awards. They are ten years old. Some said they wouldn't last but they're getting bigger and stronger every year, so our tenth anniversary is a very special one for us and as befits a special night we'll have a great line up there for you.

Bookings are pouring in already, pouring in already. So get yours in pronto to avoid disappointment as there is a finite number of seats available this year, much as there was a finite number of seats available for today's function. I'm sorry to those people who were disappointed. Don't be disappointed for the Quills. Get your bookings in early. It will be a great night.

That's it from me. Enjoy your lunch. Michael Long, Paul Briggs and Jon Faine will take the floor after sweets and coffee. Thank you.

[Dinner]

JON FAINE – ABC PRESENTER:

Good afternoon. My name's Jon Faine from 774 ABC Melbourne and the Melbourne Press Club, in their wisdom, have asked me to play a almost insignificant role here today, but it's my great honour and pleasure to do so.

Before we get too far into things, today's proceedings are being broadcast to Telstra Country Wide offices in Mildura, Ballarat, Bendigo and Shepparton and we welcome them to our gathering here in Melbourne.

Michael Long will be joining us in a moment with Paul Briggs as well. A briefes... the briefest of introductions from me.

Just before Christmas last year I was asked by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust to emcee a function for the visiting former Indonesian Prime Minister Abdurrahman Wahid at the Melbourne Town Hall.

When I stood up to introduce the devoutly Muslim former leader of our nearest neighbour who was visiting Melbourne, I was required to acknowledge and recognise the original indigenous occupants of the land, which I duly did and I do again today. I

then made welcome the Chinese, ethnic Chinese, Lord Mayor of Melbourne John So, the openly gay Jewish Deputy Mayor of Melbourne, Gary Singer

We were at a function to hear a Muslim cleric who'd been the leader of the largest Muslim nation in the world, our nearest neighbour. We had the leaders of all the major churches and religions in the room. And it struck me that Australia had gone through incredible change over even just my short lifetime.

Here we were in the heart of Anglican Melbourne welcoming every imaginable race, religion and dignitaries who represented anything but establishment Melbourne. Midway through our proceedings, everything stopped. The blind cleric Abdurrahman Wahid who was speaking was asked to stop because the room erupted into spontaneous applause when Michael Long walked in, only a few minutes late. I then had to explain to the blind Muslim cleric, former Prime Minister ... President, rather, of Indonesia, why everybody burst into spontaneous applause when Michael Long walked into the room. But I don't think anyone here needs that explanation.

Michael, thank you for joining us, and welcome to the lectern.

[Applause]

MICHAEL LONG – FORMER ESSENDON FOOTBALL CLUB:

Thanks very much. I prepared a speech. And I'm pretty much one for putting my thoughts down and speaking from the heart a lot of things that happen.

There are many beginnings to The Long Walk. Some happened to me, most happened to my people. I wonder whether, will we ever stop walking, whether we will reach our destination, that place where we are understood and the opportunity belongs to us on equal terms, a place where we can be ourselves, where we can be what we want to be, a place where we're all the same. I found that place perhaps a dozen years ago. It was called the Essendon Football Club.

Before and after I had been looking; it was a long walk, and it was a penetrating search. So much of it is looking inside yourself; who you are, where do you belong. I left Darwin when I was sixteen. The first of my long journeys, I left home land, my people searching. Football took me to Alice Springs, further south to Adelaide and I had never been to Adelaide before. I stuck with what I knew - to friends - and let no-one else inside. It was here I first heard hatred. I didn't know what to do. It was uncommon for me growing up in Darwin. I was so young, what could I do? Black Sambo they called. Why? I never knew or understood.

I was lucky. I played in the bicentennial carnival football for the Northern Territory. This ground was so big, and I was so fast, and I ran and no-one could catch me. No-one could touch me. They noticed me and they wanted me to come to Adelaide, to Melbourne to play footy. I had never been to Melbourne before, and I had hardly been on a plane. Essendon was my new home now.

I kept it to myself. I said nothing. I was shy, I was scared. My brother was with me. We boarded and we stayed in our room. We were frightened, shy. We couldn't actually watch TV, couldn't go and get a drink from the fridge. We didn't know where we were, what we were doing, where it would all end. But we were learning, finally we were learning. We started to see what was happening when we learned things. I was probably bitter that that school had been nothing for me.

But I don't regret it now, though I feel that this hole in my life so many times when I feel inadequate. And I there ... I know there are some – many – who know so much more than me.

I feel intimidated by my lack of knowledge, and I'm a statistic of the past and present with our kids. Kevin Sheedy, my first teacher. I listen to him other than my mother and father. He spoke in riddles sometimes, but listened. I listened. The first time I could see what it meant to listen and learn. There was a

reason. There was a beginning, and a middle and a purpose. I had none of that.

Now, you can see, whenever I travel back to Darwin, the island ... far north west, so little has changed. Learning is the key; knowledge makes you independent, gives you the reason to live, takes you somewhere. That's what we want: equality, knowledge, purpose, we can see, we can go for.

It's easy with footy, such a wonderful, inclusive game. You can grab its history and see how you can be a part of it. Your knowledge is your skill, you were born with it, you only need to refine it or find someone like Sheedy who can show you how to refine it, without intimidation or being taken down or made inadequate.

You can be a Tim Watson or Jimmy Hird, Maurice Rioli or Peter Matera. You can be anything you want to be in the sport. But life, what can be ... what can you be, where can you go?

I started feeling my way at Essendon. I found friends in the older players. Why was that? Was it because I was naturally drawn to the knowledge of the experience of the eldest within the team? I got better and better and learned more about the game, how to defend, prepare, how to get stronger, how to beat the opposition, ideas. I got stronger in the mind, and came to

the ground knowing nobody could beat me. I would run like the wind. I'd run, nobody could beat me, not even hatred, not even ignorance. But we beat that too.

But then the game left me; football came to an end. It gave me ... could not give me no more. I was again an outcast in my mind. Where would I go, what would I do? People helped me, or so they thought. But how could they? What did they know about me, where I'd been, what I'd done, what I'd missed? What do they know about my people?

What do they know that we are what we are, we always have been? We are searching to be there again. I am searching again. I've not heard of a natural ... I've not had a natural home since my last game with Essendon or Darwin. I had no club to lean on, no people, no land. Where can I go, what can I do?

I could hear Kevin Sheedy's voice: you have to lead yourself, you can't wait, make decisions. If only I'd been to school. May not be lucky again.

I'd met with leaders; people like Ginger Riley, Blair Goodabee (ph.sp.), great artists, Mick Dodson, Pat Dodson, Paul Briggs. Learnt so much about the real world and how to paint it, understand it and walk in the shoes of these great people.

I heard stories. I felt much closer to where I've been. I'd learned that I had ... am a leader and I had to use the good fortune in my life to help other people.

It came again last October when I was in Broome with the Aboriginal players listed in the AFL. I could see myself as a young man in these indigenous people in Broome. I could see their wide eyes, I could see no future for them in this world. I had to do something.

Decisions were being made for me, my family, my children and cousins, my brother for Aboriginal Australia. I saw it like a shining light. It was like a footy team being coached by email.

Nobody's driving us as people; nobody is feeling our personalities; nobody is seeing us for who ... see us as; nobody is loving us for ourselves, our skills, our potential. Nobody assumes that be fit in the long march back into the depths of time.

We've been cut away from our homeland. You could see it in Broome. It was like the Essendon Football Club turning up on Saturday in any jumper the players could find, playing wherever they liked, doing whatever they wanted, playing without leadership.

This is why I walked to Canberra. This is why I knocked on the PM's door. I wanted Australia to know that we need leadership, understanding the purpose we want to live as long as our white brothers and sisters. We don't want to die twenty years younger. We don't want to work for the dole. We don't want to have empty eyes. We want to lead ourselves in a new beginning. We want to be valued in the community and to play in the midfield of life.

Please don't think of us as that we fill up the list of teams, we played a few games and drifted away. We're not like that. We have never been for thousands of years and we are proud of the leaders of our own destiny.

The long march was about recognition, whatever set our mind to do. We can do to understand that, understand our needs and our needs together. Or don't give us pity, give us hope, give us help, give us education, give us goals, join with us.

As I said in the beginning there's been so many things ... the long march. I hope this is the beginning for the final beginning, the one that helps us reach our destination. The one that has us all marching together and knocking on the PM's door, black and white, working together.

Thank you.

[Applause]

FAINE:

Thank you, Michael. We have an opportunity for questions in a few moments and we've got some roving mikes which we'll arrange for you to access when we get there in just a moment.

Paul Briggs, as Ian introduced him earlier, is a respected community elder who's here from Shepparton and in support of Michael. And Paul wants to say a few words as well. And a few questions from me, a few questions from you coming up too.

Paul.

PAUL BRIGGS – COMMUNITY ELDER:

Thanks, Jon. I think that was very touching, very eloquent about what Michael has put and the way in which he's canvassed the issues around Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. And it really does bring back to us the rationale for why we joined together on the walk to Canberra and the issues facing Aboriginal people as a nation here in Australia.

It really does emphasise the isolation of Aboriginal people in relation to being a part of this greater community and it does emphasise, I think, some of the exploitation that happens when

Aboriginal people have got certain skills, certain values that can be traded but then once used, discarded.

And it relates to certainly the level of infrastructure that sits between relationships between non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people around Australia and we are - and we continually say this across generations - we are tentatively at the crossroads of future relationships here in Australia and the future of indigenous people.

Michael has touched on some of the issues that caused the walk and in particular the life expectancy and some of the socio-economic data that describes Aboriginal people. And it describes Aboriginal people not in the two ... year 2000 but has described us for the last fifty-odd years. And those descriptives [sic] are not getting any better but it seems to me that we're just seen as a product than can be used when it needs to be or discarded when it needs to be.

The infrastructure that's driving us as indigenous peoples and helps us protect our culture, protects our future, protects our values, is sadly lacking from the way in which Aboriginal people live with non-Aboriginal people.

Our communication is primarily with levels of government and it's not with you people who sit in this room. And somewhere

along the line we need to be able to communicate with you, we need to be able to communicate with the Muslim community, we need to be able to communicate with the leadership of the Chinese community. The communities that make up the social diversity, the cultural diversity of Australia. And it's very, very limited where Aboriginal people interface and non-Aboriginal people find it very difficult to get access to us and for us to go out and access broader.

So these are the challenges I think that we face and this is the sort of discussion I think that we took and we spoke to the Prime Minister about, about the future over the next twenty to fifty years of Aboriginal culture here in Victoria, in Michael's country, in Cape York and wherever Aboriginal people live.

So, the challenge is with you as much as with us. It's not just Aboriginal leadership that is at question here, it's the broader leadership issue.

FAINE:

Thanks, Paul.

[Applause]

Michael, you held a press conference after your meeting with John Howard. Have you had any contact with the Prime Minister or his office since?

LONG:

I suppose the next part was having Pat and, Mick Dodson and Paul, that's the next part of the process. I think it's going together and putting something to them, that's the next step of the walk. I know Pat Dodson, through the foundation, hasn't been able to do that and, knowing Pat Dodson and the person he is and he is about the people, that is the next step: where to from here. And it's certainly something I probably felt as probably the messenger that these people need to be heard. These are the ... this is why we've survived for so long for thousands of years through our elders, and we need their voices to be heard and that's the next step.

But I think most importantly, it's about the will. It's really about the will of both parties and accountability of us working together. So, I think that's where we've opened up the dialogue. This is the next step that I think we want to go to, and where to from here. We don't have all the answers as well but I think we're part of a solution.

FAINE:

Was there a plan when you set off at the start of the walk?

LONG:

No real plan of an ... (laughs) I said I think I was doing it black-fella style, I think I up and left.

[Laughter]

FAINE:

How many of you started off?

LONG:

There was me and my cousin, John. I actually got back from Broome and then I went to Adelaide for another funeral and it was really social ... it was the conscience. And I thought, you know, I'd come from football and then seeing the other side of the arena and I saw more destruction and more ... less opportunity that was happening.

So we set off on Sunday and I said, enough was enough, and going to another funeral ... and it's become a common thing with indigenous people in communities. And what we were saying, crying out for help.

And that's why I set off on a Sunday ... Sunday morning, I think ... up and left, and I said to my cousin, you know, this was something that ... we sat in the room and I was thinking of my

kids and I was thinking of also what the cause was about. It was about the people, about the kids, what we see in the community ... the hope, boredom, people dying, suicide, petrol-sniffing. Said, we got to do this, brother, I need you to walk with me. So we started off Sunday afternoon and headed off to Wallan and then obviously, the Rock, and left the Rock on ... the next day.

[Laughter]

He was my rock, this guy, he's a ... I spoke to Paul at ... Sunday night, so ... as an elder statesman and a leader, he was my rock of guidance and leadership. So it was ... started off with my cousin John Cusack and him, and then it led to Wallan which Paul ...

FAINE:

Did the walk change you?

LONG:

I know it hurt my feet.

[Laughter]

It did change me ...

BRIGGS:

Lost a bit of weight.

LONG:

Lost a bit of weight, no. I saw the other side of people. I saw people walking for something that we collectively believed in, what was happening and wanted change.

That's what I saw, and it gave me strength even though we were hurting ... and blisters ... it was about the cause and what we wanted to change and what we wanted to see change into the future. I think it changed me in terms of trusting people in working together.

FAINE:

Paul, do you think the walk is some sort of symbolic moment in the path to ... I don't know, reconciliation or improving the life of Aboriginal Australians?

BRIGGS:

It re-emphasised the need for the broader Australian people to engage with Aboriginal people in relation to the issues that were being raised as a result of the walk, and it did challenge the broader leadership about its capacity to provide leadership in consultation with Aboriginal people.

And what it did do was break a nexus, I think, that existed with the current government in relation to indigenous futures, and the inability at that time for a broader leadership to be engaged in the debate about the way forward in Aboriginal futu... in Aboriginal life.

We're still not there, we're still unclear on whether or not how this government is going to approach the future visions of indigenous peoples. But what ...

FAINE:

This is in the post-ATSIC era you mean?

BRIGGS:

Well, I think it was a part of the environment at the time, you know, about the walk, the demise of ATSIC, the inability of the government to be clear on what its expectations were or what its views were in relation to indigenous ... and the lack of clear consultation with Aboriginal leaders across the country about what would be the way forward.

And I think it became very isolated and very aggressive and very hostile, and I think the walk was a breath of fresh air for everybody to be able to re-engage in broader communication. And I think it gave, certainly, Aboriginal Australia open inspiration, and it gave an opportunity for the Howard

government to look at leadership issues on a more broader scale, and to think about its policies and approach to Aboriginal life.

FAINE:

We have a roving mike. If you give me a wave, I'll make sure the microphone gets to you. And if you could just perform the brief courtesy of introducing yourself as you ask your question of Michael or Paul, and Sue's got the mike over there, so give her a wave. There's another mike at the back of the room and you've got a chance to have your questions answered by Michael and Paul.

I have a question that's here on relay. I don't think anyone walked though from Shepparton to deliver it. Christie Peucker from the Shepparton News wants to know how important was the support given to you, Michael, by the Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative during your walk to Canberra?

LONG:

I think it was important that, you know, the walk wasn't about me, it was about change and it was about everyone else, and all the issues we faced. That's why I encourage people, black-white, or indigenous, or part of the globe they come from or what part of the state. Like, people ring me from other states; sorry, we can't be there, but we're there in spirit. But that's what will

always remain, that this walk wasn't just about me, it was about the change that we wanted to have collectively.

So I think the support from ... we've had along the road and even from co-ops (ph.sp.) was well supported. I was quite overawed by the whole support and the people that came along.

GRIGGS:

Some people had to jump in at the ... at a very short ... at short notice to provide support, and people like Rehame and also the unions that gave us support on the day when we were walking. The Aboriginal women's group out at Shepparton that provided the T-shirts and things that we wore. The people who were providing oranges and lots of water and other things that along ... and the footpads, I should mention, that kept us ...

[Laughter]

I won't say what they were, but will ... we ... they kept us on our feet of every morning. So, there was a lot of support, and even the country towns that we went through, how well received we were, which was, to me, very surprising and very heartening and inspiring to think that non-Aboriginal people in the small country towns were very supportive of the things that were happening. And I think it was the way in which Michael and there was often

others that presented the issues to them in a way in which they could understand. So, that was really fantastic.

FAINE:

When Charlie Perkins and others did the freedom bus based on and copying what was done in the south ... in the deep south in America in the '50s. When Charlie Perkins and others did that in the '60s here in Australia, there were people waiting for them with baseball bats in some towns. Did you encounter any absolute racism or hostility at all on your walk, Michael?

GRIGGS:

People wanted us to join in the games, not with the bats ... not ...

[Laughter]

... so much use them on us. But yeah ...

LONG:

I mean, you couldn't imagine what Charlie probably went through and probably the threats he would have. I actually thought about that along the way, what would Charlie be doing and what would he be thinking, and it showcases a leader. And in terms of fear, when you attack something, you believe in something, it's amazing.

Probably one incident in Wangaratta, that was probably it. But, as Paul said, tremendous support from towns and people wanting to give us money to ... we don't want your money, we want you to walk with us in terms of reconciliation and coming together.

So, it's probably more so, fully support than ... along the way from country towns.

FAINE:

Give us a wave if you've got a question. First up at the back there, thank you.

CLIFF PEEL – MELBOURNE PRESS CLUB:

Cliff Peel, Melbourne Press Club. I've just returned from Darwin, I've travelled out ... extensively out through the outback and worked in south-west Queensland. One of the things I've noticed is that, I think, to me the basic problem of the indigenous people and also, I might add, for the ... some of the people not indigenous in the city, is the nothing to do; the lack of employment, the ... you go to school and you go it ... you're in ... go back to your community and there's nothing there.

To me, and I'll ask you if you agree with (indistinct), if we can solve this problem – I don't know how you do it - but if we can

solve this problem of giving young people something to do, even ... the (indistinct) people something to do, they earn their self-respect; like anyone who doesn't have a job, loses their self-respect. And if we can do that, we're going to solve all the other problems or basically all their basic problems first.

FAINE:

What do you think, Paul, Michael? Something to do in the communities.

BRIGGS:

I think it's a ... it is a very complex ... and it's not just a matter of trying to put somebody in a job or give them something to do. But no doubt, having a job and having an economic basis is instrumental to having good health and a future.

But it is about ... where Aboriginal people and Australian society are at, in terms of a social and an emotional and a spiritual construct of community, what does that mean to the emergence of the evolutionary process of Aboriginal culture. And it's at different stages, from Michael's country to my country, right around Australia.

So, one answer is not going to fit all, but it does revolve around the capacity to have a strong spiritual base, and that could be deemed as religious in some instances. But it also is about

having a good economic base and your ability to actually determine your future, and to have a good social base of respect and value with the people that you're interacting with.

I think ... and that requires some really strategic planning and generational work because it is generations that have got us to this point where we're at. And it's going to take a couple of generations if we get the things right to actually make the changes that we need to make. But we've got to protect cultural values, we've got to protect cultural integrity whilst we're trying to form a new way into the twenty-first century of Aboriginal people.

But, certainly, having us marginalised, having us isolated and silent and only talking to governments and bureaucrats is not necessarily the way forward for Aboriginal people and we've got to try and break that. It requires broad leadership to work with us on these issues and not just bureaucrats. I think that's my sort of answer to that, I suppose.

FAINE:

Michael?

LONG:

I suppose the remoteness plays an enormous part to that and there's only so many jobs within each community. And that's

where it does lie in terms of what is the future for me or what is the vision for me. And as we're talking about opportunity for our young kids, but also for our men and women and our elder statesmen, what of our ... what role do our elder statesmen play in terms of where we come from and why we've survived for so long?

And it's all about up-skilling, giving them the skills to actually be operational, to do things. And remoteness, when you're cut off through ... whether it's through rain or ... you only can get to certain communities, there's also limited things to do.

But I think it almost comes back to that rule of (indistinct) the community but also skilling it up.

FAINE:

Brian?

BRIAN DAWE – POLITICAL SATIRIST:

Michael, on the ...

FAINE:

Could you introduce yourself, please.

DAWE:

Brian Dawe, pretend journalist.

[Laughter]

On the walk, Michael, I asked your wife, Lesley, what your biggest fear was when you set out and I was really shocked by her answer. And I think it says a lot about where the situation is between black and white in this country, and I didn't think it was this bad. But would you like to comment on the answer, because you skipped over it?

LONG:

Was that my will you're talking about?

DAWE:

No, I'm talking about what your biggest fear was for the family when you hit the road.

LONG:

I suppose the biggest fear ... I mean, on the road it's ... you never ... there's so many things that can happen on the road. I wrote my will out before I left. And when you've got two ... three children, those are the things you think about in terms of planning and what may happen. That's where I thought about Charlie Perkins. What would he be thinking? There was a no road to ... no return.

Yeah, and that was something I had to take into perspective that might happen on the way of the walk and even the people that walk with me, you know, I felt a responsibility, but also a responsibility to the bigger picture to the community and change, what I wanted to see happen. But that was probably ... yeah, something that was part of the sacrifice, I think, probably playing that part. But I know it put enormous pressure on my immediate family, wife and kids. I also had a social conscience of what I needed to do or what I could do to open up opportunities for our community in Australia.

FAINE:

Thank you, Michael.

JEFF SHARP – GROLLO GROUP:

Hi. I'm Jeff Sharp from the Grollo Group and a mad Carlton supporter.

Michael, you mentioned that you had a sense of family when you were with Essendon; are you still involved with Essendon Football Club?

LONG:

I wear three hats. I work for the AFL with indigenous development and the AFL Players Association and I work with most of the clubs working specifically with indigenous players

and planning for life after footy: education, career planning but also troubleshooting with the players. Most clubs have a pretty good structure now and probably seen as a support.

Probably in the past our indigenous players have walked away from the game and only walked away with a trade of football and that wasn't good enough. And it was a responsibility (indistinct). That's how my role came about in terms of improving that.

But now I think it's changed enormously of where our players are not only leading on the field but off the field in terms of education because that's that next progression, the next step. And we're talking about leaders here, people who are really looked up to. And I know Xavier Clarke is here today and he's working with the Lighthouse Foundation.

Years ago we had no young indigenous kids, you know players, actually doing anything like that. And I think the next generation have changed in terms of leadership and we need that leadership amongst indigenous community but also working together with non-indigenous. So ... and plus the impact that the players are making, yeah.

FAINE:

You notice he said he was a mad Carlton supporter. Aren't they all, I thought, aren't they all?

[Laughter]

JOHN ALLEN – DEAKIN UNIVERSITY:

Michael, John Allen from Deakin University. It's interesting that today we have two generations here. We've got one of balding, old, gits are losing their hair, like us, sort of, nearing the age of forty. Then we've got a table of very young people who are in Year ten. Do you have a ... who have a compelling interest in your subject, and who wanted to be here because of that interest. Do you have any message for them about how perhaps education should be ... the history books that they should be studying, perhaps, in that .. for the next generation that comes behind?

LONG:

I also think that education is the key in terms of ... it is no secret in terms of our education where Indigenous kids are ... and I think that education is changing for the next generation of kids coming through that are more aware of a lot of the issues, indigenous and overseas and here as well. I think that that plays an enormous part of understanding and respect. That is what life is about: our younger generation, our kids coming through.

And, enormously, I think that education has been lost. I think in Australian society, when I went to school, you learnt about Captain Cook but didn't learn about the history of what state we were in, and whose country we were in; the traditional owners. And that's important because of understanding and protocols. And I think that's where the next generation will be much more understanding of the issues. My kids would be very much the same of growing up in a private school, having the opportunity to learn a different culture, a Western society culture.

So ... and that's where I think the understanding will probably be a much clearer understanding.

FAINE:

Speaking of the younger generation, we'll take two more questions; one from over there and one at the back. And then, even though we are running on blackfella time, we'll have to stop at some point. Thanks.

FEMALE SPEAKER – KILVINGTON GIRLS' GRAMMAR:

Hi, I'm Cassandra Ramanathan from Kilvington Girls' Grammar. And you were talking before about The Long Walk and searching for what direction to take and things like that. Could a possibility be setting up programs where you actually ... we actually meet indigenous people, as in our generation, to make us more aware of the issues there are in today. Because I know

at our school, we have a year nine program called spirit. And that's where some year nine girls go around and we actually meet indigenous people, we learn their stories and their history and things like that. So would you want more programs like that in our schooling systems?

FAINE:

There's a tag-team act going on up here, isn't there.

BRIGGS:

... sharing. He's handballing.

[Laughter]

LONG:

I was good at handballing.

[Laughter]

BRIGGS:

Not in the forward line.

[Laughter]

LONG:

Not outside fifty.

BRIGGS:

I think that's fantastic what you're doing. And, as I say, the isolation and the silence of Aboriginal people needs to be expanded on. We need to bring the ... break those barriers down. And the ability of young people like yourself and your school to have contact and have exposure to Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal culture, in all parts of Australia, is vital to the understanding that would ... should exist and needs to exist between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. Bearing in mind, though, that Michael's diary is pretty well booked up for appointments but if you ring, and keep ringing, he'll answer at some point.

[Laughter]

LONG:

But just a ... I think one of the things we ask, even in a press conference, is that we want people to go out and see it, see the issues and challenges that we face in the community. And I think one of the things we picked up on is that, you know, the Prime Minister has only been ... visited two communities. Is that right, Peter?

And to understand the issues and ... I ... and that goes a long way to understanding people and the life they live, and where

they've walked in terms of understanding. And that's very important. I think that's ... just shows, I think, leadership in terms of where our young people are going. But even to, when we addressed the media after the Prime Minister, we want everyone to go and have a look and to walk in their shoes and to see how they live and their housing, and talk about jobs, and understand why people are crying out.

FAINE:

Thank you. Last question over in the corner.

PAUL:

Paul Clapham (ph.sp.) from Common Fate. A question for Paul: You have mentioned earlier in terms of engagement with the Aboriginal community. We have also heard a number of themes, and it is fantastic to see Kilvington here today, engaging. Obviously, one suspects that at this point in time, some leadership from the Prime Minister may not be coming in terms of engagement. But, in terms of corporate Australia and those who have made the effort to come here today, Paul, do you want to just have a chat about ASHE, Rumbalara, what it is doing up there, Common Fate and areas where the white brothers and sisters of this nation can engage with the Aboriginal community.

BRIGGS:

I will use an example from my community, but the building of community, as I've said, does require more leadership than just relationships with politicians and bureaucrats of government bureaucracies, although they are important. But corporate, private sector leadership, chambers of commerce, rotaries, apexes, other forms of leadership in your communities, it is about where does, you know, where does the priority of community wellbeing sit when you've got a disparity between levels of socioeconomic issues and the way in which Aboriginal are portrayed.

So, the wealth and the wellbeing of the community is going to be enhanced by the wealth and the wellbeing of indigenous people's participation. That requires jobs, it requires good education outcomes. It requires good social and respectful relationships, so that jobs do turn up in the customer relations areas and not necessarily in the social ... in the public sector.

But that issue has not been addressed in a very good... in a very strong way, and the infrastructure that drives Aboriginal community is ... has been constrained and locked down into crisis intervention, service delivery.

So, we need a way of not only addressing the crisis in our community, but to work with private sector, to work with other

elements of community leadership to look at the future of the way in which we interact.

Common Fate and, certainly, the relationship in ASHE - the Academy of Sports [sic], Health and Education – which is a partnership between Melbourne University and the foo... Rumbalara Football and Netball Club is elements, I think, of people trying to find different ways of addressing the issues of long-term wellbeing of community and of indigenous communities. And we'd welcome, you know, the opportunity to sit and talk to corporate sector, corporate leaders, private sector people in relation to how we might be able to develop a pathway that reflects everybody's agendas.

FAINE:

Thank you for your questions. Ian Henderson will move the vote of thanks and thank you both very much. Hold your applause, because Ian's going to make a short speech. Thank you.

CONVENOR:

Well gentlemen, thank you very much for coming along today. I think everyone who's come along here today has learnt something about you, Michael, about you, Paul, and about where we're headed. Maybe any journey's comprised of thousands of little steps, no doubt, as you found, and maybe

we've taken another small one today. I found it engaging, riveting and challenging; I suspect everyone else here did today.

So, I'd just like to say to you, good luck with the journey that follows and we'll be with you.

[Applause]

And we'd like to send you on your way with some practical support. We do have something for you, Michael. This involves a progressive reveal.

[Laughter]

Yeah, it has to be a footpath doesn't it?

[Laughter and applause]

Now, we didn't have enough money in the kick for two footpaths, although arguably Paul ... you know, well, perhaps you can bor... perhaps you can borrow Michael's. But I can tell you, having been in some painful feet situations myself in the past, I find that this does every bit as good, if maybe only in the short term. That's for you, Paul.

[Laughter]

A nice bottle of Pepperjack.

[Applause]

Works a treat every time, I reckon. And for all his fancy footwork up here at the podium, some Pepperjack for Faino (ph.sp.) too.

[Applause]

Thank you boys, this has been magnificent. Can I just remind you of the Quills and the tsunami lunch on March the ninth, and I hope we'll see all of you, or as many of you as we possibly can at both of those. Thanks for coming along today and see you next time.

[Applause]

END OF SEGMENT