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Stars line up to support prestigious Aboriginal health event in Darwin

Darwin will host a roll call of sporting and entertainment greats this month as they fly in to participate in the second Rioli Fund Annual Dinner

Aussie Rules legends Peter Daicos, Glen Archer, Robert Shaw and Doug Hawkins join sport commentator H.G Nelson, comedian Sean Choolburra, actor Ernie Dingo and former National Basketball League player Chris Anstey at SkyCity Darwin on 16 March.

Close to 300 guests are expected to attend in 2012, and the night will incorporate a sporting panel, auction of sport memorabilia and a major raffle.

Rioli Fund founder and former Essendon football star Dean Rioli says the night will raise awareness and funds for Aboriginal child and mental health projects run by the Menzies School of Health Research.

"It's about treating people in Darwin to a night with high profile sportsmen and entertainers, and about helping to close the gap," Rioli says.

"Everything I do is to try and close the 17-year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous people are dying way too young and the areas that will make a difference to this are child and mental health."

The Rioli Fund for Aboriginal Health was established in 2008 by Menzies and Dean Rioli to raise awareness and funds for Aboriginal health projects.

Rioli's passion for health promotion stems from his upbringing on Tiwi Island. He witnessed first-hand the obstacles facing remote communities, a situation that dramatically contrasted with the affluent lifestyles he saw while training in Melbourne.

"I want Menzies to continue doing vital research that improves lives in remote communities. I'm concerned about skin disease, making sure kids brush their teeth and just basic, basic messages such as 'keeping yourself clean helps prevent disease'."

The Rioli Fund Annual Dinner is the Rioli Fund for Aboriginal Health's signature fundraiser, with the first held last year as a tribute to sporting great, Maurice Rioli. The night was a resounding success and has now become an annual event. This year the Northern Land Council is on board as the major sponsor.

Interviews are available with panel members.

The Rioli Fund Annual Dinner will be held at 7pm, 16 March at SkyCity Darwin's Grand Ballroom. Tickets are available now for \$180 through darwinentertainment.com.au. They include a three-course dinner, drinks and entertainment.

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