History Made at NT Sports Awards

*Embargoed until 11pm Friday 25 March 2011 *

History was made tonight with Olympic hockey star Des Abbott and women's international cricketer of the year Shelley Nitschke both named the Northern Territory Sportsperson of the Year at the 2011 Northern Territory Sports Awards in Darwin.

It is the first time in the Awards’ 21 year history that joint winners have been named as the Territory’s top sportsperson.

Minister for Sport and Recreation Karl Hampton congratulated Abbott and Nitschke on their Awards and outstanding contributions to their sports during the past year.

“The Northern Territory Sports Awards is the highlight of the calendar for our proud sporting community and I congratulate the nominees, finalists and winners,” Mr Hampton said.

“Des, a current NTIS scholarship holder, is a two-time winner of the top individual award and Shelley, a former NTIS scholarship holder, is the first cricketer to be crowned as the Territory’s top sportsperson.

“The pair is a great inspiration to all Territorians and I congratulate them on their standout performances for Australia.

“Des is an Olympic bronze medallist and was last year named in the 2010 Federation of International Hockey World Team following the Kookaburras' success at the World Cup, Champions Trophy and the Commonwealth Games.

“Shelley is the world’s best women’s cricketer and played an integral role in Australia’s success at last year’s women’s Twenty20 World Cup in the West Indies.”

Sailor Jack Benson was named NT Junior Sportsperson of the Year while the Masters Sportsperson of the Year award went to hurdler Stephen McGugan.

Essendon Premiership player Michael Long was inducted into the Territory Hall of Champions for his outstanding contribution to Aussie Rules Football.

Boxing coach and administrator Boyd Scully was awarded the NT Roll of Honour while former National Basketball League player Timmy Duggan was awarded the prestigious Steve Abala Role Model Award.
“Sport is such an important part of our community and lifestyle, and the Territory Government strongly supports sport in the Territory,” Mr Hampton said.

“The NT Sports Awards recognise outstanding achievements across the sporting arena from volunteers and administrators to coaches and athletes and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in Territory Sport.”

Northern Territory Government Sport and Recreation Minister’s Award for Officials:
Stephen Versteegh (Hockey)

Local Performance of the Year:
Casuarina Cougars Rugby Union Football Club

Steve Abala Role Model Administrator’s Award:
Timmy Duggan (Basketball)

Hall of Champions:
Michael Long (AFL Football)

Roll of Honour:
Boyd Scully (Boxing)

Centralian Advocate Volunteer of the Year:
Debbie Page (Race Walking)

Crown Lager Eric Johnston Coach of the Year:
Melissa Hall (Hockey)

Team of the Year:
NT Strike (Cricket)

Crown Lager Masters Sportsperson of the Year:
Stephen McGugan (Athletics)

Northern Territory News Junior Sportsperson of the Year:
Jack Benson (Sailing)

NT Sportsperson of the Year:
Desmond Abbott (Hockey)
Shelley Nitschke (Cricket)

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