A champion farewelled

**Tiwi legend left legacy that lives on**

**ASHLEY MANICAROS**

He was the patriarch of the greatest sporting family in the Northern Territory.

Although diminutive in stature, Cyril Kalippa-Rioli was a champion father who inspired a family of champions. More so he was one of the most influential indigenous leaders of our time extending well beyond blessed genetics.

Hundreds gathered for a State Funeral at Darwin’s St Mary’s Cathedral to honour Mr Kalippa who died on June 3 at the age of 83 with his wife of 63 years, Helena, by his side at their Tiwi Island home.

The father of eight sons and one daughter, he was the figurehead of a community and family dynasty boasting 33 grandchildren and 23 great grandchildren including Hawthorn and AFL superstar Cyril ‘Junior Boy’ Rioli and Daniel Rioli, who plays in his famous uncle Maurice’s number 17 at Richmond Football Club.

Tigers’ coach Damien Hardwick and senior sporting, political and long-time locals were at the service.

On several occasions family surrounded the coffin, singing in language and dancing.

Helena was surrounded by a loving Tiwi Islands community. Reverend Malcolm Fyfe said they wanted to “thank God” for all the gifts that he endowed Cyril with.

“And remind ourselves of the many ways Cyril Kalippa used those gifts for the good of his family and the good of the community,” he said.

Allan McGill, representing the Tiwi Bombers, said Mr Kalippa’s vision was recorded in the minutes of a Tiwi Land Council meeting from the mid 1970s: “Communities themselves are best placed to look after their own futures. They require their own good governance to do it. And Tiwi leadership can be found and called upon to provide it.”

Long-time friend Ernie Chin, who first met Mr Kalippa in 1961, recalled even back then he had economic determination arguing for a resort to be built at Garden Point on the Tiwi Islands was substantial getting everyone in from the port. He said the logistics of solving this was substantial and it showed what could be achieved when everyone pushed together.

“Mr Kalippa’s son Manny thanked everyone for the support. He said the logistics of getting everyone in from the Tiwi Islands was substantial and it showed what could be achieved when everyone pushed together.”

Chiefs Minister Adam Giles said: “You were a champion to your community. And you were a champion to the NT. You will be missed and you will always be remembered.”

“Mr Kalippa’s son Manny thanked everyone for the support. He said the logistics of getting everyone in from the Tiwi Islands was substantial and it showed what could be achieved when everyone pushed together.”

Chiefs Minister Adam Giles said: “You were a champion to your community. And you were a champion to the NT. You will be missed and you will always be remembered.”

AFL star Cyril ‘Junior Boy’ Rioli (centre) with family and friends carrying the casket of Tiwi Island legend Cyril Kalippa Rioli at his Darwin state funeral. Pictures: ELISE DERWIN