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NRL indigenous round takes a stand with Recognise logo

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L-R: NRL Indigenous Round Ambassadors, Nathan Merritt and Anthony Minichiello with Chloe Wighton a Recognise campaigner. Source: News Corp Australia

As Adam Goodes takes to the footy field in Geelong this weekend with the nation behind him, the league establishment will make a gesture that will no doubt bring a smile to the Swan's face.

The Recognise logo — the distinctive R that brands the movement for Aboriginal constitutional recognition — will be proudly emblazoned on the 40m line of all games played during this weekend's NRL indigenous round.

Referees will wear the R symbol on their uniform sleeves and the NRL's support for the Recognise movement will be featured on signage peppering stadiums from Darwin to Newcastle and Melbourne.

One of league's indigenous talents, former Rabbitoh and Wiradjuri and Bundjalung man Nathan Merritt, said such a display of support from the NRL would fill players and the public with hope, part of which could be realised if the movement for recognition came to fruition in a successful referendum.

"It would be a pretty special moment, I think, for us indigenous people to be recognised, and for everyone to come together as one and stand together," Merritt said.

"Hopefully we can come to a point where we are able to gain this recognition and get it put into our Constitution so we can move forward and unite as one and make this country a stronger

place.”

Fellow NRL indigenous round ambassador, former Roosters captain Anthony Minichiello, has also thrown his support behind the Recognise movement.

“When people look back at our history, they should read that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were here first,” Minichiello said. “This is about saying there’s no place for discrimination in footy, in the community or in the Constitution.”

The prominent display of support for the Recognise movement comes at a time when racism in sport is in sharp focus, highlighting the burning need for progress on reconciliation in Australia.

NRL chief executive Dave Smith said the NRL had always been a game of inclusiveness.

“The NRL has a proud history of standing up for causes we believe in, so it makes sense to partner with an organisation like Recognise,” Mr Smith said. Recognise campaigner and Wiradjuri woman Chloe Wighton said she was heartened by the NRL’s support for the movement.

“So many kids look up to these players,” Ms Wighton said. “They are such role models. The indigenous round is such a brilliant showcase of the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players to the game.

“To have players, both indigenous and non-indigenous, coming out and showing their support, that really encourages the wider community to come on board as well and support this movement.”