

Saturday 30 November 2019

Open letter from Tennis Australia

Given the interest in the 50th anniversary of tennis legend Margaret Court's Grand Slam, we felt it would be worthwhile to share the guiding principles we use at Tennis Australia in acknowledging not just our champions, but everyone who plays our sport.

Tennis Australia recognises the champions in our sport as a matter of course, whether it be stadium names, naming of parks, statues around the country and trophies and awards during a player's career. We *celebrate* sporting heroes who inspire and motivate people through the generations, and who are lauded and respected widely by their peers and the broader community.

As with other great sports in this country and elsewhere, it is common practice to draw a distinction between recognising champions and celebrating heroes, and it is an important distinction.

Australia is fortunate that Margaret Court's extraordinary playing achievements form part of our national tennis history.

Naturally, we will be recognising Margaret and her incredible tennis record, and contrary to many reports, there is no plan to 'rewrite history'. As she is aware, planning has been in the works for some time, with interviews and filming having taken place in her home in June this year, along with other opportunities which will be announced closer to the time.

Margaret and her family have been invited to the Australian Open in January. Her outstanding playing career is her tennis legacy and clearly worthy of recognition. We will continue to communicate with Margaret, as we have for many years, regarding events, our recognition of her achievement, our sport and its culture.

However, the philosophy and culture of our sport goes deeper than winning and setting records. We seek to foster a sport that is inclusive and welcoming of everyone. We all bear some responsibility for creating a safe and inclusive society. As a sport, tennis is unwavering in playing our part.

As we have often communicated to Margaret, we respect that everyone has a right to an opinion - and a right to express it. Equally, we all share an obligation that while living our lives freely, we do not harm others, and we understand that there are consequences to our words. Publicly stated views of intolerance and demeaning language about others can have enormous impact, and are particularly hurtful and harmful to those who believe they are targeted. We have a big responsibility as a sport to play a leadership role in supporting an inclusive community, and respecting the rights of all Australians, whether or not they play our great sport.

Similarly, we believe any public figure has a big responsibility to ensure their views are expressed in a way that demonstrates respect and tolerance, and does not cause harm to, or degrade others.

As a sport, tennis is unwavering in playing our part to ensure an inclusive society. We cannot condone views that fracture our incredible tennis community, nor indeed, the wider community.

It is with all of this in mind that we will continue to promote and celebrate inclusiveness and diversity. We are vocal and proud of our efforts to welcome all sections of our community to all levels of our sport. The tennis court and club should be a place of fun and comfort to everyone, where people from all walks of life get to know each other without fear of judgement or harassment. Inclusivity is at the very core of what we do and that also involves creating an environment where people feel comfortable to be themselves and live their lives as they see fit without causing harm to others.

We look forward to seeing everyone during the summer.