



Geoff Lee

Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans
Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 29 May 2020

WESTERN SYDNEY LEADER AWARDED TOP HONOURS

A South Sudanese refugee who has dedicated his working life to inspiring and engaging culturally diverse young people through basketball has been awarded top honours by the NSW Government.

The Barker Henley Stepan Kerkyasharian AO Community Harmony Medal was awarded to Mayor Chagai as part of the 2020 Premier's Multicultural Community Medals.

Acting Minister for Multiculturalism Geoff Lee congratulated Mr Chagai on his achievements, particularly in light of the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

"Now more than ever, the tireless work of our community leaders promoting social cohesion and community harmony is vital," Mr Lee said.

"Even during COVID-19, leaders like Mayor engage and connect with people in a time where physical distancing has challenged the way communities interact."

Member for Seven Hills Mark Taylor said it was outstanding to see the local community member recognised with the prestigious medal.

"Mayor's basketball program, Savannah Pride, has engaged hundreds of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Western Sydney," Mr Taylor said.

"For more than a decade, Mayor has meaningfully engaged with young people by promoting participation and inclusion. Savannah Pride has become a part of the very fabric of our community.

"The program has seen incredible results both on and off the basketball court. Savannah Pride has supported dozens of young people achieve prestigious scholarships in the US."

Mr Chagai fled war from South Sudan before migrating to Australia as a refugee. Savannah Pride continues to grow, with the program rolling out in Wagga Wagga.

Mr Chagai said he was overwhelmed and amazed by the recognition that the medal represented.

“Since childhood when I left my family in South Sudan and travelled to Ethiopia, then Kenya and finally to Australia on a refugee journey, I have been depending on other people’s love and generosity, and I owe such compassion to the world,” Mr Chagai said.

“So, the acknowledgement by the NSW Premier together with the Minister for Multiculturalism in selecting me, is just amazing.

“It means a lot to me and even more to Savannah Pride's youth, parents, volunteers and also many members of my community. I’m determined to live my life giving back to the community what I have been given.”

The Premier’s Multicultural Community Medals are traditionally awarded at the annual Premier’s Harmony Dinner gala event. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Premier’s Multicultural Community Medals were awarded virtually.

For more information about the Premier’s Multicultural Community Medals and Multicultural Honour Roll see: <http://multicultural.nsw.gov.au>

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