



Charity begins at home for AFL champ

A HEALTH charity founded by Territory AFL legend Dean Rioli was launched last night.

Former coach Kevin Sheedy is ambassador for the Rioli Fund for Aboriginal Health.

Some of Australia's most influential businessmen and philanthropists were at the launch in Melbourne.

Rioli wants to raise money for Aboriginal child health and mental health research through the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin.

The Tiwi Islander said he had visited many indigenous communities since retiring two years ago.

Rioli said he was "appalled" by the high rates of disease, inadequate education and poor living conditions he witnessed.

"Indigenous kids face a bleak future — they are suffering from chronic ear disease, skin sores and scabies and respiratory diseases, such as pneumonia, at epidemic proportions," he said.



ROLE MODEL: Former AFL star Dean Rioli has launched a health charity

"Young men are committing suicide and people are turning to substance abuse which is breaking up families and communities. We need to break this vicious cycle and one of the ways we can do this is through research.

"Research helps us find

solutions and make sure our efforts are likely to work."

Menzies director Jonathan Carapetis said tackling indigenous health problems needed a multi-pronged approach.

"We can't just rely on government support to 'fix' this problem," he said.

"The issues are of such enormity that a great deal of community and corporate backing is needed to act as a catalyst to drive political will."

● Donations can be made to the Rioli Fund for Aboriginal Health at www.rioli.org.au.