



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Volkswagen NZ rewards Taranaki local with trip to the 2016 Olympic Games**

**7 April 2016:** Volkswagen New Zealand has today announced it will be sending Taranaki local Graeme Mehrtens to the Rio do Janeiro Olympic Games in August 2016 in recognition of his contribution to basketball in the Hawera community.

As a long-standing partner of the New Zealand Olympic Committee, Volkswagen has been supporting not only athletes, but the people who support Kiwi athletes to be able to succeed in their sports.

Mehrtens' active involvement in basketball in the community came to light following a nomination by friend and fellow coach Fraser Linn, who described Mehrtens' selfless contribution to the sport.

His involvement in Hawera basketball has spanned more than 20 years as a referee, coach and currently as President of the Hawera Basketball Association.

Basketball has always been a major part of Mehrtens' life, which fuelled his desire to get the sport going for country towns like Hawera to ensure kids could get involved regardless of where they live.

"Seeing kids grow and develop with confidence and skill throughout the year is hugely rewarding, I feel I'm basically on the court playing with them. I do get very caught up.

"I'm overwhelmed, I don't coach for this kind of reward, but it's wonderful," says Mehrtens.

Julia Phillips, Operations Manager at Volkswagen's New Plymouth dealership W.R. Phillips, says, "Volkswagen is proud to support those behind the drive of our athletes and Graeme has certainly been doing this for our local basketball players for many years. We are delighted for him to be rewarded in such a way."

Mehrtens and his wife are excited about being able to cheer on New Zealand athletes in Rio.

"Just being there, being part of it is going to be massive. I'll be flying the flag," he says.

Volkswagen NZ has also worked with the New Zealand Olympic Committee to send the family of Olympic rower Brook, Robertson to the Olympic Games and will be selecting another deserving supporter of a Kiwi athlete to send to Rio. The athlete's supporter selected to travel to Rio will be announced in late April 2016.

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#### **Further information:**

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