



Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Rugby Football League Limited will be held at the Office of the Queensland Rugby League, 411 Vulture St Woolloongabba, on Tuesday, December 9, 2008, commencing at 9.00am.

Business

1. To receive and consider the Statement of Financial Position and Statement of Financial Performance and the reports of the Directors and Auditors in respect of the financial year ended 31 October 2008.
2. To elect 8 Directors:
 - i) Four persons nominated by the New South Wales Rugby Football League Limited.
 - ii) Four persons nominated by the Queensland Rugby League Limited.
3. To elect a Chairman.
4. To elect a Deputy Chairman.
5. To appoint the company's auditors for 2009.
6. To transact other business of which due notice has been given.

By order of the Board
Geoff Carr
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Office Bearers 2008

Patron:
HRH Prince Phillip, KG, PC, KT, GME, FRS

Selectors:
Bob McCarthy, MBE NSW
Bob Fulton, AM NSW
Des Morris, QLD
Les Geeves, QLD

National Coach:
Ricky Stuart

Australian Team Managers:
Craig Young and Gavin Allen

Hon. Medical Officer:
Dr. Hugh Hazard

AIS RL Program Head Coach:
Brian Johnson

Incorporated:
May 23, 1986

Registered Offices:
5th Floor, 165 Phillip St,
Sydney, NSW 2000

Life Members:
NC Robinson *
JJ O'Toole, OAM, MBE
RE McAuliffe, OBE *
KR Arthurson, AM
TJ Bellew, OAM *
RA Dunn, OAM*
KJ Brasch
* Denotes deceased

Auditors:
Campbell Griffin & Co,
22nd Floor, 288 Edward St,
Brisbane Qld 4000

Board of Directors

Chairman:
Colin Love AM

Deputy Chairman:
John McDonald AM

Chief Executive:
Geoff Carr

Directors:
John Barrett OAM
Peter Betros
John Chalk
Ross Livermore
Bob Millward OAM
Barry Pierce
Terry Quinn



Colin Love AM
CHAIRMAN



John McDonald AM
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN



Geoff Carr
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



John Barrett OAM
DIRECTOR



Peter Betros
DIRECTOR



John Chalk
DIRECTOR



Barry Pierce
DIRECTOR



Ross Livermore
DIRECTOR



Terry Quinn
DIRECTOR



Bob Millward OAM
DIRECTOR

Fans watch St. George play Manly-Warringah at Kogarah Oval in May 1966. Fairfax Photos.



saluting the past – celebrating the present – inspiring the future

Chairman's Report



saluting the past – celebrating the present – inspiring the future

Old rivalries were renewed, heroes of bygone eras were remembered, and cherished memories stretching back 100 glorious years were relived.

A dramatic conclusion to the NRL Premiership, a Centenary Test match played in heritage 1908 colours at the historic Sydney Cricket Ground, and unprecedented celebrations throughout regional Australia.

The naming of the greatest team to have played our game – the 'Team of the Century'. The battle for bush football supremacy in the Toyota Centenary Trophy. A travelling exhibition of the most comprehensive collection of the game's treasured memorabilia.

Indeed, the Centenary year of Rugby League had it all.

And at the time of writing, the 10-nation Centenary World Cup had just concluded, with New Zealand triumphing in emphatic fashion in the final over Australia. The World Cup, which due to time constraints will be comprehensively reviewed in next year's Annual Report, capped a truly historic year for our game. Congratulations to New Zealand for a magnificent tournament win.

As Chairman of the Australian Rugby League, it's truly a great privilege to reflect on the magnificent achievements of 2008.

Importantly, widespread celebrations throughout country and metropolitan Australia ensured 2008 was not only a year of paying tribute to those that went before us, but a vehicle to thrust our sport into the next century.

The announcement of game's greatest 100 players came after an extensive voting process undertaken by a college of more than 140 experts. My congratulations go to all players selected in this prestigious list.

From those names came the 'Team of the Century' but not before passionate debate in the voting room – made up of Rugby League's senior journalists, administrators, coaches and historians – took place.

While the debate of the team's makeup carried over into the public arena, one thing remains clear; the 'Team of the Century' is a team full of immense talent of which we will be lucky to see again. I congratulate all members of the team for their momentous achievement.

On the field, the Australian Kangaroos lived up to their proud and successful history, beating New Zealand 28-12 in the Centenary Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground on May 9.

A highlight of the night for many fans was the Australians donning the original 1908 Kangaroos Test jumper which combined the maroon and blue of Queensland and NSW. The special atmosphere at the SCG certainly befitted the historic occasion – the very day 100 years ago both New Zealand and Australia began their trans-Tasman rivalry.

Mal Meninga's Queensland side this year earned the ultimate accolade – becoming the first Maroons side since Wally Lewis' 1987 charges to win three consecutive Harvey Norman State of Origin series.

The game's premier interstate fixture drew unprecedented ratings figures, with the 2008 series the highest rating series in history with Origin I and II breaking all previous benchmarks.

In total, the three matches reached more than six million viewers – an incredible achievement. Game III set another new figure for the largest Origin television audience in history, with a record average of 2.144 million fans across the five capital cities tuning in.

Next year, the Harvey Norman State of Origin series will return to Melbourne for Game I. With the Maroons aiming for an unprecedented fourth consecutive series win and NSW desperate to stop them, it should make for fantastic viewing. The match will be played at the Telstra Dome, where in 2006 Queensland clinched a series deciding win in front of 54,833 fans.

A feature of the Centenary celebrations has been the involvement at the grass roots level and our driving force in this area, ARL Development, should be duly acknowledged for the terrific results achieved in 2008. My congratulations go to their General Manager Bill Palmer and his staff for not only the vital growth at the junior level, but their efforts in ensuring that schools around the country and junior league players were given the chance to play an active part in Rugby League's Centenary.

Rugby League mourned the passing of several of the game's elder statesmen in 2008, among them Coach of the Century Jack Gibson, South Sydney great Jack Rayner, revolutionary second-rower Harry Bath and our oldest Test player Arch Crippin. They, along with others who have passed this year, will be greatly missed for their wonderful contribution to our game.

In an unprecedented effort to grow the international game of Rugby League, at the time of writing the ARL was preparing to host not only the Rugby League World Cup at 13 major locations across Australia, but also simultaneously run the Women's, Defence Forces and Police World Cups in Brisbane and Sydney. The tournaments are set to bring together Rugby League players and fans from all walks of life from around the globe, which is another step towards strengthening the international game.

Our corporate partners are another reason for our success in 2008 and I must thank the likes of Harvey Norman, Classic Sportswear, Bundaberg Rum, Coca Cola, Victor Sports, BSC and Skins for their loyal support and contribution. Continuing a valuable partnership with the ARL, the Australian Sports Commission has again assisted us greatly in the development at various levels of the game.

The Centenary year has brought with it a far greater than usual workload and in light of this I would like to thank ARL Chief Executive Geoff Carr for his efforts throughout the year. The ARL Board of Directors has once again provided me the support needed to take the game forward. Likewise, Queensland Rugby League's Managing Director Ross Livermore has contributed greatly to Queensland's



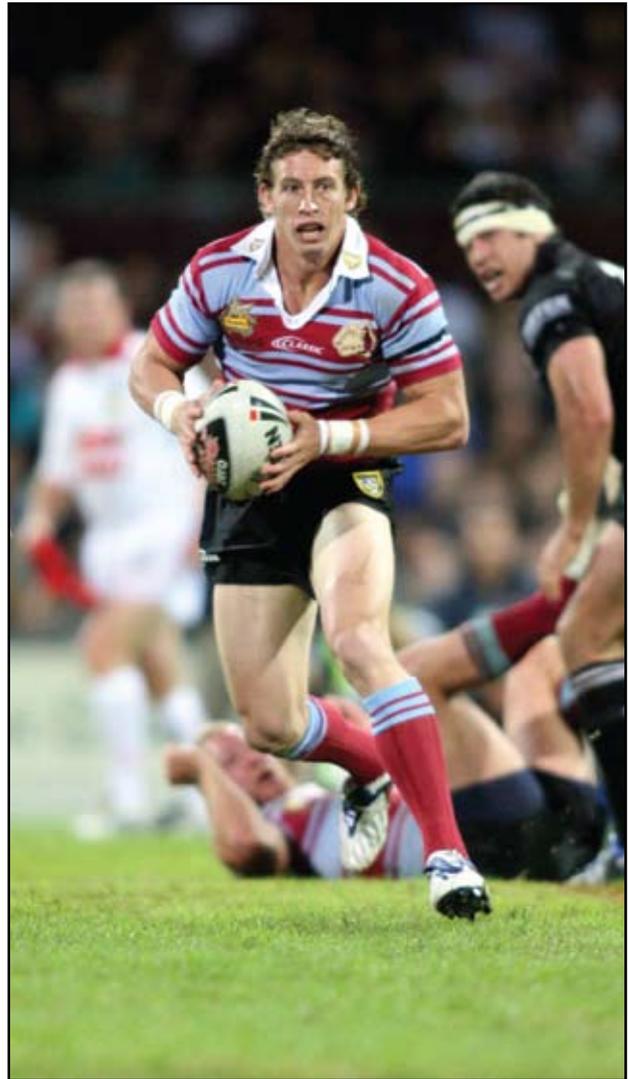
Chairman's Report

Centenary celebrations, and I congratulate him and his staff for what was a memorable year north of the border.

As the Centenary World Cup prepares to close a wonderful chapter in the game's history – its first 100 years – I look forward to joining the rest of the Rugby League "family" in welcoming the challenges of 2009, and beyond.

Colin Love AM

CHAIRMAN



saluting the past – celebrating the present – inspiring the future



Saluting the past - celebrating the present - inspiring the future

Undoubtedly one of the most important years in Rugby League's rich 100 year history, 2008 will go down as a year where outstanding results on the field were matched by a comprehensive array of events which united all levels of Rugby League in celebrating its Centenary season.

The year got off to a terrific start with the Centenary Fan day held at ANZ Stadium in Sydney, where for the first time players and coaches of all 16 NRL teams came together to join fans of all ages in a host of activities, including ARL skills clinics, autograph signings and kicking competitions. With more than 400 players in attendance and thousands of fans, it was the biggest public fan event in the game's history.

The Centenary Fan day was just the beginning for Rugby League fans in 2008, with a series of events being held throughout the year to ensure fans from all walks of life had an opportunity to participate in the celebrations.

The traveling 'League of Legends: 100 Years of Rugby League in Australia' exhibition assembled by the National Museum of Australia was a glowing tribute to the treasures and artifacts of our game.

To be able to walk the halls and view personal items of Dally Messenger, Clive Churchill, Arthur Beetson or legendary broadcaster Frank Hyde would have been a special experience for thousands of fans throughout the country.

Never before in its 100-year history has our game produced anything that has come remotely near to matching such a marvelous collection of treasures, stories and memories. It would be remiss of me not to thank Craddock Morton, the Director of the National Museum of Australia, and Guy Hansen, senior curator and the driving force behind the exhibition.



A tribute of a different kind, but nonetheless a rare honour reserved for the truly great moments in Australian sport was the unveiling of a commemorative \$1 coin by the Royal Australian Mint.

The first dedicated Rugby League coin the Royal Australian Mint has produced featured the Centenary of Rugby League logo in a design that represents the game's anniversary theme of 'inspiring the future', and it is a terrific memento all fans can treasure from this special year.

The Harvey Norman Regional Celebrations saw Rugby League's favourite sons return to their home towns to celebrate in day-long fan extravaganzas, culminating in a local Toyota Centenary Trophy match.

The Centenary Trophy tournament itself was the classic NSW versus Queensland country battle, with Illawarra Region the eventual 20-18 winners over Townsville in the tournament final, played prior to the third State of Origin match at ANZ Stadium.

More than 170 venues around the country were honoured as significant sites in the history of Rugby League through the 'Centenary Plaques' program. Whether they country grounds such as Wingham's Central Park, Roma's Arthur Beetson Oval or showpiece stadiums such as ANZ or Suncorp – the unveiling of the commemorative cast-bronzed plaques not only ensured our next generation of players and fans can read of the proud history that went before them at their local ground, but gave local communities the chance to play an active part in celebrating the Centenary year. Congratulations to ARL Media Manager Doug MacDougall for his efforts in coordinating the nation-wide program and generating terrific media coverage of the unveilings.

Similarly, the Centenary Medals program saw volunteers – the backbone of our game – from around the country be recognised for their fireless efforts in helping Rugby League flourish. The nomination-based program celebrated the dedication and enthusiasm that is prevalent at the grassroots level of our sport.

Undoubtedly one of the highlights of the Centenary season was the unveiling of Rugby League's 'Team of the Century' after an exhaustive voting process saw the side selected from the 'One Hundred Greatest Players', which was announced earlier in the year.

Detailed later in this report, the team encompassed the greatest talent our game has ever seen, with names like Wally Lewis and Andrew Johns joining those of Norm Provan, Clive Churchill and Ron Coote. The team was announced at the stunning Centenary Ball on April 17. Congratulations to all players and their families for certainly the highest honour the game has to offer.

Also announced, in conjunction with the ARL Indigenous Council, was the Indigenous Team of the Century which encompassed players from all eras of the game.

It included George Green - the first Indigenous Rugby League player who represented Eastern Suburbs in 1908 - Wally McArthur, who played most of his football in England and scored four tries for a Rest of the World team; and Frank 'King' Fisher – the grandfather of athletics great Cathy Freeman – who is recognised as the Aboriginal version of Wally Lewis and played for Wide Bay against touring Great Britain sides in the 1930s but was refused a passport to pursue a career overseas.

Rugby League's Indigenous Team of the Century was Eric Simms, Lionel Morgan, Steve Renouf, Greg Inglis, Dale Shearer, Laurie Daley, Johnathan Thurston, Sam Backo, Mal Cochrane, Arthur Beetson, Gorden Tallis, Sam



Chief Executive's Report

Thaiday, Cliff Lyons, George Green, Wally McArthur, Frank Fisher and John Ferguson. Congratulations to all players selected for a wonderful achievement.

In September, the ARL and NRL unveiled a yearly tribute to the game's history with an annual heritage round that will feature an official Hall of Fame Dinner.

Next year's inaugural Hall of Fame Dinner will feature a formal presentation of all inductees from the game's One Hundred Greatest Players as well as any new members voted by the ARL Hall of Fame Voting College in 2009.

Another highlight of the year was the launch of the official publication commissioned by the Australian Rugby League and National Rugby League to record the game's first century in Australia.

A Centenary of Rugby League tells the complete season-by-season story of Rugby League's first 100 years in Australia, and is rich in detail, anecdote, history, scandal and triumph and illustrated by hundreds of extraordinary photographs. On behalf of the ARL I'd like to congratulate and thank authors and historians Ian Heads and David Middleton for their tireless efforts on the publication.

On the field, the Australian Kangaroos continued a solid build-up to the Rugby League World Cup with a convincing win over New Zealand in the Centenary Test played at the SCG.

The Australian Schoolboys enjoyed similar success, retaining the World Youth Championship after consecutive 68-6 and 17-10 wins over the touring England Academy side, played in Townsville, before rounding out their impressive series with a 40-6 win against the France Junior XIII side in Brisbane.

In the weeks preceding the Schoolboys' representative matches the annual Schoolboys Championships took place in Darwin. Once again the very best junior talent was on display and it was the NSW Combined High Schools side which eventually triumphed 18-12 over NSW Catholic Combined Colleges in the Under-18 Championship Final. Congratulations to NSW CHS for an outstanding tournament.

The highly successful Under-16 Indigenous representative series again took place in 2008, with Queensland toppling NSW prior to the Centenary Test in May. The sides met again in November when they played prior to the Kangaroos' World Cup clash against Papua New Guinea in Townsville, with NSW emerging 22-18 winners.

The Prime Minister's XIII again travelled to Papua New Guinea this year with an aim to promote critical health messages, particularly concerning the prevention of AIDS and HIV.

Led by coach Mal Meninga, the team participated in a variety of community work and backed it up with an impressive 50-34 win in harsh conditions against a

committed PNG Prime Minister's XIII. Congratulations to Mal and his team for their good work.

At the time of writing the Australian Rugby League / Australian Institute of Sport side had just begun its tour to France and England, with three matches against strong UK opponents set to test Brian Johnson's promising young squad.

On behalf of the ARL I'd like to thank our committed corporate sponsors who have continued to provide their loyal support in 2008, those being Harvey Norman, Classic Sportswear, Bundaberg Rum, Coca Cola, Victor Sports, BSC and Skins. The ARL continues to share a strong bond with the Australian Sports Commission which has proven highly beneficial for the development of our sport.

To the Chairman of the Australian Rugby League, Colin Love, thank you for your support throughout the season, and congratulations for your outstanding work on this year's Centenary World Cup. Likewise, I wish to thank the ARL Board of Directors for their efforts in what was a demanding year. Last but not least, my loyal staff at the headquarters in Phillip Street should be congratulated on a superb effort this year.

The Centenary of Rugby League has given us all the opportunity to reflect on a wonderful 100 year history, but importantly, the chance to inspire new generations of Rugby League players and fans. The challenge now lies in taking full advantage of the outstanding achievements of 2008 with passion and vigour, as we move into the next century of 'the Greatest Game of All'.

Geoff Carr

CHIEF EXECUTIVE



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Rugby League's Centenary Premiership in Australia kicked off exactly where it all began in 1908 and finished with Manly putting a new twist on the nation's oldest feud.

The rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne is a part of Australian culture but rarely has Rugby League taken centre stage as the battle ground.

The first afternoon Grand Final in eight years fell firmly on state lines.

Three-time minor premiers Melbourne entered their third straight grand final in search of their second successive premiership.

For the second year in a row they faced Manly.

It was one of only six times in history that the same two teams had faced each other in the Grand Final two years in succession. Only once had the team that lost the first encounter reversed the result the next year (Penrith beating Canberra in '91).

Manly, suddenly finding themselves Sydney's favourite team, ignored history and produced a stunning display to claim the match 40-nil.

The score-line was the biggest in Grand Final history - a feat all the more impressive in that it had been achieved against one of the great teams of the modern era.

The match in front of 80,388 fans at ANZ Stadium was the culmination of a season that had lived up to its aim of honouring the past, celebrating the present and inspiring the future.

It featured the final Australian match of one of the greatest modern day players, a man who on the day equaled Terry Lamb's record of 349 first grade games, Steve Menzies.

The same afternoon had also showcased the stars of the future with Canberra becoming the inaugural Premiers of the game's new Toyota Cup Under 20s National Youth Competition after a thrilling 28-24 'Golden Point' win over Brisbane.

The competition was a major strategic step for the NRL in 2008 and it could not have been more successful.

Fifty-two players from the Under 20s would graduate to NRL ranks in year one, but more importantly every player was required to either study or find employment. They were brought together to be advised on the opportunities challenges and risks associated with careers in professional sport and mandated 'non-training' days were set down across all clubs to ensure a balance between football and 'the outside world'.

It was a revolutionary approach to professional sport in Australia and the final proof came when two of the teams who were among the best in terms of off-field education also emerged as the two grand finalists.

The year also saw the launch of a new stadium on the Gold Coast, construction underway for a new stadium in Melbourne to be ready for 2010 and redevelopments at Leichhardt, Canberra, Cronulla, Kogarah and Newcastle.

The competition also undertook the most extensive survey into refereeing ever taken with results confirming that the level of professionalism in Rugby League in this area is establishing world wide benchmarks.

The Telstra Premiership established the game's third highest average crowd figure of, 15,595 a figure that was 0.99% down on 2007 despite the challenges of a rain soaked run to the finals and a sudden economic downturn.

Eight of the sixteen clubs, the Broncos, Titans, Knights, Dragons, Roosters, Storm, Raiders, and Sharks all recorded rises on the back of a game wide push to focus on the promotion of club memberships.

Across the game the number of people signing up to be members of their club rose 24% and with increasing tax pressure on leagues clubs the area of football club membership remains a vital focus for the game.

The extent to which fans want to identify with their team was further emphasised by yet another growth in merchandising as fans reached for the latest team apparel.

At the time of the report licensing figures had increased 22% on the corresponding 2007 period while sponsorship across the game also reached record levels.

Importantly the players shared in the success with the NRL increasing the salary cap by \$100,000 over and above the Collective Bargaining Agreement, taking the figure to \$4 million per club. A further \$100,000 per club goes to the player retirement fund. This is up from \$3.9 million in 2007 and \$3.66 million in 2006.

These figures do not include the \$150,000 marquee player club sponsors' allowance (extended in 2008 to take in 10 players).

The salary cap will rise by another \$100,000 in 2009, with Minimum wages for players 18-25 increasing from \$50,000 to \$52,500 in 2009.

It would seem an inconceivable amount to those who pioneered the game back in 1908 - yet 'those who dug the well' were a part of every turn in the game's Centenary Season.

There was a mixture of reverence and excitement at the season launch where a giant sized Telstra Premiership was installed at Birchgrove Oval - the scene of the first games in 1908.

In the footsteps of the men who pioneered the game appeared the legends who themselves have become immortalised in the trophy of today, Norm Provan and



National Rugby League Report

Arthur Summons. They were in turn joined on stage by representatives of today's champions Cameron Smith and Greg Inglis.

Amid the backdrop of Balmain's struggle street and Sydney Harbour the imagery moved league stalwarts of every age.

The theme would be further developed through a breathtaking National Museum Exhibition, through a heritage round featuring a relay of fans from Birchgrove to the SCG, through regional centenary celebrations held across NSW and Queensland and at one of the most memorable nights in the game's history, the Centenary Ball.

The gathering at the Royal Hall of Industries launched the official team of the century and veteran campaigners from all eras declared it the most memorable function in the game's history.

The Centenary was a reminder of the outstanding strengths of the game and of strong community ties that date back through generations.

It was yet another demonstration of how closely the ARL, NSWRL, CRL, QRL, ARL Foundation and One Community can work together to achieve outstanding results.

On behalf of all the NRL, I thank all the leagues and the NRL Partners, the ARL and News Ltd, for their support.

I know that we move into the next one hundred years with every confidence that the game is on track to achieve even greater levels of success and that future generations are assured of their chance to be a part of the greatest game of all.

David Gallop

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE



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New South Wales Rugby League Report



Saluting the past – celebrating the present – inspiring the future

Strong growth at the grassroots level, the introduction of successful new initiatives, elite level Rugby League's return to suburban venues and memorable celebrations characterised a huge Centenary season for the New South Wales Rugby League.

At the elite level of the game, the NSW Wizard Blues tried valiantly to regain the Harvey Norman State of Origin Shield this year but were again denied by a resilient Maroons side now brimming with confidence after three straight series wins.

However it was the Blues which got the series off to a sensational start when, after going into the match as underdogs, they rallied to an upset 18-10 victory at ANZ Stadium. Led by newcomers Anthony Laffranchi, Peter Wallace and Anthony Quinn, the Blues shut out the Maroons in emphatic fashion giving new coach Craig Bellamy the perfect start to his maiden series.

Subsequent 30-0 and 16-10 losses in Brisbane and Sydney, however, meant the Blues would have to wait yet another year for a fourth crack at Mal Meninga's side. While the 2-1 series loss would have hurt the Blues, the Origin concept continues to build on its status as Australian sport's premier interstate rivalry with record numbers tuning into all three matches. In fact, Channel Nine's May 21 telecast of Origin One was the highest rating program on any network to date, a magnificent achievement.

The news was better for NSW sides at the junior representative level, with the Under-16 and Under-18 sides enjoying convincing wins over their Queensland counterparts in Sydney and Brisbane respectively. The NSW Residents achieved similar success, beating Queensland Residents 24-16 prior to State of Origin Game Two, while the NSW Indigenous Under-16 side suffered a last-minute 18-16 loss prior to the Centenary Test in Sydney. Barring their and the Blues' State of Origin loss, all levels of NSWRL representative sides emerged victorious over their Queensland opponents this year – a sensational achievement which bodes well for future Wizard Blues teams.

The annual City versus Country Origin fixture moved to Wollongong's picturesque WIN Stadium this year, with fans turning up to see players in both sides duelling it out for coveted Blues spots. A 22-all draw was indicative of a tightly-fought match, with standout Country forwards Anthony Laffranchi and Ben Cross earning call-ups for their Origin debuts weeks later. Leading the match with only minutes to play, Tim Sheens' City side was unlucky not to steal victory from their more fancied opponents, but regained the City Country Shield nonetheless after taking out the 2007 fixture. Congratulations must go to all staff, players, and officials for a job well done.

With the advent of the Toyota Cup Under-20s competition this year, the NSWRL underwent a competition restructure which saw the VB NSW Cup and Jim Beam Cup take centre-stage at the open-aged level.

Both competitions delivered elite level Rugby League to suburban venues such as Ringrose Park and

Campbelltown Stadium throughout the season, which proved advantageous for families unable to travel to NRL matches.

A highlight of the season was the Centenary celebrations held at Birchgrove Oval for the VB NSW Cup clash between the Balmain Ryde Tigers and Western Suburbs Magpies. Thousands of fans turned out to see the two sides duel it out in heritage jerseys, while family activities further contributed to a great atmosphere on the day.

NSWRL initiatives such as an "Alcohol Free" Semi Finals day at Campbelltown Stadium also proved popular, with plenty of families turning out on September 21 to see the only live Rugby League in Sydney.

While it was the North Sydney Bears and Windsor Wolves who set the pace during the year – with the Bears achieving ten from ten wins, a club record, early in the season – it was Wentworthville which emerged victorious in an epic 104 minute Grand Final against foundation club the Newtown Jets. A win would have secured a fairytale finish for Newtown, the only foundation club involved in Grand Final day, but Wentworthville's 12-8 win was well earned. Both clubs should be congratulated on tremendous efforts in the final and throughout the season.

In the Jim Beam Cup it was Windsor which produced a stunning performance to topple perennial finalists the Sydney Bulls. The Wolves' 36-16 win was remarkable considering they were trounced 62-12 by the Bulls only weeks before in the major Semi Final. Congratulations must go to coach Trent Rosa and his team, as well as the Sydney Bulls for another terrific season.

At the time of writing, the NSWRL was finalising a new competition sponsor for the Jim Beam Cup, following Jim Beam's decision to conclude what has been a highly successful six year partnership with the competition.

Throughout that period we have enjoyed sustained growth and are now positioned as the state's premier semi-professional competition, and I wish to extend my thanks to Jim Beam for their support.

Some of the biggest gains this year were made at the grassroots level and particularly within Martin Meredith's NSWRL Academy unit based at Narrabeen. The introduction of a Pacific Islander development officer brought with it new initiatives and programs which helped celebrate Rugby League's cultural diversity, while the Indigenous programs led by Steve Hall also proved successful. I'd like to thank Martin and his entire staff at the Academy for their hard work this season.

At the Junior Representative level, changes set to be made in 2009 include the restructuring of the Queensland junior competitions, which will see them come into line with the NSW Under-16 Harold Matthews and Under-18 SG Ball competitions.

On the field, Parramatta took out the Harold Matthew Cup competition while the Sydney Roosters won the SG Ball Cup competition. Congratulations to both teams for their achievements.



New South Wales Rugby League Report

The Arrive Alive Cup competition again showcased the country's best school talent and once again the standard of play was exceptional throughout the year. In what is a challenging competition to administer, Western Sydney Development Manager Steve Hewson has done a terrific job and he and his staff should be congratulated on their efforts. On the field, Palm Beach Currumbin proved too strong for Matraville Sports High, winning a thrilling Grand Final 24-22 at the Sydney Football Stadium in September. Congratulations to Palm Beach Currumbin and their Peter Sterling Medal winner Ryan James.

In response to the rapid population growth in Western Sydney, the NSWRL has revamped the Western Sydney Development Academy which will see it move from Homebush to CUA Stadium in 2009. Headed by former Parramatta Eels general manager Greg Mitchell, the Western Sydney Development Academy will form a key part of the NSWRL's junior development drive in the region. It would be remiss of me not too acknowledge the terrific support from the Penrith club which has made the move to CUA Stadium possible.

The game continues to flourish at the grassroots level in NSW and this has much to do with the dedication and support from the numerous Junior Leagues. To the development staff, officials and particularly the volunteers who work so hard to develop the game at this level, congratulations and thank you for your support.

In the vital area of refereeing, the still relatively new Referee Development department of the NSWRL continues to achieve excellent results under the direction of Tony Danks and Doug Keen. With an aim to increase retention of referees at a junior level and provide a clear pathway to the elite level, Tony and Doug have introduced initiatives which have seen a clear increase in numbers in this area.

Also deserving of our thanks are those that have overseen our Judiciary this season, particularly Paul Conlon, John Murphy, Greg Glass, Bob Abood and our Video Review Committee of Ron Massey, John Hayes and Bob Saunders. I would also like to acknowledge the effort of our NSWRL Vice Presidents as well as former players who served on the panel, including Gerard Raper, Ron Sigsworth, Ricky Walford, Royce Ayliffe and Joe Thomas. I must also extend my thanks to Tas Baitieri and Sean Garlick for their terrific efforts this year.

Our Centenary season could not have been a success without the wonderful support provided by our array corporate partners including Wizard Finance, Harvey Norman, NIB, Classic Sportswear, Carlton United Breweries, Fosters Group, Jim Beam Brands Australia, Canterbury Clothing Company, Coca Cola, Victor Sports and the Motor Accident Authority. I'd like to offer my sincere thanks to all parties for their continued support.

Likewise, the efforts of our Board of Directors have ensured the NSWRL pushes on to new challenges each season and our success could not have been possible without their support and direction. I'd like to thank the Board, headed by Chairman Colin Love, for their support and dedication to taking the game in NSW to new levels.

The Centenary year has provided thousands of fans with the opportunity to celebrate our game's great history and at the heart of all NSWRL operations has been the passionate and hard-working staff of Phillip Street, Narrabeen and Western Sydney. It has been a privilege to work alongside you during what has arguably been the most important year in the League's history.

On behalf of the NSWRL I would offer sincere condolences to those who suffered bereavements throughout the 2008 season. The Rugby League community will mourn the loss of several people who made outstanding contributions to the game over the years, names such as Gibson, Rayner and Bath, among others, and those that have left us leave behind a legacy which will continue for many years to come.

Finally, I believe the unequivocal success of Rugby League's Centenary season has had a lot to do with the exceptional working relationship forged between the various members of the NRL, QRL, CRL, NSWRL and the various affiliate leagues. This strong bond shared between the leagues has helped us all contribute to the betterment of the game and I congratulate all involved for their contribution in this area.

As I look back on the achievements on and off the field during the Centenary of Rugby League, I have no doubt the game received the glowing tribute it deserved. The challenge is there now for the NSWRL to continue the good work as we move into the next century of Rugby League. It's a challenge I, and I'm sure all involved in the game, are looking forward to.

Geoff Carr

GENERAL MANAGER

NEW SOUTH WALES RUGBY LEAGUE



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Many outstanding activities were staged in 2008 to celebrate 100 remarkable years of Rugby League – ‘The Greatest Game of All’. In liaison with the ARL Centenary Committee, the Queensland Rugby League’s own Centenary Committee developed an extensive calendar of major events to celebrate the milestone and released two books.

The highlight was the wonderful QRL Centenary Celebration Dinner on June 10 which featured the unveiling of the Queensland Team of the Century. This stunning event received glowing reviews from guests who donned their finest for Queensland Rugby League’s night of nights.

But the celebrations did not end there. Numerous other events, including the masterful re-enactment of the 1908 meeting which led to the formation of the Queensland Rugby Association (later to become the Queensland Rugby League), ensured the great game of Rugby League was the sport everyone was talking about. The QRL congratulates the people involved in the celebrations and acknowledges the many members of the wider community who embraced this most treasured occasion.

With the wonderful spectacle of the World Cup capping off a great year, it is hoped that grassroots Rugby League in Queensland will receive a further spin-off in a range of areas, particularly at junior level. Registrations of junior players and insured teams were already at a record high for 2008, with junior player (Under-7 to Under-18) registrations reaching 41,329, an increase of 791 on 2007. There were 2,455 insured junior teams which marked an increase of 97 teams from the previous year.

It is fabulous to see so many youngsters playing our sport, and with a proven pathway in place, it is only a matter of time before some of these talented players reach the top. That “top” level of Rugby League in Queensland is alive and well, with the XXXX Maroons clinching a third-straight Harvey Norman State of Origin Series.

The Maroons now stand on the verge of playing their way into the Origin record books.

No State has ever won four consecutive series and that elusive milestone will no doubt be used as motivation when the Maroons prepare for the 2009 Series.

The man driving Queensland’s bid for a slice of history next year will again be league great Mal Meninga, the Queensland and Australian Team of the Century centre. Meninga was appointed to a new three year deal as head coach of his beloved Maroons in September. The unprecedented contract extension was a fitting reward for the coach who continues to get results for Queensland. As was the case when he made his Origin coaching debut in 2006, Meninga and the entire Queensland camp came under enormous pressure this year after the Maroons lost the opening match of the series in Sydney.

But the tenacious Maroons responded in brutal fashion, belting the Blues 30-0 with an awesome display in front of more than 52,000 fans at Suncorp Stadium.

In the series decider, Queensland held firm against a

determined NSW barrage to emerge with a 16-10 victory at Sydney’s ANZ Stadium. The Queensland players who tackled themselves to a standstill in those frantic few minutes celebrated the 2-1 series inside the dressing room win with great gusto. And no one could deny them that right after one of the great Origin victories.

Queensland encountered setback after setback throughout the entire series. The adversity seemed to follow the Maroons every step of the way but somehow the Maroons found an answer whenever the critics circled. Queensland’s first setback came before the opening game when inspirational captain Darren Lockyer was ruled out with a knee injury. The Queensland selectors then came under fire from the media and some members of the public for not naming Scott Prince as Lockyer’s replacement.

While history shows the Maroons went down 18-10 in that opening match, it was plain for all to see that the Queensland side which took the field was well below its best and was simply outplayed by the Blues. Queensland’s bid to level the series looked promising from the opening day of the Game Two camp when Lockyer was named to make his return. The headlines labelled Lockyer as Queensland’s saviour. But in a major blow, the star Broncos playmaker withdrew just days out from the match. Prince was called into the halves at late notice - and he didn’t disappoint.

Along with the change in the key playmaking positions, the Maroons also had to contend with the unavailability of Test centre Justin Hodges due to suspension. Young Bronco Darius Boyd replaced Hodges in a reshuffled backline which simply blew NSW off the park at an electric Suncorp Stadium.

Queensland named an unchanged 17 for the series decider. The build up to the deciding match of the series was an emotional time for those in the Queensland camp after the passing of legendary Maroons manager Dick “Tosser” Turner. Such was Turner’s enormous contribution and standing to the game, a public service was held at Suncorp Stadium. The service featured moving tributes from the likes of Paul Vautin, Wally Lewis and Mal Meninga.

Meninga again spoke of Turner’s legacy in an emotion-charged dressing room following Queensland’s stunning 16-10 win. Following the match, halfback Johnathan Thurston was awarded the Wally Lewis Medal for Player of the Series. Petero Civoniceva received the Ron McAuliffe Medal, while the popular Kevin Walters accepted the Peter Jackson Medal for his contribution to team spirit.

Queensland’s dominance was rewarded at the national selection table, with 12 Maroons selected in the Kangaroos’ initial 24-man squad for the World Cup in Australia. However, Maroons stars Karmichael Hunt and Darius Boyd received late call ups after Justin Hodges and Brett Stewart were late withdrawals because of shoulder injuries.

Nine Queenslanders also took part in the historic Centenary Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground in May. With Darren Lockyer a late scratching, Cameron Smith



Queensland Rugby League Report

took over the captaincy and led the Kangaroos to a comprehensive 28-12 victory in front of more than 34,000 fans.

The 2008 season marked an exciting new era for the Queensland Wizard Cup. The arrival of two new teams and the rapid rise of a couple of perennial battlers made for an enthralling and most unpredictable year. The upsets began in round one and the trend of unexpected results continued until the very end when the Souths Logan Magpies upset red-hot favourites the Ipswich Jets in a pulsating grand final.

The Jets had the luxury of playing the match in front of a parochial "home" crowd at the North Ipswich Reserve after the Ipswich City Council successfully applied to host the match when Suncorp Stadium was unavailable. The Magpies silenced a large contingent of Ipswich fans in the 6,000-strong crowd by racing to an 18-0 lead.

The Jets stormed back into the contest to level the score at 18-18 and the match appeared to be headed for extra time. That was until Alby Talipeau stepped in. Talipeau, who received the Duncan Hall Medal for the Best and Fairest player post-game, caught the Ipswich defence napping with a clever play out of dummy half to send Kyle Lodge on his way to the try-line for the stunning match-winner in the final minute. A sea of black and white descended over the North Ipswich Reserve as passionate Magpies fans celebrated the club's first Queensland Cup premiership.

In a remarkable achievement, the Magpies had gone from finishing second last in their five previous campaigns to holding aloft the prized silverware. The Magpies' new partnership with the Canberra Raiders, along with the outstanding work of first-year coach Paul Bramley and his dedicated support team, played key roles in the club's revival.

Although bitterly disappointed with the loss, the Jets can take many positives out of a strong campaign. The two newcomers to the Queensland Cup – the Northern Pride and Mackay Cutters – could also be happy with their debut seasons. The ultra-professional Pride set the early pace in the competition and came within a whisker of qualifying for the grand final.

The Cutters weren't quite as successful, but they did snare seven wins and a draw to finish the season in a creditable ninth spot. Both the Cutters and Pride played in front of bumper home crowds, further extending the Queensland Cup's reach. With the likely inclusion of the Sunshine Coast Eagles next year, that statewide exposure will only increase.

The leading players in the Queensland Wizard Cup again received representative opportunities throughout 2008. XXXX Country played XXXX City in Clermont on May 31. Country won the match 25-18 in front of a good crowd. The Clermont Bears and the local community are to be congratulated for staging and supporting this match. Following the annual clash, the Queensland Residents team was selected to play NSW Residents at Suncorp Stadium. NSW Residents won a hard-fought contest 24-16.

Many of the players involved in next year's Queensland Cup will have emerged from recent QRL Under Age Carnivals and numerous other grassroots representative programs. This year, Under Age representative rugby league adopted a new format following the establishment of the National Under 20s competition.

The traditional Under-17 and Under-19 Carnival on the representative calendar was replaced by an Under-16 and Under-18 format. This Carnival was played in Proserpine from May 3-5. The Central Capras, Wide Bay Bulls, South West Mustangs, South East Poinsettias, North Queensland Marlins and the South East Kookaburras fielded teams in both age groups.

The Carnival produced a high-standard of Rugby League as the players strived for further representative honours. Positions in the two Queensland Under-16 and two Queensland Under-18 teams were up for grabs.

In a major disappointment, Queensland was beaten by New South Wales in the Under-16 and 18 matches which were played as curtain-raisers to Harvey Norman State of Origin matches. Queensland gained a small slice of revenge when its Maroons Under-16 team defeated NSW Country on the Sunshine Coast in July. NSW Country beat the Queensland Under-18 Maroons.

While the final scoreline was disappointing for all concerned, it should be noted that steps have been taken to ensure future Queensland Under Age teams like this one are better prepared for the demands of interstate football. The QRL announced in September that a new Under-16 and Under-18 Competition would be staged in 2009.

The Competition, featuring Southern and Northern Conferences with a finals series crossover with NSW, is expected to provide the State's elite players with regular exposure to a high-standard of play. It is hoped that this exciting Competition will assist with the development of our best young players and ensure future Queensland teams are primed for battle against NSW.

There were many other great contests between Queensland and New South Wales teams this year, including the inaugural Outback representative match between Queensland Outback and NSW Outback in Winton and the Quad Series which saw the XXXX Queensland Rangers take on the NSW Country and the Jim Beam Cup side. The Great Britain Community Lions also took part in the Quad Series, which was taken out by the red-hot Jim Beam Cup outfit.

The Outback match played in Winton on July 26 was an overwhelming success. The local community threw its support behind the concept and the match itself produced a high standard of play. New South Wales won an exciting contest 26-20, but Queensland still had plenty of reasons to celebrate with eight players selected in the Australian Outback Merit Team. It is envisaged that this match will become an annual contest on the representative program.

Another major match on the bumper 2008 calendar was the Toyota Centenary Trophy final between the Townsville Stingers and Illawarra. This match pitted the

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best grassroots team from Queensland against the leading side from NSW. Illawarra won a tight clash 20-18 in the curtain-raiser to Game Three of the Harvey Norman State of Origin series.

The final capped a thrilling finish to the knock-out competition which started with 16 teams in Queensland. Such was its success, the League is pushing to stage a similar Competition in 2010.

But NSW-based teams did not have it all their own way in 2008.

Palm Beach-Currumbin flew the flag for Queensland when it won the Arrive Alive Cup final with a sensational 24-22 victory over Matraville Sports High at the Sydney Football Stadium. The Palm Beach-Currumbin team contained many future stars of our game. Young halfback Jordan Rankin is one player who has already enjoyed a taste of National Rugby League action.

Rankin made his NRL debut for the Gold Coast Titans in August. The Titans finished in 13th spot this year, although it must be said a crippling injury toll hampered their top eight push. The North Queensland Cowboys were also devastated by injuries and only narrowly avoided the wooden-spoon.

Brisbane was the best performed Queensland-based NRL side. The Broncos' bold bid for the premiership and a fairytale finish to Wayne Bennett's illustrious coaching stint with the Club was only curtailed by an amazing last-minute try from the Melbourne Storm in the second week of the finals. The QRL congratulates Wayne Bennett, a former employee, on his incredible coaching tenure with the Broncos and acknowledges the assistance it has received from all three NRL sides over the course of the year.

The QRL also recognises the wonderful support it continues to receive from the Corporate sector. XXXX, AAMI and Canterbury Clothing were the major backers of the Queensland Origin side.

In conclusion, rugby league in Queensland is thriving and the success of the Centenary Year has further strengthened the code's standing in the State. The QRL has received glowing feedback following many of the off-field events, particularly in regional areas.

Just as importantly, the on-field play was as exciting as ever before. From the Origin arena right through to grassroots levels, thrilling matches were played out on rugby league fields everywhere.

We will strive to provide even greater opportunities for all players, coaches, match officials and supporters. Again, the QRL praises all those involved in the Centenary of Rugby League Celebrations. Your work and support has made for an unforgettable season.

Bring on the next 100 years.

Ross Livermore

MANAGING DIRECTOR

QUEENSLAND RUGBY LEAGUE





Victorian Rugby League Report

The Victorian Rugby League (VRL) enjoyed an extremely successful year across all areas of the business in 2008. There were unprecedented results achieved in club and schools participation, and outstanding performances throughout the various representative programs. The VRL also undertook an important governance restructure in 2008 that will result in representation at Board level for all key stakeholders in the game of Rugby League in Victoria.

The Victorian Rugby League junior and senior competitions have both enjoyed significant growth during the 2008 season. The junior competitions recorded a 22 per cent increase in player registrations in 2008 and this growth can be attributed to the continued terrific work undertaken by Development Officers who have established excellent links within the primary and secondary school systems.

The Senior competition bucked the national trend achieving a 25% increase in registered participants in the 2008 season. This growth can be largely attributed to the two new teams that entered the First Grade competition in 2008, however the commitment of the clubs in embracing providing playing opportunities to women and older males has also had a positive impact upon senior club participation.

The Melbourne Storm Development Schools program continued to deliver outstanding results in 2008. School based Rugby League participation has increased 40 per cent from 19,807 participants in 2007 to 33,444 participants in 2008. The Development team has conducted 58 Rugby League competitions in 2008 and this is up from the 40 Rugby League competitions that were held in 2007.

The Victorian Primary School Sports Association (VPSSA) Under-12 team participated in the National Exchange in Darwin from August 9-16. The Under-12 team was coached by Jamie Fardell from the Melbourne Storm Development team. In the second year of the eight-team National Exchange Program, the Victorian team finished in sixth place going down to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in the fifth versus sixth play off game.

The Victorian Rugby League Secondary Schools Representative Program enjoyed an extremely successful year. There were 49 Victorian players given the opportunity to participate in the 2008 15 and 18 Years Australian Secondary School Rugby League (ASSRL) National Championships.

The Victorian 15 Years team participated in the ASSRL Championships in Brisbane from June 28 to July 4. The 15 Years team was coached by Paul Boyce and he was assisted by Garry Whicker. The team opened the Championships against the reigning Pool B Champions Northern Territory and went down 20 -16 in a closely contested game. The 15 Years team rebounded strongly from this loss defeating South Australia 60-0 which proved to be an important winning margin - boosting the Victorians' head to head points difference against other Pool B Final aspirant Western Australia. The Victorian team faced Western Australia in their final pool game

needing a win or a draw to qualify for the Pool B Final against Northern Territory.

The Victorian team secured their Pool B Final spot with an exciting 26 all draw against the Western Australians. The Victorian team turned the tables on Northern Territory for their loss on day one to take out the 2008 Pool B Final 24-10 to win the John Allen Trophy for the first time since 2005.

The Victorian 15 Years team had five players selected in the 2008 15 Years Pool B Merit team with Adam Millgate (Parkdale Secondary College), Cameron Hansen (Parkdale Secondary College), Herchel Gideon (Doncaster Secondary College), Aaron Presnell (Westbourne Grammar) and Talalupelele Titi (Kambrya Secondary College) receiving an Affiliated States Australian jersey.

The 18 Years program provides Victorian players with the opportunity to be selected for the Combined Affiliated States (CAS) and participate in Pool A of the ASSRL Championships. The Affiliated States conducted a selection trial over the Queens Birthday weekend in June in Alice Springs to choose the 18 Years Pool A CAS team. The Victorian team and players were outstanding over the three day selection period and nine Victorian players were chosen for the Pool A CAS team.

The success of having nine players selected in the 18 Years Pool A CAS team provided additional opportunities and challenges for the 18 Years Pool B program. The opportunities resulted in nine 'new' players being given the chance to represent Victoria in Pool B of the 2008 18 Years ASSRL National Championships. The challenge that the coaching staff faced was to put together a competitive new squad three weeks prior to the ASSRL National Championships.

The VRL had an interest in both Pool A and Pool B of the 18 Years ASSRL National Championships that were held in Darwin from July 13-18. The CAS team, containing nine Victorian players, participated in Pool A of the Championships and had a frustrating week losing each of its first three games against NSW/CIS, ACT and NSW/CIS by two points. The CAS team finished the Championships strongly defeating ACT 42 - 20 in its final game.

The Victoria 18s team participated in Pool B of the 2008 18 Years ASSRL National Championships. The team was coached by Dylan Hides and he was assisted by Bruce White. The 18 Years team met Pool B defending champions Northern Territory on day one and led the Championship Hosts 12-6 at half time. The Victorians ran out of steam in the Darwin heat after half time going down 34-18. In game two of the championships Victoria took on South Australians and mirrored the performance of the Victorian 15 Years team defeating the South Australian team 60-0. The Victorian team took on Western Australia in game three for a place in the Pool B Final. Victoria dominated the Western Australians and convincingly won the game 32-10. The Victorian 18 Years team took on Northern Territory in the Pool B Final and the Territorians proved too strong winning 31-10.

The Victorian Opens Representative team participated in

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the ARL Affiliated States Championships in Alice Springs from June 6-8. The team was coached by Melbourne Storm Premiership 1999 player Ben Roarty and finished the Championships with two wins and one loss and overall second in the four team competition. The highlight of the weekend was a 12-10 over the Western Australian Reds inflicting the Reds first loss at these Championships since 2001.

The Victorian Opens team had five players selected in the 2008 Affiliated States Australian team with Sam Lalotoa (Altona Roosters), Corey Timothy (Altona Roosters), Brandon Chase (Altona Roosters), Tim Neal (Sunbury Tigers) and Darcy Etrich (Sunbury Tigers) representing the Affiliated States in their tour of Fiji and Tonga.

The 2008 Junior Competition Grand Finals were played on Saturday September 6 at Betula Reserve, Doveton. Congratulations to the South Eastern Titans JRLFC for hosting a very successful Grand Final Day. The four junior divisions were won by four different clubs which highlights the increased depth that exists throughout the junior competition. All games were played in terrific spirit and excellent sportsmanship shown by the players.

Below are the results from the 2008 Victorian Rugby League Junior Grand Finals:

Girls Tag: Grand Final: Northern Thunder 16 def Altona Roosters 0

Under-12s - Grand Final: Casey Chiefs 22 def Northern Thunder 16

Under-14s - Grand Final: Waverley/Oak. Panthers 36 def Altona Roosters 28

Under-16s - Grand Final: Moorabbin Rams 34 def Waverley/Oak. Panthers 24

The Goulburn Murray Rugby League launched its Junior competition in 2008. The competition comprises of two clubs with the Wangaratta Tigers and Wodonga Junior RLFC fielding teams in the Under 8, 11 and 13s age groups. The competition is projected for further growth in the 2009 season and the Goulburn Murray Rugby League is to be congratulated to its commitment to growing the game in North East Victoria.

The 2008 Senior Competition Grand Finals were played on Sunday September 7 at Fregon Reserve, Clayton. The Waverley/Oakleigh Panthers hosted an excellent day and the Committee are to be congratulated for their efforts.

The Masters Grand Finals was played between the defending Premiers Casey Sharks and Minor Premiers the Altona Roosters. The game was fitting of a Grand Final with the Casey Sharks claiming back to back Premierships in a 20-18 golden point victory over a gallant Altona.

The Women's Tag Grand Final provided the opportunity for the Altona Roosters to avenge their loss in the 2007 Grand Final when they took on the Moorabbin Rams. The Roosters were bridesmaids again going down to the Rams 18-14 in a closely contested game.

The Altona Roosters were aiming for a three-peat in the Colts Grade when they took on the South Eastern Titans in the 2008 Colts Grade Grand Final. The Grand Final match up was highly anticipated after the Roosters defeated the Titans 26-24 in the Major Semi Final a fortnight earlier. The Roosters maintained their dominance in the Colts Grade outclassing the Titans 48-10 the 2008 season decider.

The 2008 First Grade Grand Final was contested between perennial powerhouse the Altona Roosters and competition new boys the Moorabbin Rams. The Roosters had been motivated for the 2008 season by their heartbreaking 23 - 22 loss to the Doveton Steelers in the 2007 First Grade Grand Final. The Rams were the surprise packet of the 2008 season qualifying for the Grand Final in their inaugural season. The experience of the Roosters was telling in the 2008 decider and they dominated the Rams running out convincing 72-10 winners.

The Victorian Rugby League Commission and staff would like to thank the Victorian Primary School Sports Association (VPSSA) and Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League (ASSRL) for their continued commitment and support of primary and secondary schools Rugby League. We would also like to recognise the support provided to the Victorian Rugby League by the Australian Rugby League (ARL) and Australian Rugby League Development (ARLD), Melbourne Storm RLFC, Sport and Recreation Victoria and Vic Health.

The Victorian Rugby League would also like to thank all clubs, players, coaches, volunteers, parents and helpers who were involved in the various Victorian Rugby League programs and competitions during the 2008 season.

Joe Messina

GENERAL MANAGER

VICTORIAN RUGBY LEAGUE





Northern Territory Rugby League Report

Affiliated States Championships

At the Affiliated States Championships conducted at Alice Springs, the Northern Territory teams acquitted themselves courageously with only a single loss each temporarily halting a highly successful campaign.

The Under-18 team was defeated by Victoria 18-16 in controversial circumstances in their first match, before convincingly defeating both Western Australia 24-0 and South Australia 40-12 in their latter games. As it was a selection trial only, the importance was placed on achieving representation in the CAS Under-18 squad to play in the Australian Secondary Schoolboy Championships in Darwin in July and to that end we were successful in gaining representation for Matt Johnson, Tyler Malone, Jeromey Edwards, Michael Elphick and Joseph McCarthy while Mitchell Russell and Matt Bennett were on stand by.

The NT Titans opened their account with a strong victory over Victoria 22-18 with Aaron Barnes and Andrew Herbert outstanding among a host of quality performances. The heavens then opened up on the second day of proceedings, but we still overcame a strong challenge from South Australia 40-12 in icy conditions to score a convincing win. Best for the Titans were Marty Ramage and Jethro Campbell. The final day saw us up against the might of West Australia in what proved to be the Championship Final. Unfortunately, the Sandgropers were too strong on the day and we lost a titanic struggle 34-14. Best for the Titans was Michael McLean, who had a wonderful tournament.

The Australian Affiliated States team was announced and we deservedly had a strong representation with Aaron Barnes, Jethro Campbell, Andrew Herbert and Michael McLean all gaining representation while Marty Ramage was ruled out with injury. This indeed was a terrific representation from the NT as we had six players unavailable for Australian team selection due to work and family commitments.

Special mention must go to Marty Ramage who announced his retirement from representative football after an illustrious career. All those who attended the Championship Dinner would have noted the respect Marty has attained from his peers in all States and he was duly honoured at the Dinner for his achievements for both the NT and Australian Affiliated States teams over the years.

Under 18 Secondary Schoolboys Championships

The Northern Territory Rugby League had the great honour of hosting the Australian Secondary Schoolboys Championships in the Centenary year of Rugby League in Darwin during July.

With great assistance from both online and print media

and the Darwin public in general, the event drew good crowds daily culminating in a crowd more than 2,000 for the final day. The football was fast, tough and uncompromising at all levels and all players should be congratulated on the way the games were played.

Some teams were obviously not used to the perfect Darwin dry season weather and had trouble initially acclimatising but after the initial shock of playing in 30 degree temperature, all teams were competitive in their respective pool matches. The Pool A matches featuring the Combined Affiliated States team were of a terrific standard and there were certainly no easy games with the future of the NRL looking bright if these matches were any indication.

Pool A was won by the team representing the NSWCHS with an 18-12 victory over the NSWCCC side thus reversing an earlier result during the tournament. In Pool B, the Northern Territory overwhelmed Victoria 31-10 in front of a very parochial crowd, maintaining their undefeated status.

Players from all teams must be congratulated for their demeanour and behaviour both on and off the field and were a credit to themselves, the teams they represented and the game of Rugby League, while 99.9% of spectators thoroughly enjoyed the Championships.

We at the NTRL thank the ASSRL committee for the opportunity to host the event, the players and officials from all teams and the Darwin public for supporting the Championships and eagerly await another opportunity to host. Personally, I would like to thank the staff of the NTRL for their magnificent achievements and dedication during the tournament.

Under 15 Schoolboys Championships

The team as a group set several goals prior to the championship, these were as follows: To finish in the top two in the Affiliated States (Pool B), and to have the belief in themselves that they can compete at the same level as the players in Pool A (Queensland, NSWCHS, NSWCCC, NSWGIS, ACT).

To have pride in their own try line, therefore making every team earn every point that they score against them.

To finish the championships proud of their efforts and knowing that they could not possibly have done anything else.

To come away from the championships having learnt something and being a better player and/or person from the experience, and to enjoy the trip!

Their achievements of these goals were as follows:

They finished 2nd in the Affiliated States Pool competition, defeating all other affiliated states in the preliminary rounds but unfortunately being defeated by a strong Victorian team in the Final.

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Officials from every other team, both Pool A and B, favourably commented on the skill level and play of the NT team throughout the Championship.

The NT teams' for and against was the best of any Pool B team who participated in the championships, a record of which the players should be extremely proud.



Brett Holmes was once again a superb mentor for these young men and stated that this was one of the most rewarding experiences in his 17 years of coaching at this level. This team performed well and above all expectations which he had for them, particularly considering the number of quality players who withdrew from the squad with injury.

Comments from many of the parents upon their return have been very positive towards these players being more confident both on and off the field.

The smiles on the faces throughout the championship cemented that they were enjoying the trip.

French Under 19 Schoolboys

During August, the NTRL hosted the French Schoolboys at Richardson Park and once again, our Under 18 team did us proud before a large and appreciative crowd.

The match resulted in a 14-all draw and it was a thriller, with the NT having an opportunity to win the match after the final hooter. Both teams played themselves to a standstill and the great crowd gave both sides a well deserved standing ovation after the match

Darwin Rugby League Competition

The 2008 DRL season reached its climax with the Grand Final Gala Day at Richardson Park. In front of a large and enthusiastic crowd, the Litchfield Bears and South Darwin Rabbits played off in a classic end of season encounter with Litchfield running out worthy winners, but not without some tough and enthusiastic opposition from the depleted Rabbits. The Bears were deserving victors as they were the pace setters throughout the Competition.

Season 2008 was an historic year in Darwin with home and away matches introduced for the first time and the Juniors joining with their Senior Clubmates at the same venue. Home games were played at Richardson Park, Archer Field and Fred's Pass during the season proper

using the "bringing the game back to the people" theme. Attendances at Richardson Park were up on 2007, Palmerston enjoyed good crowds at Archer, and Fred's Pass in particular enjoyed great home support.

Participation numbers were again up on the previous year, but there is still more work to do in the Juniors ranks to fill the voids that we have in some age groups. The DRL Development Officers will work closely with Clubs to assist in recruitment and retention of players.

Congratulations to all Clubs for their efforts during the Season and particular congratulations and best wishes to all Grand Final participants. To the joint Frank Johnson Medal winners Aaron Barnes and Chuck Norris, what a stellar year you enjoyed, it was fitting that your teams faced off in the Grand Final. We also had joint Rookie of the Year winners in Bryce Richards and Matthew Johnson, both of whom had wonderful seasons in A Grade.

Central Australian Rugby League

The Alice Springs Grand Final was played in front of a bumper crowd at Anzac Oval between traditional rivals Memo and Wests, with the Wests team aiming for their fifth straight title.

Wests were favourites to clinch the victory despite going down to Memo in the Major Semi Final, but Memo upset the applecart with a seven point win in a great display of attacking football.

2008 saw our participation growth level out after an outstanding year previously, but we are confident we can keep building on the numbers we have and retain a strong presence in Central Australia.

This year saw the departure of Warren Collits after seven extremely productive years as Development Officer in Alice Springs and his enthusiasm and work ethic will be missed.

Development

This year, the NT Development Officers have been outstanding with their dedication to the tasks that have been set for them with visits to Yulara, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Tiwi islands, Gove and Groote Eylandt in the rural areas for Clinics. Thanks must go to the NRL, Parramatta Eels and the North Queensland Cowboys for their assistance.

Gove and Groote Eylandt have now established Junior Competitions as a result of the work put in and we look forward to assisting both areas with their expansion while the Katherine Junior League remains strong.

Gary Launt

GENERAL MANAGER



Western Australian Rugby League Report

The 2008 season had been an exciting year for the Western Australian Rugby League. Overall participation at school and club level has increased once again and the development work done by our development staff has been rewarded with increases in teams from both category A and B Schools, both Primary and Secondary.

The development staff travelled far and wide to spread the league message, with clinics being held in Pilbara (Karratha), Eastern Goldfields (Kalgoorlie), South West (Bunbury), the Avon Valley (Northam) and the Wheatbelt of the South East (Corrigin).

Western Australia is still very biased towards its two AFL teams and the Western Force has developed a solid following. It is difficult work for the development officers to work in such a hostile environment however a small step forward this year was the Sunday afternoon telecast of the NRL match of the day and the extensive broadcast of the NRL Grand Final.

The acceptance of the Western Australia Reds into the NSW Rugby League Jim Beam Cup in 2008 was a great plus for Rugby League in the West. Despite a huge financial and travel commitment the year was successful. The team won seven games and defeated teams in the top half of the table. The side has to develop a more consistent win record, but the presence of the team certainly had a positive impact on the local competition and junior grades.

The Western Australian Rugby League ran an Under-20 Colts competition on a fortnightly basis and a representative fixture structure. This was very well received by players and supporters.

The National Championships was a great weekend for the Western Australian Rugby League. Our boys played great League and were worthy winners over the Northern Territory in the final. We gained 10 players in the combined Affiliated States Team as well as the Coach. Between the opens, 18s and 15s, WA supplied 18 players to the Combined Affiliated States Representative sides. The Combined Affiliated States Team toured Tonga and Fiji and our representatives were very appreciative of the experience.

Western Australia had three boys selected the CAS Team to participate in the ASSRL Championship in Darwin, with the coach and trainer also coming from WA. This was a successful tour and they performed credibly in the A Pool.

The 15s performed well at the Nationals in Queensland, which was a smoothly run carnival. Congratulations to the team for finishing third.

The 18s also toured to the Nationals, this year held in Darwin. They also finished in third position.

The Under 12s participated in the Legend's Cup at Darwin in August. The team representative of WA with boys selected from country regions. They finished a creditable fourth.

The Academy continued to cater for the High Performance Program, while at the other end of the spectrum, the Masters proved to be a successful weekend of competition with North Beach achieving the most wins.

The Perth Competition had a solid eight team competition with a three game card each Saturday - Women's Leaguetaq, Premier Grade and First Grade. The Kalgoorlie Brothers were strong and the Central Bulldogs made the playoffs. In a terrific achievement, Rockingham was represented in all senior grade finals this year for the first time and achieved Club Champions. Kalgoorlie Women were grand finalist and South Perth made a clean sweep in both senior men's grades.

The Ken Allen Medal night was a gala affair at the Perth Town Hall. Michael Guthrie, South Perth and CAS Representative Player, won the medal. The Grand Final Day at Members Equity Stadium was very well attended and a superb day of Rugby League.

The Pilbara Competition had a good year with the South Hedland Cougars becoming Premiers and an additional side entering the competition in Karratha, and a new junior section in Karratha and Wickham.

The girls Junior Leaguetaq and the Women's Leaguetaq continue to add an extra dimension to League in WA. Their presence gives the game days an added attraction, making it possible for the whole family to take part in our great game on the field.

The referees were administered by Peter Watkins and strongly supported by Liam Noonan. The task of attracting junior and senior referees is a difficult one and requires harmonious cooperation between the Western Australian Rugby League administration and the Referees Association.

The Western Australian Rugby League had an exciting year strongly supported by volunteers on big days. The relationship between the Western Australian Rugby League and the Stadium Management, Allia Venue Management, is also a sound and cooperative one.

The Western Australian Rugby League look forward to an exciting 2009, particularly with two NRL games planned, and an improved showing in the Jim Beam Cup competition – to be named the Bundy Red Cup – by our Reds.

The Board and Management of the Western Australian Rugby League thank the ARL and ARL Development for their support in keeping this great game alive in the West.

Bill Nosworthy

GENERAL MANAGER

Val Murphy

OPERATIONS MANAGER

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE

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South Australian Rugby League Report

The South Australian Rugby League has had an exciting year with continued growth in both schools and club numbers.

Among the highlights of the 2008 season was the Hon. Mr M. Rann, MP, Premier of South Australia, becoming the Patron of the SARL, the Minister for Sport the Hon Michael Wright unveiling a Centenary Plaque for Hindmarsh Stadium, the three Harvey Norman State of Origin games and the NRL Grand Final being shown live and the SARL Grand Finals being held at Hindmarsh Stadium, under lights for first-grade.

In a terrific boost for South Australian Rugby League, NRL club the Cronulla Sharks are to play a competition game in Adelaide for the next three years.

The game is getting more exposure which will assist the local clubs with more recruitment opportunities. Next year the SARL, together with the Office for Recreation and Sport, Channel Nine and radio station Triple M will launch a campaign entitled 'Combating Childhood Obesity'.

In addition, the Cronulla Sharks game will give great exposure for Rugby League in SA, meaning 2009 will be a significant growth year.

Local Clubs

The local competition comprised six clubs in 2008 and the season commenced with an 8s one-day competition for Under-18s and seniors.

A great central venue was secured at West Beach comprising three fields where juniors up to Under-14s played on Sunday mornings. Friday nights became a weekly highlight, with the SARL running Under-16s and Under-18s competitions at Dry Creek on two fields – a great atmosphere under lights.

The season ended in grand style with all Grand Finals played at Hindmarsh Stadium. The first grade played under lights on Saturday night with the underdogs, South Adelaide Bulldogs, victorious over last year's premiers the Eels.

School Development / Representative Football

The 2008 season was a very busy one for the development unit. The Tier A and Tier B competitions were very successful with record numbers in both Primary and Secondary Schools. The Primary School competition commenced in 2007 with 6 schools and increased to 19 schools with 42 teams in 2008. The Secondary schools comprised 19 schools with 18 senior teams and 15 junior teams.

More teachers are completing coaching, refereeing and strength and conditioning courses.

The SARL Schoolboys competed at the National Schoolboy Championships and although outclassed by superior opposition, gave wholehearted performances and were proud to represent SA at the championships.

Scott Merriman from Gawler High School was appointed coach of the Under-18s and as a developing coach we see Scott as a role model for more teachers to become involved in state teams.

Four players from the Under-18 squad were selected in the Combined Affiliated States team which competed in Pool A. They were James Newbury, Toby Hook, Blair Young and Luke Waiti.

With the evolvement of the Primary School competition and the continued improvement in the standard of the Secondary Schools Tier A competition, South Australia is confident of competing at a higher level in years to come.

The senior state team played in the championships in Alice Springs where John Geeves gained selection in the Australian Affiliated States Team which travelled to Fiji and Tonga.

High Performance

The High Performance program again provided 40 athletes with the opportunity to improve their skills, speed and strength with the SARL gym based in the north at Ross Smith High and at the southern gym at Aberfoyle Park.

Looking ahead, 2009 is shaping as a major growth year and with club recruitment becoming a priority. We look forward to a much stronger club competition.

The Board and Management of the South Australian Rugby League is forever grateful of the support provided by the ARL as it continues to grow the great game of Rugby League in South Australia.

Bruce Walker

GENERAL MANAGER

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE



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The Australian Universities representative season kicked off on May 2 this year when a NSW University Rugby League team played a Queensland University team at WIN Stadium.

The match was used as a selection game to pick a squad of 22 players to represent Australian University in the 2008 University World Cup, to be held in Brisbane in July 2008.

The team was coached by former Parramatta, NSW and Australian player Brett Kenny, and featured 14 players from Queensland and eight from NSW.

Eight countries from around the world participated in the event with all players being current University students. The participating countries were Australia, England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, France, New Zealand and making their first appearance, Greece.

The tournament was split into two pools with the top two seeds Australia and New Zealand in different pools. New Zealand were the current University World Champions but were defeated by England in their semi final.

Pool results were: Australia 24 England 0

Australia 58 Scotland 0 Australia 54 Greece 0

Semi Final: Australia 26 Wales 12

Final: Australia 26 England 16

After the final a World University Squad was selected, with seven Australian players gaining selection in a terrific achievement. Those players were Drew Dalton, Josh Whitty, Jonathon Crawley, Matthew Church, Marty Cordwell, Nathan Mossman and Eugene Seddon.

Capping a sensational tournament, Drew Dalton from NSW was selected as Australia's outstanding player. Drew was also selected as Player of the Final and Player of the Tournament.

After a successful 2008 the Australian University League is planning to tour the South Pacific in 2009.

NSW Tertiary Rugby League

The 2008 NSW Tertiary Rugby League competition was made up of 14 teams divided into two divisions, with matches throughout the year proving competitive.

Participating clubs for the 2008 season were CSU Bathurst, Cumberland Beavers, UTS Jets, Macarthur Magpies, Newcastle University, West Sydney Blues, UWS Norwest Polecats, Sydney University and Railcorp.

West Sydney Blues, in their initial year, was first into the first grade grand final with a strong win over minor premiers Norwest Polecats. The Polecats then defeated Sydney University in the preliminary final to set up a return clash against the West Sydney Blues in the grand final.

The grand final, played in very wet conditions at Guilford Oval, would see the Norwest Polecats gain revenge on their finals loss to West Sydney in an extra-time thriller – kicking a penalty goal to defeat the Blues 14-12.

The second-grade final was won by Newcastle University - the front runners all year – with a 22-8 win over Bathurst University.

Special congratulations must go to University referee Mick Offer for reaching a remarkable milestone of 500 games.

A new innovation within our own competition was the splitting of our clubs on a city / country basis. Two teams were selected in traditional city/country colours and a match was played at the impressive Western Weekender Stadium at St Mary's, Penrith.

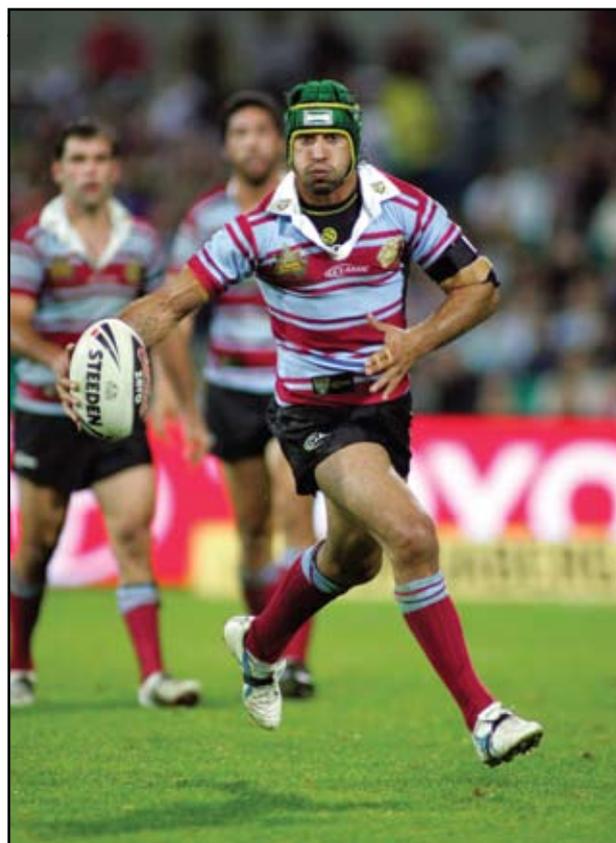
The match proved to be one of the most outstanding of the year and will be included on our calendar again next year. This game will also be used to assist our selectors in assessing player talent for the NSW Tertiary team which regularly assists the NSW Rugby League in taking our game to remote areas of Australia and also the emerging nations.

On the representative scene, a NSW Tertiary University side was selected to play Queensland University at WIN Stadium in early May with the squad being coached by former first grade player Brendon Reeves. Queensland ran out comfortable winners 48-4. As detailed earlier in this report, 22 players from that match were picked to represent the Australian Universities Rugby League in the University World Cup.

Following a great Centenary year in 2008 we are looking forward to a continued and expanding participation in 2009.

Bob Lennox

BOARD MEMBER





Australian Women's Rugby League Report

Season 2008 has been a year for growth and expansion for Australian Women's Rugby League.

The Centenary year has seen an unprecedented amount of attention for Rugby League that culminates in the Festival of World Cups at seasons end.

The expansion in the game has come not only from an increase in player participation but also in the infrastructure that is being put in place, which will provide better opportunities to play the game at all levels and ages of women and girls.

This year has also seen the realisation that the women's game is a marketable commodity. The Women's League at a National level has benefited greatly from the involvement of two major sponsors which have enabled the organisation to host more promotional matches, thus lifting the awareness of the game.

It has also provided much needed funding for the National Team in its quest to secure its first World Cup title.

Junior Girls

The AWRL is working closely with the Women and Girls Committee to establish infrastructure to sustain a number of schoolgirl competitions around the country.

This will allow girls that do not currently have access to a competition to participate in a structured format in Under-14s and Under 16s. The programme has the backing of Patron, Katie Page.

State of Origin and National Championships

These events were again dominated by Queensland with the Queensland team enjoying a 2-nil sweep of the Origin series and South East Queensland taking out honours at the Nationals.

Competition has grown and strengthened along the East Coast of Queensland resulting in a number of regional players having representation in the National Jillaroos Team.

NSW Women's Rugby League has seen a resurgence in the Metropolitan Division, with six teams contesting their season. AWRL Coaching staff has been involved in a coaching and player mentoring program to strengthen the player and coaching base in NSW. This has been rewarded with one CRL player and several metropolitan players being selected for National duty.

Women's Rugby League World Cup

The AWRL will host eight countries including Australia at the official Women's Rugby League World Cup on the Sunshine Coast in November.

New Zealand, England, Australia, Samoa, Tonga, France, Russia, and the Pacific Islands will challenge each other for the World Cup crown. The planning that has gone into this event and the international ties that have been forged are a credit to the growing standard and commitment to the women's game.

I believe the 2008 Women's World Cup will be the catalyst that launches the women's game to unparalleled heights.

The future holds many opportunities for the women's game and Rugby League as a sport and a business in general.

Annie Banks

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S RUGBY LEAGUE



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Message from the Australian Sports Commission

Australia, for its small population and remoteness of location, continues to confound the world with its achievements on the international sporting stage. This position has been reached by the development of a comprehensive and effective national sport system that encourages sport and physical activity for all Australians and creates opportunities to enable those who are talented and motivated to reach their potential. This system has evolved with the strong support of the Australian Government, State/Territory and local governments, the private sector and sporting organisations at all levels.

At the national level primary responsibility for developing and directing sport lies with national sporting organisations. On behalf of the Australian Government, the Australian Sports Commission plays central leadership, co-ordination, funding and advocacy roles in the operation of the Australian sport system, largely through the national sporting organisations. Indeed the Australian Government, through the Commission, is the major investor in Australian sport.

In 2007-08 the Australian Government, through the Commission, provided the Australian Rugby League with funding of \$476,000 for the development of the sport and its continued enhancement at the grass-root and elite levels, including the Australian Institute of Sport Rugby League program. A further \$2 million was provided to Rugby League to support the Centenary and World Cup Volunteer program, Pacific Island region team, Australian Indigenous showcase match, and Festival of World Cups. Congratulations is extended to the Australian Rugby League for instigating its Centenary Plaques program, to date over 177 grounds, stadiums, leagues clubs and club foundation sites have been recognised for their part in Rugby League's proud 100 year history.

The Australian Sports Commission recognises that the Australian Rugby League has continued to work to build its membership base and has provided significant financial support to its Member Associations and introduced a number of very worthwhile programs such as Sports CONNECT (Creating Opportunities Nationally through Networks in Education, Classification and Training), with the aim to ensure Rugby League athletes with a disability have opportunities to participate in sporting activities at the level of their choice.

On behalf of the Commission, I look forward to working with the Australian Rugby League in future for the betterment of Australian sport.



Brent Espeland

ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION



Players embrace following 1963 Grand Final between St. George and Western Suburbs. Newspix.



Combined Services Rugby League Report

Early 2007, Combined Australian Services Rugby League was approached by the Australian Rugby League to host the inaugural Defence World Cup to be run at the same time as the World Cup in Australia.

CASRL took up this challenge and have been full steam ahead to gain approvals from Combined Defence Forces and inviting various Nations to Australia to participate. The CDF and the minister signed off on this document in June 2008. There will be six nations competing: Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Russia, Papua New Guinea and Cook Islands.

CASRL will conduct its selection trials in Canberra prior to our Defence World Cup side being selected and then play a game in Townsville as well as in Sydney. The Patron for CASRL is hoping to generate massive support and supporters for this event.

The Defence World Cup games will be played as curtain raisers to the main draw games. The Defence World Cup final will be played at the Sydney Football Stadium on November 16 as the curtain raiser to the World Cup semi final.

CASRL did not compete this year at the Affiliated States Carnival as the Patron felt that it would be more beneficial for us to concentrate on getting personnel released for the longer period of the DWC and to win it.

CASRL will participate in the Affiliated States Carnival in 2009.

We have had a lot of interest from players who have passed their prime, who want to mix it with the young guns by getting involved with the ARL Masters Tournament which is held on the Gold Coast each year. CASRL are looking into this to ascertain the viability.

There has been strong support from the Affiliated States organisers to enter an Australian Defence Force women's team into the Tag concept that they have. It is very strong in Western Australia yet not so in other states as they play full contact Rugby League.

CASRL again played the curtain raiser to this years trans-Tasman Test, only this year it was played on May 9, the date 100 years ago that the first Test between Australia and New Zealand was played.

Army played Navy in a very entertaining match with Army prevailing and winning by two points. This was a great showcase for what was to come in November 2008. It will be an extremely busy two months with a lot of testing times to get players and officials released for such a long period. However we all feel that this will be tremendous for the ADF as well as all players and officials that will be involved.

CASRL is looking forward to a successful selection carnival in Canberra and the World Cup in Sydney. A separate report will be written on the World Cup at the conclusion of this historic event for inclusion in the 2009 ARL Annual Report.

It is hoped that with the Defence World Cup taking place CASRL will gain favourable support to conduct this special event.

Grahame Cavanough

CASRL PRESIDENT



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The Centenary year of Rugby League has proven to be one which will remain etched in the history of the Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League as a "stand-out" year.

The first of many highlights was the announcement of the Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League - Centenary Team at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney on September 18. The event was a media extravaganza supported by the Centenary of Rugby League Committee represented by Ms Yvonne Christensen, the ARL Media Manager Doug MacDougall, ARL Development and Classic Sportswear.

The team was announced by Channel Nine Rugby League identity, Tim Gilbert. Selected team members were presented with a commemorative Centenary Jersey and an engraved glass with the names of all team members. Players in attendance were interviewed by Tim after they had received their presentations from Geoff Carr, the Chief Executive of the ARL and myself. Tim Auremi and Albert Kelly from this year's Australian Schoolboys team attended this event and accepted the awards on behalf of absent nominees and were interviewed by the media.

All selected players listed below had to have represented the Australian Schoolboys and the Australian Kangaroos. Voting concluded mid-July. The Centenary Team is as in the following table:

At this event Roy Masters, Michael Bueftner and Bruce Wallace addressed the gathering of Rugby League dignitaries prior to the announcement of the team. This event received the most extensive media coverage the Australian Schoolboys Rugby League has ever received which is testament to the quality of what the ASSRLC produces in terms of elite players. Every television station was represented and radio and newspaper coverage was comprehensive as the concept stimulated enormous interest throughout the Rugby League community.

Also announced at this occasion was the 10-year sponsorship agreement with Classic Sportswear, covering the playing gear of the Australian Schoolboys and the Affiliated States Teams. The ASSRL are grateful to Tony Magnus, the Managing Director of Classic Sportswear for the continued support of his progressive company.

The next highlight was the performance of our outstanding Australian Schoolboys Team this year. This team proved to be very strong defeating the England Academy in two Tests and the French Juniors in their one off Test.

AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS RUGBY LEAGUE CENTENARY TEAM 2008

Australian Secondary Schools Team Player Representative Records

No 1	Tim Brasher	Grantham High	NSWCHS	1988 (To NZ)
No 2	Andrew Ettingshausen	De La Salle Cronulla	NSWCCC	1982 (NZ); 1983 (merit)
No 3	Mark Gasnier	Peakhurst High	NSWCHS	1998 (NZ); 1999 (France/England/Ireland)
No 4	Justin Hodges	Cairns State High	QSSRL	1998 (NZ); 1999 (France/England/Ireland)
No 5	Greg Inglis	Wavell State High	QSSRL	2004 (v Barla, France and England Academy in Aust)
No 6	Brad Fittler	McCarthy Senior High	NSWCCC	1988 (NZ); 1989 (v Barla in Aust)
No 7	Greg Alexander	Patrician Brothers Fairfield	NSWCCC	1983 (merit)
No 8	Craig Young	Corrimal High	NSWCHS	1972 (England)
No 9	Danny Buderus	St Francis Xavier Newcastle	NSWCCC	1995 (England/France)
No 10	Les Boyd	Nyngan High	NSWCHS	1972 (England)
No 11	Steve Menzies	Narrabeen High	NSWCHS	1992 (NZ)
No 12	Paul Sironen	Holy Cross Ryde	NSWCCC	1983 (merit)
No 13	Bradley Clyde	Hawker College	ACT	1986 (England); 1987 (merit)
No 14	Tonie Carroll	Beenleigh State High	QSSRL	1993 (v Barla in Aust)
No 15	Ian Schubert	Wauchope High	NSWCHS	1972 (England)
No 16	Matthew Gidley	Glendale Technology High	NSWCHS	1995 (England/France)
No 17	Brent Tate	Clontarf Beach State High	QSSRL	1999 (France/England/Ireland)



Australian Schoolboys Rugby League Report

Results

First Test

Australian Schoolboys 68 def England Academy 6

Dairy Farmers Stadium, Townsville.

Second Test

Australian Schoolboys 17 defeated England Academy 10

Wynnum-Manly, Brisbane

Third Test

Australian Schoolboys 40 def French Juniors 6

Wynnum-Manly, Brisbane

This team set itself high standards both on and off the field, receiving accolades for their demeanor from accommodation venues, Clubs and their opposition. They were a credit to the Australian Schoolboys and the team officials who were in their charge.

The success of this year's Corporate Sports Australia International Series was a product of the great support that the ASSRLC received from the senior Rugby League family. The first Test in Townsville was hosted by NRL Club the North Queensland Cowboys. The hospitality awarded to our team and the English, by the Cowboys, was incredible. We extend our appreciation to Mr Laurence Lancini, the Chairman and the Board of the Cowboys, Mr Peter Parr, Chief Executive and Mr Peter Jones, Coaching and Development Manager for their support and commitment of this wonderful Test match at Dairy Farmers Stadium.

The next two Tests in the Corporate Sports Australia International Series were hosted by the 'home of Australian Schoolboy Rugby League' - Wynnum-Manly Rugby League Club. Once again our greatest supporters went all-out to support the Australian Schoolboys and both of our international visitors. To Mr Arthur Lovell, Chairman and the supportive Board of Directors, Mr Stan Plath and their ever-energetic Development Officer, Roy Wyatt, we once again extend our sincerest appreciation.

In order to select the above-mentioned team there was another highlight for the year in the outstanding 18 Years Australian Championships, hosted by the Northern Territory Rugby League.

The fireworks display at the conclusion of this event was a feature as were the 'world's biggest oysters' at the Manager's dinner. The quality of the selected team was only matched by the quality of the performance of the teams which participated. This event was a credit to Gary Launt, the Operations Manager of the NTRL and their Chairman, Mr Mick Palmer, and their incredible administrative support team. We are also grateful to the

NTRL for hosting an international match between the French Juniors and the NT 18 Years State team. Another great effort!

Pool A Champions

NSWCHS

Pool B Champions

Northern Territory



The 15 Years Australian Championships was another highlight held at Wynnum-Manly and hosted by Queensland SSRL. As expected the quality of this event was second to none with the incredible support of this great club. To Phil Hall, Secretary QSSRL, Dave Seeley and the committee and the Wynnum-Manly family, once again we say thanks for your professional organisation and unerring support and loyalty.

Pool A Champions

Queensland SSRL

Pool B Champions

Victoria

Danny Buderus received a Testimonial dinner at the Wests Newcastle Rugby League Club in September. As one of our outstanding Patrons, we congratulate Danny on his wonderful career. A career with so many highlights; Club Captain, State of Origin Captain, Captain of the Australian Kangaroos and where he attributes the beginning, as a member of the 1995 Australian Schoolboys Team which toured France and England.

He is a great role model, a great person and a genuine supporter of Australian Schoolboys Rugby League. We are proud of our association with Danny Buderus.

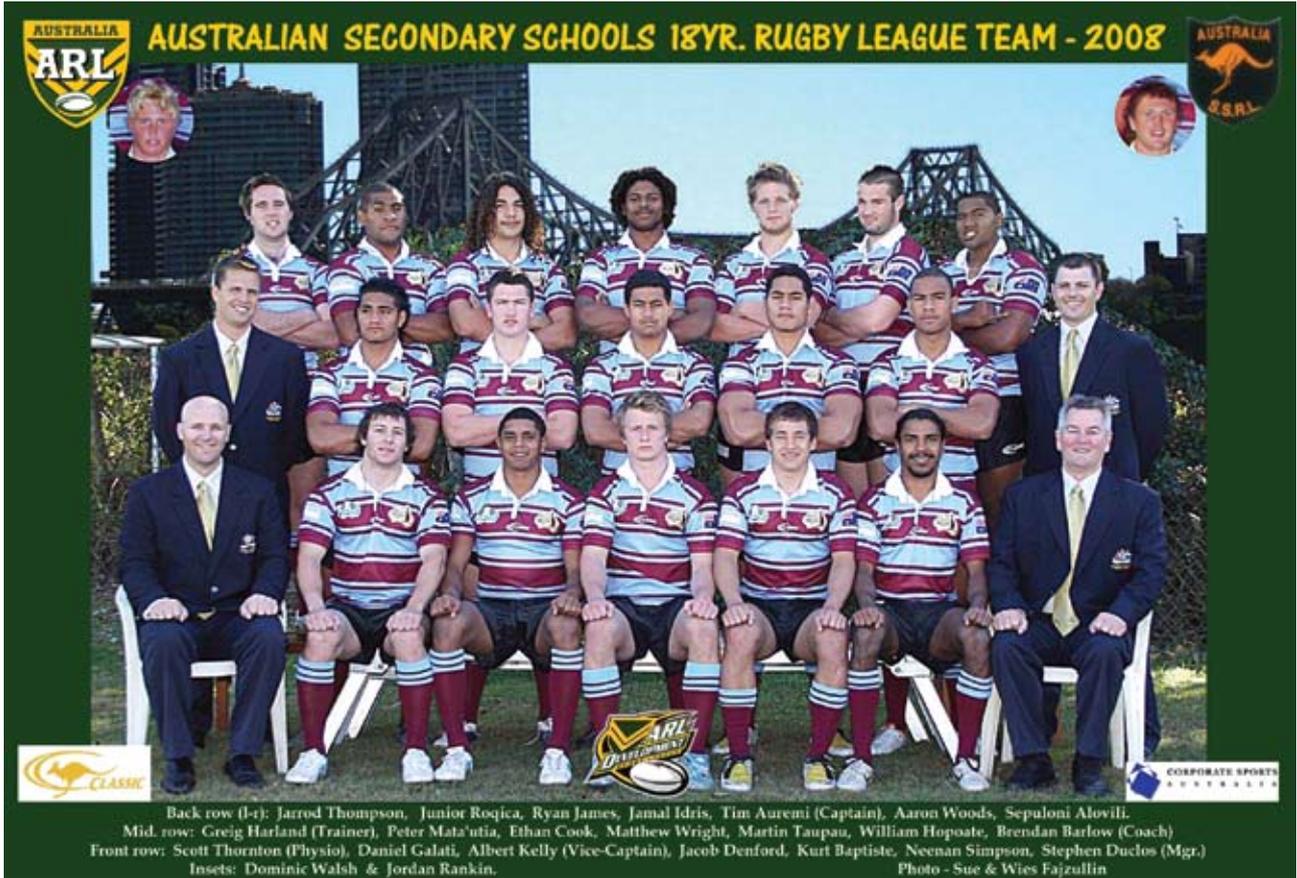
We also congratulate another Patron of the ASSRLC, Mr Michael Buettner on the success of his management of this year's inaugural Toyota Cup. Also we thank Michael for his efforts in always attending our national championships and Test matches and contributing to these occasions by actively participating in presentations and official functions, representing the NRL.

In November the ASSRLC will be conducting a biennial conference where we will be evaluating the championship structures which were implemented in 2007-08. Also we

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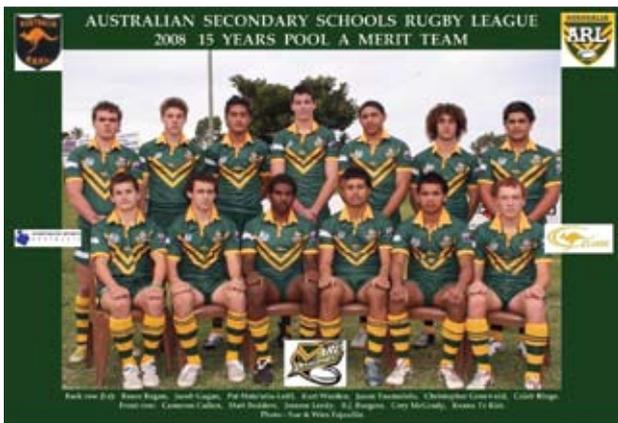
Back row (l-r): Jarrod Thompson, Junior Roqica, Ryan James, Jamal Idris, Tim Aureani (Captain), Aaron Woods, Sepuloni Alovili.
 Mid. row: Greig Harland (Trainer), Peter Mata'utia, Eihan Cook, Matthew Wright, Martin Taupau, William Hopoate, Brendan Barlow (Coach)
 Front row: Scott Thornton (Physio), Daniel Galati, Albert Kelly (Vice-Captain), Jacob Denford, Kurt Baptiste, Neenan Simpson, Stephen Duclos (Mgr.)
 Insets: Dominic Walsh & Jordan Rankin. Photo - Sue & Wies Fajzullin

will be discussing the issue of elite player burn out. This is a topic which needs some empirical research for sound decisions to be made regarding the impacts on our elite young players. Also the recent changes to the structure of the ARL elite competitions will be discussed. This conference will be valuable for setting future directions of the Council.

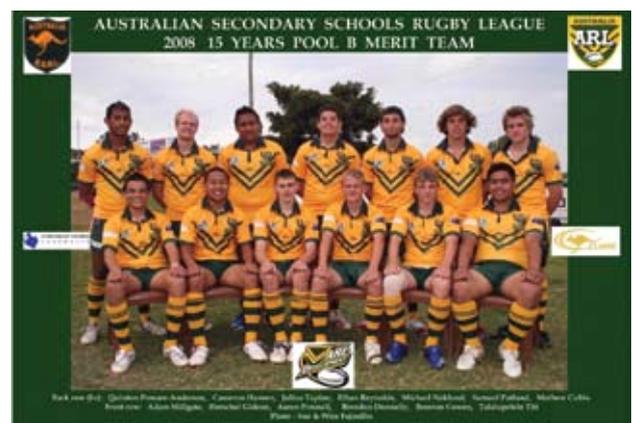
Another highlight this year will be the bestowing of Life Membership of the ASSRLC to Val Murphy. Val has been the long term ambassador of Rugby League in Western Australia. As the Principal of Aranmore Catholic High School he conducted Rugby League Programs and has been a delegate to the ASSRLC for many years. His efforts not only in WA, have fostered the improvement of our game in the Affiliated States. No one has done more to

promote the game of Rugby League in the States where Rugby League is a minority sport. Val is a most deserved recipient of Life Membership.

The ASSRLC is fortunate to have a few loyal, long term sponsors and we wish to pass on the due recognition they deserve. Mr Paul Nash, Director, Corporate Sports Australia, naming rights sponsor of the International Series, many thanks for your generous, ongoing support, enabling us to minimise the costs for the students representing the ASSRLC. Appreciation is also extended to Mr Tony Magnus, Managing Director, Classic Sportswear for the support of his company for over a decade and for our new long term agreement to 2018. Also, for Tony's personal support and encouragement, to investigate and present an Australian Schoolboys Centenary Team.



Back row (l-r): Brent Egan, Josh Logan, Pat MacIntyre, Scott Freeman, Christopher Lister-Hill, Colin King.
 Front row: Cameron Collier, Matt Skelton, James Leary, RJ Ferguson, Clay McInally, Kevin To Bin.
 Photo: Sue & Wies Fajzullin



Back row (l-r): Graham Brown, Andrew, Cameron Harvey, John Taylor, Ryan Reynolds, Michael Rickford, Samuel Palford, Matthew Collins.
 Front row: Adam Milligan, Fletcher Collins, Aaron Powell, Brandon Duncanson, Benjamin Conroy, Takahiroshi Ito.
 Photo: Sue & Wies Fajzullin



Australian Schoolboys Rugby League Report

Appreciation is also extended to the Australian Training Company and Mr Jim Whiteside, Director, for his company's long term and continued support of the 18 Years, Player of the final award.

The ASSRL programs are a part of the ARL system and we are most fortunate to have the support of the ARL Board and their Chairman, Mr Colin Love and the Chief Executive, Mr Geoff Carr. The programs of the ASSRL are the 'flagships' of elite junior Rugby League development and we are grateful that Geoff avails himself to all of our major events where possible. Mr Bill Palmer, Manager ARL Development, Mr Steve Palin, Operations Manager, ARLD are integral supporters of the ASSRL. We are grateful for their contributions to championships and to this year's Centenary Team event.

Two very special people who are integral to the operation of the ASSRLC are Mr John Coates, Chief Operating Officer of the ARL and Life Member of the ASSRLC and, Mr Paul Walker, Communications Manager, ARL Development. These two gentlemen foster the professional development of the Executive of the ASSRLC as well as making invaluable contributions to Australian Championships, Conferences, Publicity and General Meetings - assisting in the logistics of keeping the ASSRL at the forefront of elite junior development.

Gratitude is also extended to Mr Ken Rogers, President, School Sport Australia for his attendance and participation in the official events of the ASSRLC.

This year's international program required the support of a number of particular groups. Firstly appreciation is extended to Mr Martin Meredith, Coaching and Development Manager, NSWRL Academy and Mr Tas

Baitieri, Operations Manager, Rugby League World Cup, for their invaluable contribution to the French Juniors tour of Australia. Also to NSWCHS, Mr David Whittock and Mr Kevin Stacey, for their coordination of the international match between the French Juniors and the NSWCHS Development Squad.

This match was held at the St Mary's Club and we thank Mr Warren Smith, President and the Board of Directors of the Club for their hosting of this event.

Next year's program includes the 18 Years Australian Championships in Newcastle hosted by the NSW Combined Independent Schools (July 12-17). The 15 Years Championship hosting venue will be determined at the November meeting of the ASSRLC but the Championships will occur - (June 28 - July 3).

At this stage the international program will include a tour of Australia by the Great Britain Community Lions and either New Zealand or Papua-New Guinea. This tour will occur early to mid-August 2009. Great Britain are to enter Australia via the Affiliated States and New Zealand or PNG to tour NSW and/or Queensland, with venues to be confirmed.

The program this year in the Centenary of Rugby League has been very busy and a great deal of support has been afforded to the ASSRL by many and varied groups whose input has been invaluable to what has been a stand out year for the ASSRLC Inc. To anyone who contributed in any way to this year's Centenary program we are eternally grateful.

Bruce Wallace

ASSRL PRESIDENT



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As in previous years, the Australian Institute of Sport / Australian Rugby League Program has had four camps during the 2008 season. The first of these camps was in October 2007, followed by others in January, April and October 2008.

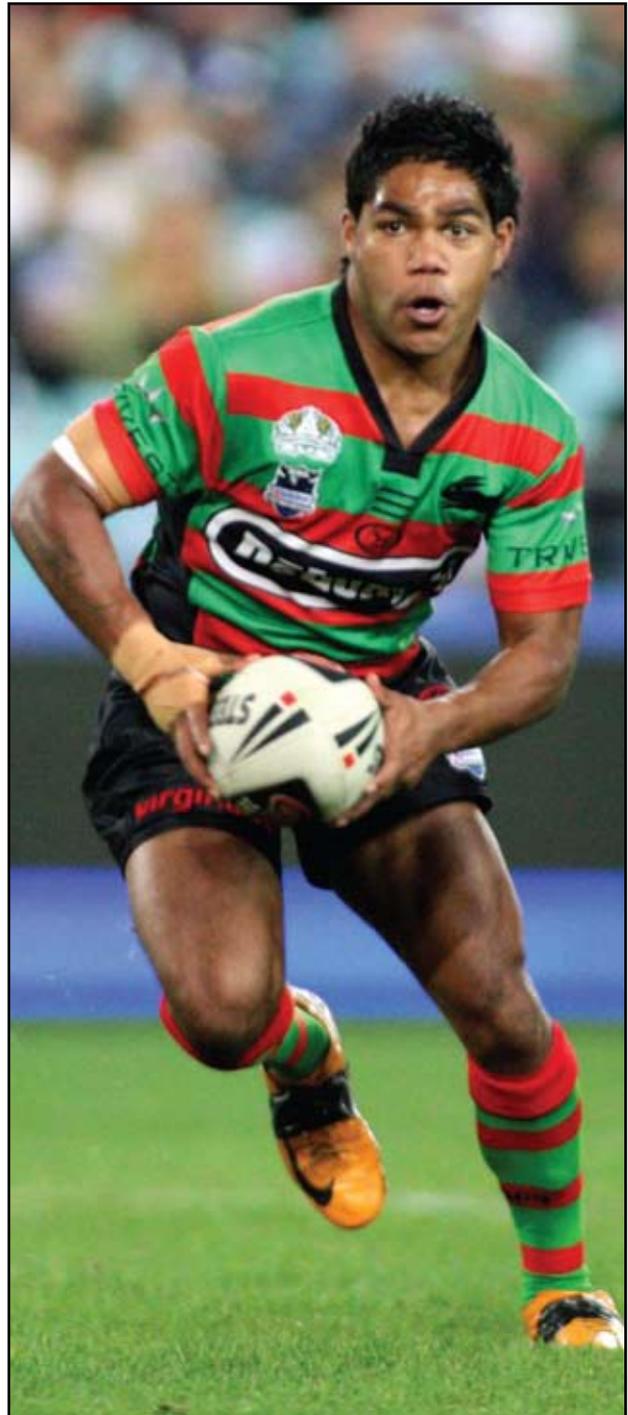
Again in the January camp we played against a Canberra Under-18 squad, as well as a St George-Illawarra Under-18 squad. While the result is of little importance a good win was had over the Canberra side in wet conditions. Unlike last year we also had a win over the St George-Illawarra squad, but this had more to do with the relatively poorer quality of their squad compared to previous years than the strength of our own squad.

For 2008, scholarships were offered to and accepted by the following players:

Dallas Anderson	Brisbane
Kurt Bapiste	Brisbane
Mitchell Barnes	Townsville
Jared Brodrick	Orange
Rory Brien	Cowra
Dale Copley	Brisbane
Aaron Fairweather	Yeppoon
Dale Finicune	Tathra
Jake Hawkins	Tamworth
Dylan Hill	Dubbo
Brett Jarrett	Tamworth
Ryan James	Bilambil Hts
Charlie Jones	Brisbane
Jack Littlejohn	Wagga Wagga
Tom Merritt	Byron Bay
Ethan Lowe	Goondiwindi
Pat O'Hanlon	Mackay
Justin O'Neil	Hughenden
Luke Page	Brisbane
Max Ray	Dubbo
Jordan Rankin	Gold Coast
Gary Riccardi	Brisbane
Josh Rose	Toowoomba
Scott Rosser	Orange
Sam Saville	Kyogle
Jake Seaton	Coolum

With the Queensland Schoolboys side doing relatively poorly at the Schoolboy championship the AIS Rugby League Program had a fewer number of Australian Schoolboy representatives than in previous years. Only three Under-17 Queensland players (Ryan James, Kurt Baptiste and Jordan Rankin) made the Australian Schoolboys side. They were all AIS Rugby League Scholarship holders.

On the other hand we had our largest contingent of NRL debutants in this year with the following former AIS Rugby League Scholarship holders making their NRL debut in 2008:



Andrew McCullough	Broncos
Chris Sandow	Souths
Obi Geia	Cowboys
Luke Capewell	Souths
Aiden Tolman	Storm
Sammy Joe	Storm
Joel Thompson	Raiders
Josh Bateman	Penrith
Greg Byrnes	Cowboys
Jake Friend	Broncos
Ben Lowe	Souths
Jordan Rankin	Titans



Australian Institute of Sport Report

Former AIS Scholarship holders also figured prominently in the Toyota Cup Under-20s competition with well over thirty of them playing in this competition. Eight of them played in the Toyota Cup Grand Final.

Last year I was able to acknowledge the stunning achievements of former AIS/ARL scholarship holder Israel Folau, who became the youngest Kangaroos Test player in history.

This year mention must go to Jordan Rankin, also an AIS Rugby League Scholarship holder, who became the youngest NRL player and the youngest player to play in what was a Sydney first-grade competition in over 70 years.

The achievements of players such as Jordan and Israel is a testimony to the quality of the players that come into the AIS Rugby League Program and it exciting to have had a hand in their development.

The Program's structure will remain largely the same in 2009 as it was this year, with the onus being on the players to prove that they have the work ethic and willingness to commit to the requirements of the Program, rather than scholarship players which are talented but not suitable for the Program. A batch of more than 50 players will again be recruited to the October camp, where they will be set programs to follow in the lead-up to re-testing in the January camp, before decisions are made regarding whom to scholarship for 2008.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Australian Sports Commission for its ongoing support of the AIS Rugby League program. The Program continues to prove its benefit to young, talented players each year with many players going on to greater success in the game. The partnership with the AIS has proven invaluable to the success of our program and we look forward to working together again in 2008.

Brian Johnson

HEAD COACH

AIS RUGBY LEAGUE PROGRAM



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Long considered by fans as the highlight of the season, anticipation for the 2008 Harvey Norman State of Origin series took on new proportions this year as the last true interstate series in professional football prepared to celebrate 100 years of cross-border rivalry.

In one corner was the NSW Wizard Blues, boosted by a promising end to their 2007 series loss and welcoming to their corner arguably the current game's most astute and successful coach in Craig Bellamy.

Standing opposite the Blues was a truly star-studded XXXX Queensland Maroons side, ready to gun for their third consecutive series win - and first hat-trick of series wins since 1989 - under the guidance of newly crowned Team of the Century centre Mal Meninga.

Making this year's series all the more important was of course the celebration of 100 years of interstate rivalry, the last 28 under the Origin format.

NSW and Queensland honoured the occasion by wearing 1908 heritage jerseys at the first game at ANZ Stadium on May 21, with the Blues also presenting their Team of the Century on the night.

The Queensland Team of the Century was announced at a special function on Tuesday, June 10 and was part of the pre-game build up before Origin II at Suncorp Stadium on June 11.

The first Rugby League encounter between New South Wales and Queensland was at Sydney's RAS Showground on July 11, 1908 with the Blues running out 43-0 winners. The Queenslanders, still some months off starting their own competition, had learnt one thing from the outset - the desire for revenge.

Only the war years would interrupt the annual clashes from that moment on and no amount of NSW victories could dampen Queensland's desire to get even.

And so when the two sworn enemies took to the field this year it was no surprise fans were treated to an explosive match which set the scene for a memorable series.

Craig Bellamy's men were simply outstanding in Origin I at ANZ Stadium, putting on a defensive display Queensland and Australian hooker Cameron Smith described as the best he'd seen from a Blues side.

The Blues were led by outstanding debuts from halfback Peter Wallace, winger Anthony Quinn, who scored two tries, and forward Anthony Laffranchi, while centre Mark Gasnier turned on a stellar performance to completely outpoint his opposite Greg Inglis.

The Blues won the match 18-10 but it was Inglis who simply stole the show in the second game at Suncorp Stadium, going one up on Gasnier in a stunning performance.

A capacity crowd of 52,416 saw the Melbourne star add another timeless highlight to the Origin show-reel when he fended off Mark Gasnier and NSW debutant Steve Turner in quick succession before slipping a pass to Queensland winger Darius Boyd, who scored the first of his two tries in a memorable debut.

Led by Johnathan Thurston, the Maroons went on to win 30-nil in emphatic fashion, with the loss handing the Blues the unenviable title of just the second NSW side after the 1995 outfit to be shut-out in an Origin contest.

Thurston was at it again in the final game at ANZ Stadium, leading a tenacious performance from the Queenslanders as they went about cementing themselves as one of the great Origin teams with a 16-10 win in front of 78,751 fans.

Their first three-peat since the 1987-89 sides, the win set Queensland on a path to an unprecedented period of Origin dominance, with a great deal of the side still early on in their playing careers.

For the Blues, it was the end of an era with inspirational skipper Danny Buderus playing his final representative match. Buderus was again the Blues' best throughout the series, tackling himself to a standstill in all three matches.

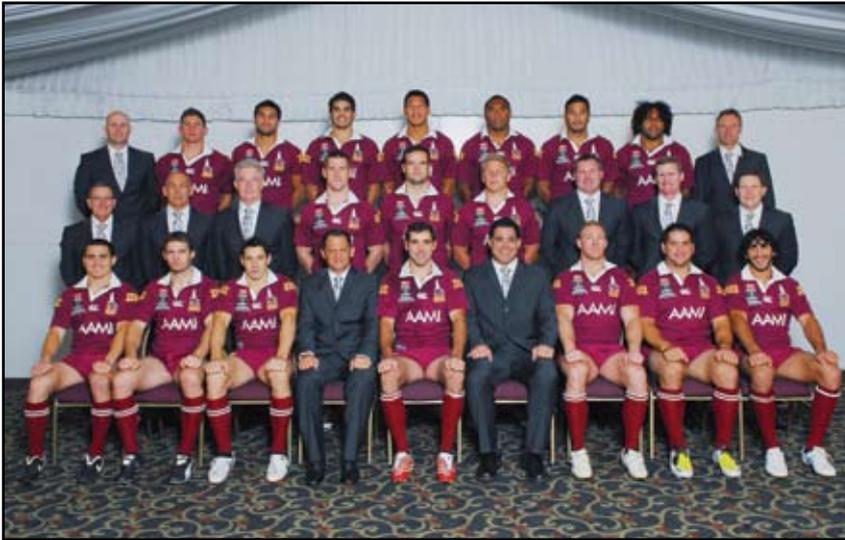
Both Origin teams, their staff and officials deserve congratulations for their efforts during the 2008 Harvey Norman State of Origin series, as do our committed group of corporate partners in Harvey Norman, Castlemaine Perkins, Wizard Finance, Carlton United Breweries, Canterbury Clothing and AAMI. We thank each of them for their ongoing support of Rugby League.

NEW SOUTH WALES – TEAM OF THE CENTURY

1. Clive CHURCHILL
2. Ken IRVINE
3. Reg GASNIER
4. Graeme LANGLANDS
5. Dally MESSENGER
6. Bob FULTON
7. Andrew JOHNS
8. Frank BURGE
9. Sandy PEARCE
10. Glenn LAZARUS
11. Ron COOTE
12. Norm PROVAN
13. John RAPER
14. Wally PRIGG
15. Dave BROWN
16. Steve ROGERS
17. Roy BULL

QUEENSLAND – TEAM OF THE CENTURY

1. Darren LOCKYER
 2. Cecil AYNSLEY
 3. Tom GORMAN
 4. Mal MENINGA
 5. Denis FLANNERY
 6. Wally LEWIS (c)
 7. Allan LANGER
 8. Mick MADSEN
 9. Noel KELLY
 10. Duncan HALL
 11. Brian DAVIES
 12. Arthur BEETSON
 13. Bob LINDNER
 14. Jim CRAIG
 15. Duncan THOMPSON
 16. Gene MILES
 17. Herb STEINOHRT
- Coach: Wayne BENNETT



QLD XXXX Maroons Origin I

Back Row (L to R): Scott Thornton (Physiotherapist), Jacob Lillyman, Karmichael Hunt, Greg Inglis, Israel Folau, Petero Civoniceva, Justin Hodges, Sam Thaiday, Neil Henry (Skills Coach).

Middle Row (L to R): Tony Spencer (Trainer), Billy Johnstone (Conditioner), Roy Saunders (Doctor), Brent Tate, Nate Myles, Ben Hannant, Bob Lindner (Assistant Manager/Media), Steve Hooper (Trainer), Troy Thomson (Trainer).

Front Row (L to R): PJ Marsh, Dallas Johnson, Billy Slater, Steve Walters (Manager), Cameron Smith (Captain), Mal Meninga (Coach), Michael Crocker, Carl Webb, Johnathan Thurston.
Absent: Kevin Walters (Trainer/Analyst).



QLD XXXX Maroons Origin II & III

Back Row (L to R): Scott Thornton (Physiotherapist), Brent Tate, Nate Myles, Petero Civoniceva, Israel Folau, Karmichael Hunt, Ashley Harrison, Roy Saunders (Doctor).

Middle Row (L to R): Tony Spencer (Trainer), Kevin Walters (Trainer/Analyst), Billy Johnstone (Conditioner), Billy Slater, Dallas Johnson, Ben Hannant, Scott Prince, Bob Lindner (Assistant Manager/Media), Steve Hooper (Trainer), Troy Thomson (Trainer).

Front Row (L to R): Darius Boyd, Greg Inglis, Michael Crocker, Steve Walters (Manager), Cameron Smith (Captain), Mal Meninga (Coach), Steve Price, Sam Thaiday, Johnathan Thurston.
Absent: Neil Henry (Skills Coach).



NSW Wizard Blues Origin I

Back Row (L to R): John Donehue (Assistant Coach), Craig Catterick (Trainer), Steve Roach (Assistant Manager), Craig Fitzgibbon, Ryan Hoffman, Will Badel (Video analyst), Willie Mason, Ben Cross, John Di Stefano (Performance analyst), Bert Lowrie (Manager), Dr Hugh Hazard (Team Doctor)

Middle Row (L to R): Tony Ayoub (Physiotherapist), Craig Young (Manager), Paul Gallen, Greg Bird, Mark Gasnier, Jarryd Hayne, Brett Stewart, Matt Cooper, Scott Campbell (Head Trainer), John Coates (Team Co-ordinator)

Front Row (L to R): Shane Flanagan (Assistant Coach), Peter Wallace, Anthony Laffranchi, Anthony Tupou, Craig Bellamy (Coach), Danny Buderus (Captain), Andrew Johns (Assistant Coach), Anthony Quinn, Brett White, Ben Hornby, Robbie Aubin (Trainer)



NSW Wizard Blues Origin II

Back Row (L to R): Craig Catterick (Trainer), Greg Bird, Anthony Tupou, Craig Fitzgibbon, Ryan Hoffman, Willie Mason, Steve Simpson, Anthony Laffranchi, Bert Lowrie (Manager)

Middle Row (L to R): Tony Ayoub (Physiotherapist), Dr Hugh Hazard (Team Doctor), Paul Gallen, Anthony Quinn, Kurt Gidley, Matt Cooper, Jarryd Hayne, Brett White, Scott Campbell (Head Trainer), Craig Young (Manager)

Front Row (L to R): John Coates (Team co-ordinator), Brett Stewart, Andrew Johns (Assistant Coach), Danny Buderus (Captain), Craig Bellamy (Coach), Peter Wallace, Shane Flanagan (Assistant Coach), Mark Gasnier, Robbie Aubin (Trainer)



NSW Wizard Blues Origin III

Back Row (L to R): Steve Roach (Assistant Manager), Matt Cooper, Craig Fitzgibbon, Ryan Hoffman, Willie Mason, Joel Managhan, Ben Cross, Anthony Laffranchi, Craig Catterick (Trainer)

Middle Row (L to R): Robbie Aubin (Trainer), Dr Hugh Hazard (Team Doctor), Bert Lowrie (Manager), Kurt Gidley, Anthony Quinn, Anthony Tupou, Jarryd Hayne, Brett White, Brett Stewart, Craig Young (Manager), Scott Campbell (Head Trainer)

Front Row (L to R): John Coates (Team Coordinator), Paul Gallen, Andrew Johns (Assistant Coach), Danny Buderus (Captain), Craig Bellamy (Coach), Braith Anasta, Shane Flanagan (Assistant Coach), Mitchell Pearce, Tony Ayoub (Physiotherapist)



Saluting the past - celebrating the present - inspiring the future