

# MEN OF LEAGUE

## FOUNDATION



CARING FOR THE  
MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY

# ACES



## LICENSED UNDER COVER DRIVING RANGE BAR • FUNCTIONS

**Aces Sporting Club** • Springvale Rd & Hutton Rd, Keysborough  
Ph. 9701 5000 • [acessportingclub.com.au](http://acessportingclub.com.au) • [/AcesSportingClub](https://www.facebook.com/AcesSportingClub)



— PRESENT THIS FLYER —  
IN THE DRIVING RANGE FOR  
**200 BALLS FOR \$10**

Can not be used in conjunction with any other offer. Terms and Conditions Apply. Expires 30 June 2020

# IN THIS EDITION

## OUR COVER

Tim Salway (see story pages 10-11) and Eels skipper Clint Gutterson. Photo courtesy NRL media.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

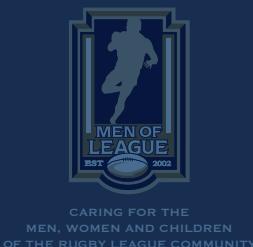
- 5 Pati Tuugamusu
- 8 Ron Coote loses home
- 10 Tim Salway and Eels Feels
- 13 Allen Wheatley
- 14 Mal Meninga boardroom lunch
- 16 George Doniger
- 19 Wests Tigers sign up
- 20 Eels legends join Meals from the Heart
- 22 Barry Buchanan
- 24 1980 BRL grand final relived
- 26 Bringing Christmas cheer
- 28 Q/A with chairman Stephen Martin
- 34 Philippa Wade and her Storm Sons
- 36 Broncos-Cowboys lunch in Cairns
- 38 Macca reunites with old school mate
- 39 Roosters ambassador Kyle Flanagan
- 40 From Twitter to Tweed
- 42 Eels inspire Ashton Marsh
- 44 Steve Ghosn
- 45 Gold Coast Internationals Dinner

## THE REGULARS

- 32 Around the Grounds
- 46 Helping Hand
- 48 NRL wellbeing
- 50 Committee news
- 59 Tributes

## THE MAGAZINE

**Editor:** Neil Cadigan  
(magazine@menofleague.com)  
**Design:** Daily Press  
Ph: (02) 9007 7500 | www.dailypress.com.au



CARING FOR THE  
MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY

## MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION DIRECTORY

### NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Chairman:

Professor The Honourable  
Stephen Martin

**Deputy Chair:** Helen Wood Grant

#### Patron:

The Hon. John Fahey

#### Honorary President:

Ron Coote

#### Directors:

Brad Howell  
Alan Sullivan QC  
Geoff Thoroughgood OAM  
Ian Gatenby



## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

### PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE STEPHEN MARTIN

in. Your Foundation is determined to ensure those who need help can get it but we may have to reduce allocations to ensure the many get something.

These challenging times have required your board to meet via teleconference on a weekly basis. With the assistance of our dedicated staff we are looking at various scenarios that will allow us to cross the bridge that the Prime Minister refers to when the pandemic subsides. I fear however the journey will be a long and tortuous one, with hard decisions having to be made. For example by necessity our staff are all working from home. This clearly not ideal when so much of our work depends on personal contact.

I would simply say to you, our amazing members, that every option will continue to be explored so your Foundation's mandate continues to be fulfilled. Your board thanks you for your support, and as I said last time hope that might extend to finding new members and by encouraging your friends and colleagues to support our fundraising initiatives when we are in a position to commence these activities.

In these very challenging times and on behalf of your Foundation's board, I would like to thank the ARLC/NRL, our sponsors for their past support. Each has their own challenges. Like them we will seek the best possible strategy to meet our fundamental obligations.

**Stay safe, healthy and committed.**

### STAFF

#### Chief Executive Officer

Stephen Lowndes  
stephen.lowndes@menofleague.com

#### National Manager Membership and Marketing

Todd O'Kelly  
todd.okelly@menofleague.com

#### National Manager Wellbeing

Jessica Macartney  
jessica.macartney@menofleague.com

#### Wellbeing Lead

Roxanne Moates  
roxanne.moates@menofleague.com

#### Financial Controller

Kevin Moore  
kevin.moore@menofleague.com

#### Marketing and Membership Executive

Joe Bokeyar  
joe.bokeyar@menofleague.com

#### Membership and Database Executive

James Rayment  
james.rayment@menofleague.com

#### NSW State Manager

Bruce Walker  
bruce.walker@menofleague.com

#### QLD State Manager

Andrew Blucher  
andrew.blucher@menofleague.com

#### QLD Administration

Belinda Perry  
belinda.perry@menofleague.com

#### National Events Manager

Joanne Baxter

#### Volunteer Development & Administration Officer

Paula Feagaiga

# YOUR MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION LOCAL CONTACTS

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### Canberra Monaro

**President:** Noel Bissett 0407 597 533  
**Secretary:** Steven Troth 0407 182 410

### Central Coast

**President:** Eddy Johnson  
**Secretary:** Trevor Andrews 0412 694 857

### Central West

**President:** John Lasker 02 6852 2477  
**Secretary:** Norm Cook 0458 658 827

### Far South Coast

**President:** Colin Clarke 0412 764 740  
**Secretary:** Sheldon Wykes 0408 649 611

### Illawarra

**President:** Ian Bray 0423 5100 91  
**Secretary:** Gary Hart **0411 132 217**

### Macarthur/St Highlands

**President:** Andrew Hicks 0438 423 753  
**Secretary:** Sue Dawson 0407 927 907

### Mid North Coast

**President:** Brian Atherton 0427 523 818  
**Secretary:** Kevin Rayment 0427 533 644

### Mid West

**President:** Royce George 0408 635 011  
**Secretary:** Deborah Mina

### Newcastle Hunter

**President:** Garry Leo 0400 421 767  
**Secretary:** Peter Corcoran 0413 453 473

### North Coast

**President:** Peter Barrett 0414 227 068  
**Secretary:** Wendy Barrett 0419 894 432

### North West

**President:** Don Pascoe 0477 132 456  
**Secretary:** John Campbell 0408 421 065

### Northern Rivers

**President:** Phil Chesham 0402 305 498  
**Secretary:** Tony Cicchinelli 02 6621 3096

### Northern Sydney

**President:** Trevor Bailey 0414 843 600  
**Secretary:** Jim Phelan 0419 414 759

### Port Stephens

**President:** Chris Kelly 0418 652 857  
**Secretary:** Peter Arnold 0404 872 018

### Riverina

**President:** Kel Tilden 0457 319 700  
**Secretary:** Stephen Lawler 0413 573 537

### South Coast

**President:** Murry Conran 0407 318 343  
**Secretary:** David Blunden 0412 869 814

### Southern Monaro

**President:** John Bedingfield  
**Secretary:** Tom Herbert 0419 215 103

### Southern Sydney

**President:** Terry Hughes 0447 488 052  
**Secretary:** Bruce Thompson 0419 475 465

### Sydney Metro

**President:** Henry Morris OAM 0418 115 706  
**Secretary:** Seamus O'Connell 0411 126 060

### Tuggerah Lakes

**President:** Neville Glover 0403 011448  
**Secretary:** Matt Smith 0407 924 188

### Tweed District

**President:** Greg Hodge 0407 275 718  
**Secretary:** Tom Cassin 0407 457 661

### Upper Hunter

**President:** Paul Medd 0409 482 297  
**Secretary:** Erica Edwards 0429 485 121

### Western Region

**President:** Martin Cook 0414 393703  
**Secretary:** Ross Tighe 0428 289 324

### Western Sydney

**President:** Steve Winbank 0412 280 162  
**Secretary:** Garry O'Donnell 0418 699 257

## QLD & AFFILIATED STATES

### Brisbane

**President:** Ian Gatenby  
**Secretary:** Vance Rennie 07 3350 6436

### Bundaberg District

**President:** Greg Pershouse 0414 484 911

### Far North Queensland

**President:** John McAllister 0409 722 455  
**Secretary:** Megan McAllister

### Fraser Coast

**President:** Kev Embrey 0427 250 545  
**Secretary:** Jeffrey Bacchi 0419 729 857

### Gold Coast

**President:** Lloyd Evans 0439 979250  
**Secretary:** Ian Amos 0417 005 180

### Goondiwindi

**President:** Ernie Silcock 0429 724 699  
**Secretary:** Peter Sullivan 0427 653 679

### Gympie

**President:** Ross Groundwater 0408 825 466  
**Secretary:** Greg Pountney 0432 397 974

### Ipswich

**President:** Pat O'Doherty 0400 797 541  
**Secretary:** Anthony Breeze 0417 927 449

### Moreton

**President:** Peter Affleck 0414 445 630  
**Secretary:** Terry Webb 0400 715 715

### Roma

**President:** Owen Lingard 0400 496 507  
**Secretary:** Julie Walton 0437 721 527

### Sunshine Coast

**President:** Don Oxenham 0409 849 161  
**Secretary:** Barry Marsden 0402 654 231

### Toowoomba Region

**President:** Tony Coonan 0407 124 302  
**Secretary:** Jackie Stephson

### Townsville

**President:** Mark Williams 0409 894 427  
**Secretary:** Terry Feeney 0488 000 899

### Victoria

**President:** Peter Foreman 0439 533 171  
**Secretary:** Greg Warren 0412 368 078

### Western Australia

**President:** James Sullivan 0414 733 083  
**Secretary:** Justin Reid 0403 012 252

### QLD STATE COMMITTEE

**Chairman:** Andrew Blucher  
**Committee:** Ian Gatenby, Pete Psaltis, Tony Woodgate, Darryl Foster, Wally Fullerton Smith, Dan Whitmore, Peter McWhirter, Anthony Monaghan, Shane Boyes



CARING FOR THE  
MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY

# COVID-19 & MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION

**Due to the situation surrounding COVID-19 the Men of League Foundation wish to inform members of the following decisions:**

- After discussions with building management, our Sydney and Brisbane offices are temporarily closed. However all staff continue to work remotely and are contactable on their normal email and mobile phone numbers
- Memberships for 2020 are on sale. Recruiting members is the best way to show your support and it is easy to do so online at [menofleague.com/membership](http://menofleague.com/membership) or by calling (02) 8756 7190
- All Men of League events that were scheduled to be held in March, April or May have been postponed. We will be looking to reschedule these events to later in the year when it is safe to do so
- We have suspended in-person visits performed by wellbeing officers and staff. In-person visits will not resume until we consider it safe to do so. We will continue to provide wellbeing check-ins via phone/Facetime/Skype and email for the time being, to ensure those who are socially isolated feel connected
- For any wellbeing enquiries or referrals, please contact (02) 8756 7184 and our wellbeing team will be there to help

**Men of League Foundation team**

# WE HAVE PATI'S BACK

**WHEN PATI TUUGAMUSU DIDN'T RETURN HOME FROM WORK ONE NIGHT, HIS PARTNER FEARED THE WORST. HE'D BEEN INVOLVED IN A CAR ACCIDENT, HOWEVER THE SUPPORT OF THE FOUNDATION AND JOEL THOMPSON HAS HELPED THEIR FAMILY IN TRAUMATIC TIMES.**



Aggie and Pati with their loving family.



Pati with Manly Sea Eagles second rower Joel Thompson

## ANDREW JACKSON

It was late at night, later than Aggie Dean usually had to wait for her partner Pati Tuugamusu to return home from work.

He worked only a five-minute drive away and would call before leaving to check if he should get McDonalds on the way home – their little ones Amara and Osyris were waiting up for him.

But that night was different.

"As soon as we called around 11:20pm and he didn't answer, we knew straight away; I knew straight away," Aggie said.

A call eventually came through but it was not from Pati.

"I got a call from police saying my partner had been in a car accident," she said.

He had been driving home on the M5 motorway and noticed a woman had broken down on the side of the road and stopped to help her.

That is when he was hit by an oncoming car and left unconscious in the middle of the road.

Pati was taken to the intensive care unit at Liverpool Hospital and remained in a coma there for just over two weeks.



Aggie was there by his bedside every day. She did not eat or sleep for the first two, riddled by the uncertainty of what lay ahead.

"I'm crying inside but not really showing it," she said. "Our kids were really sad about it but strong as well because we're tight as a family so obviously they knew when the accident happened that we all needed to work together to get through it."

Her eldest daughter Briana took over the housework and making lunches while 14-year-old Jahziel also helped out.

Briana and Aggie play for the Wests Tigers in the Tarsha Gale and Harvey Norman NSW women's premiership teams and were the first mother-daughter duo to feature at the club.

But in the weeks after the accident they just wanted to be with Pati.

"With the accident, it's put our sporting life on hold," Aggie said. "The accident happened pretty much at the start of pre-season so I haven't been to training. Our eldest girl has only been to a few."

"Four weeks after the accident when he was more aware, Pati talked to her [Briana] and said he wanted her to go to training and motivate herself."

"He pretty much pushed her by saying 'do it for me'."

The Men of League Foundation were notified about Pati's situation via social media and began to provide social and emotional support for the family through regular visits to the hospital.

It was then that national wellbeing manager Jessica Macartney and Aggie planned a big surprise to spur on Pati's efforts in his rehabilitation.

Sea Eagles second-rower Joel Thompson was contacted by the Foundation and eagerly agreed to visit Pati during a specially organised training session at the hospital gym.

Drawing upon experiences from his own recent brain injury, Thompson says he jumped at the opportunity to join in on Pati's recovery.

"I only spent a couple of weeks in the brain ward at the Royal North Shore," he said. "I haven't been around these types of injuries much so it opened my eyes and I realised there are people out there with big journeys ahead of them."

"You can tell with 'Tofu' he is really focused and driven to push himself."

Pati remains a committed Tigers fan but Aggie says that, following Thompson's visit, a tough decision will have to be made any time they play the Sea Eagles.

"He is a big Tigers fan for sure but now meeting Joel, he said that he has a new reason to support Joel and the Sea Eagles as the visit has motivated him a lot," she said.

Pati plays in the Narellan Jets' third grade side and is also a trainer for the family's local club, Campbelltown Collegians.

"With him being their trainer, the boys in his team got a bit sad," Aggie said.

"They've all been in to see him with a few tears but seeing them has definitely pushed him to work harder."

Despite having only been in the brain unit for about two weeks, Pati was exceeding expectations with his physical recovery.

He holds the second-best record on the unit's 'sit to stand challenge' and 'six-minute walk test', despite having his shoulder in a sling since the accident.

Aggie jokes it is only a matter of time before he gets back into his weight-lifting regime.

"When he gets discharged he wants to go back to the gym because he's known as a lifter," she laughed.

The rugby league community has rallied around Pati with the Jets raising \$6000 to support the family while Collegians club president Jacqui Moran has made dinner for the kids and even shopped for them.

Thompson says throughout his career he has been continually amazed by rugby league's ability to bring people together in tough times.

"Rugby league is a special community," he said. "It is a community I am very proud to be a part of."

"When someone needs a hand, when someone needs help, we pull together."

While Aggie and Briana made history as the first mother and daughter to play at the Tigers, they have always dreamed of running out together one day on the same team.

They wanted to do it for each other.

Now, they want to do it for Pati.

"This is our other motivation with him experiencing this," Aggie paused, fighting back tears. "That's definitely our goal."



# WHEN LEGENDS BECAME MEN OF NEED

RON COOTE NEVER THOUGHT HE'D ONE DAY BE IN A DESPERATE SITUATION OF TRYING TO SAVE HIS HOME, WITH A FELLOW LEAGUE LEGEND AND THEIR WIVES HAVING TO SAVE THEIR LIVES. WHILE THE RECENT SOUTH COAST FIRES THRUST THAT UPON THEM, THEY FOUND THE TYPE OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT HE'D SPENT YEARS ENGENDERING WAS A BLESSING.

## NEIL CADIGAN

Ron Coote has spent much of the past two decades helping build a community that looks after its greater self. The co-founder and driving force of the Foundation and rugby league legend, who has put so much focus on ensuring those who hit hard times they may never have contemplated would have the comfort that someone had their back.

He'd never envisaged he would be on the receiving end.

During most of that period, Ron had slowly reduced his time in Sydney on Foundation or other business and allocated more of it to days at a what was initially a holiday house he'd built in 1988 at Lake Conjola but became the permanent family home.

Then, on the last day of 2019 as terrifying fires erratically raged around the town and hamlets of the NSW South Coast, one of those moments hit him – along with wife Robyn, fellow Rabbitohs legend Bob McCarthy and his wife Judy, who were house guests, and Ron and Robyn's daughter Natalie, whose family home next door was also lost, and her family.

Bob, Judy, Robyn and Natalie had to run to the lake and swim out to save their lives while cinders caught their hair. Ron fought to the end to save the home, pumping water out of their swimming pool and, with the help of his grandson Lachlan Brooks and son-in-law Darrien Hall, had put out the fires around the house as the nearby raging fireball passed by.

However, sparks must have infiltrated under the awnings and when they saw fire growing under the roof, they knew the home could not be saved.

For almost an hour Bob, Judy, Robyn and Natalie had been treading water in the lake and could not have continued much longer when neighbour Mark Halcro, who had played lower grades for the Rabbitohs in the early 1990s, raced to them in a jet ski after hearing Robyn and Natalie's cries for help. He relayed them one by one to safety in the smoke, probably saving their lives, in the daytime dark.

It was the first of many kind deeds the Cootes have encountered as they became recipients of the spirit they have worked to engender in the rugby league community ... never contemplating they would need assistance in return.

Too many residents of the South Coast and other parts of Australia have lost their lives or their homes in the summer fires for Ron Coote, AM, to want this story to suggest his struggles are graver than many others. He knows that, despite losing their home and possessions, including precious memorabilia, he and Robyn are a lot better off than many around the nation.

However, their plight serves as a reminder that no one is immune to unexpected hardship – nor being subject to the compassion and support that this nation, and Foundation, is built on.

"Of course it's been tough; having to demolish the idyllic home we loved after it burnt down and going through all the challenges of finding somewhere to live and starting again," he said. "But there are so many other people in the last few months who have been hit by hardships they never thought would affect them. We all have to be there for each other."

"Quite a lot of people have been killed down here; it's tragic. We were lucky; we survived."

"And the kindness and support from people straight afterwards was incredible. We had people who took us in and gave us somewhere to sleep, gave us clothes, picked us up in boats because the roads were closed and took us out for meals."

"Even the guy who had to knock our house down, Adam Wilson from Trim Plant Hire, has been just tremendous."

"We are very grateful to Anthony and Bec McKelvey for the help they gave us straight after the fire came through. We stayed in their house for three nights and they fed us and looked after us; really good people. We had no clothes and other people from around the lake gave us some to get by, and people came around to see how we were doing."

"Les Hobbs, the ex-Balmain player and conditioner, was a tremendous help and the grandchildren of my old Souths teammate John O'Neill came with the chainsaws and cleared the road, even though trees were still smouldering, to make it accessible to our property and others."

Many members who were made aware of the Cootes' plight have asked how they are getting on. The simple answer is – still rattled, but fine. They have moved into rented accommodation in Mollymook where they will live until their home is rebuilt on their lakeside property, incidentally by the same builder, Ron Mathie, who built the original home.

They are navigating the many steps of building a new future yet feel blessed for the value of their close-knit family and network of friends. Material possessions come second to that.

Ron can even see humour in some of the comments thrown around 'Macca' and the women swimming to safety. "They reckon they should enter the Olympics after learning how quickly they swam then stayed afloat in the lake," he laughed. "Seriously though, for 75 year olds to tread water for nearly an hour in the dark with smoke around them is pretty amazing."

That night, a call went out to gather whatever food was available and a group of 30 gathered at the McKelveys' by the lake and a community feast was served up. Clothes were provided for those who needed them, along with a hearty meal, a few relieving beers and a whole lot of goodwill which lifted the spirits of those who'd seen their lives changed but saved.

"People came from all around to make sure everyone was fed and ensure we all knew there were people there to help; it put a lot of heart into what was going on ... it just added a real good feeling to a very tough time," Ron said.

Several NRL clubs sent players and wellbeing teams out to the bush to give support. We tell of the Parramatta Eels visiting Tim Salway who lost his brother Patrick and father Robert at Cobargo on pages 10-11. Foundation committees in many parts of the country have been on hand to help those affected by fire and flood, on top of their normal wellbeing efforts. And who knows what will soon be before us soon as we pray for the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The lesson of 2020 is that hardship does not discriminate. No matter how healthy or wealthy, how young or old, whether in the city or the country – from the figurehead of this proud Foundation to the battling unknown member in the bush – kindness and concern goes a long way to lifting spirit and hope.

And we can't always predict when, or for whom, that will be needed.

# IN THE DARKEST HOUR

KATE CORNISH

There are almost no words available to describe the tragic and devastating fires that the recent summer has produced. There was such a feeling of devastation and helplessness felt by so many. Thousands of people were affected, wildlife lost in catastrophic numbers and homes and memories reduced to rubble and ash.

Even sadder, these fires claimed several lives as they swept through communities; mother-nature was relentless in her fury.

By his own testimony, former Parramatta Eels junior Tim Salway says he is lucky to have survived the fires that ravaged his home town and property in Cobargo, 500km south of Sydney. Sitting on the Princes Highway, between Narooma and Bega on the NSW south coast, there was no way the little country town could have been prepared for what was coming. In the saddest of tragedies, as the fire furiously swept through, Tim lost his father Robert, 63, and his brother Patrick, 29, on New Year's Eve.

A man usually stoic in his resolve, there is no doubt those devastating few weeks were some of the toughest Tim and his family had faced and he is not too proud to admit that, despite having broad shoulders, there have been tears shed on the tractor.

"A song came on the radio and it reminded me of my brother, Patrick," Tim said. "It is tough; it is tough on the whole family."

There were no new year celebrations for the Salway family. The fire had ripped through their properties so quickly and with such devastation that making it out alive was a miracle. They bravely fought fires all through the night until 11am the following day, knowing that Robert and Patrick had not been as lucky.

When news of the dairy farmers' tragedy surfaced, the Men of League Foundation, in conjunction with the Parramatta Eels, knew they had to do something to help, in any way that they could.

“

IT WAS LIKE A  
BOMB WENT  
OFF; IT WAS A  
TORNADO WITH  
FIRE ON IT ... IT  
WAS COMING  
AT US. I DON'T  
KNOW HOW I AM  
HERE TALKING  
TO YOU.

TIM SALWAY,  
COBARGO BUSHFIRE  
SURVIVOR.



*Tim with the supportive Far South Coast committee members.*

The Far South Coast local volunteer contingent covers a large area from Eden to Bega and Cobargo and there are times where members travel over 80km to attend meetings but travel is never an issue. Volunteers, Sheldon Wykes, Frank Davies, Peter Turner, John Cooper and Geoff Lucas were on hand to support Tim and his family, not only in the short term but with a commitment to support them into the future.

As so often happens in the rugby league family, Men of League Foundation volunteer Geoff Lucas knows Tim from his days representing the Bega club in first grade. Geoff recalls that Tim was not his biggest fan when Geoff was his trainer but he says that, off the field, they both have a special connection - a love of rugby league. They have kept in touch over many years and Geoff called to check on Tim in the days following the tragedy, offering the only thing he could, his compassion and support.

In the first 'Eels Feels' initiative, the Foundation and the Eels packed up their cars for a road trip which coincided with the NRL's decision to play a trial match in Bega in

February. It was then out to Cobargo with Parramatta stars Reagan Campbell-Gillard, Mitchell Moses, Kane Evans and Foundation ambassador Clint Gutherson to help lift the spirits of Tim, his wife Leanne and their son Blake.

Their faces lit up with the arrival of the group. Tim and Blake greeted the Eels players with a warm handshake and a huge country smile and when Tim noticed the Foundation volunteers had also arrived, he was incredibly emotional.

"I was probably more surprised when the Men of League turned up; wow, that is just amazing," he glowed, "There are others that need help too, so that was lovely; just unbelievable".

National wellbeing manager Jessica Macartney was also there and she says this visit is a wonderful example of what the Foundation and NRL clubs can do when they work together. Tim proudly wore his Men of League Foundation cap, presented to him during the visit, during his interviews with Fox League on game day.

"This is what the Men of League Foundation is for, when you are in your darkest hour, to know that you are not alone and that the rugby league community has your back," Jessica Macartney said. "Today is part of our Eels Feels joint initiative, when we know there is a rugby league community member with an Eels connection doing it tough, we come out and do what we can to lift their spirits together."

On behalf of the Foundation and the Parramatta Leagues Club, Tim was presented with \$7200 of product and services from Southern Farm Supplies in Bega.

Volunteer Geoff Lucas was incredibly impressed with the Eels players' compassion, warmth and sincere concern. "They spent time with everyone, lifted their spirits and showed a genuine interest", he said.

While on the farm, the players were treated to the life of a dairy farmer, milking cows, sampling the milk and riding tractors while bringing some much-needed smiles to a family that is doing it so tough. Tim says it was also a highlight to see the trial game in Bega bring topline footy to the bush.

For Geoff and the Far South Coast volunteer team, they know that the visit, and time spent with Tim and his family, will not be where their care and concern ends. Geoff insists he will pick up the phone for a yarn and to check in with the farmer who is putting on a brave face in such extreme adversity. "When he gets back to work, and everything starts to return to normal, he is going to need support and we will be there for him."

This is the kind of compassion that makes the Men of League Foundation such an incredible family. The volunteers are selfless with their time and their empathy for others seems limitless. There is no other sport in the country which looks after its own the way the Foundation does. And while there are volunteers throughout the country, it is obvious the blokes from the bush may have tough exteriors but inside are huge hearts.

Thank you to Zac Bailey and the team at nrl.com for covering the story on their network and providing the images.



*On the farm ... (from left) Clint Gutherson, Tim Salway, Reagan Campbell-Gillard, Blake Salway, Kane Evans and Mitchell Moses*



*Tim Salway tells the visiting group of how the fires raced through local properties.*

# ALLEN'S EFFORTS INSPIRATIONAL



Working hard ... (from left) Men of League Foundation volunteer Geoff Lucas, Allen Wheatley and 'Nugget' Wheatley.

In a time where many of us are looking for inspiration, we need not look much further than stroke survivor Allen Wheatley.

Based on the NSW Far South Coast, Allen is a rugby league man who barracks for his beloved St George Illawarra Dragons. Allen has dedicated many years to grassroots rugby league. He played for the Bega Roosters, from under-8s to first-grade and then contributed as a coach.

In February 2019, at only 50, Allen unexpectedly experienced a major stroke which left him with damage to the left side of his body. The stroke significantly affected his mobility and his capacity to perform simple daily tasks which most others take for granted. Allen could have sat at home feeling sorry for himself unable to work, or he could have committed wholeheartedly to a rehabilitation program which would require massive amounts of resilience and courage.

He chose the latter.

Allen was a self-employed farrier at the time of his stroke, which left him ineligible for government assistance. His application for support from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) was also denied, which is surprising given

the toll that the stroke took on his body. The Far South Coast Men of League Foundation committee identified his need for support and assisted Allen to apply for financial assistance.

A grant was approved to assist with living costs as well as some specialised rehabilitation equipment. Allen was shocked when Dragons centre and Men of League Foundation ambassador Euan Atkin called to give him the good news. Not one to miss an opportunity, Allen quickly steered the conversation to footy and got the inside scoop from Euan about the team's pre-season preparations.

With the unwavering support of his family, partner Donna and the Foundation volunteers, Allen began attending the United Fitness Studio, a local Bega gym, five mornings a week. At first, his progress was slow but the persistence paid off and a year later Allen is much more mobile and gaining more and more strength and control each day.

Far South Coast wellbeing officer Sheldon Wykes considers Allen's journey extremely encouraging for anyone looking for motivation. He had these words for Allen: "Mate, you are an inspiration for others. Your determination and commitment will guarantee you a great outcome. Well done".

# LUNCH WITH AN IMMORTAL

MAL MENINGA, AUSTRALIAN COACH AND IMMORTAL OF RUGBY LEAGUE, WAS THE 'HOST' OF THE THIRD ANNUAL BOARDROOM LUNCH WITH A LEGEND THAT HAS BEEN A FEATURE AUCTION PRIZE AT THE ANNUAL QUEENSLAND LUNCH.



*Lunch with an Immortal ... (from left) Andrew Blucher, Caleb Harry, Gary Clare, Rebecca O'Connell, Steve O'Connell, Troy Cassar-Daley, Peter Lucas, Tim Dinnen, Shane Dowling, Lara Anderson, Chris Edwards, Mal Meninga, Matt Que Hee, Lachlan Grant, Cameron Smart, Andrew O'Brien and Luke Tully.*

## NEIL CADIGAN

It was yet another rare insight into the business, and motivations, of professional rugby league – this time provided for Men of League Foundation by Australian Kangaroos coach, and one of the game's 13 Immortals, Mal Meninga.

The boardroom lunch, a much talked about feature of the annual Queensland lunch, is a valued auction item that enables a handful of people to informally sit down with one of league's biggest names and talk not just about the sport, but swap experiences in business and pick up motivational and organisational tips over lunch.

Previously former State of Origin and NRL premiership winning coaches Phil Gould and Craig Bellamy had left the small gatherings spellbound with their insights and Mal Meninga did not disappoint when the 14 guests gathered at the Oakwood Hotel and Apartments in Brisbane in November, enjoying a sumptuous meal and wines supplied by Angove Wines.

Valued Foundation volunteer and former Toowoomba committee president Andrew O'Brien has attended all three annual boardroom lunches and says that, while all have had their different characteristics, they each provided great value for those fortunate to attend and share certain traits typical of successful highly-achieving people.

"Craig Bellamy is just 24/7 rugby league, from the time he wakes up in the morning to when he goes to bed at night; just so focused and dedicated," Andrew said.

"Phil Gould has had such an influence in the game, what he did at Penrith to turn them around (as football general manager) was unbelievable and it is now a thriving business.

"And Mal was also outstanding. We sat with him not long after Australia had lost the Test match against Tonga, so he was bombarded with questions about that.

"One was what did he learn about himself in that situation and he was very frank; saying that maybe he could have said more at half-time.

"Mal showed why he is held in awe. He is obviously very much a one on one coach and mentor, wanting to make sure the players are the best they can be.

"That's what I got out of Mal; he can be very critical of himself and felt he could have influenced the players a lot more in that Tonga Test; certainly they hadn't tasted defeat much before.

"All three speakers gave us insights about how they tick and their decision making, and that has a lesson for others in business as well as sport.

"Craig told us about how close he was to going back to Brisbane and how he went through the thought process before making his decision; Phil Gould spoke about getting

Kerry Packer to put \$10 million into Penrith to save them; Mal spoke about the need to have the right people around you and reflected on the influence of calling on some of the Queensland legends into the set-up when he was Maroons coach as a case in point.

"I'll never forget Phil Gould answering the question about when would NSW win Origin again. He said pointedly, 'when we've seen the end of Billy Slater, Greg Inglis, Cooper Cronk and Cameron Smith'. That was three years ago and it proved exactly right – the end of an era we will never see again.

"These guys have been down and dirty as part of rugby league at the highest level and they know it compassionately. One thing I really got out of it was that they were prepared to criticise themselves, what they did to improve themselves, to challenge themselves and how they came to decisions.

"A strong universal message seemed to be that if they thought they were 95 per cent right, it was the other five per cent that they worked on.

"These lunches are really, really good experiences."

Queensland state manager Andrew Blucher, who attended the lunch along with a wide variety of business people and league fans, including country musician Troy Cassar-Daley, said it was obvious how passionate Mal Meninga was about the Gold Coast Titans' future in the NRL and how important the passion for the Maroons jersey and its history amongst those who wore it.

"Mal was terrific – very open and honest, relaxed and engaged willingly with all the guests," he said. "I think he genuinely enjoyed the day himself and he clearly has high regard and respect for the role the Men of League Foundation plays within the rugby league community by attending several of our functions.

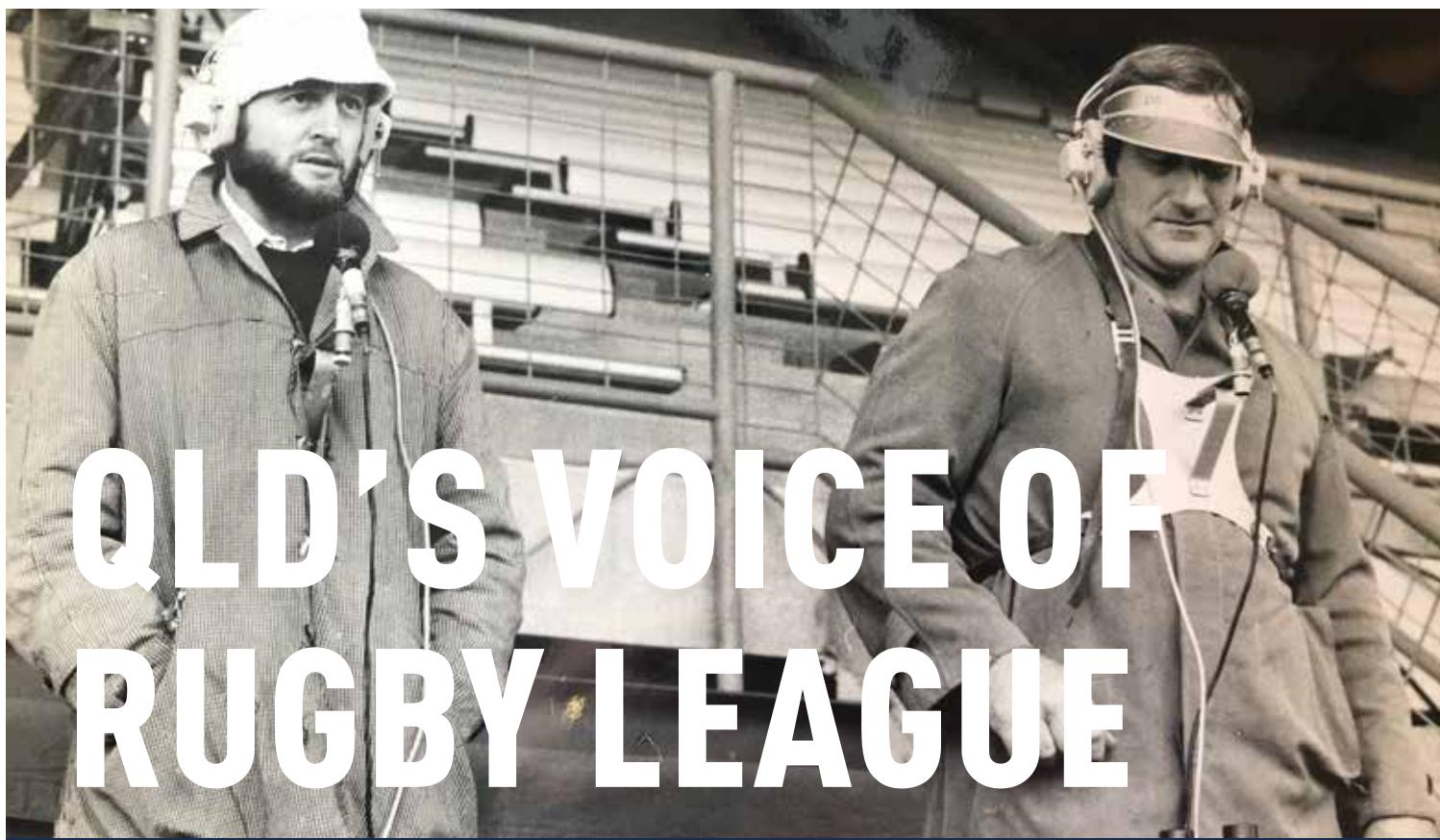
"Mal provided a good insight into how he operates and thinks and it was very clear why he has so much respect within the game and the community generally.

"He spoke passionately about the enormous rugby league community and talent nursery that extends from the Gold Coast down through to Northern Rivers, saying it was a valuable rugby league heartland with so many players coming through from these regions which more than justifies having a team based on the Coast.

"He wants players from these areas to want to play for the Titans and be proud to represent their district."

It was of no surprise to the guests when the four-time Kangaroo tourist and three-time premiership winner with Canberra replied to the question of who was the best player he played with or against.

**The answer: Wally Lewis.**



# QLD'S VOICE OF RUGBY LEAGUE

George Doniger (left) and Mick Veivers on duty during a typical 'outside broadcast' in the 1970s, covering a Brisbane match at Lang Park.



A fit and active George Doniger today.

**FOUNDATION MEMBER GEORGE DONIGER WAS REGARDED AS THE 'VOICE OF RUGBY LEAGUE' IN QUEENSLAND FOR ALMOST TWO DECADES AFTER A BREAKTHROUGH TV PROGRAM SPORTSCENE AND THE WEEKLY COVERAGE OF BRISBANE CLUB MATCHES BECAME A STAPLE PART OF THE STATE'S VIEWING HABITS. HE LOOKS BACK ON THOSE HEADY TIMES WHICH STARTED 50 YEARS AGO.**

## STEVE RICKETTS

SPORTSCENE became a Queensland television sporting institution after its modest birth 50 years ago elevated rugby league stars to celebrity status.

Queensland forward Reg Cannon was the first guest on the show, which premiered on Channel 7 on Mother's Day, May 10, 1970, with racing identity Rod Gallegos the host, former Brothers star George Doniger the rugby league expert and Frank O'Callaghan across a number of other sports.

By the time the show wound up in 1987, it had been extended to three and a half hours with an unsurpassed coverage of local sport.

Before Sportscene, the only comparable show was a Sunday program, with hosts Nat Gould and Jim Anderson concentrating largely on racing, while occasionally featuring guests like Test rugby league halfback Barry Muir and cricketer Ken 'Slasher' Mackay.

It had run its course when Channel 7's Don Brandham, who had cut his broadcasting teeth on Match of the Day in the UK, saw the need for something similar in Brisbane. Sydney already had television sports shows, which concentrated largely on rugby league, through colourful hosts such as Ron Casey and Rex Mossop.

Brandham and fellow Channel 7 production gurus Harold Croxon and Kel Geddes had the job of putting the show together with Telegraph turf editor Rod Gallegos a natural for television while The Courier-Mail's Frank O'Callaghan was regarded as an authority on a number of sports, including rugby union, swimming, cricket, golf and boxing.

But who would be the rugby league anchor?

George Doniger, who was working in a carpet showroom at the Gabba, was a well-known figure in Brisbane through his exploits as a goal-kicking outside back for Brothers, while on the Gold Coast the Doniger name was synonymous with surf lifesaving. George's father Joe was awarded a bravery medal for dragging two shark attack victims from the surf at Kirra Beach and also founded the North Kirra Surf Club.

A carnival at North Kirra gave George, now a life member of the club, his first chance at commentary.

"It was 1968 and the ABC were to televise the carnival, which was sponsored by Craven Filter (cigarette company)," Doniger recalls. "Clive Harburg, who had called the tied cricket Test at the Gabba in 1960, was assigned to call the action but poor old Clive couldn't find the club."

"The ABC director knew I had a knowledge of the competitors so he said to me, 'get up there and do Clive's job'. I called the whole thing."

"In 1970, Don Wilson, who I knew from Brothers, worked in the accounts section at Channel 7 and remembered that call when they were working out who they wanted for the league section."

The producers were keen to get a Queensland rugby league player as a special guest for one of the early shows. The Maroons were to play the touring Great Britain side on the Sunday in question and Doniger knew he would not be able to get anyone from the starting team. Brothers forward Reg Cannon had had to pull out through injury so Doniger drove to Cannon's house at suburban Grange and asked him to appear on the show.

In the years that followed, Doniger and his fellow panel members interviewed the likes of Arthur Beetson, John Grant, John Lang, David Wright, Greg Veivers, Henry Holloway, Geoff Richardson, Ron Raper, Des Morris, Ian 'Bunny' Pearce, Greg Oliphant and former Queensland manager of Men of League Foundation, the late Steve Calder, who won the Rothmans Medal as Brisbane's best and fairest player in 1975.

Former Test forward Mick Veivers joined the Sportscene panel in 1972 while Billy J Smith eventually replaced Gallegos as host.

Also in 1972, Channel 7 gained the rights to televise Brisbane club games, with a one hour highlights package going to air the night of the game.

"It was the top rating program on television in its time-slot, from 1972-78," Doniger says. "We started with two cameras, one up on the scaffolding and the other on the ground. 'Farmer' (Veivers) and I were sitting on painters' planks. There was no monitor and no replays."

"I would go to club training during the week and run around with the players to get to know them. It made so much difference on the day, in terms of getting the names right. The first time I saw colour television, at the end of 1975, I made the comment then that it would turn sport upside down."

Doniger remained with Channel 7 and Sportscene until 1978 but switched to Channel 0 (now TEN) in 1979 when it gained the league television rights. That year he called games with former Test forward David Wright and also worked alongside Ray Warren and Keith Barnes calling Amco Cup matches with Brisbane reaching the final of the knock-out competition.

Sportscene continued until 1987, the year Brothers won the last big Brisbane grand final before the advent of the Broncos the following year.

Current Channel 7 sports editor Pat Welsh was anchor for a time, as were Peter Meares and the late David Fordham.

Doniger's league history began as a primary school footballer with St Augustine's, Coolangatta, from where he was chosen in the Queensland primary schools side. He attended high school as a boarder at Marist Brothers Ashgrove in Brisbane, where he played in the First XV alongside future Papua New Guinea Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan.

George had developed a stutter in his primary school days, something he put down to the fact that he was forced to write right handed even though he was naturally left handed.

"At Ashgrove, Brother Francis McMahon (his rugby coach) taught me how to breath, and the affliction disappeared," he said. "Marist were keen for me to do years 11 and 12 to continue playing in the firsts but my mother reckoned I had wasted enough time at school so I started work as an apprentice architect at the Queensland Housing Commission."

Doniger was promoted to first grade at Brothers as a teenager, to solve a goal-kicking problem, and in 1960 became the youngest player to finish a season as the highest points-scorer, an honour he retains today. Valleys' former Test fullback Norm Pope had been the top points-scorer nine years in a row and was on hand to congratulate George when he took the title.

A knee injury ended George's career in 1965, leaving him stranded on 99 games for his beloved Brothers.

As a television celebrity, Doniger was in demand because of his entrepreneurial skills, which included a successful insurance consultancy, as well as the production of a Rugby League Yearbook. He became the face of 'George Doniger Car Accessories' which went on to become Super Cheap Auto.

For 17 years he was in charge of Wendy's Super Sundaes in Queensland and later took on the challenge of lifting the performance of an IGA store at Currumbin Waters on the Gold Coast.

Now content in retirement, Doniger is still a picture of fitness and glowing good health, as he approaches his 80th birthday.

During his time at Sportscene he would run around the torturous grades of Mt Cootha (where the television studios were located) after recording the show, while fellow panel members enjoyed a beer and fried chicken back stage.

By the time he was 60, he had run 50 marathons, including London, New York, Chicago, Ottawa, San Francisco and Amsterdam, and of course his local Gold Coast event, which he completed 10 times.

A foundation member of the Men of League Foundation, George still follows the game closely and remains heavily involved with North Kirra Surf Club.



*Scaffolding was an important part of bringing BRL games to the people of Queensland.*

# TIGERS FIRST TEAM TO SIGN UP EN MASSE

Men of League Foundation ambassador Luke Brooks has prompted the entire Wests Tigers playing roster and coaching staff to become Foundation members – meaning the Sydney club is the first to throw itself so extensively behind the Foundation.

The Tigers halfback has become a passionate advocate for the Foundation and says he had little trouble enticing his teammates to become members.

"I have been a Men of League Foundation ambassador for 12 months now and have seen firsthand how they help people who are going through a tough time," Brooks said.

"I spoke to my teammates and they liked what they heard and they have all decided to jump on board and become members. It only costs \$25 but it goes a long way to helping our Rugby League community and those who are in need."

"I also found out we are the first NRL club to have all players and coaching staff become Men of League Foundation members."

"I'm extremely proud of my team and my club for the work they do in the community and this is just another part of that."

The 133-game NRL veteran sparked a mass support by his teammates which may also lead to similar strategy by other NRL clubs and the Foundation continues to gain much-needed cut-through with current and recently retired players. The Foundation has memorandum of understanding relationships with the Tigers, Cowboys, Roosters, Eels, Bulldogs, Broncos and Panthers with several joint programs in place.

Other ambassadors among NRL players are Clint Gutherson (Parramatta), Curtis Sironen (Manly), Kyle Flanagan (Roosters) and Euan Aitkin (Dragons).

"The Wests Tigers players and staff have participated in a number of wellbeing visits and initiatives with us and have seen firsthand how life-changing the work we do is," said the Foundation's national wellbeing officer Jessica Macartney.

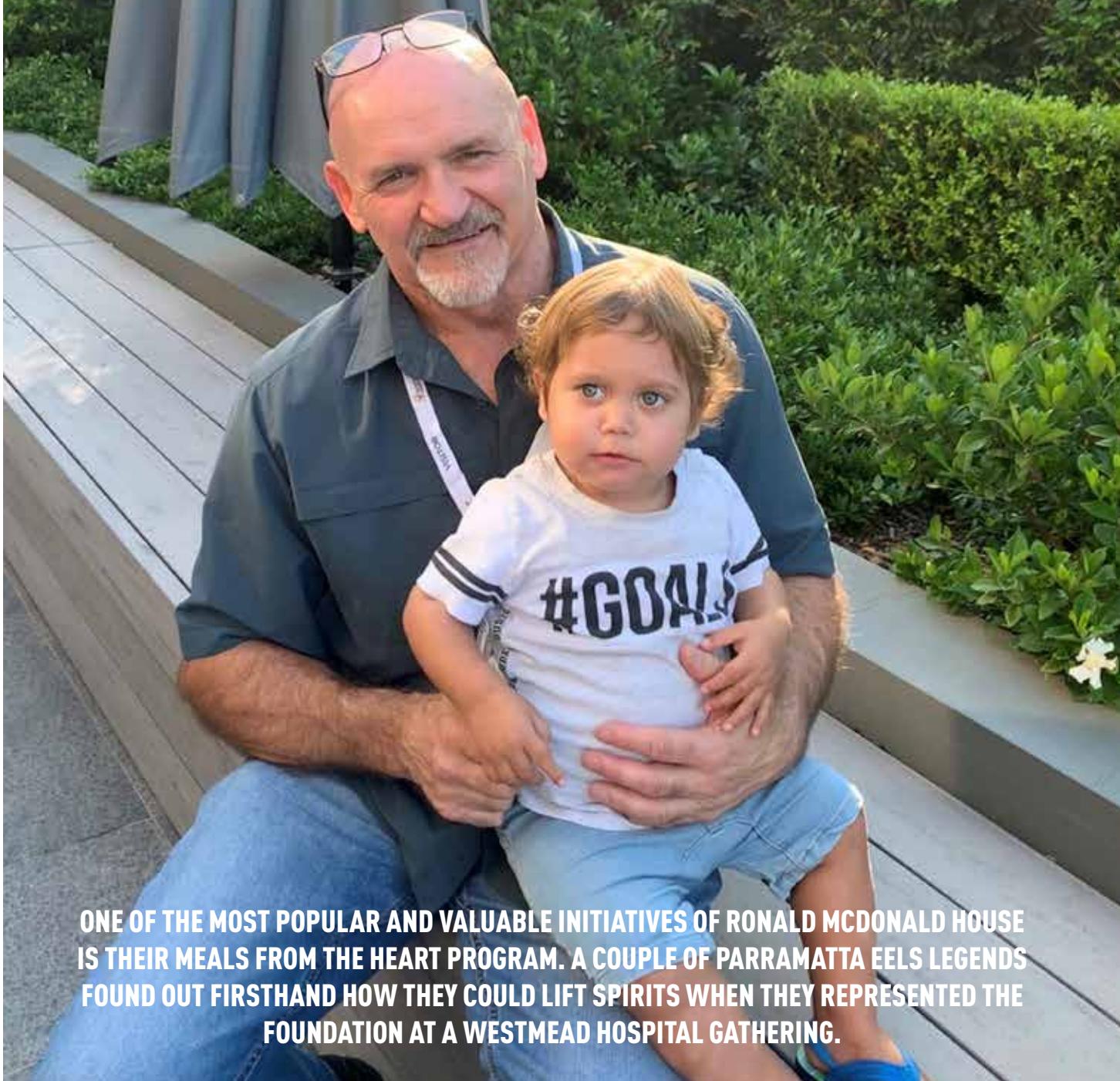
"To see Luke encourage the full squad and coaching staff to become financial members is something we should all be very proud of. We hope other NRL teams will take their lead."

The Men of League Foundation assists the men, women and children of the rugby league community from grassroots all the way through to former NRL players. Over the past two years the Foundation has provided over \$1.8 million in wellbeing grants and conducted over 3600 hours in wellbeing visits to check in and make sure in times of need that the rugby league family are there for each other.



Luke Brooks

# EELS LEGENDS ARE ALL HEART



ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR AND VALUABLE INITIATIVES OF RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE IS THEIR MEALS FROM THE HEART PROGRAM. A COUPLE OF PARRAMATTA EELS LEGENDS FOUND OUT FIRSTHAND HOW THEY COULD LIFT SPIRITS WHEN THEY REPRESENTED THE FOUNDATION AT A WESTMEAD HOSPITAL GATHERING.

*Eric Grothe (above) and Neville Glover (opposite page) still have plenty of fans, young and old.*

## ANDREW FERGUSON

Sitting outside the courtyard of the Ronald McDonald House at Westmead in Sydney's west, former Parramatta Eels winger Neville Glover says there is a common misconception in the public about the Men of League Foundation.

"The bottom line is the people we support don't have to have played NRL, they may have played any grade, at any time," he said.

"If they play rugby league or have made a meaningful contribution to the game of rugby league, Men of League are there to help.

"Even if you're a canteen worker in a junior club you are part of that rugby league family that the Foundation supports," added Eric Grothe Sr, who with Glover are the wingers in the Parramatta Eels' all-time 'Legends' team. Grothe played in the Eels' four premiership winning teams in the 1980s plus eight Tests for Australia while Glover was on the wing in Parramatta's first grand final-qualifying team of 1976 and played two Tests.

The children of Ronald McDonald House may not know who they are but their parents and grandparents who are providing their care certainly do. The former players were there to join the rest of the Men of League Foundation crew who were preparing dinner for almost 60 families of seriously ill children as part of the Meals from the Heart initiative.

"These sorts of places bring you down to a place where you see that humanity is the winner," 'Guru' Grothe said.

It's the impact former players can have in the community that has inspired Glover to clock up thousands of kilometres travelling across the country, all in the name of the Men of League Foundation.

Moree, Eden, Forbes, Parkes, Orange and Cowra are among towns he has visited- well the ones he can remember when put on the spot.

"I pay my own way because I want to see them [Men of League Foundation] get every dollar they can," he says.

"I'm lucky. I was good at the game and had a good career. I want to go and help people who are less fortunate."

CEO of Ronald McDonald House Greater Western Sydney, Belinda Woolford, says the impact of former players can never be underrated.

"It really is priceless for these kids to meet their football heroes when current players come to visit but it is also for their parents and carers to meet idols they grew up with as well," she said.

"It's not just the front line first grade players that benefit from Men of League Foundation, it's that whole NRL community that are able to utilise the services and support in so many different areas."

Foundation volunteers prepared an Aussie barbecue as they celebrated the round one NRL clash between the Eels and Bulldogs. Both clubs are official partners of the Foundation but it was clear from the jerseys and caps being worn by the families that the Eels were the strong favourites on the night.

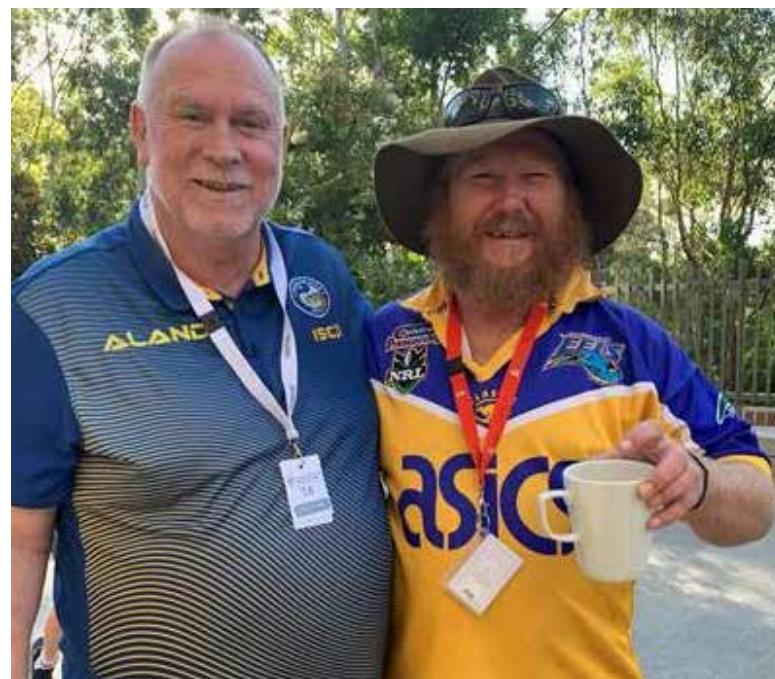
Ronald McDonald House is a source of respite for families in need of a home away from home. Activities like Meals from Heart alleviate the daily stress of having to organise meals after a long day at the hospital.

"The ongoing support Men of League Foundation offer is priceless," Belinda Woolford said. "It's an extra connection that these families need from numerous support networks to help them get through such difficult times."

For many of the parents at Ronald McDonald House, the visits offer a sense of relief and fun.

"You see some of these children struggling with sickness and the parents are working so hard to make sure everything's okay," Grothe said.

"It's very humbling. I walk away from these experiences thinking how lucky I am and how wonderful the people who donate their time are. Volunteers just do it to share their love and ease the pain."



Neville Glover and Sean Macguire

# A LOYAL COWBOY NAMED ‘UNCLE BUCK’



## KATE CORNISH

If you love rugby league and are asked if you would like to interview Barry Buchanan, you do not turn the opportunity down; and you certainly do not turn it down if you are a slightly neurotic North Queensland Cowboys fan like myself.

I heard the name Barry Buchanan some time ago. As a Cowboys fan it is impossible to be educated in their history and not come across his name. He is intertwined into every part of Cowboys' history. Before the Cowboys formally existed, Barry was weaving his magic in the background and without people like him the Cowboys may never have existed. In fact Men of League Foundation magazine editor Neil Cadigan wrote about Barry in his book '20 Years in the Saddle', which gave extraordinary history of the club and insight into just how the Cowboys came to be.

Barry Buchanan is synonymous with the club's name. He was a member of the steering committee formed in 1990

that worked to have a North Queensland club enter the competition and his devotion to the club is mentioned alongside those of players like Laurie Spina, Paul Bowman, Matt Bowen and Johnathan Thurston. In fact, so significant has he been to the club over the last three decades that he is one of only eight life members, not a small accomplishment when you see the names of the others who also hold the honour.

Barry finds himself in the esteemed company of Bowman, Aaron Payne, Bowen, Thurston, Matthew Scott, Laurence Lancini and Scott Bolton.

Another North Queensland Cowboys original of 1995 Adrian Vowles, who was captain in 1996, says every club needs an 'Uncle Buck' (Barry's nickname) "because they are passionate about their roles".

"Any CEO or coach will tell you they need people like that because they can rely on them to get the job done. Barry has left no stone unturned in his role and that's why he has been



so good in all of his positions for such a long time," Vowles said.

"Barry was one of those people who went out of his way to help and was always a great fella to chat too. Barry also had a good sense of humour and didn't mind the boys taking the micky out of him and he happily returned serve as well."

"Nothing was too much trouble for him and you could see he genuinely loved his role; all the players enjoyed his company and he was a good sounding board too."

A proud North Queenslander, Buchanan grew up in the small country town of Bowen and his love for the game began when he started playing footy for his school.

Many decades later, he has participated in almost every aspect of the game from playing to coaching to administration. He was the team manager for the Cowboys in their inaugural season in 1995 and still attends every training session. You'll also find him in the dressing rooms on game day, looking after the team 25 years after they joined the competition.

There is no doubt rugby league runs through his veins and while he is part of the furniture among the Cowboys, for the last 11 years he has also been working hard as part of Men of League Foundation's Townsville committee, these days as the publicity officer. A Foundation member from its early days, he had no hesitation in joining the fold when the opportunity presented itself to help start up the Townsville committee.

Barry says it was effortless to blend his love of the Cowboys with Men of League Foundation.

"It was easy to combine the two," he said. "I have a good relationship with the players and our former coach Graham Murray was a great advocate for Men of League; he was even the chairman of the committee up here for a while when he finished up with the Cowboys ... he was really keen to support Men of League."

Former Cowboys player Ray Thompson is a Men of League Foundation ambassador and a great enthusiast for the Foundation.

Barry says the group of volunteers in Townsville is an active gathering of about 40 and they represent a good cross section of the community. With 16 members officially on the committee, they were the first branch to have the benefit of women involved as they were able to connect and engage in a different way with the people they support.

The vice-president is also a woman, Helen Sugars, and they are proud of the variety of personalities they have up north; it is part of what makes them such a successful team.

"It's definitely advantageous to have women on the committee... another perspective that the men don't see."

Even though he is not technically a wellbeing officer

anymore, Barry says that is still the best thing about the Foundation.

"That is the part I like best of all because that's the part that's appreciated most," he said. "I still don't stop (being a wellbeing officer) because people tend to still contact me if someone needs help, or I'll find out some people need help and I will try to do what I can."

When asked why he would tell people to support the Foundation, Barry was direct. "Join Men of League to show your support for the Foundation. So that, in turn, we can support you in time of need."

And it really is that simple. In the early days, the people that were being supported were usually old footy mates but Barry explains that today, while that support still continues, it has grown.

"Many times we are supporting people from kids and parents through to grandma and grandad. We support families of rugby league now."

Barry acknowledged that in the current climate, with COVID-19 playing out across the world, that that support would be harder to provide.

"Some people that suffer with a bit of mental illness, as the months go on, will find it hard with self-isolation," he said. "It is sad because they will lose some human contact which is so important for your mental health."

"So that'll be something I think that we'll have to keep an eye on in the coming months with people because it will be very hard. That one time a week that you might go out for beers might be the only time you go out that week. Once we get out of this, it will be a chance for the committee to reach out if we've noticed we haven't seen certain people for a while."

With an obvious love for the game, the Cowboys and Men of League Foundation, Barry Buchanan describes the sport as his life.

"Since I've retired (from his education department job), it (rugby league) has given back to me really because it's like family to me. It's my life, I go out to every training session and everything in between."

"I still feel it's a working man's game. Kids can come from a very, very poor sort of situation into the game and they can come through school and be noticed by rugby league and then go on to play for their country. So, you know, you don't have to be in an elite situation and the audience are salt of the earth people - just family people who want to support the game because either the kids or the grandkids play or their brother did at some stage."

"I just love the game and want to support it."

Next time I find myself up in Cowboys country, I will make the time to have a coffee with one of the biggest supporters of the game we all love – the guy they call 'Uncle Buck', and someone who rugby league is fortunate to call part of the family.

# ZULU WARRIOR

## RECALLS GREAT

## BATTLE

---

**ONE OF BRISBANE'S MOST MEMORABLE GRAND FINALS WAS RELIVED AT A FOUNDATION LUNCH AT NORTHS LEAGUES & SERVICES CLUB WITH A MAN CALLED 'ZULU' HOLDING COURT.**

---

### STEVE RICKETTS

As Campbell Dews took to the stage at Norths Leagues & Services Club at a recent Men of League Foundation event, the patrons started chanting 'Zulu ... Zulu'.

The Cronulla junior, who works in the mines in Central Queensland and lives on the Sunshine Coast, remains a cult hero in Brisbane, where his heroics in the 1980s made him a crowd favourite, particularly at Lang Park where he invariably played his best football. The chants of 'Zulu, Zulu' would reverberate around the stadium from the Frank Burke Stand to the terraces.

His most memorable match was the 1980 grand final against the Bob McCarthy-coached Souths Magpies, with the underdog Devils winning 17-15 before a packed house of 32,000.

The match was the first Brisbane grand final televised live into Sydney with the NSW grand final having been played the day before.

Dews played his junior football for Cronulla RSL and graduated to S G Ball Cup and Jersey Flegg Cup with the Sharks.

He found his way to Brisbane thanks to 'super coach' Jack Gibson, who recommended him to Norths president Bob Bax, Brisbane's own super coach, who guided Norths to seven premierships in the 1960s. Dews played for Norths from 1979-85 before finishing his career at Keighley in England.



*Geoff Naylor in action.*

"Baxy was an SP bookie and of course Jack enjoyed a punt, so that's how they knew each other," Dews said. "Baxy signed me on the back of a beer coaster, which was his way of doing business."

"I joined the club at the same time as the new coach Graham Lowe. After the Woollies pre-season competition, I looked set to start the premiership in first grade but then I had a car accident which ruled me out for a time."

"Everyone predicted we would finish last in '79 but we only just missed out on the finals."

"In 1980 (Kiwi Test lock) Mark Graham came to Norths and he was the touch of class we needed to lift to another level. I can't remember the first time the 'Zulu' chant went up. The nickname came from a junior coach at Cronulla who reckoned, with my height and frizzy hair, I looked like a Zulu warrior."

"The nickname got bandied around in the papers in Brisbane and things just went from there."

Future Australian Test halfback Mark Murray was Norths' skipper in 1980 at the ripe old age of 20.

"I came down to Brisbane from Millmerran (on the Darling Downs) to attend teachers college in 1978 and was all set to join Wynnum-Manly until 'Baxy' intervened and trumped their offer," said Murray, who now works in real estate after a long stint as Norths' CEO.

"In 1980, Valleys were the team to beat after they had won the minor premiership on top of thrashing Souths 26-0 in the 1979 grand final. I think a lot of people thought we were just making up the numbers in the finals but we were always confident of beating Brothers in the knock-out semi even though they had rolled us in the final round of the home and away season."

"Wayne Bennett was coaching Brothers after having left Souths following that big grand final loss. We scored six tries to three against Brothers with Mark Graham getting two. Souths beat Valleys 22-14 in the major semi-final and we knew if we could beat Valleys (in the preliminary final) we would win the grand final."

Valleys, with former Test halfback Ross Strudwick as captain-coach, boasted future Immortal Wally Lewis at lock, with current Moreton Men of League Foundation committee president Peter Affleck at five-eighth, the position Lewis would later make his own at interstate and international level.

Valleys were leading 14-10 in the second half when Lewis slumped to the ground in agony after attempting a ball-and-all tackle on Mark Graham. Murray remembers Graham's boot catching Lewis in the throat as he fell to the ground while Lewis, in the book 'King Wally', recounts coping an accidental elbow.

Whatever the cause, the result was one of the most frightening events in Lang Park history with Valleys trainer Brian Canavan giving Lewis mouth-to-mouth as club medics, Dr Tom Dooley (Valleys) and Dr Keith Woodhead (Norths) made their way on to the field.

Lewis was carried to the sidelines and recovered sufficiently to join teammates in the dressing room after the heartbreak loss. Dr Dooley said Lewis had suffered a laryngeal spasm and was critically ill.

Souths had enjoyed a week off after their win over Valleys so coach McCarthy made sure they worked hard on the training paddock.

"We hardly touched the ball," recalls Souths' prop, Geoff Naylor, who had returned to Brisbane after two seasons with Balmain. "We were doing road runs and hill climbs, but not much team work. Macca said it would make us hungry for the ball on the day of the game."

"Norths put on a blue early and they settled down the best after that."

Naylor, who now works for Toll Transport in Brisbane, had played both interstate matches for Queensland that year but when the inaugural Origin match rolled around in July, the Queensland props were Arthur Beetson and Naylor's former Balmain and Brisbane Easts' teammate Rod Morris. (Naylor and Morris were props and John Lang the hooker, when

Easts won the 1977 Brisbane grand final).

Naylor and Dews swapped jerseys after the 1980 grand final and shared stories about their careers when they caught up at the Brisbane Men of League committee's lunch at Norths Leagues on 28 February when they were joined on stage by Murray for a trip down memory lane as the club marks 40 years since that premiership win.

Also in attendance was Norths stalwart Kevin Brasch, AM, who received his life membership of the Devils in 1980.

"That 1980 side was something special," Brasch said. "Baxy did well to recruit Graham Lowe but Bob remains the wiliest of coaches to have graced the club."

Mark Murray agrees.

"Baxy is the smartest man I have met in rugby league," Murray said. "Before that 1980 grand final, Baxy told everyone that he knew a bloke, who knew a bloke who'd got him this secret cheat sheet out of Souths where all these things were meant to be said about us. Things like 'Zulu will turn it up', or 'Kilroy's no good under the bomb' or 'Murray lacks experience', that sort of thing."

It was 7-all at halftime in the 1980 grand final but fullback 'Smokin' Joe' Kilroy broke the game wide open soon after the resumption when he fielded a clearing kick from Mal Meninga and ran 50 metres, beating five defenders before linking with giant centre Brian 'Yogi' Dunn, who raced clear for the try.

Winger Gary Warnock, one of seven Norths' juniors in the side, landed the conversion. Norths' other second half try was scored by centre, Peter Dutton, like Dunn, a Queensland baseball star.

Footnote: Bob Bax's penchant for signing players on the back of beer coasters almost proved costly. In December 1980 QRL chairman, Ron McAuliffe revealed only Mark Graham was legally signed by the Devils. The rest of the players had not been registered on the prescribed QRL contract forms. The shock discovery was made by QRL officials tidying up books in preparation for a change over to new administrative model in 1981, when Ross Livermore was to come on board as managing director.

"If Souths wanted to appeal against Norths winning the premiership, it would be upheld," McAuliffe told The Courier-Mail's Lawrie Kavanagh.

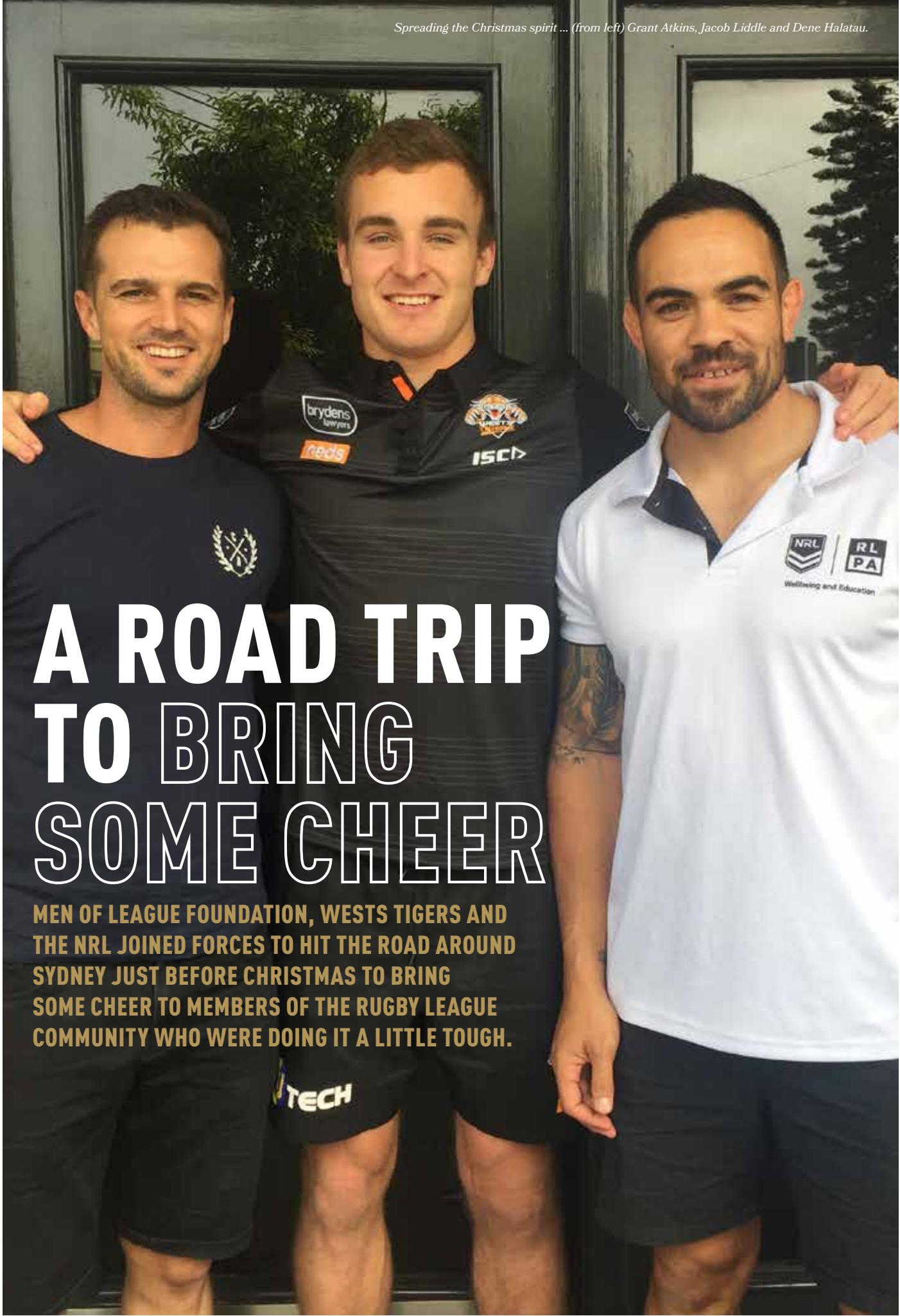
Souths president, Tony Testa said Norths had won the premiership 'fair and square' and the Magpies would not lodge an appeal.

Norths' 1980 side is planning a reunion for October.



Campbell Dews is second from left in the back row – on his left is Kiwi legend Mark Graham – in the 1980 Norths team poster.

*Spreading the Christmas spirit ... (from left) Grant Atkins, Jacob Liddle and Dene Halatau.*



# A ROAD TRIP TO BRING SOME CHEER

**MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION, WESTS TIGERS AND THE NRL JOINED FORCES TO HIT THE ROAD AROUND SYDNEY JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS TO BRING SOME CHEER TO MEMBERS OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY WHO WERE DOING IT A LITTLE TOUGH.**

## GRANT ATKINS

The month of December is one that often conjures up a range of emotions for most people. It's a time when family and friends gather and spend memorable moments. It can also be a time of deep reflection.

Men of League Foundation saw a great opportunity in mid-December to raise the spirits of some of our rugby league family doing it a little tough.

Wests Tigers hooker Jacob Liddle joined national wellbeing manager Jessica Macartney, along with former Wests Tigers premiership winning player Dene Halatau, NRL referee Grant Atkins and Men of League Foundation wellbeing volunteer Ken Vessey on a day trip to Sydney's south-east to spread some Christmas cheer.

First stop was Tempe.

As the Men of League Foundation van pulled up on the Princes highway, the team made their way into the building to visit former first grade player Paul Morris, who was five-eighth for Newtown in the 1981 grand final loss to Parramatta. The 57-year-old was delighted to see the smiling faces of everyone as they all spoke about the rigours of off-season training and reflected on Paul's playing days with the Balmain Tigers, Jets and St George Dragons.

Having grown up in the Sydney suburb of Ermington, Morris started his first grade career with the Tigers before switching to Newtown in 1981 to partner Tommy Raudonikis in the halves (and as goal-kicker) and make the grand final, only to lose to Parramatta 20-11 at the SCG as the Eels celebrated their first premiership.

Following his time at the Jets, Morris went on to play for the Dragons in 1984-85. The joy that appeared on his face as the group presented him with a Christmas card and voucher demonstrated what it meant for the Men of League Foundation to make this visit.

We trekked our way across to visit Ray Corner, 78, a massive South Sydney fan who welcomed us into his home and had asked his family to prepare for the visit. Upon walking into his yard, we were welcomed by a vintage Volkswagen Beetle painted in the crimson and myrtle of the Bunnies.

Ray who finds it difficult to leave his house, pointed out all the South Sydney memorabilia he and his wife had collected over the years, including several painted surf boards that had been mounted on the walls. His passion for the game was obvious, borne from not just his own playing career but through his son's and grandkids' experiences too. Ray reflected upon his time watching Souths at Redfern Oval and relayed his pride in his son being the team mascot for many years. His wife spoke glowingly about how important it was for her family that the Men of League Foundation had come to visit, not only just before Christmas but also for Ray's birthday in September.

A short trip east took the group to Malabar to visit former Roosters junior and La Perouse player Timothy Ella. The household lit up with smiles as Liddle and Halatau showed their faces to huge rugby league fans. A name synonymous with the eastern suburbs of Sydney, Timothy explained how, as the youngest of 12 and brother to former brilliant Wallabies Mark, Gary and Glen, playing sport was a favourite past time

of the family. Timothy spoke about how important the game of rugby league was to him and his family. The visit from the Men of League Foundation provided him with a Christmas card and voucher for him to use during the festive season. Affected by lung cancer, Timothy's smile spread from ear to ear as he held his five-month-old twin grandchildren on his lap and donned his new Men of League Foundation cap.

Our final stop was at Randwick to visit young Eli Chatfield from Batemans Bay on the NSW South Coast. Eli, who is a huge Wests Tigers fan, was greeted by Liddle and Halatau near Ronald McDonald House. The boys shared stories about surfing and revealed they both have a terrifying fear of sharks. Eli is currently being treated for his second bout of cancer. His spirits lifted as comparisons and reviews of current PlayStation games and Netflix shows became the topic of conversation. Eli did find the courage to talk with Liddle about potential signings for his Wests Tigers over the next few years and the aspirations of the team heading into the 2020 season.

At the completion of the day, Liddle, who is undergoing rehabilitation for a knee injury sustained in the 2019 season, spoke about how humbling the entire experience was.

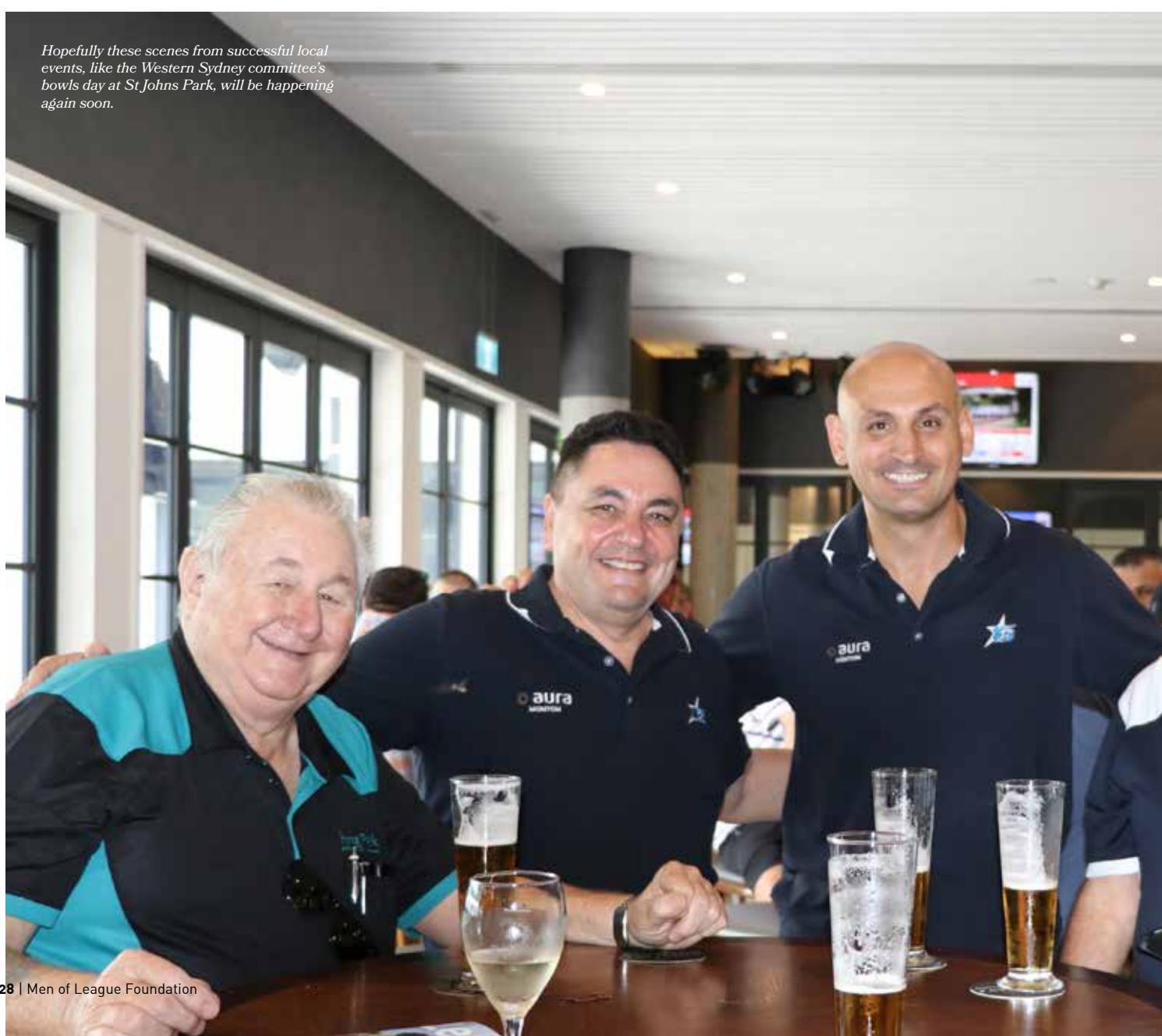
As the Men of League Foundation van pulled away, Liddle and Halatau expressed their feelings about how the Foundation had enabled them to give back to the wider rugby league community just before Christmas.

**GRANT ATKINS  
IS A  
FULL-TIME NRL  
REFEREE  
WHO HAS ALSO  
COMPLETED A  
COMMUNICATIONS  
COURSE AT  
UNIVERSITY.**

# CHAIRMAN STEPHEN MARTIN ANSWERS COMMON QUESTIONS

Men of League Foundation chairman, Professor the Hon Stephen Martin, in answering some common questions fielded in recent months, has compiled a detailed explanation of the recent changes to the organisation's constitution, the challenges ahead due to the effect of the coronavirus pandemic and the need for continued member support, including a greater representation of women.

*Hopefully these scenes from successful local events, like the Western Sydney committee's bowls day at St Johns Park, will be happening again soon.*



## CAN YOU TELL US WHY THERE WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING HELD IN MARCH THIS YEAR?

An extraordinary general meeting (EGM) of members of the Men of League Foundation was held on 11 March to address a number of governance issues, and to adopt a new constitution which better established the rights and obligations of members and directors of the charitable organisation. As a company limited by guarantee, all members have a limited liability of \$10 if the company is ever wound-up and has outstanding liabilities to meet. Whilst this is most unlikely to ever occur, members have never been formally advised of this condition of their membership. Similarly, the board has always been comprised of willing volunteers invited to assist the organisation fulfil its mission of helping those in the rugby league community in need. Members have not been involved in the election or selection of volunteer directors or been served notice of general meetings of members – most people join the Foundation simply to help those in need of support. Adoption of the new constitution makes clear that members are not voting members of the Foundation. The EGM also confirmed the appointment of the current board.

A second EGM was also held on 11 March to formally wind-up a subsidiary company, the Supporters of the Men of League Limited which was formed in 2006 to facilitate the Men of League Foundation achieving charitable status. Changes to the

requirements for charities came into place shortly after the formation of this subsidiary and it has never actually operated and serves no useful purpose. The Men of League Foundation is of course a registered charity and operates fully under its own registration.

## WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES FROM THE EGM?

The Men of League Foundation now has a new and contemporary constitution which better reflects the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC), our regulatory authority. The status of members is now clearly established in that they are not required to participate in the governance of the company and are not required to elect directors of the company. And finally, the current board has been formally and legitimately appointed, so that it can continue to oversee the regulatory and financial obligations of the organisation.

The Supporters of the Men of League Limited is in the process of being formally deregistered so that there are no possible regulatory or reporting obligations associated with this inactive entity.

## WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE FOUNDATION FOR 2020?

The year 2020 is obviously proving to be an extremely challenging one for all businesses and for-purpose organisations around the world. The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic are enormous and of course the full extent and duration of the impacts is still not known. We cannot sugar-coat the serious sustainability issues facing your Foundation. The Men of League Foundation has, like many others businesses, witnessed a huge drop off in revenue – the full NRL grant in 2020 is most uncertain, all fundraising events have been postponed indefinitely, support from clubs and some of our corporate sponsors has been withdrawn or is on hold until the economy returns to normal, sponsorship opportunities are unlikely as businesses struggle themselves and of course the entire rugby league world is in a most uncertain and unclear position. All of our normal fundraising activities have ground to a halt with the social separation and self-isolation regimes necessary to defeat the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Trying to look ahead and model what all this means in the coming twelve months is an enormous challenge.

Our wonderful wellbeing staff and volunteers have risen to the challenge after having to suspend the in-person visits we are known for and launching our virtual visitation program. The virtual visitation program enhances social connection and limits loneliness by connecting with wellbeing officers with community members via a range of technologies.

Under these circumstances, the Foundation has little option than to reduce its costs wherever possible whilst continuing to deliver upon its purpose – to continue to assist those in need in the rugby league community. Unfortunately, of necessity, there may need to be some tightening of the financial grants to help provide some level of assistance to as many as we can, and a focus on providing emotional and psychological support. Staff have been working hard to keep abreast of the support packages released by Government to ensure people in need can be connected to support in a timely and responsive manner. But the fundamental conclusion is we can only provide financial support as long as our revenue sources allow us to do so.

Fortunately, one of the very positive things that has occurred is the wonderful support of our members. Whilst our 2020 membership campaign was delayed until the recent EGM cleared the way for it, the support of you, our members, in renewing membership in 2020 has been fantastic! Membership





fees and member donations are so much more critical to us than ever before in continuing our wellbeing activities and we will be looking at new ways to grow our membership base in 2020 and beyond. Maintaining communication and engagement with our volunteers and our members throughout this difficult period will be most important and hopefully the great game of rugby league and the strong communities which support and sustain it, will remain strong.

### **THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS AFFECTED THE WORLD AND THE MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION HASN'T BEEN EXEMPT. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT IMPACT THIS HAS HAD ON THE FOUNDATION?**

As I said previously, the impact has been quite monumental particularly in regard to revenue – we are literally living on our reserves and upon our membership fees to deliver our wellbeing services and to pay our bills. Like all businesses, especially not-for-profits, we have to look at reducing our operating costs and make sure we maintain the necessary levels of cash and reserves to survive this downturn whilst doing whatever we can to continue to help those in dire need. And, of course, we are an integral part of the rugby league community – suspension of the game at all levels across the nation impacts us, directly through the current loss of the NRL's financial support but indirectly simply through the loss of the face to face interaction and engagement of this strong and resilient and caring community.

Meanwhile, until the world returns to normal, the board is exploring all options to keep the Foundation viable and in a position to resume normal activities once the crisis is over. In this respect, recent government financial support initiatives are being explored.

### **I UNDERSTAND THE FOUNDATION IS LOOKING TO ATTRACT A BROADER DEMOGRAPHIC AND IN PARTICULAR TO HAVE MORE WOMEN AND YOUNGER PEOPLE INVOLVED. HOW CAN WOMEN AND THE YOUNGER DEMOGRAPHIC GET INVOLVED?**

This has been part of the board's agenda for some time now. Prior to this pandemic (and hopefully once the world returns to normal and the great game of rugby league is restored) the women's game and women's involvement in rugby league was growing exponentially. But our volunteers, who under normal circumstances do an outstanding job in raising awareness at a grassroots level of the work of the Foundation in raising funds, driving membership and helping identify, refer and support people in the rugby league community in need, are under-represented by women. The vulnerability, too, of some of our older dedicated volunteers has been highlighted also by the COVID-19 controls. Younger members can bring new ideas and new enthusiasm to our local committees and help ease the burden on some of our very loyal, dedicated and long-serving volunteers who do so much to keep our organisation functioning.

If anyone is interested in getting involved, please hop onto our website at <https://menofleague.com/contact-us/> or admin@menofleague.com. We have committees throughout NSW and Queensland, and in Melbourne and Perth.

**Professor the Hon Stephen Martin  
Chairman**

# THE SUPPORT THAT HELPS US SUPPORT YOU

The current COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected many industries and businesses, and the Foundation and our sponsors are no exception. While we have staff members working remotely and have had to suspend personal wellbeing visits, the support of the rugby league community is still important – even if it is via the telephone.

Our support of our members has been strongly supported by several companies over many years, but they too are facing difficult times.

Unfortunately, two long-time and valued supporters of the Foundation have had to suspend their sponsorship due to the current economic situation.

Aces Sporting Club, in the Melbourne suburb of Keysborough, has been a devoted and generous supporter of the Foundation's Victorian activities. However, like all clubs, hotels and restaurants across the nation, it has had to close to the public. The Club houses function rooms (which the Foundation utilises), a bar, the Asian Palace restaurant and operates a multi-level licenced golf driving range but all have had to be temporarily shut.

Similarly, Llewellyn Motors in Ipswich has been forced to discontinue its financial support for the Men of League Foundation for the time being because of the economic impact of the current situation.

The Foundation would like to thank Aces Sporting Club and Llewellyn Motors for their support and we wish them well in recovering from these difficult times.

BMD, which has been the Men of League Foundation's wellbeing partner in Queensland for the past three and a half years, is another valued supporter. BMD not only provides a fully serviced vehicle for our Queensland wellbeing lead Roxanne Moates but has a genuinely caring appreciation and community awareness of what the Foundation does.

The ongoing support of BMD is greatly appreciated and helps us to continue the core business of the Foundation – assisting those in need.

# AROUND THE COUNTRY

## TWO JOHNS CONNECT



*It's a knockout item ... (from left) Johnny Lewis, John McKiernan and Port Stephens committee president Chris Kelly.*

Boxing hall of famer and great supporter of the Foundation, Johnny Lewis, made former Newcastle player of the year John McKiernan a happy man at the recent Port Stephens committee's Kick-Off Club at Soldiers Point Bowling Club.

John McKiernan and his wife Janet secured a canvas print of Lewis and his world champion Kostya Tszyu.

Guest speaker Lewis was happy to sign the memento with the message, 'To John, always in your corner'.

John McKiernan was a football of great promise when he won the player of the year award in the strong Newcastle competition in 1981, when only 19 and playing for the North Newcastle club.

His prize was a Toyota car! He signed for Lakes United for the 1982 season but a car accident in the off-season left him with severe head and facial injuries and he missed the entire season.

He made a comeback in 1983 but was rushed to hospital with a blot clot and underwent brain surgery, ending his league career.

Yet he has remained a great lover of the game and the Foundation's Port Stephens committee and left the luncheon a happy man with his prized piece of memorabilia and a good chat with Johnny Lewis.



### SHELLEY BEACH GOLF CLUB EARLY MOANERS GROUP

Central Coast committee were presented with a cheque for \$1000 from Shelley Beach Golf Club's Early Moaners Golfers group in December. They had raised the money at their annual State of Origin day.

The history of the Moaners Golf Club is that they are a group of golfers at Shelley Beach Golf Club, with a blend of sporting backgrounds and interests, who play Sunday mornings with a 6am tee off, with between 50 to 80 in attendance. They raise money in support of several charity's and organisations from the green fees.

The continued support of the Foundation is greatly appreciated.

### LUNCH WITH ALFIE

One of the auction prizes at the Queensland annual lunch last September was a lunch with Broncos and Maroons legend Allan 'Alfie' Langer at the Alliance Hotel Brisbane. Foundation life member Darryl Van de Velde and Alf hosted guests in a highly entertaining afternoon. Those who joined Darryl and Allan were Lewis Dickinson, Brodie Tarrant, Jesse Pukallus James Gillanders, Christian Coccilone, Lennon Wiki and Brent Pukallus.



# IE GROUNDS

## — ROOSTERS RIGHT BEHIND RON —

When the Sydney Roosters became an official partner of the Men of League Foundation in 2019, CEO of the Roosters Joe Kelly was adamant that care for past players associated with the club be made a priority in what was named the Retro Roosters initiative.

When news that former Roosters legend and Men of League Foundation patron Ron Coote had tragically lost his home in the New Year's Eve's devastating Lake Conjola fires, the two organisations knew they had to do something special to demonstrate their support.

On Saturday 1 February, Sydney Roosters players were asked to volunteer and to make their way under their own steam to visit the town of Milton on the NSW South Coast. The South Coast had experienced a significant amount of trauma through the fires and the community needed a visit to lift their spirits.

Several NRL players jumped at the opportunity to give back to the community including Victor Radley and Brett Morris. They were joined by members of the coaching staff in Matt King and Nathan Cayless. The squad participated in a police-escorted tour of

many of the things in their home can be easily replaced. However, what cannot be easily replaced was Ron's priceless memorabilia from his illustrious career which perished in the blaze.



*Showing they care ... Ron Coote surrounded by the crew from Men of League Foundation and Sydney Roosters.*

When the Roosters players arrived at the Star Hotel, obviously impacted by what they had seen, Brett Morris asked for quiet as he paid tribute to Ron in a heartfelt address.

"The fires have done a lot of damage, and damage to one of the greats of our game," Morris said. Speaking on behalf of the club and the Foundation he continued, "We know it is not going to replace the treasured positions you've lost, but we have this to present to you mate." He then handed over a 1970 World Cup framed photo, kindly donated by Rugby League historian Terry Williams and framed by Icons of Sport, of Ron, Australian captain in the final at Headingley, with fellow Kangaroo Billy Smith and Australian coach Harry Bath.

Visibly moved by the gesture, Ron – who played in the Roosters' 1975-76 premiership-winning teams after winning four titles with Souths from 1967-71 – expressed his appreciation and said he spoke on behalf of the community in explaining the impact of having a successful team like the Roosters devote time during their busy pre-season schedule to show that they cared for those affected by the bushfires.

If you are aware of rugby league community members who need support following the recent bushfires, please email [wellbeing@menofleague.com](mailto:wellbeing@menofleague.com) to make a referral.



*Roosters heroes past and present ... Ron Coote pictured with NRL players (from left) Brett Morris, Egan Butcher, Nat Butcher, Victor Radley and Ryan Hall.*

the bushfire effected area and witnessed firsthand the devastation, including what was left of the Coote's family home.

The recently regenerated Men of League Foundation South Coast committee met at the Star Hotel in Milton to prepare to meet Ron and the Roosters players for a special surprise presentation. The Cootes will rebuild in time and

# PHILLIPPA AND HER 'STORM SONS'

MOST NRL CLUBS HAVE A 'HOUSE MOTHER' WHO LOOKS AFTER ASPIRING YOUNG PLAYERS WHEN THEY FIRST COME INTO THE PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT. PHILLIPPA WADE IS MELBOURNE STORM'S SUCH SAVIOUR – AND STILL HAS TIME BE AN ACTIVE FOUNDATION VOLUNTEER TOO.



Phillipa's boys at the Storm's awards night: (from left) Sale Finau, Houston Wade, Louis Geraghty, Jesse Arthars and Phillipa Wade.

## AJ MITHEN

Rugby league's host families are an important part of what goes on behind the scenes in the NRL. When young players are recruited to a new city, they are often placed with a local family to make the transition easier.

In the seven years since the Wades became a host family for the Melbourne Storm, Men of League Foundation's Victorian committee member Phillipa Wade has seen firsthand how young players handle the game's highs, lows and everything in between.

In that time she has seen the likes of NRL stars Brodie Croft, Brandon Smith and Scott Drinkwater and NSW Waratahs player Mack Mason adapt to the challenges of life away from home as young aspiring professional footballers.

Phillippa spoke about what it's like nurturing the Storm's up and coming talent as they strive to break through at one of the most successful sporting clubs in Australia.

"I've always been involved in rugby league," Phillipa said. "My father played rugby league, my brothers played rugby league, my husband played rugby league and my son played rugby league here in Victoria."

"It was my husband and son who wanted to be a host family some seven years ago. They had to convince me - I knew in the

end I would be doing the work, not them!"

"But I wouldn't be without my 'Storm Sons'. While it is a lot of work at times, and it can be challenging dealing with the personalities and injuries, it's also very rewarding watching them achieve milestones and goals, not to mention the friendships and bonds we have forged."

There has been a steady stream of young signees, trialists and other players at Phillipa's place.

"We've had quite a few boys through the house. Some boys will come and stay a year, some two years. Some might only come for the pre-season. We've even helped out if someone's just come down for a week or a couple of weeks training."

And it's a lot more than just a room and a roof being provided to the players. Phillipa's family home plays a key role in helping the young men understand how to look after themselves.

"Many of the boys that we've had, have come straight from school to us," Phillipa said. "I've had to show some of them - not all of them - how to make beds, wash clothes, you know. It's basic life skills because their mum's had done everything for them at home."

"The first rule we tell them when they arrive is that they see that I'm the female in this house, they need to put the toilet seat down. That's a must. That's the first thing we tell them!" Phillipa jokes.

"Every Tuesday night we have Storm family dinner with the boys who used to live with us but have ventured out flatting and the boys who have come from interstate and don't have family in Melbourne join in too".

The Tuesday family dinner is a big part of helping young players stay grounded.

"It just lightens the mood, because they're going to training and everything's so regimented and so serious," Phillipa added.

Phillippa's role as host parent includes providing a compassionate ear for players who might be doing it tough. It is critical help for players who are away from their usual support networks.

"They can talk to me about anything. Some of the boys over the years have spoken to me about relationship issues or other stresses. I've had to support them through all that," she said.

"We go through the highs and lows with them. We had Scott Drinkwater for two years and he's moved on to the North Queensland Cowboys. He came home to tell us that he was leaving and I burst into tears because I do get emotionally attached. I only have one biological son Houston but they're all my Storm Sons."

The bond Phillipa and her family build with players go well beyond the period of time they live under her roof. "I still keep in contact with them every week," she says. "If they've moved on to other clubs, if I see them play, I send a text to say they've played a good game and we send messages for their birthdays and milestones."

With a house full of 'Storm Sons' it's amazing that Phillipa still finds the time to be an active Men of League Foundation volunteer. She is fondly referred to within the Victorian committee as "the world's best raffle ticket seller", particularly when the team are given the opportunity to run the raffle on Storm game days.

Victorian committee president Peter Foreman describes Phillipa as an asset to the team. "Her passion for the game and the people within it, her drive and enthusiasm, her knowledge of the game and the networks she has built over time all provide tremendous value to the Foundation activities in Melbourne," he said, adding how important it was to have a female perspective.

Phillippa admits she initially thought the Foundation was just for men. It wasn't until she became more involved through her husband Massey (a fellow committee member) that she realised the organisation supported the men, women and children of rugby league.

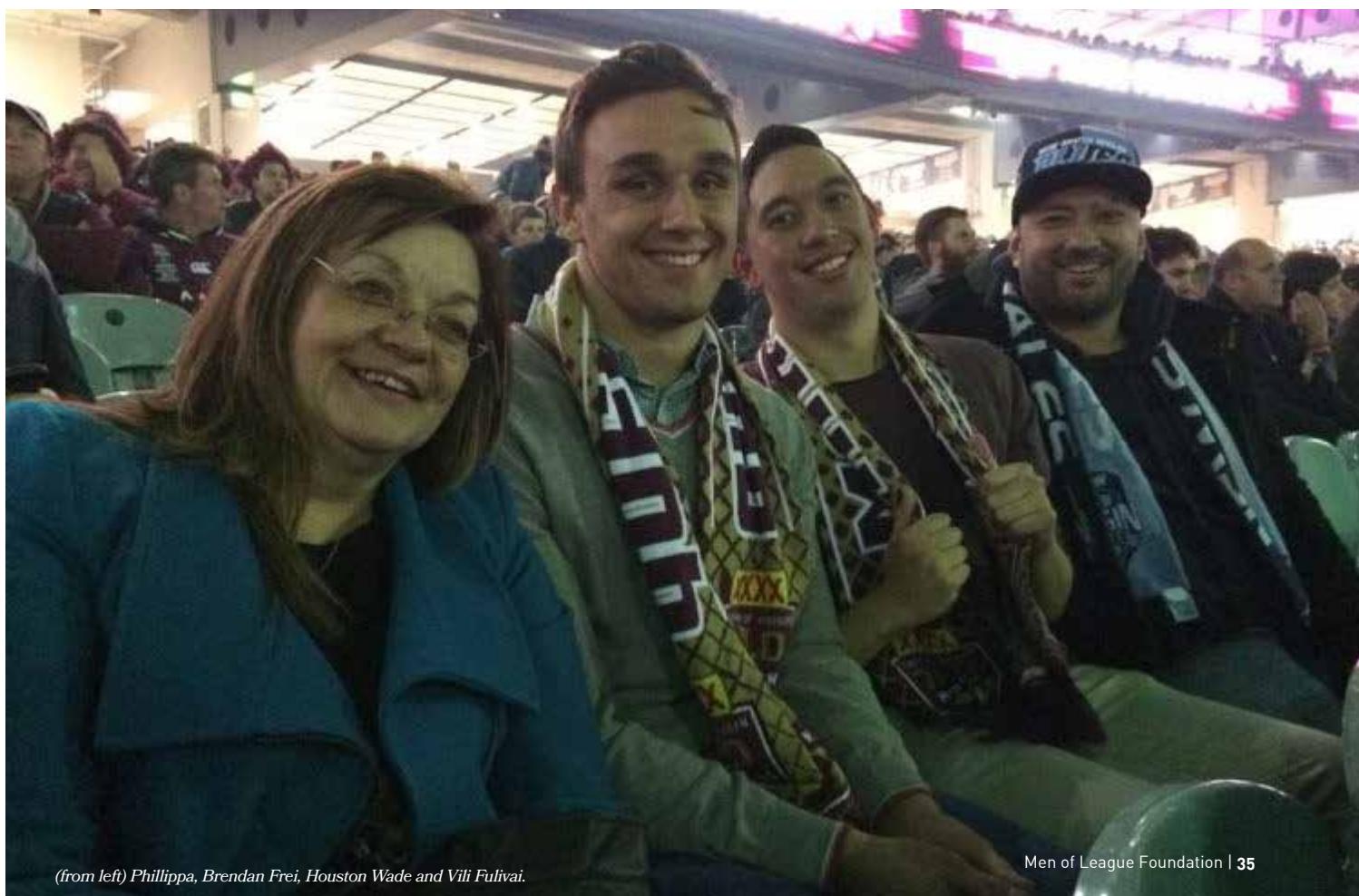
She encourages all women with an involvement in the game to consider becoming a Foundation volunteer. "Rugby league is not just a sport for men, we play an important part in all levels of the game and our female voices need to be heard. Women can provide a great balance to a committee and can draw on their experiences, from not only the roles they play in the game but also their roles as mothers and grandmothers."

Like all of us, the recent COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the NRL's 2020 season weighs heavily on Phillipa's mind.

"Look, I'm scared, I have to admit," she says. I'm scared if they cancel the season; there's a lot of people's jobs in jeopardy. I don't think people realise what's involved in putting an NRL team on the field.

"It is huge behind the scenes but people don't see that. It's sad because we're going through tough times and the public needs a way of releasing that negativity. And watching sport is one way we can distract ourselves from what is going on in the world."

It's a tough time for rugby league, but the game is lucky to have women like Phillipa volunteering to make a real difference, not only to the NRL stars of the future but also to those who fall on hard times and require support from the Men of League Foundation.



(from left) Phillipa, Brendan Frei, Houston Wade and Vili Fulivai.

# BRONCOS AND COWBOYS HOLD COURT



Paul White & Jharal Yow Yeh



Paul White & Jeff Reibel & Peter Parr

Far North Queensland members were provided with some fascinating insights into the National Rugby League and how clubs operate when the bosses of the North Queensland Cowboys and Brisbane Broncos were guests speakers at a luncheon held in February on the eve of the two clubs' trial match at Cairns.

Cowboys CEO Jeff Reibel and general manager of football Peter Parr spoke frankly on several subjects while Broncos CEO Paul White and former star player Jharal Yow Yeh, provided their views with a Brisbane perspective during interviews with former Courier Mail newspaper's chief league reporter Steve Ricketts.

And conversation certainly included the hot topic of expansion, as fans await direction from the NRL on their intentions to spread the game through another club or two, with the options of a second Brisbane team or another in Perth or elsewhere in Queensland have been widely thrown around.

Reibel said he felt Far North Queensland should not consider pitching for an NRL team but instead lobby for support to build a new major stadium in Cairns with a capacity of 20,000-25,000 that is capable of hosting more NRL matches than in recent years, as well as other major sports. South Sydney brought a game a season to Cairns over a six-year period from 2013-18.

White told the audience he was comfortable with the prospect of another team being based in Brisbane. He said the Broncos are well positioned to compete with a new rival which would further lift the profile of the sport in Australia's third largest city, which the Broncos have had exclusive access to since joining the competition in 1988 – and had fiercely protected against another NRL team for, certainly, their first two decades.

He stated with no reservation that the NRL had to provide an indication of its intentions soon and that clubs wanted leadership in this area of the game and a clear strategy, which has certainly not been seen with the Gold Coast Titans the only inclusion since the reinstatement of South Sydney in 2002.

Paul White also gave the gathering an exclusive insight into the David Fifita issue in Bali during the off-season and indicated there was a lot more to the story than what the media had indicated. He hinted that Fifita had been a victim of a set-up, a story that broke the next day in Courier Mail.

It was obvious talking to the two representatives from each club that a strong mutual respect existed between the two Queensland clubs which have played some classic tight encounters over the past few years, certainly since the Cowboys' breakthrough premiership victory on the back of a Johnathan Thurston field goal in extra-time in 2015.

Parr has been at the Cowboys since 2001 in charge of football, plus a brief period as CEO, and has seen the club grow from a struggling outfit that had never beaten the Broncos until a 10-0 victory the first time the Cowboys had made the finals in 2004. They have become a club that has had success comparable to the Broncos in at least the past decade.

Parr spoke glowingly of Valentine Holmes, who had returned from his aborted stint in the NFL to return home to where he played his junior football. He described the Queensland and Test utility back as "the ultimate professional in everything he does" and revealed he had had "a very positive impact on the younger players at the clubs with his attitude, expectations and standards he set".

All four guests were glowing in their praise of the Men of League Foundation and the role it plays in the rugby league community.

Also present were former Cowboys fan favourite Ty Williams, who is now the Northern Pride coach in the Intrust Super Cup, and the Foundation's Queensland state manager Andrew Blucher.

Hopefully the event was the catalyst to attract more support for the Foundation in the Far North Queensland region.



CARING FOR THE  
MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY



# JUNIOR CRAZY SOCK ROUND

KNOCK YOUR (NORMAL) SOCKS OFF!

1<sup>ST</sup> - 2<sup>ND</sup> AUGUST 2020

ALL RUGBY LEAGUE CLUBS AND PLAYERS ARE INVITED TO KNOCK THEIR (NORMAL) SOCKS OFF FOR THE ANNUAL MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION JUNIOR CRAZY SOCK ROUND!

ALL FUNDS RAISED WILL GO TOWARDS THE MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION'S WELLBEING PROGRAM THAT SUPPORTS THE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY WHO ARE DOING IT TOUGH.

PURCHASE YOUR  
CRAZY SOCKS!

[MENOFLEAGUE.COM/SHOP](http://menofleague.com/shop)



\$12 PER PAIR

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY:



Did you know?  
MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION  
OFFER JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP  
STARTING FROM JUST \$25!

FIND OUT MORE AT  
[MENOFLEAGUE.COM/MEMBERSHIP](http://menofleague.com/membership)

# 'MACCA' LIFTS AN OLD SCHOOLMATE'S SPIRITS



*Bob McCarthy (second from left) with a smiling Joe Younis (bottom) and his family.*

It is often stated that rugby league forges lifetime friendships and that statement was proven again when wellbeing officers Bob McCarthy MBE and Ken Vessey visited Joe 'Dib' Younis and his family at his home.

Joe and Bobby grew up in the inner Sydney suburb of Redfern, were schoolmates at the St Peters Catholic School in Surry Hills and played rugby league for their school teams. St Peters produced some of our country's most accomplished rugby league players in Bob McCarthy, Bernie Purcell, Keith Holman, Dicky Poole, Benny Wearing and Jack Troy.

Joe (who has since sadly passed away) lived with a serious lung disease Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. He was an avid supporter of the Rabbitohs, having grown up a stone throw away from Redfern Oval. He played junior league for Redfern United and played in Souths' lower grades. His loving wife of 54 years, Anne, told us that in their courting days she quickly learnt that on Sundays they would be attending Redfern Oval if the Rabbitohs were playing there.

That practice continued as their family grew with the birth of daughters Joanne, Carolyn and sons Steve and Jeffrey. Their extended families continued to attend Rabbitohs games, home and away.

Steve contacted the Foundation to see if Bob might visit to lift his father's spirits. On the day of the visit, Anne told Joe a new doctor was coming to see him. "My words cannot adequately

describe the jubilation on Joe's face when he instead saw Bobby walk into his lounge room and re-introduced himself," said Ken Vessey.

"Needless to say, Bobby and I were welcomed warmly by Joe, Anne and the several family members and it was emotional to witness their overall joy of having Bobby there.

"As you can imagine, during our visit the talk was about their school days together all those years ago and Joe's experiences supporting the South Sydney team, including recalling Bobby's remarkable career and loyalty to the Rabbitohs. Other topics of discussion included reliving the South Sydney exclusion years, the Sydney Town Hall protest march and final reinstatement. Attending the 1965 grand final victory by Souths where, due to a capacity crowd, Joe was only able to take one step inside the entry to the turnstiles and listen to the roar of the crowd.

"In 1971 whilst Anne was in hospital having just given birth to their second child, Joe was at the Sydney Cricket Ground watching his beloved Rabbitohs win their 20th premiership and in 2014, with 43 years between winning premierships, he was able with his whole family to attend the grand final and witness and experience the joy of a Rabbitoh's victory."

The Foundation was advised of Joe's passing just before going to print. Our thoughts are with the entire family.

# OUR AMBASSADOR IN PROFILE

## WHAT IS YOUR EARLIEST RUGBY LEAGUE MEMORY?

Running around throwing the ball with my mates at the local field. I was also very lucky as a young kid; I was a Roosters ball boy and got to run out of the tunnel at the old Sydney Football Stadium in front of Brad Fittler.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE MOMENT IN YOUR FOOTY CAREER?

Making my NRL debut for my junior club, the Cronulla Sutherland Sharks, at our home ground in front of my family and friends and playing under my old man (former Sharks coach Shane Flanagan). More recently, winning the 2020 World Club Challenge with the Sydney Roosters in my first game for the club in England was also a very special moment.

## HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION?

I've always known of the great work the Men of League Foundation does but it was amazing seeing how much help and support they gave Lance Thompson's children after he passed away suddenly. Our coaching staff invited the Foundation to come and brief our squad and it reinforced to me how much they do to lift the spirits of the rugby league family.

## WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED AS AN AMBASSADOR FOR THE FOUNDATION?

I want to be a part of something special and Men of League Foundation is exactly that. I want to get out in the community, help make a difference to people's lives and bring joy to people through our connection through rugby league.

## THE FOUNDATION IS LOOKING TO ATTRACT MORE YOUNGER MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS. WHY SHOULD YOUNGER PLAYERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS GET INVOLVED?

Young players and people of the community should get involved because the Men of League Foundation is for everyone. We never know what is around the corner and some day it could be you or someone close to you that needs the help. This is an opportunity to build a better community.

## WITH THE TELSTRA PREMIERSHIP ON HOLD (HOPEFULLY BACK REALLY SOON), WHAT WILL TIME IN ISOLATION LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

Time in isolation for me will involve looking after my body and wellbeing the best I can. That means setting up a training program that ensures I'm ready for the season to start again.

## WHAT WILL BE YOUR 'GO TO' ISOLATION SNACK?

Try to maintain discipline during this time, all snacks high in protein!

## WHAT IS YOUR NETFLIX/STAN RECOMMENDATION FOR A MOVIE OR TV SERIES?

Interested in watching the cricket documentary 'Test' on Amazon Prime. Will be a great insight into the cricket world and what goes on behind the scenes.

## IF YOU WERE GOING TO PICK UP A NEW HOBBY WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I have a new hobby which is golf. So I will be practising my swing!

# KYLE FLANAGAN SYDNEY ROOSTERS



## HOW WILL YOU BE KEEPING FIT?

I will be trying to keep as much of my usual routine as I can with weight sessions, running loads, any kind of cardio. I will also use the time to expand my knowledge of the game.

## IF YOU HAD TO ISOLATE WITH THREE FELLOW ROOSTERS PLAYERS WHO WOULD YOU CHOOSE AND WHY?

James Tedesco, just because he is the GOAT; Jared Waerea-Hargreaves, for his banter; Luke Keary because he is a businessman and we might come up with the next big idea.

# FROM TWITTER TO THE TWEED



The Broncos' signed jerseys organised by Darius Boyd.

In late 2019, the Men of League Foundation received a surprising message via our Twitter account @menofleague. The unexpected contact was made by Justin Robertson who identified himself as an avid rugby league supporter.

Justin had an incredibly generous offer for the Foundation. He had received some gift vouchers for the official online store of the NRL, NRLshop.com. He realised he had all the rugby league merchandise he needed, so he posted a message to his "Tweeps" (social media slang for Twitter people/followers) to see if they had any suggestions for a worthy organisation that would benefit from the donation. A friend of the Foundation saw the tweet and suggested Justin look no further than rugby league's own charity, Men of League Foundation.

The Foundation's wellbeing lead Roxanne Moates considered a number of worthy families who would benefit from having their spirits lifted by this gift. After plenty of thought, Roxanne settled on a brother and sister duo aged just eight and 10 years who had become involved with the Foundation's wellbeing program just before Christmas after their father had sadly lost his life to pancreatic cancer.

The family have a strong connection to rugby league through their involvement with local club the South Tweed Seagulls.

Despite their Tweed connection (which one could assume would align them with the Gold Coast Titans), the pair are massive fans of the Brisbane Broncos.

The order was placed online and two Broncos jerseys promptly arrived at our Queensland office. Before delivery, to make the gift even more special, a call was made to good friend of the Foundation, Broncos star Darius Boyd. He was asked to autograph the jerseys and if possible get a couple of his teammates to do the same.

As is typical of the generosity of Darius, he returned the jerseys two days later complete with the signatures of the entire 2020 squad.

Social media often gets a bad rap but this was an example of how platforms like Twitter can bring a community together. What started as a simple tweet became a gesture of support and solidarity for a rugby league family that had experienced unimaginable loss. The family is looking forward to seeing Darius and the Broncos back on the field some time soon.

Our sincere thanks go to Justin Robertson for his incredible gesture and to all those who choose to support the Foundation through membership or donations.

**THE MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION HAS A PRESENCE ON FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM!  
SHOW YOUR SUPPORT TODAY BY FOLLOWING, LIKING AND SHARING OUR PAGES.**

# GOOD KNIGHTS' DAY IN THE BAY



## HOSTED BY PORT STEPHENS COMMITTEE

### CHARLES ELIAS

Around 250 people attended the Port Stephens Men of League Kick-Off Club and fundraising day held at Soldiers Point Bowling Club in February.

Newcastle Knights old boys were there in numbers to support the Foundation and to honour former Newcastle Knights board member Leigh Maughan, one of the founding fathers of the Knights who received an OAM for his services to rugby league and was a leading sports reporter on television and radio in the 1970s and 80s.

The event also recognised the work of Allan Bell, the mastermind behind the Knights' entry into the premiership and in their early years as a tactical guru in their formative years when the mantra of 'our team, our town' was created. He continues to help up-and-coming young players.

Among the ex-players who attended were Mark Sargent, Brad Godden, Ken Maddison, Bruce Walker and Dean Carney, in addition to former Newcastle hardmen Peter Johnston, Marc Glanville and Tony Butterfield, who conducted an excellent interview with Australian boxing hall of famer Johnny Lewis.

ABC radio's Craig Hamilton's interview with new Knights coach Adam O'Brien left everyone in the room convinced that this



*From left: Men of League's national wellbeing manager Jessica Macartney, boxing training legend Johnny Lewis, Knights coach Adam O'Brien and Port Stephens branch president Chris Kelly.*



*Johnny Lewis is interviewed by former Knights prop and his one-time manager Tony Butterfield.*

humble young man who has had Craig Bellamy and Trent Robinson as mentors will deliver for the Knights fans.

Also in attendance was Jack Newton, who won professional golf tournaments all over the world before suffering a nasty accident and is now a major benefactor for junior golf and Diabetes Australia.

Those who supported the "feel good day" were very generous to the Men of League cause with raffle and auction items well supported. Comedy was provided by 'Out There' auctioneer Sean Chaffer and comedian Isaac Butterfield.

"On behalf of the Port Stephens committee we would like to offer our sincere thanks to everyone who was part of this most enjoyable and successful day," added Allan Bell.

# 'EFFORT ON EFFORT' IS ASHTON'S NEW MANTRA

**ASHTON MARSH'S USUALLY BEAMING SMILE HAD BEEN SEEN RARELY DURING A VERY TOUGH YEAR DURING WHICH HE HAD ENDURED CONSTANT TREATMENT FOR A BRAIN TUMOUR. A SURPRISE RED-CARPET VISIT TO THE INNER SANCTUM OF PARRAMATTA EELS' NEW TRAINING COMPLEX GAVE HIM NEW STRENGTH, NEW DIRECTION ... AND A GRIN FROM EAR TO EAR.**

Ashton Marsh wasn't all that impressed when his dad Greg advised him that he wouldn't be attending school because he had an additional physiotherapy session scheduled at Westmead Children's Hospital. It's a place he has spent more time than any young person could envisage over the past 11 months.

The astute 15-year-old probably realised that something unexpected was happening when his brothers Kyan and Chase were also given a leave-pass for the day to accompany him to this impromptu appointment. What Ashton could never have imagined is the once in a lifetime experience that awaited him.

There was an unexpected detour.

In December 2019, Men of League Foundation partner, the Parramatta Eels, abandoned their training and administration facilities to move to a new purpose built state-of-the-art facility in Kellyville. When the Marsh family pulled into the driveway of the complex, there was no mistaking the blue and gold stripes that stretch the length of the property. This is the new home of the Eels, the envy of the National Rugby League and a venue that few fans have had the good fortune to visit.

Men of League Foundation national wellbeing manager Jessica Macartney and wellbeing officer Jim Quinn met the family in the lower carpark 250 metres from the Eels headquarters' entrance. Ashton was largely in the dark about what was about to transpire, although he knew that whatever was to come would now no doubt involved his beloved Parramatta Eels.

Ashton's facial expression gave nothing away. He may have been playing it cool. Ashton is a junior rugby league player himself, having represented his local club, the Camden Rams. His playing career is on a hiatus since a shock diagnosis of a brain tumour in April 2019.

Ashton has endured 11 long months of surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. His eye sight has been impacted, he has lost a lot of weight and he has had some dark days. One month after the initial surgery, Eels player Nathan Brown and Men of League

Foundation volunteer Luke Goodwin visited him in the hospital.

What Ashton doesn't know is how many times this surprise day had had to be postponed. The harsh but necessary treatment knocked him around so much that there had been numerous postponements of this plan. Remarkably, it feels like all the false starts happened for a reason because the timing of this could not be more perfect - coinciding with the completion of all the treatment.

Having tolerated months of hospital visits and stays, he had a new challenge - abandoning the security of his wheelchair and learning to walk again.

His mother Lauren and physiotherapist Nicola encouraged Ashton to leave the chair in the car and walk, with support, the short distance to the club. Ashton's reluctance was evident, his confidence low and he did not feel ready. No amount of encouragement would change his mind and dad Greg agreed to push him in the wheelchair.

A smiling Paige Treglown greeted the group at the entrance. She is the Eels' community executive. Paige attended that first hospital visit almost 12 months earlier too and has looked forward to the day that Ashton was strong enough to be welcomed to the club. Paige presented Ashton with a full Eels training uniform and he was astonished when she directed him to the changing rooms so he could don the blue and gold.

Ashton, with the assistance of his Nicola, was about to join the Eels' rehab group of players and be the first person from outside the Eels system to be able to access the fully kitted out gym. As Nicola led Ashton through his exercises on the newly installed wrestling mat, there was a change in Ashton. He started to smile, a rare sight for mum Lauren and dad Greg in recent times. Ashton smile made them smile, and it appeared to be catching. Ashton's confidence increased when Nicola added a football to the drill.

The Eels players started to arrive, appearing a little beaten up



*The smile is back ... Ashton talks of the thrill of his surprise day to parents Lauren and Greg.*

after their round one clash with the Bulldogs. Nathan Brown recognised Ashton from the hospital visit and headed straight over to welcome the Marsh family to the Eels' new home. Without prompting, he was soon joined by fellow teammates Mitchell Moses, Regan Campbell-Gillard, Kane Evans and others.

Newly appointed CEO Jim Sarintinos took time out of his busy day to introduce himself and join the conversation and Ashton was gifted the match ball from the night before. The reception could not have been warmer and that smile of Ashton's - which there had only been a glimpse of earlier – was starting to become a permanent fixture.

Men of League Foundation ambassador Cint Gutherson took the ball briefly and returned only when he had gathered as many signatures from his teammates he could quickly obtain. There were plenty!

While the squad finished their session, Ashton and the family were given the grand tour including exclusive access to the team room. On the wall there is a mantra that will drive the Eels towards the 2020 premiership. It simply reads "effort on effort". The group collectively paused and soaked the words in. It dawns on all those present that this is what it will take for Ashton to conquer his final obstacle and learn to walk again unassisted.

The Men of League Foundation representatives knew that this experience would give Ashton a much-needed boost but they wanted to contribute to his longer-term rehabilitation too, so Jim Quinn presented Ashton with a \$500 Rebel Sports voucher. The Marsh family were in the process of setting up a home gym and this voucher will help to ensure Ashton has the top-quality equipment he needs.

The smile had become a permanent fixture on Ashton's face when Nathan Brown reappeared to chat to Ashton about the time he had spent in rehab recovering from injury and what he had learned along the way. He encouraged Ashton to set small goals on the way to the bigger ones and that all the hard work would pay off; that the pride in what he'd achieved would make it all worth it

when he realised how far he has come. Kane Evans stopped by for a chat too and recommended adding variety to the rehabilitation program to keep it interesting. The players brainstorm the songs they include in their motivational playlists.

Ashton Marsh won't know this, because he was concentrating so hard on applying "effort on effort", but there wasn't a dry eye among those watching when he discarded the wheelchair and opted to walk those 250 metres back to the car.

He required some assistance from physio Nicola to make it all the way but he won't need her for long. Ashton is on his way to recovery, with the smile on his face back and many at the Eels and the Foundation cheering him on.



*Ashton Marsh struck a close bond with Eels forward Nathan Brown. They are pictured here with Ashton's brothers Kyan and Chase and the Foundation's wellbeing officer Jim Quinn.*

# DESERVED RECOGNITION FOR GHOSN

GAVIN DENNETT

Rugby league has been a major part of Steve Ghosn's life for as long as he can remember and there is nothing he knows more about. Born in Newtown, in Sydney's inner west, in 1953 and growing up in a family immersed in the game, he developed a love for it early.

Through playing as a junior and in A-grade for Lidcombe, and into a distinguished career as a coach, at his core has been a dedication to the sport.

Now retired from the coaching caper, Ghosn has time to reflect on a distinguished career of mentoring young men and teaching them the winning ways of rugby league. The 66-year-old was recently bestowed life membership from NSW Rugby League, a prestigious accolade that acknowledges the enormous amount he has given to the code and the footy community.

"I love rugby league and it's been a big part of my life since I was a kid, so it's great to be honoured," says Steve.

"My brother George played a bit of first grade, half-a-dozen games with Wests plus lower grades, and the game has been a big part of our family. You don't expect to receive an accolade such as this, so it's special."

"There are a lot of good people who have received life membership over the years, so I'm very excited to join them."

Ghosn was inducted at the NSWRL annual general meeting on 21 February 21 along with Newtown Jets stalwart Terry Rowney and long-time coaching and development figure Peter Mulholland, two equally deserving recipients.

"I know both of them very well," says Ghosn. "It was good to be inducted with them as they have given so much to rugby league; very well deserved."

When Ghosn hung up the boots as a player, he turned to



Steve Ghosn (right) at a recent Western Sydney committee function with champion boxing trainer Johnny Lewis.

coaching and enjoyed several decades with the clipboard in hand. He was first grade coach of the Magpies from 1986-1987 and in more recent years enjoyed success during stints in the NSW Cup with Mounties and Ron Massey Cup with Windsor Wolves and Guildford Owls. In 2017, he came out of retirement to coach the Parramatta police team in the NSW Police Rugby League.

"I don't class myself as a coach; I class myself as a teacher," says Ghosn. "I'm pretty old fashioned and have always gauged someone on their heart, not their size."

"I get a buzz out of mentoring young people and teaching them about the game. It's satisfying to have made a contribution to players who went on to play first grade and have good careers."

While Ghosn may have stepped away from coaching, he's still contributing to rugby league through volunteering for the Men of League Foundation. As a member of the Western Sydney committee, he's giving back to the game and the community that is its lifeblood.

"The secretary of Western Sydney committee, Gary O'Donnell, is a good mate of mine. He's very keen on his role and I'm happy to volunteer my time."

"The Men of League Foundation does a lot of good work and it makes a lot of sense. Western Sydney is a big area for rugby league, so looking forward it would be good to get the older boys' [former players] lending their support."

"At the end of the day, if they fall on hard times they may depend on the Foundation, so I'd encourage everyone to get involved."



What a night ... (from left) Barry Muir, Dennis Ward, Frank Stanton, Ron Turner and Roy Masters.

# MASTER CLASS ON GOLD COAST

The Gold Coast committee's 10th annual Internationals Dinner held on 6 March was a tremendously successful night with guest speaker Roy Masters enthraling an audience of about 200 dedicated Foundation members and supporters at Burleigh Bears Rugby League Club.

Masters, the former Western Suburbs Magpies and St George coach who has since forged an outstanding career in journalism, travelled to the Gold Coast from Melbourne with his wife Elaine. The response he received from the audience was probably the best witnessed over the decade of the dinner's history.

Excerpts from the documentary 'Fibros v Silvertails', backgrounding the rivalry between the Magpies and Manly Sea Eagles in the 1980s, was played before Roy took the stage and totally absorbed the attention of the audience. Roy followed up with an entertaining, genuine and certainly humorous at times interview with the night's master of ceremonies, Neil Cadigan.

"Roy's ability to easily recall names, statistics and add humour had the crowd mesmerised," said Gold Coast committee president Lloyd Evans. "Our MC for the evening Mr Neil Cadigan played an enormous role in assisting Roy due to the amount of research he invested into ensuring the conversation flowed freely."

"The video prepared by Neil had everyone looking back at the '80s when the game was a little bit different from what we see today."

"Whilst Roy had a great evening discussing the Western Suburbs days, he really hit the nail on the head when he pointed out 'that while it is great to reminisce, the real reason we are all in this room tonight is to make rugby league a better game and to assist in the ongoing work of the Foundation in helping those of us who may, from time to time, need a little bit of assistance'.

"These few words certainly helped consolidate the emotion within the room."

Others who took the stage were chairman of Gold Coast Rugby League Peter Daley who spoke on the encouraging growth in participation, including among females, and the A grade competition. Former Newcastle Knights and Huddersfield Giants coach Rick Stone, who has returned to coach Intrust Super Cup premiers Burleigh Bears where he had such great success in the

1990s, also provided a great insight into his career and the Bears' 2020 campaign.

Former Australian and NSW forward Anthony Laffranchi, now general manager of football with the Gold Coast Titans, gave a frank insight into the Titans' past few seasons, their expectations in the future and revealed a moving recollection of his Test career just days after the death of his father.

The list of international players who attended included three dual Test representatives John Brass, Geoff Richardson and Ray Price. They would have been joined by a fourth in Bob Honan but he had had a fall from a ladder and was recuperating. Other internationals, representing Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand, Ireland, USA, Tonga and Samoa across every decade from the 1950s to the 2000s, were Mick Veivers, Barry Muir, John Morgan, Dennis Ward, Frank Stanton, Geoff Richardson, Anthony Laffranchi, Steve Martin, Phil Daley, Ron Turner, John Lang (Australia); Sam Stewart, Bernie Lowther, Graeme Farrar, Aaron Whittaker, Robert Irvine, Kelly Shelford (New Zealand); Paul Charlton (Great Britain); Matt Petersen (USA) and Kevin Campion (Ireland).

On each table was placed a Foundation football signed by members of the 1959-60 Kangaroos when they had their 60th reunion last year at the Burleigh Bears. One person from each table was lucky enough to win the ball on their table via a raffle.

"Member of that '59-60 touring party, Barry Muir, was present and I witnessed a number of lucky winners getting photos taken with Barry," Lloyd Evans said.

"On behalf of the Gold Coast committee we would like to say thank you to all of the internationals who not only attended but made themselves freely available for photos, chats and autographs with others in attendance."

"Thanks must go to the Burleigh Bears club for hosting the evening and continuing their ongoing support of the Foundation. And to Nerang RSL and their sub-branch for supporting three tables on the night along with Westies Concreting, Gold Coast Bowls Club, Gold Coast Rugby League, Gold Coast Titans, Belle Property, Burleigh Juniors and everyone else that supported the evening we say a big thank you."

# HELPING HAND



Les Pearce with Cooper and his mother Chantelle.

## COOPER FAWCETT

Central Coast wellbeing officers Lance Henry and Les Pearce visited six-year-old Cooper Fawcett at his parents' home in Umina.

Cooper started playing footy when he was only four in his brothers under-6's team and played two seasons before a brain tumour struck him down.

He was taken to Westmead Children's Hospital for surgery in January 2019. Complications from the surgery resulted in Cooper developing an acquired brain injury known as Posterior Fosser Syndrome. He could not open his eyes for a few weeks, did not speak for about eight weeks and cannot walk or stand on his own. With intense therapy, he may regain strength so that he may walk unaided and communicate.

Cooper is a Storm supporter, wearing their colours whenever he can. His father Mack played in the NRL competition for Melbourne and coached the Umina Bunnies first grade in 2013 and coached Woy Woy Roosters firsts in 2017 (as player-coach) and 2018. Mack continues to contribute to rugby league by also coaching the Woy Woy junior teams.

Mack and Chantelle (Cooper's mother) appreciated the visit and acknowledged the great support that the Foundation provides to those in need among the rugby league family.



Graham Callaghan (left) and Mick Sullivan.

## MICK SULLIVAN

Mick Sullivan, from South Tweed Koalas, may have lost the bottom of his right leg to type one diabetes in January but it has not dampened his enthusiasm for rugby league.

Over three decades, Sullivan has been president, secretary, treasurer, head coach and held other positions and can modestly chat with anyone about anything as he has 'been there and done that.'

Sullivan, 54, first suffered from diabetes when he was 12, requiring four needles every day and in the past three years has had six operations. Doctors removed his right leg below the knee at Gold Coast University Hospital on 8 January.

The Foundation is assisting Mick to pay the costs to have his house and car modified to suit his needs and assist with other commitments.

The truck driver has been a hands-on rugby league man since finishing his playing days after a decade with the Canberra Buffaloes from 1975. He went away working for 10 years before returning to coach Bungendore Tigers juniors from 1995 to 2010.

"We had footballers who played their 100 games with the juniors and then went on to play their 100 games with the seniors," he recalled proudly. As Bungendore coaching director, he assisted the Raiders from 1998, working with representative teams and coaching and developing squads for the Harold Matthews Shield and the S G Ball Cup.

Late in 2010, he moved north to the South Tweed Heads Koala Bears, concentrating on coaching and development which included starting the Baby Bears for kids aged between three and five. As a coaching director for Group 18, he looked after the under 14 to 16 teams in NSW representative competitions.

He has already set himself tough rehabilitation deadlines with daily physiotherapy sessions and following doctors' instructions. He completes his rigorous day with valuable recruitment work for Group 18.



(from left) Beatrice Wright, Terry Wright, Greg Sylvester, Graeme Farrar, Paul Hague and Steve Kosta (sitting).

## STEVE KOSTA

Former South Sydney and Newtown player Steve Kosta was overwhelmed to receive a surprise visit from Gold Coast committee members Greg Sylvester, Paul Hague and former New Zealand captain Graeme Farrar at the Arcare Age Care Centre Pimpama. Steve played for South Sydney from 1971-73 (19 first grades games) and Newtown 1974-78 (79 first grade games) as a speedy and elusive centre who at times mesmerised his opponents with his uncanny skills. When quizzed about who were the best and toughest players he played with or against, he immediately nominated Arthur Beetson as the best and John O'Neill as the toughest.

Steve keen to gain information of any teammates, coaches and opponents from his career and if any lived nearby.

The Gold Coast committee would like thank Terry and Beatrice Wright for informing us of Steve's condition and arranging the surprise visit.



## JACK HARRISON

A special reunion has taken place as a result of a wellbeing article which appeared in a recent Men of League membership memo. The original story detailed a recent visit by wellbeing officers Norm Pounder and Ken Vessey to meet Jack Harrison, an 86-year-old former Balmain Tigers player (1953-54) and his loving daughter Louise.

Following distribution of the memo, Ken received an unexpected call from Les 'Chick' Pearce, a wellbeing officer based on the Central Coast who was delighted to read the article on Jack.

Les recalled that he had played rugby league with Jack in Dubbo in the 1950s and that Jack was one of the classiest centres he had seen play but had not met Jack since those wonderful days playing. Jack was also

an excellent mathematics teacher and had spent many years teaching in country schools.

Arrangements were made for Les to travel to Sydney to visit Jack in his northern Sydney home and rekindle some fond memories, Les even showing a Dubbo Liberal newspaper story about Jack's feats. Both revelled in the reunion which proved the adage that friendships made on the playing field last forever.



(from left) Harry Deemal, George Ryan and Christine Muirhead.

## HARRY DEEMAL AND GEORGE RYAN

Sport is about great people doing great things – but it doesn't always happen out on the field. Since 2004, the Men of League's Far North Queensland committee has been supporting members of the region's rugby league community through the delivery of physical, financial and emotional support.

While the organisation was first established with an aim to lend a helping hand to old playing mates who were facing tough times, FNQ committee president John McAllister said it had grown to provide assistance to more than just players. "Our main objective is to ensure that not only past players but mums, dads and children belonging to the rugby league fraternity are looked after," he said.

The committee has recently assisted former CDRL players Harry Deemal and George Ryan. Hailing from Hopevale, Deemal played his junior footy on the Sunshine Coast in the 1970s and would go on to play A grade alongside legend Mal Meninga.

Upon returning to the Far North, Deemal was a respected footballer, playing centre with Ivanhoe, Innisfail United, Babinda and Mossman. Deemal now undergoes dialysis treatment three times a week, as well as suffering from other health issues, and Foundation representatives have started social visits to provide assistance.

Ryan played league in Mareeba before suffering a spinal injury in the 1980s, which confined him to a wheelchair. Men of League Foundation bought him a second-hand car which was converted for his use by the NDIS.

"We also recently visited a retired captain-coach who played locally and was also a rep player," wellbeing officer Christine Muirhead said.

"He suffered an assault away from football and is in the early stages of dementia. He will be visited again in a few months to see if Men of League can be of assistance financially, as well as emotionally."



Henderson during his time with the Warriors.



Ian Henderson today

# THE GREAT TRANSITION

## Q/A WITH IAN HENDERSON

**IAN HENDERSON, 36, HAD A 16-SEASON CAREER IN AUSTRALIA AND ENGLAND. IT INCLUDED 89 NRL APPEARANCES FOR THE SYDNEY ROOSTERS AND NZ WARRIORS AND EIGHT SEASONS IN THE SUPER LEAGUE SHARED BETWEEN THE BRADFORD BULLS AND CATALANS DRAGONS.**

### WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY DOING?

Running my own financial planning business called Affluent Life. I approach business-like professional players and we set goals and plan our finances. I'm really fortunate to be working with a lot of athletes, being able to understand their challenges and what they should be thinking at different stages of their career.

### HOW HAVE YOU FOUND TRANSITION?

Interesting. There were some early challenges. I badly broke my leg and had to retire but fortunately I had been getting educated through my career. It has been exciting though, it's been a good change. I get more family time and my body feels good.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT PLAYERS AND THOSE WHO ARE IN TRANSITION?

Start thinking about your future now. Think about finances and plan for life after footy. Think about education and work after sport. It's really important to enjoy it whilst still playing.

### WHO AND WHAT HAS HELPED YOU IN TRANSITION?

Studying through my career definitely helped me. I've been really fortunate to have some great people help me like Mark Bouris, Jim Taggart and Ian Hamilton.

### HOW HAS YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER HELPED YOU IN TRANSITION?

My mindset. Work ethic, attitude and planning.

# Q/A WITH JONATHAN WRIGHT

**'JONO' WRIGHT, 32, PLAYED 121 NRL GAMES OVER 10 SEASONS FROM 2009-18 FOR PARRAMATTA, CANTERBURY, CRONULLA, MANLY AND THE WARRIORS.**



*Jonathan Wright (far right) with some of Australia's youth who have accessed his Dhinewan Mentoring program.*

## WHAT YEAR DID YOU RETIRE FROM THE NRL?

2018

## WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY DOING?

Running my own business called Dhinewan Mentoring, specialising in culture, dance and fitness. We run programs for school kids in primary and high school. At the moment I have programs on the Central Coast, Newcastle and North Sydney.

## HOW HAVE YOU FOUND TRANSITION?

Exciting but also challenging. Being so passionate about football, I thought it might be hard to find a job that I was as passionate about. I had heaps of ideas but I kept coming back to my passion of culture and trying to think of a way to help people and create a job whilst doing it. Now it is so rewarding to be a year in and seeing kids loving the program and I love going to work every day.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT PLAYERS AND

## THOSE WHO ARE IN TRANSITION?

Find your passion away from rugby league. Plan for the future whilst playing. Ask yourself how are you placed finance-wise? Where are you planning to live? You may not know for sure but start having an eye on life after football.

## WHO AND WHAT HAS HELPED YOU IN TRANSITION?

My family have been great. Also the NRL wellbeing and education team, Bobcat (Andrew Ryan), Hala (Dene Halatau) and Jane (Lowder). I have made use of the NRL/RLPA education grants. Also having a professional rugby league background has helped me.

## HOW HAS YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER HELPED YOU IN

## TRANSITION?

Mindset. Just finding a way to get it done. Overcoming disappointment and getting on with the next job; also everything that you do every day like being early to training, preparation, reliable and accountability. Lastly, just connections from rugby league.

## LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER

**THIS MESSAGE, RECENTLY SENT TO CURRENT PLAYERS AND RECENTLY RETIRED PLAYERS, CAN APPLY TO ALL OF US IN THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY DURING THESE TOUGH TIMES AROUND THE WORLD – WHETHER YOUNG OR OLD.**

Life can get super busy and sometimes, when we get so wound up in what we are doing, it can become challenging to connect with others and maintain our routine around exercise and our own wellbeing.

Occasionally we get good and bad reminders to get back on track and tinker with our lifestyle.

Over this summer there has been a lot of tragic circumstances in Australia. Now, it is timely to take some time out and get back into your routine; to get back on board with exercise and connect with our football family.

Have a think about what you are grateful for in your life. Also challenge yourself to reach out to others and check in with a mate, a former teammate or a family member you haven't spoken with for a while.



# — COMMITTEE NEWS —



*It's not all men's business at the Brisbane Kick-Off Club lunch as this photo depicts.*

## BRISBANE

### Steve Ricketts, publicity officer

The 28 February Kick-Off Club lunch at Norths Devils Leagues Club, Nundah, proved an outstanding success with 108 guests thoroughly enjoying a trip down memory lane with 1980 Brisbane grand final stars Mark Murray, Campbell 'Zulu' Dews and Geoff Naylor.

Murray captained the underdog Norths' side to a 17-15 win over Souths, a match in which Dews (Norths) and Naylor (Souths) were rival props.

The Norths' lunch was Dews' first public speaking engagement and he handled it with aplomb.

Our thanks to Norths Leagues staff for the efficient manner in which our event was staged. It was quite a logistical exercise, given bingo had been held in the auditorium just before our lunch commenced.

Wellbeing lead Roxanne Moates'

presentation, regarding the work of the Foundation, was well received and there was a solid uptake of memberships. Our next Kick-Off Club lunch, scheduled for the Broncos Leagues Club on 22 May, has been cancelled.

Brisbane committee media officer Steve Ricketts acted as MC for a Far North Queensland lunch at Cairns Brothers Leagues Club, where the local committee has been looking to revitalise its base. Ricketts interviewed Broncos CEO Paul



*Reunited 40 years on ... (from left) Geoff Naylor, Mark Murray and Campbell Dews.*

White and his Cowboys' counterpart Jeff Reibel ahead of a trial between the two clubs the following day. White is a strong supporter of the Brisbane committee.

Cowboys' director of football Peter Parr and former Broncos' winger Jharal Yow Yeh who worked in the club's media division and as an assistant coach for Brisbane Norths' under-18 side, were also interviewed.

The annual Ron Atkins Golf Day, named after our erstwhile patron, was due to be held at Keperra Country Club on 27 March but had to be cancelled because of the coronavirus outbreak. Thanks to our sponsors and the teams that had signed up to participate.

Valleys, who always have a strong contingent at our Kick-Off Club lunches, are part of the 'Storytellers Exhibition' at the Museum of Brisbane (in the City Hall), which was due to start on 3 April and will run for two years (subject to national restrictions).

The exhibition, which is based around stories of different Brisbane suburbs as seen through the eyes of prominent authors, features a photograph of the 1924 Valleys premiership winning side. The photograph has been loaned to the museum by the Queensland Rugby League History Committee.

## CENTRAL COAST

**By Dennis Tomsett, publicity officer**

Our annual general meeting will be held at the Central Coast Leagues Club on Sunday 19 April. The purpose of this meeting will be the election of office bearers for the next 12 months and all current members and interested parties on the Central Coast are invited to attend.

The invitation is extended to former members to attend and renew their membership of the Foundation to help us to continue to provide support and care those most in need within the rugby league community. We have been very busy trying to encourage members to join the committee, however if you know of someone that may be interested please encourage them to attend the meeting.

Wellbeing officer Les Pearce has retired from this position. Les is a foundation Central Coast committee member who has given 18 years of his time, visiting and helping those of the rugby league family in need of support. Les was a great asset to the organisation with his past experience as a player and administrator he had a very broad knowledge of the game and many contacts of the local businesses. Les' tireless efforts are very much appreciated by the members and the many people Les

has visited over the years. We wish Les all the best for his future and thank him for his dedication and support given to the Foundation.

Whilst our calendar of events is not finalised, it was proposed to hold three functions this year: a bowls day in March, race day in July and golf day in September/October – however this is now subject to the current health climate. Details will be provided to members when confirmed.

## FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND

**Kev Maher (OAM), publicity officer**

The Far North Queensland committee held a successful luncheon on Friday 21 February to coincide with the Cowboys v Broncos trial match played in Cairns.

The committee appreciated the attendance of CEOs Paul White (Broncos) and Jeff Reibel (Cowboys) with other special guests Jeff Reibel, Jharal Yow Yeh and Peter Parr. Also present were Ty Williams, the Northern Pride coach, as well as the Foundation's Queensland state manager Andrew Blucher who made the trip up from Brisbane. Former Courier Mail rugby league journalist Steve Ricketts conducted some interesting interviews in what turned out an entertaining afternoon.

The Far North committee held its annual general meeting on Sunday 8 March with John McAllister being re-elected president, Megan McAllister, secretary/treasurer

and John Moore and Greg Ryan as vice-presidents. A new face on committee is John Piccone who takes on the membership officer's role while Kev Maher continues in the publicity officer's job.

The next general meeting was scheduled to be held at the Bungalow Hotel on the 8 April. Our golf day was scheduled for the Cairns Golf Club on Friday 26 June and we will keep members informed whether this will still go ahead.

A good group of past players gathered in Innisfail to farewell North Queensland and Maroons great Ron Tait who passed away in Innisfail.

## FRASER COAST

**Kev Embrey, president**

Our 8th annual Fraser Coast golf day was held on 24 November at the Maryborough Golf Club with 128 players teeing off, including our Queensland state manager Andrew Blucher. Our guest speaker, former Australian and Queensland player Wally Fullerton Smith, entertained the crowd with stories of his playing days at the completion of play.

Winners were the team from Murray Barnett Plumbing (Joel Williams, Leon Brewer, Christian Kingdom and Matt Axelson) with Maryborough Bay Glass and Aluminium (Luke, Ben, Peter and Tracy Waters) winning the best sponsor's team.



Former Broncos centre Jack Reed, Foundation wellbeing lead Roxanne Moates, Broncos game development manager Paul Dyer and ex-Broncos player Michael De Vere.



Ready to tee-off... the participants at the very successful eighth annual Fraser Coast golf day.

The team from Alice and Pallas Therapy Centre took out the hard-fought prize for the best dressed team. Our thanks go to all our sponsors and prize donors for making the day another great success and big thanks goes to Nigel and Jeff for organising the event and to our committee members who helped on the day.

Our annual sports dinner in February had to be postponed as one of our guest speakers was to be Ron Coote. As we all know, Ron lost his house in those terrible fires in NSW. Our new date has been set for 17 October (subject to the health situation in Australia).

On the wellbeing front, we have Laurie Spencer in Brisbane recovering from spinal cord trauma. Roxanne is in contact with Laurie and Betty while down there. Pat Pearson, the wife of Gary, is recovering well from a road accident in October and we wish Kev Clarke all the best for his operation on 18 March.

A big thanks go to our bingo girls from the Carriers Arms Hotel who raise funds for the Foundation and to our members Peter and Ian who help sell the scones and dabbers on a Monday, as well as Maureen and Nigel for Thursday nights.

## GOLD COAST

### Greg Sylvester, publicity officer

The Gold Coast Men Of League were extremely busy during December preparing and delivering Christmas hampers. The platitudes received from the recipients were most gratifying. To our volunteers Lloyd Evans, Ian Amos, Greg Sylvester, Paul Hague, Kim Lees, Graeme Farrar and Dennis Ward, go special thanks; your contributions were greatly appreciated.

The annual Gold Coast Internationals gala dinner (see separate report) held on Friday 6 March at the Burleigh Bears Leagues Club was a huge success. The speakers Anthony Laffranchi, Rick Stone and Peter Doyle were well excellent, whilst special guest Roy Masters enthralled the audience with

his interview. A special thanks to the staff at the Burleigh Bears Leagues Club for their participation, especially to Kim and Fiona, and to our compere Neil Cadigan who once again did a terrific job with his interviews.

There has been several welfare visits and phone calls by our committee over the past four months and it is pleasing to report that Elsie Dimond has recovered from dislocated right shoulder, John 'Pogo' Morgan has been released from hospital where he had been admitted after suffering from heat stroke and blood poisoning, June Rasmussen successfully had a skin cancer removed from the instep of her foot, Bob Honan is recovering after falling from a ladder, Val Irvine (Ken's widow) escaped injury when her car careered into the back wall of the garage and into her kitchen. Greg Roussell is recovering from the removal of a melanoma from his nose and a skin graft, while Dennis Ward is still having weekly chemotherapy.

We would like to welcome Paul Hague to our committee. Paul replaces Greg Roussell who, for family reasons, has relocated to Yass in NSW.

## GYMPIE

### Greg Pountney, secretary

It was gratifying to hear back from recipients of our Christmas vouchers. They proved to be a wonderful surprise for people and were greatly appreciated at what can be a difficult time for some people.

In conjunction with the Mary Valley Rattler, we had planned to conduct a Melbourne Cup train experience in early April. A couple of our local members who were part owners of winner Vow and Declare were to take the Cup through the train with patrons able to have photos taken. [EDITOR'S NOTE: This was postponed; check for details].

We're planning a sportspersons' dinner for November. Organisation is still in the early stages but we aim to have speakers representing a range of women's and men's

sports. Andrew Blucher has come onto the planning committee which we appreciate.

Our other fundraisers planned for 2020 are sausage sizzles at Bunnings. These are always successful and are also great in promoting Men of League Foundation.

## ILLAWARRA

### Gary Hart, secretary

There has been a changing of the guard at the Illawarra committee's annual general meeting with Ian Bray and Gary Hart the incoming president and secretary respectively. Brian Smith will continue in his role as treasurer while Billy Robinson is the vice-president and Bob McKellar the wellbeing officer. We are fortunate that the majority of our current hard working committee members will continue to contribute to the Foundation in our area as we endeavour to offer support to those requiring assistance in our rugby league community.

As a footnote we would like to wish all teams participating in the upcoming Illawarra and Group 7 competitions an injury free and enjoyable season. Here's a snapshot of the competitions: Illawarra coaches: Berkeley – Adam Doyle; Collegians – Nathan Fein; Corrimal – Sean Maloney; Dapto – Chris Leikvoll/ Michael Murphy; Western Suburbs – Peter McLeod; Helensburgh – Gavin Lennon; Thirroul – Jarrod Costello. Prominent signings: Tim Grant (ex-Penrith) – Thirroul; Jeremy Latimore (ex-St George Illawarra) – Western Suburbs; Ben Jones (ex-Sydney Roosters) – Helensburgh. Group 7 coaches: Albion Park-Oak Flats – Ian Jones/Steven Johnston; Berry-Shoalhaven Heads – Jayson Smith; Gerringong – Michael Cronin; Jamberoo – Jono Dallas; Kiama – Matt Clarke; Nowra-Bomaderry – Dylan Farrall; Shellharbour – Abed Atallah; Stingrays of Shellharbour – Brad Reh/Greg Reh; Warilla-Lake South – Troy Grant/Neil Farmilo.

The Illawarra committee is looking forward to staging our annual bowls day on Friday 31 July at Warilla Bowls and Recreation Club (this is now subject to national health restrictions). If previous bowls days are anything to go by, it promises to be a successful and enjoyable event. The day kicks off at 7.30am with registration and breakfast, with bowls commencing at 9am. Lunch will be served at 12.30pm with our guest speakers to be confirmed. Cost per participant for the day is \$50 which includes breakfast, lunch and some refreshments as well as the opportunity to renew old acquaintances and make new ones.

A bus has been arranged to leave the Steelers club at 6.45am for the convenience of those taking part. Team names to be submitted to Warilla Bowls and Recreation Club on 02 4295 9595 by 24 July.



*The Redcliffe golf day crew before they teed off.*

## MORETON

### Peter Affleck, president

We held our annual golf day at Redcliffe Golf Club on Friday 21 February which was a magnificent and highly successful event. In only our second year we almost maxed out the field, with 136 players enjoying the challenge and fun filled atmosphere.

The event was proudly sponsored by Shaw and Partners, one of Australia's pre-eminent investment and wealth management firms. The success of the day was also underpinned by an additional 15 corporate partners taking up hole sponsorships and it was fantastic to see the course displayed with an abundance of sponsorship banners together with three motor vehicles. A number of past league greats joined the day and the players and supporters were well entertained during lunch by the 'QUEEEENSLANNNDER!' - Origin legend Billy Moore.

We thank the players and sponsors for contributing to a wonderful fundraising event and the Moreton community businesses for their generous prize, raffle and auction donations. The scene has been well set for 2021. We have continued to be involved with wellbeing visits across those in need, with such visits and financial support where possible, brightening the spirits in tough times. The committee's focus now turns to our June Kick-Off Club gathering which will be held at the Redcliffe Leagues Club and promises to be another popular event. The details for how members and guests can book will be outlined on the events section on the Foundation's website in due course and will be subject to developments with the current health and wellbeing issues facing the community.

## SOUTHERN MONARO

### Sam Tonks, publicity officers

With the sun shining, good company to be enjoyed and a great cause to support, the Craig 'Reggie' Elton and Past Players

Memorial Day proved a success on the Bombala bowling greens on Saturday, 29 February.

The Southern Monaro Men of League Foundation hosted the day, with a group of 48 signing up to hit the greens for social bowls and a cheerful afternoon in the name of charity.

The first Jonno Kidman Cup was also presented to the closest to the jack, with NSW state manager Bruce Walker taking the glory. Following the bowls, the group adjourned inside to enjoy an excellent barbecue, social night and auction, with the presentation of bowls winners seeing Paul Perkins' team being congratulated.

The highlight of the night was an entertaining interview between guest speaker and former Raiders player Paul Elliott and his Bombala teammate of years ago, Peter Jones. Paul was instrumental in getting the Foundation committee established in Bombala, and the interview was greatly enjoyed by the crowd.



*Tash Stewart showed her bowls skills.*

Following the successful day, there are many thank yous to be made with sincere appreciation going to Powers IGA, Ingram's Quality Meats, the Globe Hotel, Club Bombala and Reigh and Sue Callaway for donating to the auction, and to the various sponsors of the event's stubby holders.

Thanks also to the Bombala Bowling Club and greenskeeper, the bar staff at Club Bombala, the cooks of the barbecue and other helpers.

Finally, great appreciation goes to those who turned up to play, especially those who travelled to be a part of the very successful event, which was also well supported by the Bombala Blue Heelers Rugby League Football Club.



*Southern Monaro committee's Reigh Callaway, John Ratcliffe, John Bedingfield, Brian Morgan and Tommy Herbert with NSW state manager Bruce Walker and special guest Paul Elliott (both the tallest in the middle).*



*Special guests as the Christmas Kick-Off Club lunch (from left) Chris Flannery, Kevin Walters, Kerrod Walters, Sam Hambly (wellbeing recipient) Tony Durkin, Paul Kent and Ben Ikin.*



*Tony Durkin, the mainstay of the Sunshine Coast committee, will be sorely missed. He is pictured here (second from left) with guests at a previous lunch – Neil Breen, Moses Mbye and Barry Dick.*



*Retiring committee members Pat McKirdy and Laurel Hagan.*

## SUNSHINE COAST

### **Bob Black, publicity officer**

Well, the start of a new era has begun for the Sunshine Coast committee, organising our first Kick-Off Club function without branch stalwarts Tony Durkin, Bob and Laurel Hagan plus Bruce and Pat McKirdy.

The attendance of Queensland state manager Andrew Blucher and national events manager Joanne Baxter at our most recent committee meeting provided food for thought regarding solutions to some of the areas that were so well managed by these great servants.

'Durko' has hung up his boots after a magnificent 13 years' service as the face

of the Sunshine Coast committee, during which time he sourced speakers and sponsors for all functions as well as actively managing and carrying out MC duties. These efforts were recognised with Tony being awarded the 2016 Steve Calder Volunteer of the Year Medal. He is now taking a break, and deservedly received a standing ovation from the audience of 290 after hosting his final function, our Christmas fundraiser held December 2019 which raised just over \$22,000.

Founding president, and current Men of League Foundation ambassador Bob Hagan is doing it a bit tough and is being looked after by Laurel at Estia Health, Amity Ave, Maroochydore. Laurel, along with Pat and Bruce McKirdy, have been wonderful committee members since its inception on

the Sunshine Coast and leave a big gap for the current committee, under president Don Oxenham (another original) to fill.

Mick Legg continues to do a fantastic job managing the wellbeing arm for the committee.

The committee was excited to be kicking off its 2020 year with Billy Moore as the guest at our Kick-Off Club with well-known rugby league journalist Steve Ricketts acting as MC. With some 110 acceptances we were looking at a good start to the year.

However, coronavirus has and continues to change our lives so the function had to be cancelled. The venue provider, The Mooloolaba Surf Club, was very understanding and supportive.



League legend Wally Lewis and Toowoomba committee stalwart Andrew O'Brien.



Sea Eagles reunion ...John McDonald, Nik Kosef and Travis Burns.

## TOOWOOMBA

### Tony Coonan, president

The Toowoomba committee had our annual golf day on Friday 7 February. The event was held at Toowoomba Golf Club, Middle Ridge. Despite the wet weather, over 100 golfers braved the conditions and helped raise over \$8000.

The major sponsors for the day were Toowoomba Toyota, Hutchinson Builders, QPF Finance Group, GTH Accounting Group, Treg Smith's Autos and The Criterion Hotel Dalby. We were entertained by our main guest, Nik Kosef, along with Wally Lewis and Travis Burns. All three were interviewed by a great supporter of the Foundation, Paul Reedy.

Manly fans were excited to be photographed with John 'Cracker' McDonald (committee patron), Nik and Travis, all great Sea Eagles players. Toowoomba functions are always enhanced by the regular attendance of the Brisbane Valleys Diehards crew. This group from

Peter O'Callaghan's era, along with groups from the Lockyer Valley and the Criterion Hotel Dalby, guarantee the success of our events. Thank you to our key organisers Peter O'Callaghan, Peter Young, Steve House and Graham Pamenter.

## TOWNSVILLE

### Barry Buchanan, publicity officer

We welcomed Cowboys ambassador to North Queensland committee Ray Thompson to our final Kick-Off Club for 2019 which included our annual general meeting. Ray is a Townsville boy who played 111 games for the Cowboys and is now community engagement and programs officer for the Mackay, Townsville and Cairns districts and is heavily involved in Cowboy House.

Thanks to the Riverview Tavern's manager Judy Moyle and Carlton United's Brian Gulliver for their support of a very enjoyable evening.

This year was off to a flying start with our

active committee embracing what should be an exciting year with the opening of the new Queensland Country Bank Stadium. We were invited by Cowboys to set up a booth at the Cowboys' community day held at the Townsville Entertainment Centre on 7 February. It was a great opportunity to promote the awareness of our cause as well as give away some of our many badges that were received some years ago.

We had been allotted the Cowboys Community Corner at the new stadium on 12 July when Newcastle Knights were scheduled to play here but this is obviously in doubt due to the current national social restrictions. This is the same weekend as the Laurie Spina under-11 carnival which features 72 teams from Weipa to Brisbane to Mt Isa, so it would provide great exposure for the Foundation and hopefully a chance to sign up new members if it is able to go ahead.

Our annual Townsville Blackhawks Day is set down for Friday 5 June when they play Mackay Cutters at 7.30pm. A Kick-Off Club is planned as a lead up to the game.

The prize for our major raffle, sponsored by the Cowboys, will be seating and catering for 10 people in the southern terraces to watch the clash with Auckland Warriors on Saturday 29 August at 5.30pm. Anyone wanting tickets should phone our treasurer Barrie Page on 0419 237 262.

Keep on caring for our rugby league community

## TUGGERAH

### Greg Tunn, publicity officer

The Tuggerah Lakes committee has commenced their activities for the year with the traditional Kick-Off Club at the Grand Hotel, Wyong. Fifty members and guests were welcomed by president Neville Glover and all enjoyed the hospitality and generous support of the hotel. Thanks also to the Wyong Race Club who donated prizes for the raffles on the night.

Our committee was very pleased to assist at a charity golf day on 31 January to raise funds for the family of the late Brad Wall, who was a Wyong coach. Sadly, Brad passed away in December shortly after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Brad's family, friends and the rugby league family came together on the day to support such a worthy cause.

Our calendar for the year is being finalised with a bowls day, further Kick-Off Club nights and a golf day on 30 October at Wyong Golf Club. We wish all committees a busy and enjoyable year.



## VICTORIA

### Peter Foreman, president

We kicked off the 2020 activation program for the year with our annual golf day at the Keysborough Golf Club on Thursday 13 February. The day was a success with 59 players attending, which was a little down on last year, however revenue for the event was just under \$7600.

Our thanks go to our major benefactor the Aces Sporting Club continues for the support that it has graciously provided since our inception. We are extremely thankful for the funds that the club provides. Last year was a record for the support that we provided to people in need, and the Aces' funds go a long way towards the wellbeing support that was delivered.

We are also appreciative of the support that we receive from the Melbourne Storm CEO Dave Donaghy and his team too, particularly Justin Dixon and Ashleigh Roberson who help us to be in a position to continue to help the people who are in necessitous circumstances. We recently activated our marquee at the Storm's annual family day where we focused on increasing awareness and membership of the MOLF.

NRL Victoria allowed us to meet with representatives of all local clubs at their monthly meeting in February where we provided an overview of what the Foundation is about and how the majority of support that we provide is to the men woman and children from the grass roots level of our game. We have asked that each of the grass roots clubs consider appointing a Foundation advocate who can be a point of contact for our committee. We believe that the advocates from the clubs can become a valuable source of connecting us with potential wellbeing recipients and also create awareness of what

we do that may lead to an increase in membership. (we had 193 members last year and have set a target of obtaining 255 this year)

I would like to finish by wishing a former teammate Ken Wilson (Newtown Bluebag great) all the best. 'Squeaker' was recently diagnosed with cancer and, in typical Bluebag spirit, he attacked the treatment with positivity, and has now completed the treatments that were required. At the time of writing this report he was about to be re scanned, after which the doctors will decide on the next course of action. Kenny advises that he is feeling really good with very few side effects.

## WESTERN SYDNEY

### Kylie Murphy, media officer

Western Sydney Men of League committee's bowls day at St Johns Park Bowling Club was a huge success with special guests being rugby league royalty in Eric Grothe snr, Terry Lamb, Gavin Miller, Michael Vella, Johnny Peard, Col Bentley, Steve Ghosn, Denis Fitzgerald, Chris Yates, Alan Wilson and Joe Thomas to name a few.

We thank our sponsors, supporters and special guests. With a huge thank you especially going to David Marsh and his team at St Johns Park for hosting the event and providing an amazing \$10,000 donation to Men of League Foundation.

Lastly, thanks go to our Western Sydney committee members for all their hard work and to everyone who attended on the day.

Our scheduled next event was a golf day at Cabramatta Golf Club on Friday 15 May which has had to be postponed and a sports luncheon at Smithfield RSL on Friday 4 September. RSVP to Garry 0418 699 257.

**jaycar**

**proudly supporting  
MEN OF LEAGUE  
FOUNDATION**

**Electronics**  
Projects, Test, Tools & Components

**POWER**  
Mains, Portable, Smart & Lighting

**IT, communications & surveillance**

**1800 022 888**  
**[jaycar.com.au](http://jaycar.com.au)**  
OVER 100 STORES AND 140 RESELLERS NATIONWIDE



# TRIBUTES REMEMBERING THOSE NOW GONE

## THEO BURGESS

Theo Burgess, 84, passed away peacefully at his Dee Why home on the 6 March.

Theo was highly respected in the community and throughout rugby league due to his involvement from junior league to professional rugby league clubs in Australia, New Zealand and England. He was recognised as the game's first full-time recruitment manager.

He started his playing with the McMahons Point, later coaching teams at there and at Asquith, in the meantime becoming a keen supporter of the North Sydney Bears District Rugby League Club.

Theo developed into a "go to man" for many senior rugby league club's administrations, imparting his skills and knowledge first at, with stints at the Cronulla Sharks as football manager and Auckland Warriors in a similar role.

He was a knowledgeable advisor on skills, player recruitment and retention and management. His was highly involved alongside coach Chris Anderson in putting together the initial Melbourne Storm squad in 1998, which won its inaugural premiership in 1999 then followed Anderson to the Sharks.

## TONY BURKE

The Moss Vale Dragons lost one of their greatest clubmen with the passing of Anthony 'Turk' Burke, aged 84. Tony moved with his family to Moss Vale as a teenager, having already won the Clayton's Cup (for the top team in NSW Country rugby league) with Nimmitabel in 1951 when he was just 16 in a team that included his father Bill.

His move to Moss Vale brought instant success with the 1955 Group 6 premiership. After his playing success, he excelled as president of the Dragons in three separate stints from the 1970s-90s, as well as service as a selector for Group 6 and Southern Division. His devoted service to the Dragons earned him life membership alongside wife Helen. From 1954 until 2019 when the Dragons merged with Bowral to form the Highlands Storm, the Burke family were the bedrock of this grand old club.

Tony was one of eight sons of Bill and Edna who played for Moss Vale, also earning many representative honours. He leaves behind four children, Wendy, Greg, Cathy and Michelle, as well as 10 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.

## TONY BRANSON

Tony Branson (pictured above), who played eight Tests for Australia, has passed away at the age of 73.

A classy five-eighth from Nowra, he played for Country Firsts in their win against City in 1967, going on to represent NSW and being selected for the Kangaroos' tour of Britain and France, making his Test debut against Great Britain at White City in London.

After making four Test appearances on tour, he joined St George in 1968 and during six seasons with the Red Vee, including the 1971 grand final against South Sydney. He also played seven games for NSW. He returned to the Nowra district where he passed away on 1 April.

## TOM COCKING

Rugby League has lost a true gentleman with the passing of staunch Rabbitohs supporter Tom Cocking in December, aged 82. Tom played his junior football with Redfern United and Waterloo Waratahs. Tom was graded with South Sydney in 1957 and went on to play 13 first grade games among his 76 senior matches for the club. Under the expert coaching of Clem Kennedy, Tom captained the Kingsford team, winning the premiership in their first year of the Sydney inter-district competition (which became the second division).

He served the Rabbitohs in several capacities over the years including selector, team manager, club supervisor and was a member of the board of directors from 1983-90. He was granted life membership in 1983. He was also well known as 'The Barrow Man' as he delivered fruit and vegetables in a barrow in Barrack St, Sydney for many years.

## TED CURRAN

The Illawarra rugby league fraternity, in particular the Thirroul Butchers family, mourned the recent passing of Teddy Curran, aged 85. Ted carved a successful career in the Illawarra region as a rugged forward after coming to Thirroul from Temora in 1958, playing 120 first grade games with Thirroul before retiring in 1966. He played for Country Seconds on the day he turned 18 in 1952, while he also represented Riverina against the American All Stars and played for Southern Division against Great Britain in 1958 and New Zealand in 1959.

Curran continued to contribute to the game post retirement after being appointed as a selector for the NSW CRL and NSWRL. Illawarra Rugby League long-time official and current NSWRL president Bob Millward said of Ted: "We've lost a great rugby league person with the passing of Ted Curran. He was a long term NSW CRL selector and served on the NSWRL selection committee where he did his state proud. Ted was a great league man both on and off the field and never stopped giving to the game."

## DON FURNER, OAM

Don Furner, patriarch of an impressive rugby league family, had an enviable record as a coach and a player while also being recognised as one of the game's true gentlemen.

After great success as a player which saw him tour with the 1956-57 Kangaroos to Britain and France, he began an enviable coaching record, first in the bush before taking on the Eastern Suburbs Roosters from 1970-72, taking them to the grand final. He then returned to Queanbeyan where he took the Blues to 10 premierships in 13 seasons.

In 1982 Don was the inaugural coach of the Canberra Raiders, the club his son Don jnr now leads as CEO. His other son David, won a grand final as a player with the Raiders before becoming first grade coach and making history as the only father-son coaches of an ARL/NRL club in the modern era (both also played for Australia).

Don snr. coached Australia from 1986-88, taking the Kangaroos on their second ever undefeated tour in '86 and then became chairman of selectors. He also spent some time as CEO of the Gold Coast Seagulls/Chargers.

"Don was one of those rare gifts to the game which allowed him to excel as a player, as a coach and a fine administrator," NRL CEO Todd Greenberg said. "Very few have been able to do that in rugby league."

## DOUGLASS HOWARTH

Douglass Howarth passed away peacefully after a long battle with melanoma cancer, aged 68. He was a true character one hopes to meet in life and was a very active Men of League Foundation member and regular attendee/supporter of events held by the Northern Sydney committee.

In the early 1970s Douglass went from the Parramatta juniors to start a long association with the McMahons Point club, playing in C and B grades before being graded in lower grades for the North Sydney Bears. Shoulder surgery ended his career while he was playing A grade but he continued to serve on many committees and coaching panels for McMahons Point Club into the 1990s.

## BRIAN JAMES

One of the Foundation's earliest supporters (member #16) and member of the national board from 2003-13, former South Sydney premiership winner Brian James died in a tragic accident on his farm near the NSW country town of Capertree on 10 January. He was 76.

Brian began playing rugby league at primary school but switched to union while a student at Newington College. He represented the GPS first XV in 1960 before playing first grade with St George at 18. He switched to league with the Dragons the next season, in 1962 and spent four seasons at Kogarah before joining South Sydney where he had greater success. He played 79 first grade matches and scored 32 tries for the Rabbitohs and was a member of the 1967 and '68 grand final winning teams. He played for City Firsts and NSW in 1968, making the Australian team that won the World Cup. He played his only Test at Lang Park, Brisbane on 8 June 1968, a 37-4 win over France. While at Souths, James and club patron Jack Thom organised the first official touch football tournament at Redfern Oval on February 1968 with all proceeds going to the Spastic Centre. He was made a life member of the Souths in 2002.

## MARK HARRIS

The two-time premiership winner with the Roosters and powerful-running Test player Mark Harris died on 15 January, aged 72. He was Foundation member #4.

The Brisbane Brothers junior joined the Roosters after two years in PNG and in 10 seasons at Bondi Junction from 1970-79 he scored 88 tries and played 190 top-grade games, playing a prominent role in the 1974 grand final in one of the greatest club teams coached by Jack Gibson but missed the 1975 victory because of injury.

He finished his playing career with two seasons at North Sydney. His career spanned 223 first grade games, in which he scored 93 tries and 20 goals.

From 1970 to 1978, he played 11 matches for NSW, scoring nine tries, as well as four games with City Firsts, in which he collected six tries. His Test debut was in the 1970 World Cup in England and he represented the Kangaroos in 11 Test matches in then centres or on the wing. In 1973, Mark turned down a place on the Kangaroo tour to have a season of American football with the Montreal Alouettes, playing seven games in the Canadian Gridiron Grey Cup competition.

In 2000, he served on the NRL judiciary. Mark and his family lived for many years in the Frenchs Forest area.

## GREG HAWICK

One of Australia's most versatile players, Greg Hawick (pictured below), passed away in Wagga on 6 February, aged 87.

Born in Sydney but spending much of his teenage years in Wollongong, Hawick came into South Sydney's ranks in 1950 and, after just one appearance in reserve grade, made his first grade debut and went on to play five-eighth in Souths' 21-15 win over Wests in the final, which meant that as minor premiers, Souths took the title.

Hawick could play lock, halfback, five-eighth or centre and became an international in 1952 on the Kangaroo tour. He would have won a second premiership with Souths in '52 but broke his jaw in the semi-final against St George.

In 1954, he won his second premiership with Souths and later that year he went to France with Australia's first World Cup team. He was also a member of Australia's winning 1957 World Cup team. The last of his nine Tests was at the SCG in July 1958. He also played 10 games for NSW.



Greg Hawick

At the end of the 1956 season he left South Sydney and joined the Wagga Kangaroos as captain-coach, returning to Sydney to play for the Bears in 1959-60. He returned to Wagga and had the outstanding record of winning premierships with the Kangaroos as captain-coach in 1962 and 1963 before moving to Turvey Park for five seasons then Junee in 1970. He went to Sydney as North Sydney coach in 1984-85. He was made a life member of the South Sydney and in 2004 was named in the 'Souths Dream Team'. The Museum of the Riverina admitted him in 2013, as one of their sporting greats.

## PETER LONERGAN

North West Men of League committeeman Peter Lonergan passed away on 25 January after a battle with cancer. He was 56. Peter was a tireless worker for the Foundation and would attend most fundraisers, organising many events at Narrabri where he resided for around 28 years. He worked at CSIRO's Narrabri research centre for many years.

Born in Tamworth, he played first XIII league for Farrer Agricultural College and after attending university switched codes to rugby union, representing St Alberts College and Tamworth Magpies. Peter was farewelled at a memorial service in Narrabri and laid to rest in his hometown of Tamworth.

## ADAM MAHER

The 47-year-old former tough NRL forward from Wynnum in Brisbane sadly lost his life at age 47 after fighting motor neurone disease. His first grade career spanned stints with Easts in Brisbane, Cronulla Sharks, Hunter Mariners and Hull in England where he was a crowd favourite during four seasons from 2000-03, at Rochdale and Gateshead.

He was a long-time mate and teammate of current Cowboys coach Paul Green and fellow Queensland Origin player Craig Greenhill. The Hull faithful last year organised a special fund-raising event which proved an emotional night, such was the respect he generated during his time there.

## BARRY McCONNELL

BARRY McConnell, reputed by many to be the best halfback to come out of the Tweed alongside 25-Test campaigner Barry Muir, has died. McConnell, from the Cudgen club, turned 90 the week before his passing in mid-December.

He was tied up with the Green Hornets club from 1946 until 1964. A Cudgen and Group 18 life member, he was halfback, coach, selector and on the inaugural committee at the licensed club.

Cudgen was disbanded during the war years and reformed in 1950. Barry played with the Starlights for a few seasons until the reformation of the Cudgen club.

He represented NSW Country many times and he scored in the first three minutes of a Northern Division match against the touring English side.

A big Pommy forward told him, 'You won't do that again' and the marked him heavily.

## MANFRED MOORE

One of Sydney rugby league's most colourful characters, American Manfred Moore, died in January in California at the age of 69.

Moore was the first African-American to play in the Australian

premiership and the first to have scored an ARL/NRL try and an NFL touchdown.

He joined the Newtown Jets, in a highly publicised signing funded by John Singleton, in 1977 after a season in which he played for Super Bowl-winning Oakland Raiders.



Manfred Moore

Months later he was thrilling crowds in Sydney and scored a try with his first touch of the ball in rugby league when Newtown beat Wests 17-10 at Henson Park. He returned to the NFL after one season of rugby league, playing with the Minnesota Vikings. He later became vice-president First Los Angeles Bank.

## BOB SMITHIES

Rugby league lost a real character when Bob Smithies passed away late last year, aged 71.

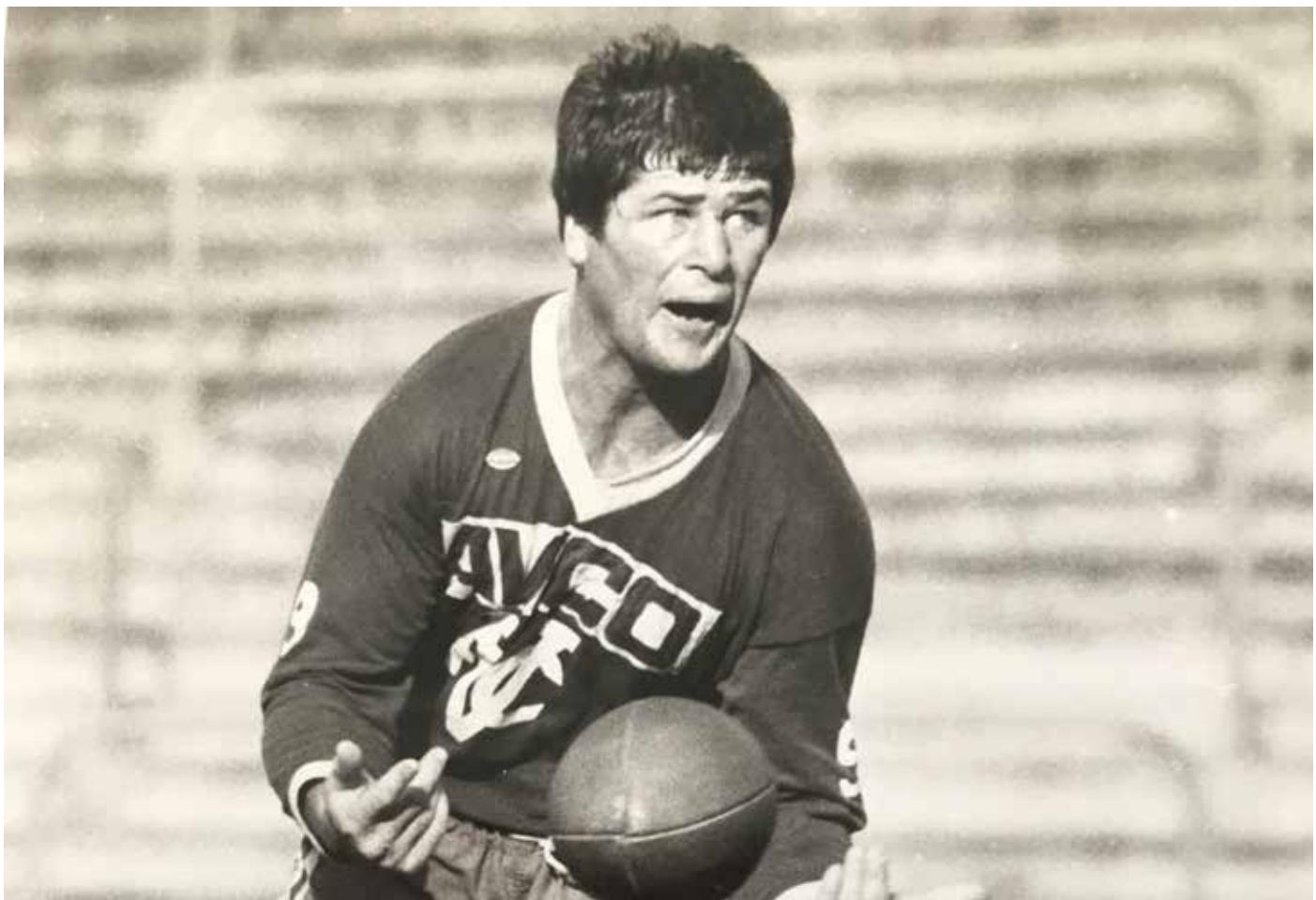
Born in England, his family migrated to Australia when he was young and settled at Dapto. He began playing league with Dapto under-12s in 1960 and quickly became a schoolboy star, representing NSW Schools for four successive years while a student at Dapto High.

He was a member of the Dapto team that won the 1968 premiership, claiming the Illawarra Mercury's player of the year award.

He joined Balmain the next year and was fullback in the Tigers' grand final upset against the powerful Rabbitohs. He played 58 first grade over four seasons with the Balmain Tigers and represented City Seconds in 1971 against Country Seconds.

He went back to Dapto for one season in 1972 and then joined Hull Kingston Rovers in England, joining Balmain teammate Allan Fitzgibbon (who played one season). Smithies played at Craven Park for three seasons.

He returned to Dapto in 1975 and won three successive Illawarra first grade premierships under the coaching of Fitzgibbon.



Ian Sommer

## IAN SOMMER

The Valleys Diehards rugby league faithful are mourning the loss of stalwart forward, Ian 'Elke' Sommer, who died suddenly on 12 February, aged 68.

Sommer was vice-captain of the formidable 1979 premiership winning side, which defeated Souths 26-0 in the Brisbane grand final at Lang Park after finishing five points clear on the minor premiership ladder.

In 1980, Valleys welcomed Bryan Niebling to the club and Sommer proved an ideal mentor for the young forward from Murgon, who would go on to play State of Origin for Queensland and represent his country.

Sommer, who went to school at Camp Hill, played his early football as a centre with Easts Carina. He joined Valleys in 1975 and made his debut as a winger in reserve grade. First grade coach, former Test forward, Henry Holloway, moved Sommer to the pack, and his career blossomed. He was a regular in Valleys' first grade teams from 1977-81 season. Sommer was active with Valleys' Past Players Association and also was a member of the Kirra Beach Surf Life Saving Club Old Boys Association.

## TOM SOPER

Soper, one of the best clubmen to play in Illawarra, passed away on 12 January, aged 93. Tom came from the club's junior ranks into grade football in 1946 and continued playing with the Wollongong club until his retirement in 1960. During those 15 years, he played more than 230 games and winning first grade premierships in 1947, 1950 and 1951 and representing Illawarra several times. He was made a life member of the club in 1970 and was a vice-president of the football club and director of the leagues club.

## GORDON STANBROUGH

Gordon Stanbrough passed away 11 February, aged 88 years. He was a long-time supporter of the now defunct Estates club in the Townsville competition. His association with Estates began in the 1960s when he was approached to be team manager for the club's under-19 team. Gordon became president in the 1970s and a prolific supporter and fundraiser and was granted life membership in recognition of his tireless efforts. Gordon showed a genuine interest in the wellbeing of all members at the club, often finding employment for the younger players.

## RON TAIT

Ron Tait was a product of the Innisfail Marist Brothers and played juniors with the Brothers Club in 1950 and was drafted into the senior ranks at the age of 16. He made his representative debut for far North Queensland against the touring Frenchmen in 1955 and in 1957 headed to Toowoomba for three seasons where he represented the Clydesdales from 1957-59, captaining the winning Bulimba Cup team in 1959.

In 1960 Tait had a season in Rockhampton and made his Queensland debut, the first of 14 appearances for the Maroons over five years. He returned to Innisfail in 1961 to captain-coach United, leading them to four successive premierships from 1966-69.

He also captained Innisfail to Foley Shield victories in 1964 and 1968 and coached Innisfail until 1980. He was part of NQ teams that dominated through the 1960s, playing in some epic victories alongside good mate Jim Paterson.

# 2020 Membership Application Form



Sign up online at [menofleague.com](http://menofleague.com)

## Step 1: Add new member details (Fill in & tick below)

<input type="checkbox"/> Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs <input type="checkbox"/> Ms <input type="checkbox"/> Miss	Email:		
First name:	Mobile:	Phone:	
Last name:	Favourite NRL team:		
Address Line 1:	Favourite State of Origin team:		
Address Line 2:	Member referral program (Referring member/committee name)		
Suburb:	State:	Postcode:	DOB:

## Step 2: Select your membership package (Tick below)

Bronze \$25 <input type="checkbox"/>	Silver \$60 <input type="checkbox"/>	Gold \$125 <input type="checkbox"/>	Corporate \$1,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	Junior (16 & under) \$25 <input type="checkbox"/>	Family \$90 <input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	--	---	--------------------------------------

Category	Membership Card	Keyring	Magnet	3 digital magazines per year	Exclusive members emails	Exclusive partner offers	Pen	Members cap	Invite to members event	Discount to National and QLD Lunch
Bronze	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Silver	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			10% x2
Gold	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	20% x 2
Corporate	X5	X5	X5	X10 (mag posted)	✓	✓	X5	X5	✓	20% x 5
Junior	✓	Pair of Crazy Socks		✓	Junior Footy			MOLF Drink Bottle		
Family	Family membership entitlements: 2 x Bronze memberships and 2 x Junior memberships									

I would prefer not to receive any merchandise items but rather donate these to a wellbeing recipient

## Step 3: Extras – Magazine and Donations (Tick below)

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please send my membership magazine via post for <b>an extra \$15</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, I would like to donate a membership to a wellbeing recipient for \$25
<input type="checkbox"/> NO, do not include postage. I will receive my magazine digitally	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, I would like to make an additional donation: <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 other _____

## Step 4: Payment (Fill in & tick below)

<input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Cheque <input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Debit	
Card number:	Account name:
Cardholders name:	BSB:
Expiry date:	Account number:
Total owing:	Signature:

**Automatic Payment Plan:** The Men of League Foundation want to make the process of renewing your annual membership simpler. We will continue to renew your membership in February of each year automatically until you choose to opt out. You will be added to the Automatic Payment Plan when you join via credit card or bank transfer. See [menofleague.com.au](http://menofleague.com.au) for Automatic Payment Plan terms & conditions.

**Privacy Policy:** By entering and submitting your details via this application, you consent to the collection, use and disclosure of your personal information as described in our Privacy Policy at [menofleague.com/privacy-policy](http://menofleague.com/privacy-policy).

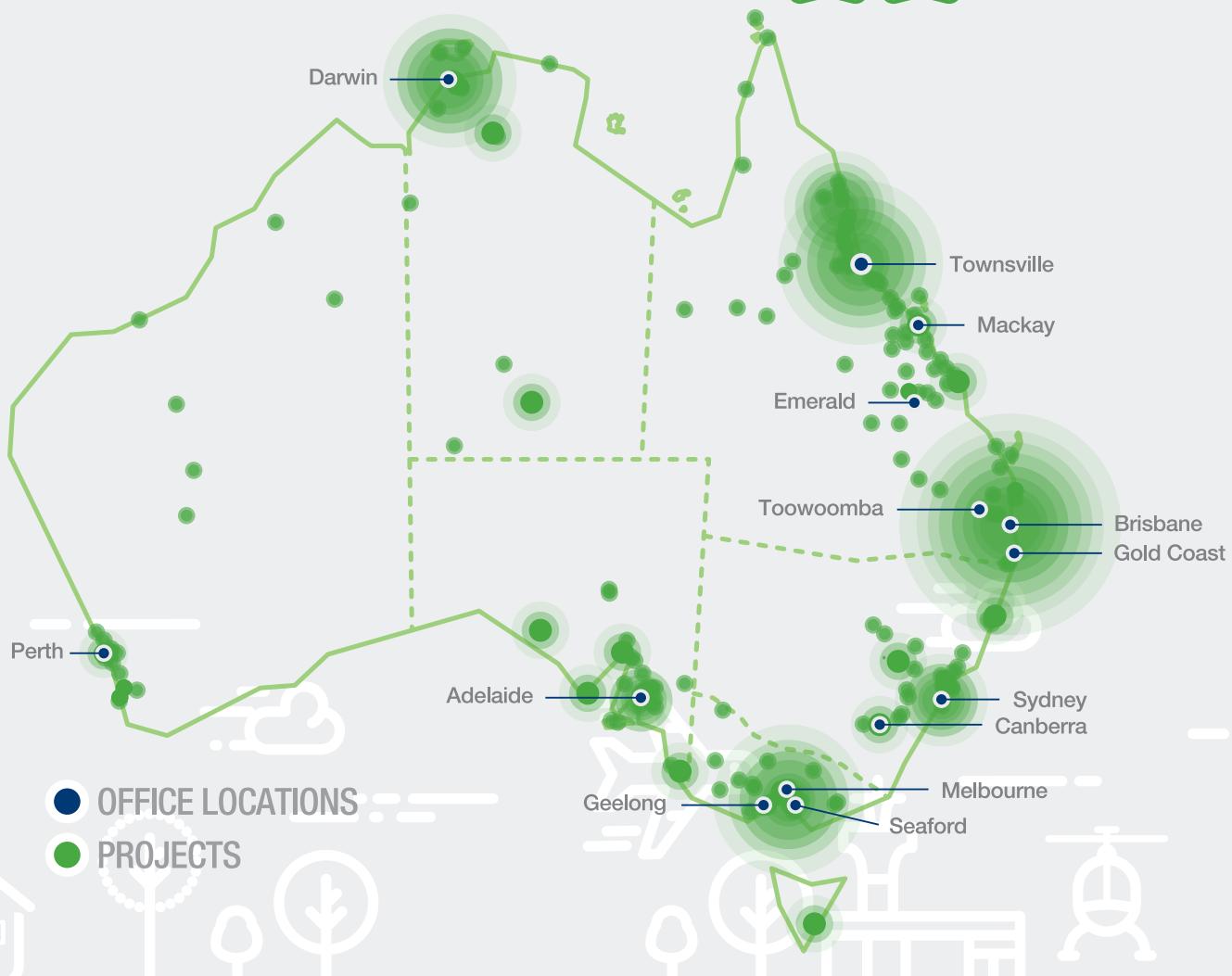
By completing this application, you are applying to be a non-voting member of Men of League Foundation Limited. The Men of League Foundation Limited is a non-profit company limited by guarantee. On winding up of the Company, each member's liability is limited to A\$10 per membership. A copy of our Constitution and our Membership Terms & Conditions can be found on our web site [www.menofleague.com](http://www.menofleague.com)

Need help? Call 02 8756 7190 or email [membership@menofleague.com](mailto:membership@menofleague.com)

Return this completed form to: Men of League Foundation, PO Box 7049, Silverwater NSW 2128



# BMD HAS BEEN CHANGING THE SHAPE OF AUSTRALIA FOR 40 YEARS



BMD is proud to be supporting Men of League for the third year in a row as naming rights sponsor of the BMD Qld Wellbeing program. As a family owned and operated company, we work in partnership with organisations such as Men of League who embody our family values.

07 3893 7000

[www.bmd.com.au](http://www.bmd.com.au)

