

FORMER ORIGIN GREATS CONTENTS

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Queenslander Magazine, the official magazine of the Former Origin Greats, is proudly printed by:



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www.crystalmedia.com.au

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A MESSAGE FROM

THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN



f rugby league has taught us anything, it is that the hard yards must be done before the rewards can be enjoyed. This is a lesson that has resonated with the Former Origin Greats and the Maroons in 2019.

While the results on the field were not what Queenslanders were hoping for this year, with the Blues taking home the Origin shield again, there is no doubt the Maroons will emerge stronger for the experience after some tough times in recent years.

As glorious as that previous Maroons era was, the retirement of four of its greatest servants this year highlights the fact that it has now been consigned to another chapter in Queensland's Origin history.

Greg Inglis, Matt Scott, Matt Gillett and Cooper Cronk all walked away from the game after being part of that incredible core of players that carried Queensland through that unprecedented decade of dominance.

I am sure all FOGS, and all Queenslanders for that matter, will join me in congratulating these men on wonderful careers, and their outstanding service to the Maroon jersey. Similarly, the Former Origin Greats this year are celebrating two significant victories with the 10th anniversary of the ARTIE Academy program, and the terrific news that ARTIE is now being backed by the Queensland Government for the next three years.

As Deputy Premier Jackie Trad said at the announcement, the FOGS have been knocking on the door of the State Government for a long time now.

The ARTIE Academy has been backed by the Federal Government since the beginning, and we have been able to build and grow the ARTIE Academy because of that support.

Now with the Queensland Government supporting the program as well, we are able to expand into another 20 schools throughout Queensland, which is a great result.

The State Government haven't given us the funding because they're footy fans. They have backed us because they can see the hard work that has gone into the program over the past 10 years, and the results that are being delivered.

That new level of support has led to new levels of responsibility, both to the students we assist, and in our reporting and acquittals of our government funding.

I am pleased to welcome Troy Collins and Marty Rowan as new Directors on the FOGS Board.

We are looking to make some additional appointees in the future, creating a Board of Directors that will better reflect modern rugby league, and the work being done by the FOGS within the game and the wider community.

Like the Maroons, for the Former Origin Greats, a new era has begun.

Wishing you and your family all the best for a safe and happy Christmas and New Year,









BARTONS HELP GIVE THE ARTIE ACADEMY

THE DRIVE TO SUCCEED

n rugby league, we pass the ball backwards, but we pay our favours forward. Recently, the Former Origin Greats were able to use the success in one part of the organisation to benefit one of our key sponsor partners, as a way of saying "thank-you for the support", but also as a direct example of the benefits that come from being a corporate partner of the FOGS.

The incredible success and rapid growth of the ARTIE Academy Program, which is now backed by both the Australian Federal Government and the Queensland State Government, has seen the ARTIE Academy expand into a further 20 schools across Queensland.

To properly service those schools, and to ensure the standards and success of the program were maintained, our ARTIE Academy Coordinators needed access to more vehicles to cover the miles they were travelling delivering this life-changing initiative.

So when the FOGS decided to upgrade by buying a fleet of five new vehicles for the ARTIE Academy Coordinators, they did not have to waste time shopping around for the best prices – they went straight to corporate partners, Bartons Motor Group at Wynnum.

Bartons joined the FOGS family of sponsors last year after being longtime supporters of rugby league in Queensland, particularly of the Wynnum Manly Seagulls in the Intrust Super Cup.

Bartons Managing Director Mark Beitz is a passionate league man and Queenslander through and through, and FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles said it was a heartwarming feeling to have a sponsor so ready to make a contribution above and beyond to the organisation and the game at large. "We approached Bartons around our need for five new cars for the ARTIE Academy, and they looked after us very well as they always do," Gene said.

"Since they have come on board as partners of the FOGS, our partnership and relationship with Mark and the team at Bartons has been outstanding. It is easy to see why their dealership has had so much success and expanded so rapidly in the past couple of years.

"Because of the results that our students and staff have been achieving in the program, the ARTIE Academy has now expanded, and has a giant geographical footprint across Queensland.

"We can't have coordinators trying to service two separate schools in the one car, there is just too much valuable time going to waste. the acquisition of the five new vehicles will help the ARTIE Academy achieve better results for future growth.

"With more cars, we are able to be much more efficient in our delivery of the programs, ensuring less time is being lost in travel, and more time is being devoted to these students and their education," Gene said. "Less time in cars, and more time inside the school gates.

"This is a perfect example of the FOGS sponsor family at work – helping each other to create success stories for both parties, and create more opportunities and better lives for Queenslanders."



"It is important for the company to ensure that the standards we demand from the ARTIE Academy are being maintained by allowing us to service these schools when we need to."

The success of the ARTIE Academy was directly responsible for the need for the new cars. Now in turn,





COOPER-DOODLE-DOO!

Why Cronk will be the gift that keeps on giving for the Roosters

e delivered them two premierships in two years, but Queensland coach Kevin Walters says Cooper Cronk's greatest contribution to the Sydney Roosters may not be felt for another decade.

Cronk enjoyed the ultimate fairytale farewell to rugby league, steering the Roosters to back-to-back premierships with their 14-8 win over the Canberra Raiders in the 2019 NRL Grand Final at ANZ Stadium in Sydney.

The Roosters created a slice of history and buried one of the game's longest-standing hoodoos, becoming the first team since the Broncos of 1992-1993 to win consecutive premierships in a united competition.

But Cronk was rewriting record books on his own.

In his final game, Cronk walked away with his third-straight premiership – having won the 2017 decider with Melbourne before joining the Roosters for their two success titles.

Cronk also became the first player since Ron Coote in 1975 to play in nine grand finals, winning six. Only Norm Provan and Brian Clay, with 10 each, played in more.

FOG No.168 finished his career with the incredible haul of 375 NRL games with the Storm and Roosters, 22 games for the Maroons between 2010 and 2017 – including the FOGS Tosser Turner Medal, 38 Tests for Australia, two Dally M Medals, and the 2016 Golden Boot as the best player in the world.

Cronk was at his influential best again for the Roosters in the 2019 decider, steering his team around the park as the highlyfancied Roosters held off sentimental favourites the Raiders, who had Maroons giant Josh Papalii in the front row.

Walters says Cronk's move to Bondi at the end of 2017 was a gamble for

both parties – the player leaving a successful system at the Storm where he was part of the furniture, and for the Roosters punting on a player with only two years left in his playing career.

While the premierships prove the move was a success, Walters says the legacy Cronk will leave behind for the Roosters' young players – like Luke Keary and young Queenslander Sam Walker, who joins the club in 2020 – will make the decision to sign Cronk one of the best investments ever seen in rugby league for delivering long-term dividends.

"He had had success for a long time at Melbourne, but he took the hard road moving to Sydney because it was important to him – and he came up trumps," Walters said.

IT IS A CREDIT TO HIM
AND THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM
FOR THE WAY HE FINISHED
HIS CAREER

"It was the type of career that not many in rugby league get to experience, but one that Cooper most certainly deserves.

"The Roosters need to be congratulated as well. They took a massive chance bringing Cooper in, and they copped a lot of backlash for it when they moved Mitchell Pearce on.

"But they have been more than justified now, not just because there are two premierships in the trophy cabinet, but because Cooper leaves the Roosters in a much better place than where it was when he arrived.

"The influence that he has had on the young players at that club is something that will continue to serve the Roosters for many years to come.





FINALLY, OUR QUEENSLAND GIRLS

GET THEIR TIME IN THE SUN

ormer Origin Greats Executive Chairman Gene Miles has revealed that plans are underway for Queensland's Women State of Origin players to be officially honoured and recognised with selection numbers and an honour board like their male counterparts.



"That work is currently underway," Gene said. "We have been in discussions with Karyn Murphy to recognise the contribution of all the women who have represented Queensland in rugby league over so many years.

"It is obviously a fairly sizeable task, and one that needs to be done properly and with the respect it deserves.

THERE IS A VERY RICH HISTORY OF WOMEN'S RUGBY LEAGUE IN QUEENSLAND, AND IT IS TERRIFIC TO SEE THE WOMEN'S GAME **NOW GETTING THE EXPOSURE AND** THE TOP-LEVEL COMPETITION THAT

"For too long the achievements of the Queensland Women's team has sailed under the radar, or not been celebrated enough.

"We know how special it was when the men's team won eight series in a row. Well, between 1999 and 2014, the Queensland Women's team beat NSW 16 years in a row. That is just incredible.

"We want to ensure all of the women who have represented Queensland over the years are recognised for their contribution to rugby league in our state, and their outstanding service to the people of Queensland, by having their names and selection numbers

The FOGS remain active supporters of the Queensland Women's team, who are coached by FOG No.106 Jason Hetherington, with FOG No.51 Trevor Gillmeister as his assistant.

"We are very proud to lend our support to the Queensland Women's team, and our assistance whenever it is required," Gene said.

"They are officially Maroons now, so the girls come under the umbrella and responsibility of the Queensland Rugby League, just like the men's team - which is incredibly satisfying for the girls who have worked so hard to wear that jersey, and exciting for the game itself.

"We are still heavily involved with them, and very proud that two FOGS in Jason and Gilly are contributing to the development of the women's game as

"However we can assist, through the provision of expertise or facilities, hotels, food, all the little things that have to be done to make sure a team is prepared to play - we are always available to them.

"They are Queenslanders, part of our family as Maroons and part of the FOGS family as well. I know our Founding Chairman Dick "Tosser" Turner would be so proud to see these girls out there living up to the Queensland spirit and adding to the history and legacy of that famous Maroon jersey we all love so much."



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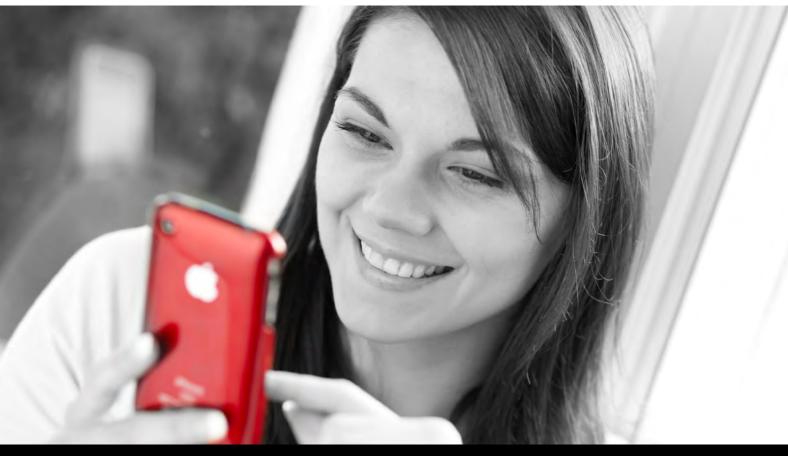


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We never SURGE NEVER!





FOGS STAY CLOSE TO THE HEART

OF EVERY FOOTBALLER IN QUEENSLAND

Every Queensland kid grows up wanting to be a Maroon. Now, thanks to the Former Origin Greats' sponsorship of grassroots footy, every young rugby league player in Queensland gets to hold that dream close to their heart every weekend.

Under a three-year deal with the Queensland Rugby League, every football used in every competition from juniors all the way to the Brisbane Rugby League A-Grade competition will feature the FOGS logo.

The only competitions run by the QRL that will not carry the FOGS logo on the football are the top-level Intrust Super Cup, and the Hastings Deering Colts competitions

It is a significant sponsorship and a significant statement, with the influence of the FOGS touching all levels of rugby league in Queensland from juniors, all the way through to our elite Maroons in State of Origin.

"Symbolically, this is a very important partnership," said FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles.

"It means that every Queensland kid that grows up playing rugby league will literally be in touch with the FOGS every time they hold the ball.

"Every time a player takes the ball up, the FOGS logo will be beside the heart of the boys and girls who will be the Maroons of the future.

"Directly and pragmatically though, the relationship is also important because the FOGS are contributing to the growth of rugby league, and the development of the kids and adults who play it.

"State of Origin represents the absolute top of the tree for every Queensland rugby league player. But for the top of the tree to be strong, the roots of the game need to be stronger still, and the FOGS are very happy to be playing our part in making sure the junior system, pathways, and lower-grade senior competition are being supported.

"This deal means that the FOGS are reaching every player across Queensland from the Under-7s, all the way through to the BRL A-Grade competition."

Gene said the deal also ensured the work of the FOGS remained in line with the vision of Founding Chairman Dick "Tosser" Turner, who created the FOGS to benefit rugby league in Queensland, and to create a better life for young Queenslanders.

"This relationship is at the heart of what Tosser envisaged for the FOGS when he got the organisation started so many years ago," Gene said. "He wanted to use the power of the Queensland jersey to improve the lives of Queenslanders, and to better rugby league in our state.

BY SUPPORTING
GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL THOUGH
OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE
QUEENSLAND RUGBY LEAGUE,
BOTH OF THOSE IDEALS ARE
BEING REALISED

"I think that Tosser would be very happy, but also very proud of the fact that the FOGS and our State of Origin players are giving directly back to the rugby league nursery that produces our great Maroons."



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MAROON SPIRIT PROVES TOO HARD FOR QLD GOVERNMENT TO IGNORE

Queenslanders never give up. Never have, never will. The never-say-die philosophy that has carried the Maroons to so many State of Origin victories over the past four decades has also paid off for the Former Origin Greats, who have landed a three-year funding partnership from the Queensland Government for the ARTIE Academy program.

"As Deputy Premier Jackie Trad said at the announcement, we have been knocking on the door of the State Government for a long time now," said FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles. "Finally, they have answered."

The new deal with the State Government is a huge vote of confidence for the FOGS and the ARTIE Academy, and deserved recognition for the outstanding results the program has delivered over a decade now.

With the Queensland Government joining the Australian Federal Government as funding partners, the ARTIE Academy Program will now take in another 20 schools across Queensland, and extend the benefits of ARTIE's early-intervention approach to Indigenous education by being introduced to primary schools as well.

"We have always been funded by the Federal Government with the ARTIE Program, and that is a relationship that goes back to when Kevin Rudd was Prime Minister," Gene said. "We have been able to build and grow the ARTIE Academy because of that support.

"Now with the Queensland Government supporting the program as well, we are able to go into another 20 schools throughout Queensland, which is a great result.

"They now fund the primary schools – so every primary school that is in the ARTIE program is funded by the State Government, and they feed into the high schools, which are funded by the Australian Federal Government."

According to ARTIE Academy Program Manager Steven Page, the entry of the program into primary schools would have life-changing effects on the students involved, who would be exposed to better learning habits from the start of their academic careers.

"It is all about early intervention," Steven explains. "If you learn good habits in anything, they are lessons you carry with you for life.

"If these students from the age of four are learning to love education and understanding how important it is for their futures as part of the ARTIE Academy, it has the power to change lives.

"A lot of our rewards and our program might be the hook that changes a student's future.

"It might not happen now, or next year. It might be well down the track. But developing that love of education, and learning important lessons about discipline and diligence could set them up for the future."

The ARTIE Academy program will be adapted specifically for the younger students, focusing on the support of mentors to encourage an early love of education, and the engagement

networks.
"It can be that the reason a student is not attending school regularly

in primary

of the

students'

support

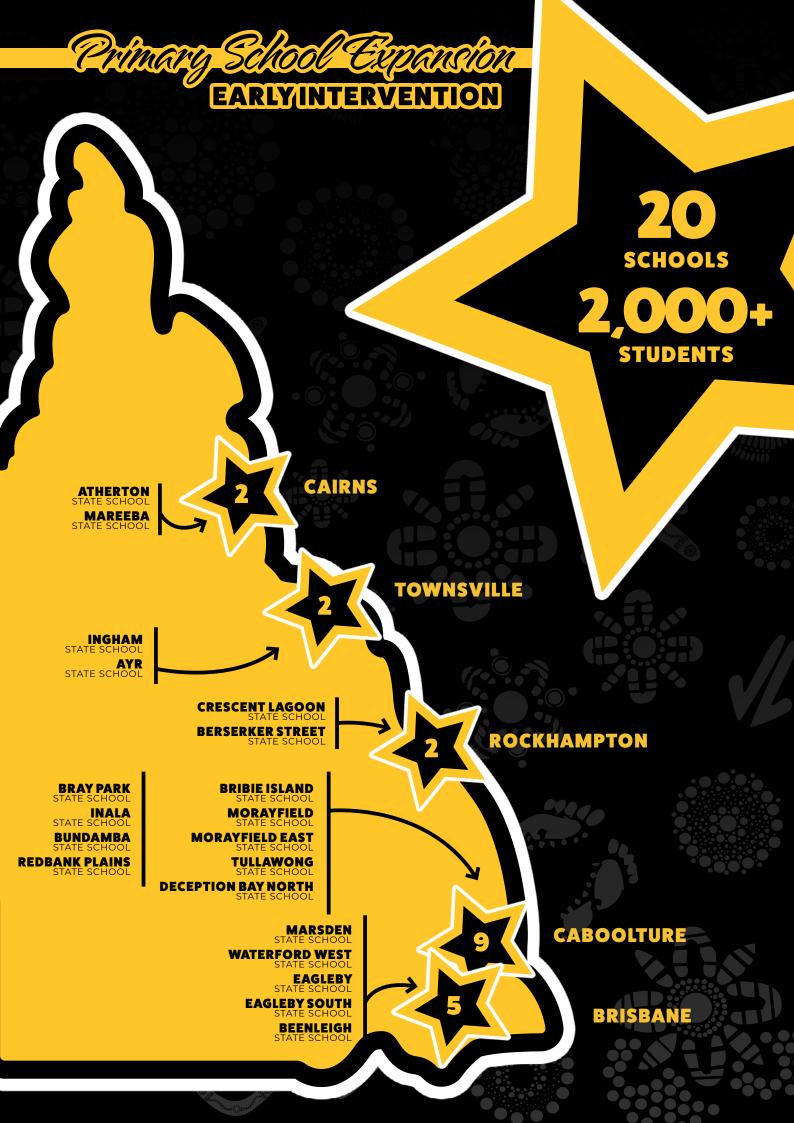
is not the fault of the student themselves," Steven said.

"So our mentors are working with the students, their family and the community to make sure these students are getting to school and getting the most out of their education.

OUR BIGGEST CARROT AT
PRIMARY LEVEL IS HAVING
A BIG STAR FOR A MENTOR
THAT THE STUDENTS TRUST,
SO THEY WANT TO BE A PART OF
THAT ENGAGEMENT

"That means they want to get to school more, then there are rewards for them when they increase or maintain those attendance levels. The rewards program works so well on the younger students, so







FROM THE COACH'S DESK

WITH KEVIN WALTERS

Queensland's players started their State of Origin series for the future by soaking up the heritage and legacy of the Maroon jumper, and acknowledging their place in rugby league history.

This year the Maroons gathered at FOGS Headquarters to prepare for the Origin series ahead.

It was something we haven't done before, but I know it meant a great deal to the players to recognise they were a part of this wonderful Maroons tradition, and a part of the FOGS family.

Visiting FOGS HQ helped to reinforce how special it is to represent Queensland in rugby league, and the incredible difference that famous jersey can make to the lives of the people that wear it, and the people it represents.

More than just the history of the Maroons, visiting FOGS HQ was a reminder of how Tosser Turner was able to channel Queenslanders' love of the Maroons into a force of unimaginable good, with the great work the FOGS are doing in the community all a result of the goodwill the people of Queensland feel towards the men who are fortunate enough to play for their state.

It is a powerful legacy to inherit, and a lot of responsibility. But that is what being a Queenslander is all about. It is about more than yourself, or merely playing well in a game of footy.

It is about living up to the expectations of all Queenslanders, and living up to the standards set by the men who wore the jersey before us.

I am pleased to say that none of that emotion or history was lost on the men who represented Queensland this year.

Unfortunately, we didn't reach our goal of winning the series. But I think the performances from the Queensland

team this year showed we have a group of men who will fulfil their duty and make all Queenslanders proud over the years ahead.

It is hard to look back on the series now and not feel like this was a series that really got away from Queensland.

Looking back and analysing each game individually, I thought we were absolutely terrific in the first game.

The second game at Perth was a long way from our best, and with the third game in Sydney, I was really proud of the way the team played, even though we didn't achieve the result that we set out to reach.

Ultimately, we were 30 seconds away from winning the series.

Could we have won Game III? Yes, we could have.

Could we have been smarter in the way that we played the game in the late stages of the match? Yes, we could have been smarter – and we have to be smarter and we have to do better for us to improve again next year and turn those results around.

But there is no doubt that the experience that this squad has gained over the past two series – 2018 and 2019 – has given us a great foundation on which to build in 2020.

We know we have the players to create a great team, and we know they now have the experience to ensure they go out and perform to their best in every game they wear the Queensland jersey.

Yes, the results this year were disappointing from the point of

view that we again did not bring the shield home to Queensland.

But I also know that we have made a massive investment in a successful future for the Maroons.

The result in Perth was the biggest disappointment, given we were so far below our best in a game where we had an opportunity to put a foot on NSW's throat.

You can always find reasons, when you look back, why all the pieces of the puzzle didn't come together as we expected they would in Game II in Perth.

I have certainly learned a lot about the team, and the individual players, because of what happened in Perth.

I was really proud of the way we reassembled ourselves in Game III, and produced such a wonderful, spirited fightback from the guys.

Everyone learned a lot about the Perth situation – players and staff – and that is only going to put us in a better position when we face a similar situation again next year with the first game in Adelaide.

We learned a lot from what we didn't get right.

And while those lessons will continue to hurt until we get the chance to rectify the situation in the 2020 series, they are the types of painful lessons Queenslanders have learned well from for generations in State of Origin.

Once they are learned, they are never forgotten.









GAME I

QLD 18

(Dane Gagai 2, Corey Oates tries; Kalyn Ponga 3 goals)

defeated

NSW 14

(Josh Morris, Jake Trbojevic tries; Nathan Cleary 3 goals)

Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane

Crowd: 52,191

GAME II

NSW 38

(Tom Trbojevic 3, Josh Addo-Carr 2, Tyson Frizell tries; James Maloney 5, Nathan Cleary 2 goals)

defeated

QLD 6

(Will Chambers try; Kalyn Ponga goal)

Optus Stadium, Perth

Crowd: 59,721

GAME III

NSW 26

(James Tedesco 2, Paul Vaughan, Damian Cook tries; James Maloney 5 goals)

defeated

QLD 20

(Felise Kaufusi, Josh McGuire, Josh Papalii tries; Ethan Lowe 4 goals)

ANZ Stadium, Sydney

Crowd: 82,565



FOGS ORIGIN LUNCH DELIVERS

FOR THE COMMON GOOD

State of Origin time is all about supporting your team. A new partnership with The Common Good at the Prince Charles Hospital will see the annual FOGS Origin Charity Lunch support some of Queensland's best medical research teams find treatments and cures for conditions and diseases affecting Queenslanders – including a couple very close to home.

"The relationship with The Common Good was formed through Gavin Allen, and the issue he went through with his heart and the transplant, and then again recently with Trevor Gillemeister and his cancer diagnosis," said FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles.

"The Common Good is a terrific charity where by donating just \$44, you can pay for an hour of medical research, and you can actually choose the medical team that you want to donate to.

"You can donate an hour – or more if you want to – of research into heart disease,

16 I

lung disease, arthritis, or dementia. If there is a condition that has affected you or someone in your family, you can contribute directly to research to find cures for those problems.

"Obviously, with the issues that Gavin and Trevor have been through in recent times, we have a couple of big causes close to our heart here at the FOGS.

"But, beyond that, we thought a partnership with The Common Good was a perfect fit for us because they deal with medical issues that affect men all across Queensland.

"We were so proud to be able to make The Common Good the designated charity for this year's Origin lunch, and to present them with a cheque for \$44,000.

"That equates to 1000 hours of research the team at the Prince Charles Hospital will use to create better lives for Queenslanders.

IT IS A GREAT CHARITY,
AND EVERY DOLLAR DONATED
GOES STRAIGHT TO THE CAUSE, AND
IS NOT LOST ALONG THE WAY IN
ADMINISTRATION COSTS

The Prince Charles Hospital Foundation's CEO Michael Hornby was on hand at the Origin lunch to accept the cheque from the FOGS, and said the chance to spread the message about the work being done by The Common Good would be a boost for the organisation.

"The FOGS are so generous, giving us this opportunity to talk about the life-saving work of our researchers and directly funding 1000 hours of their time," he said. "This is a milestone moment for The Common Good.

"We would like to thank the FOGS board, led by Gene Miles, general manager Marty Rowan, event organiser Christine Budd, and most importantly, The Common Good Ambassadors Gavin Allen and Trevor Gillmeister.

"Thank you for your incredible support and for funding precious research time that will save and change lives."



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GAMBLE RESPONSIBLY.

The donation to The Common Good was the highlight of yet another successful FOGS Origin Charity lunch, with a capacity crowd of Maroons fanatics coming together to share an afternoon of footy, fun and Queensland pride.

"The Lunch has really established itself now as a part of the State of Origin ritual in Queensland," Gene said.

"It is at the stage now where we have a large group of regulars that come every year – the repeat offenders who come along and have a great time every year, kick up their heels a little bit and help support some very worthy causes at the same time.

WE ARE VERY PLEASED WE HAVE
SO MANY OF THESE LOYAL SUPPORTERS
WHO REALLY BUY INTO THE ORIGIN
ATMOSPHERE AND TURN UP
EVERY YEAR TO SUPPORT THE FOGS
WITH THIS EVENT

Gene said anticipation for the 2020 event was already high, with the Maroons only playing one game at Suncorp Stadium next year – for the third game of the series on Wednesday 8 July.

"We have to wait a little longer for the lunch in 2020, because Suncorp is hosting Game 3 of the series next year – so the lunch will not be until Tuesday July 7," Gene said.

"Hopefully we all walk into the lunch pumped up about Queensland already having the series in the bag at two games up. But if we have to settle for a 1-1 all result going into Game 2, I guess we will be ok with that too, because that will only make the interest in the lunch even higher."

BACK YOUR INSTINCT YOUR RESEARCH YOUR KNOWLEDGE YOUR KNOWLEDGE Ladbrokes BACK YOURSELF



DALY CHERRY-EVANS

Finally, Oally gets his chance to stand among Vharoons greats

Don't try to tell Queensland coach Kevin Walters that the ascension of Daly Cherry-Evans to the captaincy of the Maroons in 2019 was one of the great rugby league redemption stories.

Walters will waste no time in telling you DCE's captaincy was not about redemption, but a classic story of resilience, patience and commitment to the Queensland cause, clouded by speculation created by those searching for answers that were right in front of their faces.

Cherry-Evans joined an elite club this year by becoming Queensland's 15th State of Origin captain.

As Origin rolls into its 40th anniversary in 2020, Cherry-Evans joins an exclusive list of our greatest rugby league names who have led the Maroons onto the field of battle, including Arthur Beetson, Wally Lewis, Paul Vautin, Mal Meninga, Trevor Gillmeister, Allan Langer, Adrian Lam, Gorden Tallis, Darren Lockyer, Shane Webcke, Cameron Smith, Greg Inglis, Billy Slater and Walters himself.

But a seat at this prestigious table seemed a long way away when Cherry-Evans was unable to force his way into the Maroons team for three years, stuck behind some of the greatest playmakers the game has ever seen who had steered Queensland to its greatest winning dynasty.

While those outside the inner-sanctum speculated about why Cherry-Evans was missing from the Queensland team, the man himself went to work on improving his game – maturing as a playmaker and a leader, making himself ready to answer if Queensland selectors made the call.

It was the commitment and resilience that convinced Walters to not only recall DCE at the end of the 2018 series, but to hand him the Maroons leadership in 2019 as a living testament to Queensland's fabled "never give up, never say die" philosophy.

"I don't see it as a redemption story," Walters says of making Cherry-Evans Queensland captain.

"People talk about the time that DCE spent out of Origin and try to find some sinister motive for it, or some conspiracy theory why he wasn't a part of that team.

"The fact of the matter is that he had Johnathan Thurston and Cooper Cronk ahead of him for the best part of a decade, and it just wasn't possible to fit all of those guys in together.

"Normally in Origin, you see guys get an opportunity through injury or suspension, and they are able to get in and establish themselves.

"Johnathan played 36 consecutive games – that's 12 Origin series in a row where he didn't miss a game for Queensland, so it was impossible for anyone to break in there.

"But Daly's opportunity arrived when those two guys retired, and we called him for Game 3 of last year's series, and I thought he did an outstanding job."

Walters said Cherry-Evans' commitment to the Queensland cause was exemplified this year, when the Manly skipper had to work around the clock to rehabilitate a severe ankle injury and be ready for Origin I.

"Again in this year's series, I thought his commitment to Queensland, and the leadership he provided, were really amazing," Walters said. "He didn't play for four or five weeks leading into Origin I, but he got himself there and was among our top two or three players.

"To me, it reminded me how committed he is to the Queensland cause – and why he was such a good choice as captain.

THIS IS HIS TEAM.
HE IS THE CAPTAIN OF IT,
AND HE DID A GREAT JOB IN ALL
THREE GAMES THIS SERIES AS THE
CAPTAIN OF THE SIDE

The man himself describes the greatest part of being named captain of Queensland was the opportunity to learn and develop more as a leader by working together with the Maroons' experienced campaigners.

"The opportunity I had to lead the Queensland team out this year was something I will never forget," he said.

"Queensland have a lot of quality guys like Cameron Munster, Will Chambers, Ben Hunt and Matt Gillett, and I picked their brains on how they go about their rugby league and that's where I got the most out of Origin captaincy.

"Those key conversations with other elite players opened my eyes to the game a bit more and how I can improve as a player."



AN INITIATIVE OF THE FORMER ORIGIN GREATS AND QUEENSLAND RUGBY LEAGUE



The **FORMER ORIGIN GREATS** and **QUEENSLAND RUGBY LEAGUE** wish to acknowledge the support of the following organisations as part of

THE 1980 INITIATIVE



















QUEENSLAND'S FUTURE IS NOW

AS ROOKIES ANSWER THE CALL

Queensland's "transition period" is officially over. The Maroons' next generation has officially arrived. That is the verdict of Queensland coach Kevin Walters, who has slowly but surely rebuilt the Maroons with a group of new faces to lead us through another generation.

The family of the Former Origin Greats continues to grow.

As unbelievable as it may seem, in 2019, we welcomed our 200th FOG into the fold, when teenage wrecking ball David Fifita earned his first Queensland jersey in Game 1 of the series.

Alongside him that day were FOGs #198 Moses Mbye and #199 Joe Ofahengaue, while a further three new faces – Corey Norman (#201), Christian Welch (#202) and Ethan Lowe (#203) – made their debuts in Game 3.

By comparison, in Game 2 of the 2019 series, Dale Finucane became the 287th Origin player selected for NSW.

That disparity will not narrow anytime soon, with Walters expecting the bulk of his young Maroons to carry Queensland's hopes through the next decade.

"You could probably throw Kalyn Ponga into that list of rookies as well," Walters says. "Kalyn has only played three Origin games, and people are quick to forget about that. "The same goes for Jai Arrow too really. He only has four games to his name over two series.

WE HAVE INTRODUCED

20 PLAYERS OVER THE LAST FOUR
YEARS TO MAKE THEIR ORIGIN
DEBUTS. THE TRANSITION PERIOD IS
FINISHED, FOR MINE

"We have got a really strong squad of good, young Maroons, with a couple of experienced guys as well, that will take Queensland to some great heights – which we will see in the next two or three years.

"Sure, there will always be new guys coming into the side. But I think everyone is aware of what we have been through in the past two or three years with the transition of the side. It is a different looking Maroons team now.

"But it is one that we feel – and I know – can remain to be the successful team that we have been over the last 20 years.

"We can't win Origin every year. We know that. We understand that. That's Origin. But we have a good young side here that we will enjoy a lot of success with."

Walters said the current group would follow the template of Queensland's golden eras in the 1980s and post-2006, when a core group of long-term Origin players became the foundation stones for success.

In the 1980s, it was names like Lewis, Miles, Meninga, Belcher, Dowling and Lindner. More recently, it was Lockyer, Smith, Slater, Cronk, Inglis, Thurston, Scott and Civoniceva.

Walters says Maroons fans a decade from now will look back with the same fondness of this current group around which he plans to build a new Queensland empire.

"I see them as all long-term Origin players," he said. "That is what you need for success – you need that stability in key positions, and you need long-termers who have been there and absorbed everything there is to learn about Origin.

"There are a lot of parts that go into being a good Origin player, and these guys are learning that along the way."













20 www.fogs.com.au



HOLMES IS WHERE THE HEART IS AND IT'S GREAT NEWS FOR MAROONS

G #188 Valentine Holmes is set to return to the NRL after a stint in the NFL with New York, and Queensland State of Origin coach Kevin Walters expects the former Cronulla winger to press for an immediate recall to the Maroons.

Walters' selection stocks will receive an unexpected but welcome boost with the news that Holmes is preparing to return to rugby league after a 12-month tilt at cracking America's NFL with the New York Jets.

Holmes is expected to turn out for the North Queensland Cowboys in 2020, bringing a massive dose of strike-power to the club based in his home town, but also delivering Walters one of the greatest finishers in Origin history for next year's campaign against the Blues.

In just five games for the Maroons between 2017 and 2018, Homes has scored a remarkable eight tries – a strike rate of better than one per game – and has kicked six goals for a haul of 44 points, and will still be only 24-years of age when the 2020 Origin series gets underway.

Walters said Holmes would be welcomed back into the Maroons fold with open arms on his return to rugby league.

"He has obviously proven himself to be a great player at State of Origin level for Queensland, and we most certainly look forward to welcoming him back into the side," Walters said.

"Val is one of those players that suits the Origin model, and he has been since the moment he ran out for his first game. He knows what is required at that level, and his try-scoring strike rate was really unbelievable.

"He left a massive void for us this year, with him being unavailable. But we are certainly delighted that he is returning to rugby league and we all look forward to seeing him in that Queensland jersey once again. It will be great to welcome him back."

While rugby league's most recent NFL defector, former NSW player

Jarryd Hayne, struggled to get back to his best on his return to the NRL, Walters said he expects Holmes to make an easy transition back to the 13-man game.

"He has only missed 12 months of the NRL really, so I would expect him to hit the ground running in respect to readjusting to life as a rugby league player," Walters said.

at fullback and on the wing, so it will just be a matter of working out where it is that he best fits into the side.

"He is one of those guys that covers a couple of positions, so that is just invaluable when it comes to representative footy."

I DON'T THINK IT WILL TAKE
TOO MUCH TIME AT ALL BEFORE
HE IS BACK TO BEING THE PLAYER
THAT HE WAS BEFORE HE
LEFT OUR GAME

"For him, with the success he was enjoying in rugby league as an Origin player for Queensland, a Test regular and a premiership-winner with Cronulla, to walk away from that to challenge himself in a new game was a very big and brave move and we all applauded his courage for doing it."

Dane Gagai and Corey Oates were Queensland's wingers during the unsuccessful 2019 series, and Cameron Munster and Kalyn Ponga played fullback.

Walters is unsure where Holmes will fit in Queensland's selection jigsaw, but said his class would always be welcome somewhere in the Maroons line-up.

"Position wise, it really is either or," he said. "He is a world class player





SHAUNE CELEBRATES HALF A MILLION SMILES

ON QUEENSLAND FACES

Shaune Watts never played a single State of Origin game for the Maroons – but it is unlikely you will ever meet a more inspirational Queenslander. Shaune is a one-man fund-raising powerhouse.

In just short of 11 years, he has raised more than half a million dollars supporting the Leukaemia Foundation and the Mater Little Miracles organisation that supports seriously ill children and premature babies.

Hosting two major events every year - a golf day and a high tea - Shaune has raised an extraordinary amount of money to buy much-needed equipment that not only changes lives, but saves them.

"When you start out, you have no idea of where it will lead to," Shaune said. "It was all born out of the ambition to support the community the best way we could.

"Now here we are at \$532,000 later in 11 years or thereabouts. It is hard to fathom sometimes where we have got to.

there every year - and the parents and families that affects - it gave me more determination because it was that much closer to home," he said.

"When you see what they do in there, it is quite amazing. If you can raise 10 or 20 grand - whatever you can do - it all goes to that cause to help those babies and the families in there come out the other side much stronger."

While Shaune's fundraising efforts have had a direct influence on the lives of thousands of Queensland families, most of them would not recognise him, or realise the work he is responsible for. And he couldn't be happier.

"There are occasions where I see the families when I have gone through the neo-natal critical care unit," he said.

"They don't know who I am, but I get to see them sitting in the recliner chairs there to make them a bit more comfortable - we bought 16 of them one year.

"There is a brain monitoring machine there that we paid \$57,000 for, which doubled the number they had.

SEEING THOSE MACHINES WE HAVE BOUGHT, AND THE MEMORIES THAT COME BACK WITH IT AS WELL, IT CAN BE A BIT CONFRONTING

"We made \$15,000 from the first golf day I ever did. At the time, I thought that was a lot of money. Because it was so successful, it just powered me on to want

Shaune began his fundraising work when his mother was

to do more."

diagnosed with leukaemia, but his beneficiary of choice changed when his son Noah was born dangerously early - at 10 weeks premature.

"When you see that side of things, with the 2000 babies that go through





"The big-ticket items like the brain monitoring machine, or the \$30,000 heart monitoring machine – just to know you are contributing in some way makes you get a bit emotional about it.

To see those babies being helped by those machines that we were able to buy for the hospital, it is a pretty special feeling."

Every year, Shaune politely reaches out to the FOGS for auction items to raise money at his events, and every year he says he feels even prouder to be a Queenslander.

"The FOGS have been terrific supporters of both our events for many years now, and I can't thank Debra and Gene Miles

"They have always been so generous with donations of jerseys and memorabilia that we have been able to turn into money to help these families.

"Dealing with Queensland audiences like we do at our events, anything to do with the Maroons is always highly sought-after. The FOGS have always been fantastic.

"Every time that I reach out to the FOGS for one of these events, I have absolutely no expectations.

"But they always offer us such wonderful support, and I am so grateful for the support that Deb and the FOGS show us. Their support makes it so much







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GOODBYE TO THE GREATS

OF A GOLDEN ERA

our giants of Queensland rugby league walked into retirement at the end of 2019 – one with a fairytale finish, and three whose battle-weary bodies surrendered before their hearts and minds were ready to call it a day. But all of them leave the game they loved, idolised as true ambassadors for rugby league, and will be embraced by the Queensland family, like so many before them, as Former Origin Greats.

Cooper Cronk, Greg Inglis, Matt Scott and Matt Gillett represent another big part of Queensland's golden Origin era that we will never get to enjoy watching on a rugby league field again, and the game is undoubtedly poorer for it.

All four players not only represented Queensland with distinction, but all achieved the honour of receiving the FOGS Tosser Turner Medal for wearing the Maroon jersey on 20 occasions or more.

Beyond that, Inglis also received the FOGS Statesman Award for reaching the 30-game milestone and, in his final Origin campaign in 2018, became just the 13th man to captain Queensland in a State of Origin game.

Queenslander Magazine asked Maroons coach Kevin Walters to share his thoughts on four of the greatest players of their generation, and four of the greatest to have worn the Queensland jersey.

COOPER CRONK

I really loved my time working with Cooper at the Melbourne Storm and also with Queensland.

People talk about his talents, and he had plenty. But it was his work ethic that was the thing that set him apart from most other players.

Right up until the last game of his career, he was the ultimate professional.

How many players have been able to leave the game with three straight premierships – at two different clubs mind you?

He just knew how to win. He was the guy who would always find the right play, the right pass or the right kick to win. He was the one who would kick the field goal to get you home.

He also has an extraordinary amount of courage. Probably one of the things he will be best remembered for is playing the 2018 grand final with a broken shoulder blade.

He was courageous in another way as well. For him to talk away from the Melbourne Storm system, where he was a major cog in a very successful machine, to join the Roosters with all the pressure and

scrutiny that brought with it, that just tells you about the character of the guy.

GREG INGLIS

As a physical specimen of what the ultimate rugby league player should look like, there are very few who can compete with Greg Inglis when he was at his best.

Not everyone gets to go out with the fairytale finish, and Greg deserved a better end to his career than the one that was dealt to him through injury.

I still remember his performance for Queensland in Melbourne, in Game I of 2018. He was the captain of Queensland for the first time, and he single-handedly tried to drag every one of those players across the line that night.

It was just an outstanding example of captaincy at its finest.

I am very thankful that Greg got the opportunity to captain Queensland in his last year of Origin.

He is the type of player we don't get to see very often. Just a rare talent, who was able to find the very best of himself and be a class above, even at the very highest levels of the game.

He had extraordinary passion and pride in that Maroon jersey.

He had enormous influence on the game – with the blokes he was playing with, and the guys who were out there trying to stop him.

MATT SCOTT

A lot of names get mentioned when you talk about that great period of success that Queensland had for so many years, but no one should ever underestimate just how much of a role that Matt Scott played in that success.

He started off at such a young age for Queensland, fought his way back after a rough start, and just kept growing and growing until he finished up as the best prop in the world.

He transformed himself into a great player, but was more importantly a great team man.

I remember his first game for Queensland, he was so young, and he got absolutely clobbered.

So he went back and got to work – working on the areas of his game that he needed to improve, until he was at the level he wanted to be.

All that hard work got him a premiership with the Cowboys, Origin successes with Queensland, Test matches for Australia, and a FOGS Tosser Turner Medal for his amazing service to Queensland over so many years.

He played 22 Origins, the same number of Tests and was co-captain of North Queensland's first ever premiership.

It was a fantastic career, and he earned and deserved everything that came his way.

MATT GILLETT

Gillo was an exceptional player but more importantly, a great Queenslander who never let his state down.

Players loved having him as a teammate, and coaches loved having him in their teams. He always had a selfless attitude to his football. The team came first.

At training, he always set the example with his effort and attitude.

I will never forget Matt's efforts in my first series as Head Coach of Queensland in 2016. He was at the peak of his powers, rightly talked about as the best forward in the world.

He put everything he had into every team he played for, but especially Queensland.

For him to come back from a broken neck and play two Origin games for Queensland this year was an incredible achievement. The fact he did so and kept his usual high standards was a real credit to him.

Playing those two games meant he reached 20 games for the Maroons – meaning he received the FOGS Tosser Turner Medal.

I remember the night he received the award – there were plenty of tears because it meant so much to him. It was a fantastic reward for a tremendous decade of service to Queensland.

Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland www.fogs.com.au



FOG No. 168

Origin Games 22 (2010-2017)

Tests 38

NRL Games 375















FOG No. 152

Origin Games 32 (2006-2018)

Tests 39

NRL Games 265











FOG No. 155

Origin Games 22 (2006-2016)

Tests 22

NRL Games 268













FOG No. 173

Origin Games 20 (2012-2019)

12

NRL Games 202





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INSPIRATIONAL ARTIE STUDENTS PAY IT FORWARD

THROUGH PROSOCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM

After 10 years of the ARTIE Academy program, you would think there would not be too many surprises for the team at the Former Origin Greats.

But in 2019, a collaborative research project with the University of Queensland's Institute for Social Science Research delivered a jolt of inspiration and selflessness above and beyond the decade of feel-good stories that have come off the ARTIE Academy production line.

Rewards for ARTIE students who achieve their targets in academic performance and school attendance have always been at the heart of the program – driving results out of under-performing students by showing them the correlation between hard work and reward.

But this year, the Prosocial Incentive program run in conjunction with UQ explored what would happen if the students who did the hard work and then earned their reward were given the chance to give that reward away – by donating it to a student they had never met, in a more disadvantaged situation than themselves.

The Prosocial Incentive program gave randomly selected ARTIE students, who achieved their goal of 90 per cent attendance, the choice of keeping their reward, or handing it to a student in more need in a remote Indigenous community – in this case Aurukun.

The result was as inspirational as any act of selflessness seen on a footy field, with over 50 students giving up their hard-earned reward by donating to students at Aurukun State School.

Dr Azhar Hussain Potia, from UQ's ISSR program, said the Prosocial experiment with ARTIE students had been the ultimate example of "paying it forward".

"Together, we have looked at new and somewhat unconventional ways we can frame incentives to motivate students to apply themselves academically and increase school attendance rates," he said.

"One such strategy is based around the notion of Prosocial Incentives – whereby people are motivated to do something that will benefit someone other than themselves. "In the context of our study, this involves offering students a choice when they achieve a set school attendance target, in which they can chose to keep an incentive for themselves, or donate it to another student from a more disadvantaged background.

"This concept is similar to the idea of paying it forward.

"Participating students are randomly assigned to one of two groups: The choice, or the control group.

"Students in both groups have the opportunity to receive an incentive if they achieve the given attendance target. But only students in the choice group had the option to donate the incentive to students at a remote and highly disadvantaged Indigenous community in Far North Queensland."

ARTIE Academy Program Manager Steven Page said the overwhelming and inspirational success of the trial would lead to the Prosocial Incentive being expanded across more schools next year.

"It is inspirational, and full credit to the students who did donate their prize," he said.

"When you dangle an ARTIE hoodie in front of a student, it is the reward that every student in the program wants.

"To give them that choice – to give away a highly sought-after reward that they have had to work hard to achieve – that is something that can only come from within them.

"For them to want to give away their reward to someone in more need shows an extraordinary amount of leadership, and incredible selflessness.

"We have been wanting to become engaged with the Aurukun community for quite some time. This gave us the opportunity.

"This was a way to show the students in our program that there are students in remote communities that may not get the opportunities that they did to

be involved in a program like this, or receive the rewards they do. There was an opportunity to pass that reward on.

"We sent up a box of donated rewards to the Aurukun Community, and the school then used those items as rewards to deliver a similar sort of reward program into that school.

SO WHILE WE DON'T HAVE
THE FUNDING TO ACTUALLY BE IN
THAT SCHOOL, WE WERE ABLE TO
PROVIDE THE REWARDS AND THE
INSPIRATION TO GET A PROGRAM
STARTED FOR THEMSELVES

Steven said the response of the students, and their willingness to give away their reward to those more in need had been an eye-opening experience.

"I was really surprised by the response of the ARTIE students to the concept, particularly in Term 1, when the reward on offer for the ARTIE students was the hoodie," he said.

"It was going into winter, everyone loves the hoodie, and we had a new design this year as well. There were students in Year 7 who had never received a hoodie before who wanted to give it away to another student they had never met who was in more need.

It wasn't because they didn't want it, or they didn't need it. It was because there was someone who needed it more, who couldn't get it otherwise.

"The success of the concept means that we now look at expanding that option across all of the high schools involved in the ARTIE Academy, and I think the students who have been involved in the program for a while would all jump at the chance to be able to give back."

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ALL FOR FUN, AND FUN FOR ALL

Artie Fun Days celebrate and inspire success

So often we hear of "peer pressure" being a negative thing for young people. But students participating in the ARTIE Academy program have turned it into a force for good.

Once again this year, the students who successfully met their attendance challenges during the past 12 months were invited to participate in the ARTIE Academy Fun Days.

For the first time, the Former Origin Greats hosted four Fun Days – the existing ones in Southeast Queensland and Rockhampton, and two new ones in Townsville for North Queensland schools, and in Cairns for the Far North Queensland schools.

More than 400 students from the southeast Queensland area celebrated the end of the year at White Water World at Dreamworld on the Gold Coast, with another 250 students from six schools spread among the three regional ARTIE Fun Days.

ARTIE Academy Program Manager Steven Page said the popularity of the Fun Days was helping to drive even more success among students participating in the program.

"To get an invitation to one of the Fun Days, students in the ARTIE Academy program must maintain an attendance record of 90 per cent or more," Steven explained. "It is a way to finish off the year on a high, and to celebrate meeting their goals in their incentive challenges.

"It is our big-ticket reward. All of the students know it is coming around each year, and they all look forward to it.

IT IS A GREAT DAY OUT,
AND THEY ALL WANT TO BE
A PART OF IT, SO IT IS A GREAT
MOTIVATOR FOR THEM TO
MAINTAIN THE STANDARDS ACROSS
THE WHOLE YEAR

"It works on another level as well, because the students want to go together with their friends and their groups, so that makes them all work harder and work as a team to meet their goals, and they help and encourage the others in the group along the way to make sure they can all go together.

"So it is rewarding to see when the students themselves are driving other students to meet their goals within the program to make sure they all attend the Fun Day together."

Steven said the trial of the Fun Days in Townsville and Cairns had both been massive success stories, ensuring they would be back on the calendar again in 2020 to keep the North Queensland ARTIE Academy cohort focused on meeting their goals.

"The students were really engaged with the Fun Days, with all the activities, celebrating with their friends, and having the ARTIE Academy Ambassadors on hand to help them enjoy the day," he said

"The students are already looking forward to next year's event, so that seed has already been sown.

"They all know how enjoyable the Fun Days are, so they will start the new school year determined not to miss out and get back there again.

"And the students that missed out will have heard all about what they missed out on, so they will be working extra hard to make sure they are not left out of it again.

"It is not only a celebration of the successes of the last year, it is also a major motivation for them to back up those results again in the new year."







RACQ AND FOGS ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Orivers Licence Program puts Artie Academy students on road to success

he Former Origin Greats are on track in 2020 to put 160 young Queenslanders in the driving seat for their futures as part ofthe ARTIE Academy Driver Licensing Program, run in partnership with RACQ.

The ARTIE Academy Driver Licensing Program provides the opportunity and support for students in Year 10, 11 and 12 to gain their driver's licence.

"The Driver Licensing Program has been going for three years," said ARTIE Academy Program Manager Steven Page.

racq.com/more

"RACQ joined us at the end of last year. We had 60 students complete the program across the first two years. in 2019, with RACQ on board, we doubled that number to 120 students participating in the program, and that expansion has been geographically as well.

"We now run the program from Beenleigh all the way up to the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland."

The Program delivers big benefits for successful participants, with the independence offered by being able to drive oneself around opening up a world of opportunity - both socially, and through





the ability to cover the distance required to attend further education or employment.

But nothing good comes easy. The students are expected to achieve and maintain high standards in their schooling and attendance to participate in the ARTIE Academy Driver Licensing Program.

"The Drivers Licence Program is a highincentive program," Steven said. "They have to work really hard to participate.

"They must attend school at over 90 percent, they must have good behaviour, they have to provide a character reference from a teacher.

THERE ARE A FEW BOXES
THEY HAVE TO TICK OFF TO BE
A PART OF THAT PROGRAM.
ALL THE WAY THROUGH THE
PROGRAM, THEY HAVE TO KEEP
THEIR ATTENDANCE HIGH, KEEP
THEIR BEHAVIOUR HIGH TO STAY
IN THE PROGRAM

"That instils leadership in them. If they can achieve that, they will earn their P-plates and a whole new world will open up to them, and employment opportunities as well."

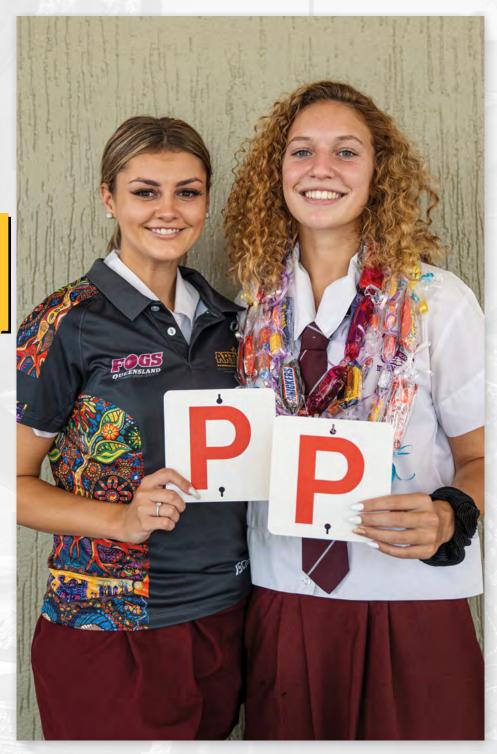
Steven said the partnership between FOGS and the RACQ in delivering the program was the perfect fit for two iconic Queensland organisations.

"RACQ really align with the work that we are doing in the ARTIE Academy and, like the FOGS, are an organisation for all Queenslanders," he said.

"They are focused on the message of road safety, getting these students on the road and helping them get into employment or further education.

"When you are talking about the regional parts of Queensland where the ARTIE Academy program is operating, especially around Atherton, Ingham and Ayr, they are all a good hour away from the nearest university.

"So the ability to get their licence, and drive a car directly impacts their ability to chase employment or further education, and that can have a huge impact on the lives and futures of these students."



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WHERE ARE THEY NOW

FOG #147 TY WILLIAMS

Think of Innisfail's finest rugby league products and the name Billy Slater immediately springs to mind.

Before Billy, you mind invariably would have gone to the other "kid" – the great Kerry Boustead, who became the youngest Test player in history when he played in the green and gold in 1978 aged 18.

But there is another backline flyer to emerge from the far north Queensland town who left a lasting legacy at NRL and State of Origin level.

Name of the second seco

For all the backfield genius of Slater and Boustead, the try-scoring wizardry of Ty Williams must not be forgotten.

From the moment he scored a staggering 42 tries in a single season playing for the Innisfail Leprechauns, it was clear Williams had the talent, passion and single-minded focus to carve out a successful career in the NRL.

But what few know is that, well before he helped awaken the sleeping giant that was the North Queensland Cowboys, Williams had his heart set on fame and fortune at the Brisbane Broncos.

"It was always the plan for me to play NRL," said Williams, who made his topgrade debut for the Cowboys in 2002.

"I did a lot of extras back home with training, and once I got a look in, I wasn't going to let my opportunity slip. It was my main goal in life. I ACTUALLY SPENT SIX WEEKS AT THE BRONCOS BEFORE I SIGNED WITH THE COWBOYS

"I was down in Brisbane doing my apprenticeship at TAFE and every afternoon I would go and train with the Broncos.

"That's when Craig Bellamy (future Storm super coach) was the assistant to Wayne Bennett. I thought I was going to be allocated to one of Brisbane's feeder squads (in the Queensland Cup), but then the Cowboys showed interest and I could see a pathway there to the NRL.

"At the time, the Broncos had Darren Lockyer, Wendell Sailor and Lote Tuqiri as their back three and they were the all-star Australian fullback and wingers, so I thought my best chance of playing NRL was going back home to the Cowboys."



TY **WILLIAMS**

FOG #147

NRL: 151 games

(North Qld Cowboys, 2002-2010)

QLD: 3 Origin games

(2005)

Still only 21, Williams rolled the dice, accepting a basic two-year Cowboys contract worth a meagre \$5000 a season.

For the first seven years of their existence, the Cowboys were premiership whipping boys.

But Graham Murray's appointment as coach for the 2002 season ushered in a bold new era for North Queensland.

Murray, who had steered the Sydney Roosters to the 2000 grand final, injected credibility and self-belief.

He fast-tracked the careers of local juniors such as Matt Bowen, Williams, Aaron Payne and Nathan Fien.

"Muzz came in and shook the place up and gave us young blokes an opportunity," Williams said.

Williams flourished under Murray. In his first three seasons, Williams scored 40 tries from 68 games, carving out a reputation as a fleet-footed winger who combined brilliantly with fullback Bowen and could score from anywhere on the park.

Then came his dream season in 2005.

Williams set the Cowboys' flanks alight, producing a career-best seasonal haul of 18 tries from 23 games to propel his side to their maiden grand final appearance.

And while North Queensland were beaten 30-16 by the Wests Tigers in the decider, Williams scored three tries in two finals games to catapult the Cowboys to their historic night at Homebush.

"The grand final was a massive year for us all," Williams recalls.

"It all flowed on from 2004, we had made the semis for the first time that year and we had that famous win over the Broncos (10-0 before a 24,989 sell-out crowd in Townsville).

"To finish in the grand final was mindblowing. The build up to the game was crazy and the whole of north Queensland was in a frenzy.

"While it was disappointing to lose, I felt we put our footprint on the competition that night and said: The Cowboys are here to stay, we're having a red-hot crack moving forward'."

The 2005 campaign was also Williams' crowning moment as an individual.

Five months before the grand final, he was called up to make his State of Origin debut for Queensland alongside Cowboys teammates Bowen, Paul Bowman, Matt Sing and Johnathan Thurston.

In his maiden outing in Maroon, Williams, wearing jumper No.2, scored a try at Suncorp Stadium and watched on in delight as Bowen intercepted a Brett Kimmorley pass to snatch a 24-20 victory in the series opener.

The Blues managed to hit back to win the series – and Williams did not survive for the 2006 campaign. But the Cowboys ace will always treasure his three-game stint in Maroon.

"It still gives me goose-bumps when I think about it," he said of his Origin memories.

"You get picked in the best 17 for Queensland and I made lifelong friends out of it.

"To debut at Suncorp and have my family and friends there was pretty cool.

I WAS PART OF THE
GAME WHERE MATT BOWEN
SCORED THE MATCH-WINNING
INTERCEPT IN EXTRA-TIME.
THE CROWD ERUPTED. IT DIDN'T
GET ANY BETTER

"Origin is another two levels up on the NRL. The whole 80 minutes is so intense. You have to be constantly on your game or the best players expose you. I found it really mentally draining. "Playing with guys like Locky and Thurston ... it was just a massive thrill and I didn't want to let those guys or the state down."

Williams played another five years of NRL before pulling the pin at the end of the 2010 season.

He was just shy of his 30th birthday, relatively young in retirement terms, but is forever proud of a nine-season NRL career that netted 151 games and 85 tries.

The 38-year-old is now giving back to the game he loves as head coach of Northern Pride in the Intrust Super Cup.

"This is my fourth season with the Pride," he said.

"I love watching young guys develop – not only as players but people. It's pretty rewarding when you get to assist guys away from football with finding work.

"I was more than comfortable with my decision to finish up. I dreamed of playing one NRL game and I ended up with 151 games for a club that is in my backyard and I love seeing the Cowboys succeed the way they do now.

> "To see them win the NRL premiership in 2015, it's nice to know I helped create a pathway for future Cowboys players.

"I have no regrets at all. If anything, I am overjoyed with what the game has given me."





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TACKLE ONEWITH TREVOR GILLMEISTER

This column was one I never thought I would have to write. This is the column about how I got prostate cancer. Sorry, I should say, this is the column about how I BEAT prostate cancer.

If I haven't caught up with you personally in recent times, no doubt you saw the stories in the media about me finding out I had cancer.

Sometimes you don't want everyone knowing your business. But I knew me going public might encourage some other blokes to go and get a test done, and that might save a life.

So here we are.

Let's start at the beginning.

I was booked in for a general check-up with my family doctor, something I have done every year since I turned 50.

Every year, I go in and get a full check-up – get the blood tested, and get my skin checked.

Every year it has been fine. Then this year, it wasn't.

Something about my blood test caught my doctor's eye.

And I should add, here is another way I am so lucky with this story: Having a regular family doctor, who knows your history, what your normal levels are, and who knows when something is not quite right.

My levels weren't even that high.

Maybe a doctor who didn't know my history would have looked at the numbers and thought they weren't high enough to be concerned.

But the difference was enough for my doctor, who knew my history, to ask the question.

He said to me: "I don't like the way your PSA levels bounce around. They're up, then they're down."

It was the smallest difference, but enough for him to send me off to a urologist at Chermside, Dr David Hussey.

Dr Hussey said: "I don't like that either, Gilly. It's not extremely high, but I'll send you for a scan anyway".

He called me up a couple of days later, and said: "I need to see you".

He had the results of the scan and there was a spot of cancer there.

I couldn't believe it. I asked him if he had the right scan.

I was feeling that good. I had been training that morning, and I'd never felt better.

I had no symptoms, no history in the family.

It hit me like a ton of bricks.

I took a couple of minutes to think about things, and I asked: "So what's the process?".

The decision was up to me about whether I had the surgery or not.

One of the nurses at the hospital said to me: "I love working with you footballers, because you process everything."

She's right. That is how we operate.

Some blokes that haven't played sport in their life might not have that.

Footy helps you so much in life. What we go through on the field helps us deal with pressure better. It teaches you how to handle adversity.

I interviewed four doctors to see what their thoughts were. I decided to go with Dr Geoffrey Coghlan at the Wesley.

I spoke to a couple of old Queensland teammates in Michael Hagan and Gary Larson, who have both had it and come out the other side.

I decided to get the surgery.

I got the news at the end of March, and had the surgery on August 5.

I had the operation, and a recovery game-plan to work to – catheter out after a week, six weeks of walking, and visiting a prostate physiotherapist to teach you about using muscles down there you never knew you had.

I saw the surgeon three months later, had another blood test, and the results came back really good. He said: "I'll see you in 12 months unless you have any dramas".

There have been no dramas. I will just go back to having my full check-up once a year like I have been doing.

And now? You would never know I had cancer.

It takes me a little longer to take a leak than it used to, but all things considered, I can handle that.

The reason my cancer story is so successful is because I was in the driver's seat the whole way along. It never had control of me.

I drive my mates mad about getting the blood tests done. Next time I see you, I am going to drive you mad too. But the number of guys that have said to me "thank God you told me, my numbers were high" makes me feel better about driving people mad.

So here's what you have to do: Once a year, book in for a full check-up with the your GP. Get your blood tested, your blood pressure tested, your skin checked. The works.

Make it routine. Do it on your birthday, your anniversary, whatever.

If you're not worried about yourself, that's fine. But what about your wife and kids.

Think about them.

Your life is not just about you.

The thing about prostate cancer is that there are plenty of good stories out there, just like mine.

It doesn't always end up with a colostomy bag for the rest of your life – or worse, carking it.



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