

VODAFONE



# Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

14<sup>th</sup> February 2018

# Newsletter #204

## ANNUAL NEW ZEALAND RUGBY LEAGUE AWARDS 2018



### The Best Honoured At NZRL Awards

By Brooke Hurdnell

**R**OGER TUIVASA-SHECK (Kiwi #779) has taken home the Kiwis Player of the Year award at the New Zealand Rugby League Annual Awards tonight.

The dynamic full-back ended the 2017 World Cup with the equal most tries scored (3), the most carries (72) and the most metres carried (626) for the Kiwis. Head Coach David Kidwell says such achievements were no small feat considering Tuivasa-Sheck had recently returned from a serious knee injury.

“In some cases, it takes a fair amount of time for a player to get back to fine form following such a

serious injury, but Roger did everything right and ultimately showed great leadership at the back.

“He’s a quality young-man who was a pleasure to coach and I congratulate him for his impressive performances throughout the NRL season and at the 2017 Rugby League World Cup,” Kidwell said.

While top honours in the men’s category went to Tuivasa-Sheck, Women’s Player of the Year was picked up by his female fullback counterpart, Apii Nicholls-Pualau.

After an outstanding season with the seven time National title winning Counties Manukau Stingrays, Nicholls-Pualau was selected to fill the void of previous Kiwi Ferns captain and fullback, Sarina Fiso, who won 2016 Women’s Player of the Year. Being named Back of the Tournament at the National Women’s Tournament was yet another feather in her cap.

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Apii took ownership of the number one jersey stamping her mark as the starting Kiwi Ferns fullback for the entirety of the 2017 Rugby League World Cup. She also topped the leader board for kick return metres at the World Cup racking up a massive 279 metres, but Nicholls-Pualau was quick to downplay her accomplishments.

“I’m honoured to even be considered alongside players such as Teuila Fotu-Moala and Krystal Rota, let alone to win this award.

“There are a lot of people I have to thank for their on-going support including my incredible family – without them there is no way I could have dedicated as much time as I did to the sport I love,” she said.

Kiwis Rookie of the Year was won by Nelson Asofa-Solomona (Kiwi #804) who was also a finalist in the top category after bursting onto the international rugby league scene in 2017.

His physicality turned heads at the Rugby League World Cup causing defensive issues for his opposition and World Cup rankings showed he was only second to Roger Tuivasa-Sheck when it came to most carries (56) and metres carried (489).

You can replay the livestream of the NZRL Annual Awards on the NZRL Facebook page.

[Click here to view the photo gallery from the Awards function](#)

## Auckland Joy At The NZRL Awards

By Corey Rosser – Auckland Rugby League Digital communications officer

**A**UCKLAND PLAYERS claimed the major prizes at the annual New Zealand Rugby League Awards held on Saturday, February 10.

Otahuhu Leopards junior Roger Tuivasa-Sheck scooped the Kiwis Player of the Year Award, following a number of strong performances in the Kiwis’ disappointing 2017 World Cup campaign.

The supreme women’s award was won by Manurewa Marlins star Apii Nicholls-Pualau, who capped a fine year in which she won the Farrelly Photos Auckland Women’s Premiership, before going on to make her mark in the Kiwi Ferns’ No.1 jersey at the Women’s World Cup.

Nicholls-Pualau’s achievement is even more admirable when you consider she was making her international debut at the tournament, after being called up to replace long-term Kiwi Ferns custodian and Manurewa teammate Sarina Fiso.

Nicholls-Pualau spoke of the honour of being named alongside 2017 Women’s World Cup Player of the Tournament, Teuila Fotu-Moala, and last year’s Auckland Rugby League Women’s Player of the Year, Krystal Rota.

“I’m honoured to even be considered alongside players such as Teuila and Krystal, let alone to win this award,” she said.

“There are a lot of people I have to thank for their ongoing support including my incredible family – without



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them there is no way I could have dedicated as much time as I have to the sport I love.”

Other Auckland winners at the awards included veteran referee Chris McMillan and Ellerslie Eagles and Saints Paul's College back-rower Christian Tuipulotu (Domestic U16 Player of the Year). Tuipulotu was last year named the SAS College Rugby League Player of the Year.

Auckland players Isaiah Papali'i (Junior Player of the Year) and Tyler Slade (Domestic U18 Player of the Year) also took home silverware.

## 2018 NZRL Award Winners



The Domestic Coach of the year award winner is Morgan Kutia (Waikato)



The Domestic Player 16s of the year award winner is Christian Tuipulotu (Auckland)



The Domestic Player 18s of the year award winner is Tyler Slade (NZ Warriors)



The Domestic Player of the year award winner is Aaron Jolley (WaikatoHamilton City Tigers)



The Grassroots Club of the year award winners are Taniwharau (Huntly)



The Kiwis Player of the year award winner is Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (NZ Warriors)



The Match Official of the year award winner is Chris McMillan (Auckland)



The Pirtek Female Volunteer of the year award winner is Chantez Connor (Otaika Eagles Northland)



The Pirtek Male Volunteer of the year award winner is Jack Newson (Hornby Panthers Christchurch)

Photos courtesy of [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)

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The Womens Player of the year award winner is Apii Nicholls-Pualau (Manurewa Marlins)

#### FULL LIST OF NZRL AWARD WINNERS:

Female Volunteer – Chantez Connor (Otaika Eagles)  
Male Volunteer – Jack Newson (Hornby Panthers)  
Grassroots Club – Taniwharau  
Domestic Coach – Morgan Kutia (Waikato)  
Referee – Chris McMillan (Auckland)  
Domestic Player 16s – Christian Tuipulotu (Auckland)  
Domestic Player 18s – Tyler Slade (NZ Warriors)  
Domestic Player Premier – Aaron Jolley (Hamilton City Tigers)  
Junior Player – Isaiah Papali'i (NZ Warriors)  
Kiwis Rookie – Nelson Asofa-Solomona (Melbourne Storm)  
Women's Player – Apii Nicholls-Pualau (Manurewa Marlins)  
Kiwis Player – Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (NZ Warriors)

## Fans Slow To Back Their Side

By David Kemeys

Former Sunday Star-Times Editor, Former Editor-in-Chief Suburban Newspapers, Long Suffering Warriors Fan



**I**S ANYONE surprised Vodafone Warriors membership has fallen drastically?

Essentially, there are about 4000 season ticket members who have not bothered to renew, and that has Warriors boss Cameron George admitting the boys have a bit of work to do to win the fans back.

We are only a few days away from the boys having their first pre-season hit-out this weekend in Rotorua, but the usually hype that accompanies a new season is totally missing this year.

Not many seem to expect anything other than another miserable year, which might even work for the team, since the pressure will be off.

Our recruitment has been solid, if unspectacular, and will certainly give us more depth, but people have been slow to forgive the dreadful nine straight losses end to our season last year, so it can't be a surprise to the club that people have had enough, and are keeping their cash thank you very much.

George summed it up: "The numbers don't lie and it is what it is."

I have to confess I have had enough myself, but I struggle with this one. Fans don't quit. I will be there, hoping for better, but not really expecting it.

At least George says the players are going to represent the loyal with "passion and commitment", and that is all you can ask.

Apparently at the start of this month 8035 members had signed up for 2018 - only the Titans having fewer.

All I can say is this. Win.

That whole "match-day experience" thing we get told about all the time is just a nice to have.

I have never left the stadium and heard people talking about how much they enjoyed watching the youngsters, or that the cheerleaders were amazing.

This is a results business, and our results have been awful, so the club is paying the price for it.

But that has not stopped a new bidder – or at least a group showing an interest – from emerging.

I did not see this one coming. The ongoing saga of selling the club has gotten even more bizarre, with an American politician interested.

This bloke is called Richard Fale, and he comes from Hawaii, which is a very nice place to come from indeed.

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He is as a Republican member of the Hawaiian House of Representatives, and is heading up a Tongan-American consortium that wants to buy the club.

Apparently the group includes quite a few current or former NFL players, even some with Super Bowl titles to their names.

He is certainly talking a big game, claiming that if they get the club this year we will be in a position to win the championship by 2020. Sounds good to me.

Fale reckons his mob know all about winning, having loads of NFL experience, and pots of money too. And that's a combination he says could change our fortunes.

"We have people in our group that know what a championship organisation looks like and how they operate," Fale said. "It takes absolute excellence on and off the field."

His group apparently includes several Tongan families, with representatives in Hawaii, United States, Tonga and New Zealand.

They can come from Nepal for all I care, just show us the money – about \$20 million is what we are told owner Eric Watson wants.

The NFL is huge, though I confess I don't watch it. The money involved is eye-watering and it is of course the most popular American sport.

Fale says the knowledge his group has could transform us. "We can take the expertise we have and accelerate the growth of league."

If it turns the results around, fine by me to have American owners.

### **World Cup Review Can't Have Been Fun**

The NZRL has received a draft Preliminary Summary Report of a comprehensive review of the Kiwis' 2017 Rugby League World Cup campaign – which is a hell of a mouthful.

Now I am going to be a bit of a name-dropper here and tell you that it has been prepared by a legal eagle named Tim Castle - who I crossed swords with more than once in my media days, but who is a good rooster all the same; and Raelene Castle, who has an extensive sports administration background, not least with New Zealand Netball and the Bulldogs

NRL side, and who is not related to Tim.

The full report is expected to be presented at the next NZRL board meeting on February 28.

It's going to make for interesting reading to say the least, because whatever way you carve it, it was a disaster.

Us poor old fans will have to wait until the nobs have had the chance to digest it, with the public release due early in March.

That said, the board has already agreed to two changes - the first being (in short) that international candidates can now apply to be the coach.

The other being (again in short) that there's going to be a panel that makes a recommendation on who should be the coach.

This is all designed we are told to "ensure the best possible person is appointed to the job".

Now before you translate that as two nails in coach David Kidwell's coffin, we are also told that this "should not be read in any way as a comment on the World Cup coach's past performance, nor on his possible re-appointment".

Kidwell of course was only appointed through to the end of the 2017 World Cup.

And as an astonishing treat, and I am sure you will all be rushing out to get your hands on it, there is, at the same time as the report goes public, also a four-year Strategic Plan developed in 2017 being released.

It is, and don't fall over laughing, designed to deliver "better outcomes for the game". It would be world first if it was a plan to make things worse.

Apparently we can expect it to set out steps to improve league, from a focus at grassroots level through to our high performance programmes, and the Kiwis.

### **The Aussies Love A secret**

Across the ditch, the NRL is responding to concerns from a clubs about how the vote on adopting a new constitution, which takes place on February 21, will be handled.

Don't fall asleep, this is important.

In a letter to big wigs, the Aussie Rugby League basi-

cally said it was going to take the vote as a secret poll. Some clubs didn't like that, but it's going to happen, with the big boss John Grant saying a change to the constitution is a big deal and that members should have the right to vote secretly, just like we do when we elect a government.

### **Fans Get A deal**

Credit where it is due, fans in Seed-knee will be able to go to ANZ Stadium for \$20, and take the ankle-biters for free as part of a plan aimed at lifting attendances. Four Clubs use ANZ as a home ground – Rabbitohs, Doggies, Eels and Tigers, and all four have the deal, though why you would pay good money to watch any of them is beyond me.

That's 33 regular-season games, and any way you look at it, it's a great initiative.

The club's members will also be entitled to free entry to all games at ANZ in which their club is competing – home or away (although it does vary a bit depending on the club membership programme) but it's still bloody good.

We are quick to criticise but good on the NRL. If you want to grow the game, make it cheap and easy to be a supporter.

### **Super League Goes Down Under**

World Club Champions Wigan and fellow Super League side Hull FC are in Aussie, which has lead to some interesting reporting, but more on that later.

They met in Wollongong in the first ever Super League game outside Europe - Wigan winning 24-10 if you're interested.

They pulled in more than 12,000 fans, which is not too bad.

Now Wigan and Hull play a Super League-NRL double-header, taking on the Bunnies and Dragons respectively, this Saturday night.

It's a hell of a punt really, but the whole deal was stitched up between Wigan and the New South Wales Government.

Amazingly Wigan are paying for their opponents to get to the ground, their own expenses for the team and officials for two weeks, the pre-match, the half-

time show, the post-match show, corporate hospitality, ground advertising ... you name it.

If no one goes, they are going to be left with a hell of a lot of costs, but again, good on them. We have to take bold steps.

Kris Radlinski was a decent player in his day he's now executive director at Wigan. "We have to be creative. We've got an ambitious owner who is proud of his club and wants to build its profile."

There's been a relentless promotional blitz, which is where our old mate and former Vodafone Warriors man Dan Burton comes in.

"With new regimes in place it will give us an opportunity for the forward thinking view, which clearly is coming out of league clubs in the Super League and can be done in the NRL. There's obviously an appetite to take the game a stage further and we just have to take our governing bodies with us."

Wigan are apparently already thinking the US might be next.

Didn't that Hawaiian lot mention something similar?

Anyway, I come back to some of "interesting" reporting.

One article helpfully shared some insights into the difference between NRL and Super League footy, and it was a complete hoot, and an exercise in Aussie arrogance too.

The first thing it pointed out was that there was only one ref in Super League, hard to argue.

Next came the gem that Super League was focused on attack, and the NRL on defence. If that makes the Super League inferior I'm all for it.

The real beauty though was number three, where we were helpfully told they can't kick in the Super League.

And apparently the Brits have odd numbers on their jerseys too, which is all to do with merchandising and nothing to do with where they play, and worse, they cap the number of foreign players to promote home-grown talent. Bugger me, we can't have that.

And lastly, Aussie clubs have a \$9.4 million salary cap, Super League share \$3.76 million. Pretty obviously the NRL is three times as good, give or take a few shekels.

You got to love that Aussie confidence.

# Dannevirke Tigers Crew Relish NZRL Awards Night

By Shane Hurndell - Hawke's Bay Today Sports Reporter



**T**WO DAYS after attending the New Zealand Rugby League annual awards function in Auckland on Saturday night Dannevirke Tigers club chairperson Naioma Chase was still buzzing about the experience.

Her club was a finalist in the grassroots club category along with the Northcote Tigers and Taniwharau. Chase travelled to the function along with club treasurer Belinda Crosswell and their respective partners Rhys Sherrard and Paul Crosswell who both coach Tigers age group teams.

"We were rapt to be finalists. It was an honour, surprising and humbling. We only got back into league at all levels last year," Chase, a cousin of former New Zealand Maori rep and England World Cup player Rangi Chase, said.

In 2016 the Tigers had just one team playing in Manawatu's age group competitions. Last year they had nine including an under-11 side which won their mini mod competition with an unbeaten run.

In addition the Tigers had teams in Hawke's Bay's premier men's and premier women's competitions and both were beaten semifinalists.

"Taniwharau were well deserved winners of our category. We sat at the same table as the Northcote Tigers reps just behind the Kiwis table. We spoke to player of the year, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, and he wrote out a couple of messages for us to bring back to our boys and Kiwis coach David Kidwell also gave us a message to pass on," Chase, a daughter of one of the original Dannevirke Tigers 1970s players, Bruce Chase, recalled.

She pointed out it was also humbling to hear what clubs in other zones are able to tap into.

"We are in the Mid Central Zone and they are lacking compared with other zones. I learnt a lot and it was a real eye opener to learn how little we get from our zone compared with clubs in those other zones to be honest.

"The Mid Central Zone is always asking us for money ... well now the time has come for us to ask what we are getting in return because they have been giving us nothing," Chase added.

Meanwhile Hawke's Bay's most successful Kiwi Fern, Chanel Huddleston, didn't get the winning farewell she was hoping for in her final outing on the international stage on Saturday.

Huddleston, 34, played as a secondrower for the New Zealand Maori Women's team in their 18-0 loss to their Australian Indigenous counterparts, the First Nation Gems, in Sydney.

The Aussies superior ball security proved the difference between the two teams.

A 2014 and 2015 Kiwi Fern, Huddleston, announced before the fixture it would be her final match at international level after 17 years of first class league and union as she wanted to focus on her teaching career at Henry Hill School in Napier.

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By John Coffey QSM

Author of ten rugby league books, Christchurch Press sports writer (44 years), NZ correspondent for Rugby League Week (Australia) and Open Rugby (England)

Jack Newson at the New Zealand Rugby League Awards  
Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)

## Jack Of All Trades

**I**NTER-CLUB RUGBY league can be very competitive in Canterbury but there would have been universal pleasure across the province last weekend when the Hornby Panthers' Jack Newson was announced as Male Volunteer of the Year at the NZRL awards in Auckland. One of the really good guys in our game, Jack was chosen from a panel of very worthy nominees from around the country.

Jack's story is quite incredible, not the least aspect being the longevity of his playing career. At the age of 75 Jack is still running around with the Hornby Masters team, playing the game that he has loved, and for the club that he has loved, for the last 65 years. Over the decades he has also served in just about every other capacity, whether it be as a coach, team manager, executive member, life member or all-round handyman.

"He is at all the working bees. Not only that but he brings the other older guys along with him and they have some great stories to tell," said club president Brent Tomlinson. "You can look around for Jack and then find him up a ladder fixing up some steel work in the roof."

During the winter months Jack is an ever-present figure on the sidelines at Leslie Park and other fields taking a keen interest in the latest generation of Hornby players. He has watched the Panthers develop into the most successful club in Canterbury by winning the most championships and producing the most Kiwis – including Mel Cooke, Canterbury's Player of the Century.

Jack Newson has seen all of those outstanding players as they have risen through the ranks and enjoyed a record number of premier grand final victories. It was not surprising that in his humble acceptance speech at the NZRL awards night he praised his fellow nominees and said he was "completely blown away" to hear his name called. He described Hornby as "a family club" with good reason.

The Newsons have actually been one of the most notable families in Hornby's century of existence. All four of Jack's sons, Sam, John, Hemi and Lincoln played for the Panthers. Both John (1989) and Hemi (1990) were Junior Kiwis and Hemi played in five grand final victories in a celebrated career. Lincoln also went on to earn representative selection.

"Jack is very giving of his time within our club," said Hornby secretary Sally Nutira in her nomination of Hornby's longest serving member. "Jack helps with and organises skills days with the juniors. He fixes and maintains our club."

"He will be on hand whenever we need help. Jack will help individuals with their fitness. He will help representative players to up-skill. It is always a pleasure for him to do it, never a chore. We as a club are honoured to be in his presence."

Many long-serving club members might feel it is time to put their feet up when they have life memberships bestowed upon them to recognise a near half-century of service. Jack Newson became a Hornby life member in 2001. But the only place he elevated his feet was up the ladder at the next working bee.





Manoa Thompson



By Miles Davis

## The Originals - Warrior No. 4 Manoa Thompson.

**M**ANOA THOMPSON was born in Fiji and was adopted by his mother's sister, Ana Waqanibaravi Thompson from whom he took his surname. One of his uncles is Sitiveni Rabuka, who led two military coups in Fiji before becoming the democratically elected President of Fiji.

When he was 11 he moved to Australia, a move that was to lead to a career in rugby league. He played his junior football with Alexandria Rovers who competed in the South Sydney Junior Rugby Football League (other league stars from that junior club include Adam Reynolds and Trent Merrin). Also a talented Union player, whilst attending Newtown Boys High, he toured Japan with New South Wales schoolboys.

He first made his mark with South Sydney Rabbitohs being part of their Championship winning Under 21 side. In 1989 he made his Senior debut in Round 11 of the NSWRL competition as a strong-running centre with a powerful fend, scoring a try in an 18-10 win over the Newcastle Knights. He didn't make his next appearance until Round 19 from the interchange bench in a 24-12 win over the Illawarra Steelers. Although Thompson only played a minor part it was a great season for the Rabbitohs who won the Minor Premiership before losing to the Canberra Raiders in the preliminary final.



He did not make his first appearance for the Rabbitohs in the 1990 season until Round 7, where he once again scored a try in a 48-14 loss to the Raiders. He became an established member of the side however it was a dramatic fall from grace for the Rabbitohs who became just the 3rd team to gain the wooden spoon the season after being Minor Premiers.

In 1991 he was restricted to a couple of interchange appearances with Graham Lyons being preferred but forced his way into the side in Round 9 and made 11 appearances, scoring 6 tries and a field goal. It was another disappointing season for the Rabbitohs as they missed out on the play-offs by a big margin. The 1992 season was better from a personal point of view with 21 appearances, 11 tries and another field goal but the Rabbitohs were still struggling to make an impact on the competition.



The 1993 season was to be Thompson's last with the South Sydney outfit and he transferred to the Western Suburbs Magpies for the 1994 season. Unfortunately surgery to his knee and ankle in the pre-season meant he

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was only able to make 6 appearances for the Magpies, scoring 1 try before signing for the Vodafone Warriors for their inaugural 1995 season.

In the starting line-up for the first game against the Brisbane Broncos things looked good for Thompson at his new club but it was to be a disappointing season for him with him making just one further start and another 5 from the bench.

It was understandable after such limited playing time that Thompson was to move on. This time he headed to England and joined up with the Warrington Wolves. Injuries continued to plague him and trouble with his knees saw him restricted to just 11 appearances for the Wolves, scoring 2 tries. He didn't really settle in England and his 2 year contract with Warrington was cut short by mutual consent. Warrington football executive Alex Murphy said "It's an amicable split. The weather hasn't been to Manoa's liking but we wish him well."



Thompson then returned to Australia trialling with the Canberra Raiders before signing with the Penrith Panthers. Unable to make a breakthrough into the first team, Thompson made a move back to Europe to play league with AS Saint Esteve before a season playing Union with RC Narbonne then returning for a final spell of league with AS Carcassonne.

In 1996 he made his only international appearance, for Fiji against the touring Great Britain side in Nadi. Unfortunately it was not a day to remember with Fiji going down to a record 72-4 scoreline.

In his personal life Thompson had a relationship with Jodie Hayne which produced a son Jarryd who has become a legend on the Australian sporting scene. Although his rugby league career meant Thompson was often away from his son he has become a stabilising figure and support in recent years.

He became involved in Australian Fiji rugby league and as well as sitting on the board was assistant coach of the Australian Fiji Under 16's who won the inaugural NSWRL Development Cup in 2008.

A self-employed truck driver Thompson has 3 children from his current relationship, Julius, Jonah and Evie.

In 2011 Thompson and Jarryd were swimming at Coogee Beach when a back-packer was swept out to sea by a rip. Both went to her aid and all 3 were dragged about 200 metres out. They managed to keep her afloat until local surf-lifesavers came to her rescue.

Although not necessarily a legend at the Vodafone Warriors, Thompson will always have a special part in the club's history for being part of that inaugural team.

Manoa Thompson interviewed [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAQpYMh\\_FbU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAQpYMh_FbU)

Manoa Thompson try for Souths v Manly <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjEopzQEiYk>

Rabbitohs v Raiders Under 21 final 1989 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0s7b6tWiPg8>

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# What Might Have Been

By John Coffey QSM

Author of ten rugby league books, Christchurch Press sports writer (44 years), NZ correspondent for Rugby League Week (Australia) and Open Rugby (England)



**A FEATURE STORY** in the 2007 Kiwis centenary book which celebrated 100 years of international rugby league was titled “Young Guns” and highlighted the exceptional skills of Benji Marshall, Sonny Bill Williams and Karmichael Hunt. The article recalled how Australian commentators had raved about the brilliant starts to their NRL careers a few years earlier. What is more, all three had been born and bred in New Zealand and Kiwis fans had been savouring a decade or more of success as the uniquely talented trio matured into leaders of our national team.

Despite what occurred at the 2017 World Cup, the Kiwis have actually enjoyed much success during the time of their playing careers. New Zealand won the 2005 Tri-Nations, the 2008 World Cup, the 2010 and 2014 Four Nations, and beat the Kangaroos in three consecutive Tests in 2014 and 2015. But of the three rising stars, only Marshall (in 2008 and as captain in 2010) featured in any of those triumphs. Williams somehow managed to absent himself from every one of those great Kiwis occasions while fashioning a truly weird multi-sport career while Hunt had chosen to wear green and gold over black and white.

Marshall and Hunt had been together in the 2003 Australian Schoolboys team which drew a two-match series against the Junior Kiwis in New Zealand. They experienced contrasting emotions when listening to the national anthems. Whakatane-born Marshall, who was on a scholarship at Keebra Park High School on the Gold Coast, decided Advance Australia Fair was not for him. But Auckland-born Hunt, who moved to Brisbane with his family at the age of 12, turned down a chance to become the youngest ever Kiwis Test player at 17 years and 158 days in the 2004 Anzac match at Newcastle.

Hunt was the 2004 NRL Rookie of the Year and from 2006 played 11 Tests for Australia and 10 times for Queensland. In 2009 he hooked up with the new Gold Coast Suns Australian Rules club after spending an off-season in French rugby union. It was widely believed Hunt’s signing by the Suns was a stunt to publicise the fledgling club and his four years in that code attracted very mixed reviews. Hunt joined the Queensland Reds rugby union franchise in 2015 and made his Wallabies debut last year. Currently, and for the second time, he is facing drugs-related court charges and his future is in limbo.

The 2004 season also ended memorably for Williams, with his Canterbury Bulldogs winning the NRL Grand Final. He had debuted for the Kiwis and was chosen as both NZRL Player of the Year and International Newcomer of the Year. But injuries subsequently limited his Test appearances and in 2008 he sensationally abandoned the Bulldogs and Kiwis to play rugby union for big money in France. Since then his code hopping has been well documented. He returned to the Kiwis only for the 2013 World Cup, when his belated availability caused Tohu Harris to be tipped out of the squad. Then SBW was gone again.

Rather than lead New Zealand to a succession of rugby league triumphs, Williams has the sad record of having played against the Kangaroos in seven of his 12 Tests without winning one, and now he never will. Though some rugby union folk have never accepted this refugee from a staunch Auckland rugby league family, Williams has played a role in two All Black World Cup victories and could be heading for a third in 2019. Boxing has also attracted his attention but, while unbeaten, he has yet to impress astute judges. Calls from NSW Origin legend Paul Gallen to share a ring with him have so far gone unheeded.

Marshall, on the other hand, deserves to be rated among our greatest inside backs. He was a charismatic figure in the 2008 World Cup and again when leading the Kiwis to a thrilling victory in the 2010 Four Nations final. A series of near crippling shoulder injuries never doused his spirit and by 2012 Marshall had equalled the New Zealand record of captaining his country in 19 (of his 27) Tests. But there it abruptly ended with coach Stephen Kearney naming Simon Mannering as his captain for 2013 and Marshall briefly going off the rugby league rails by joining up with the Auckland Blues rugby union franchise.

That experiment was even less memorable than Hunt’s Aussie Rules flirtation and Williams’ irregular boxing bouts. Marshall returned to rugby league with the St George Illawarra Dragons and Brisbane Broncos, mentoring his new club-mates and playing first grade when needed. This year he returns to Wests Tigers, where he won a 2005 premiership ring. When Kieran Foran has not been available, the Kiwis have

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strangely ignored Marshall and given the number six jersey to transplanted forward Tohu Harris, utility Thomas Leuluai, outside back Peta Hiku and youngsters Kodi Nikorima and Te Maire Martin.

That “Young Guns” article in the Kiwis centenary book noted the three great talents had merged at Suncorp Stadium in 2006 when Hunt was the Kanga-

roos fullback and Marshall and Williams played for the Kiwis. That was expected to be a recurring theme for many more trans-Tasman tussles but it seldom came to pass. Just why all three careers deviated from their original paths might not come to light until they hang up their boots, if at all. The rest of us can only wonder what might have been.

## 2018 NRL Indigenous Youth Summit

**F**OUR MĀORI youth have been selected to represent the Vodafone Warriors at LAST WEEKS Festival of Indigenous Rugby League youth summit in Sydney, Australia. The summit brings 68 Indigenous students chosen by all NRL clubs to participate in leadership workshops and self-development activities.

The week-long summit is being run by Mirri Mirri, an organisation designed to help all Australians improve their knowledge and awareness of indigenous culture, and up-skill youth so they are able to take advantage of opportunities that come their way after school.

Throughout the week they WHERE involved in a number of workshops covering topics such as cultural knowledge, leadership and education all with the purpose of aspiring them to be better young leaders in their communities and for their families.

The four students have been selected by the Vodafone Warriors through a partnership with Moko Foundation, a non-profit based in Kaitiāia that looks to provide opportunities in leadership, health and education.

At 15 and 16 years of age, two of them are yet to board an airplane but they’re all set to take flight.

The summit TOOK place in Sydney from Wednesday to Sunday as part of the Festival of Indigenous Rugby League.



Erita Thomson  
Wikitoria Watene Kowhai  
Simon Mannering  
Nathaniel Roache  
Ngawari Pio  
Shalynd Ra’ui



Erita Thomson  
Wikitoria Watene Kowhai  
Ngawari Pio  
Shalynd Ra’ui

# Catching Up With Good Mates



Great catching up with Charnze Nicholl-Klokstad & Ata Hingano and Mason Lino after training last week



Great to see three x players still working with the club. All apart of the Warriors wellbeing team! (From left to right) Jerry Seuseu - Prop Ben Henry - second row Jerome Ropati - Centre



Great to catch up with my mate Lisa who is the ticketing manager at the Vodafone Warriors



It was great to catch up with my old mate Tohu Harris last week then I visited Vodafone Warriors head office he is looking forward to the season at his new club



It's always great catching up with Vodafone Warriors head coach Stephen Kearney and Alex Corvo strength & conditioning coach at the club



Was great to catch up with Vodafone Warriors members team today here working so hard to keep members happy I'm so proud to support them. Aaron (fan engagement manager), Charlotte (membership coordinator), myself, Shani (memberships manager), Shanice (reception & admin support) and Rickey (group & membership sales)



Pete the Pom I want to give a big shout out to Lisa the ticket lady at Vodafone Warriors. I have a problem and she fixed it. Outstanding service

Great to catch up with Vodafone Warriors Brand and Communications Team Leader Bodie Friend. He enjoyed the Bucklands Beach donuts I bought in for the office staff. Bodie comes from a strong rugby league background. His dad is Kiwis great and a good mate of mine, Clayton Friend. His nana, Cathy Friend, is what I consider the matriarch of Auckland Rugby League, giving years of service to the great game in Auckland. We're extremely lucky to have someone like Bodie involved at the club.







Michaela Sokolich-Beatson

Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)

# New Zealand Netball Team announced for Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games

**L**AST WEEK the New Zealand Netball team to compete at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games was announced. The squad reflects a mixture of youth and experience and includes a couple of new faces.

Silver Fern Development Squad member/Northern Mystics defender Michaela Sokolich-Beatson is the new cap for the New Zealand team and is joined by Ameliaranne Ekenasio who has been recalled into the New Zealand side. Ekenasio last played for New Zealand in 2016 before taking time away from the game to start a family.

With just three members (Grant, Folau and Francois) of the 2014-squad that won silver in Glasgow, Netball New Zealand coach Janine Southby said they wanted to ensure that any changes to this year's squad would give them their strongest combinations of both experience and youth.

She said there were some tough selection decisions that needed to be made after their most recent results but that she and the National Selectors were confident in the 12 players selected for the journey ahead.

"We are really pleased to be able to name a new cap in the team in Michaela who has had a very strong ANZ Premiership season with the Mystics and her addition to the side means we have cover for both GD and WD," Southby said.

"Ameliaranne brings another layer of experience to our attacking end and her flair at both GA and GS leaves us with plenty of options up front. She has performed well for the FAST5 Ferns most recently and is ready to return to the top level."

"We are aware of the challenge awaiting us on the Gold Coast which I know will bring out the best of these players."

Sokolich-Beatson's elevation to the New Zealand team comes after a stand-out season for both the Northern Mystics and at the helm of the victorious New Zealand under-21 team which won the Netball World Youth Cup crown in Botswana last year.

An earlier call-up to the national side was thwarted by a back injury which she has since recovered from.



*Continued on next page...*



*Continued from previous page...*

Ekanasio returned to elite netball last October just months after the birth of her son and has realised a remarkable goal of making the Commonwealth Games team through hard work and determination.

The team of 12 is:

Katrina Grant (captain)	Maria Folau (vice-captain)	Kayla Cullen	Ameliaranne Ekenasio
Temalisi Fakahokotau	Shannon Francois	Kelly Jury	Grace Kara
Bailey Mes	Te Paea Selby-Rickit	Michaela Sokolich-Beatson	
Samantha Sinclair			

The team's immediate focus will be three training camps in the build-up to the series against Jamaica, Malawi and Fiji for the Taini Jamison Trophy in Auckland from March 21-24. This will be the last hit out for all teams prior to the 2018 Commonwealth Games and will see four days of exciting international Netball come to Auckland.

Tickets for the Taini Jamison Trophy series are now available via Ticketek and tickets are \$27 for adults, \$14 for children and family passes are just \$61 (2 adults, 2 children).



**4 DAYS, 8 GAMES**  
**NON-STOP NETBALL ACTION**

**Taini Jamison Series**  
North Shore Events Centre  
21 - 24 March 2018



**VODAFONE**  
**WARRIORS** V **STORM**

**BOP Rugby League Festival**

**THIS SATURDAY!**  
**ROTORUA STADIUM**



**T**HE WIGAN Rugby League Club should be congratulated for their effort to bring a Super League competition match to Australia. On Saturday at WIN Stadium Wollongong, 80 kms south of Sydney, Wigan beat Hull 24-10 to claim the two competition points in a round two Super League contest. It was a Wigan home game and so the Warriors had to bear all the costs associated with the match, including the air fares for both teams and officials, accommodation, ground hire and other expenses. The official crowd figure was 12,416 and Wigan probably lost money on the venture, but they were happy to bring their game to our part of the world. Wigan owner, Ian Lenagan, was right behind the concept and a day or so before the game, he commented that the NRL should take some of their games overseas.

“The NRL is the best Rugby League competition in the world,” Lenagan said, “and they need to stop being so insular.”

Now in his early 70s, Lenagan is a big Rugby League fan and he has supported Wigan, since his boyhood days, growing up at his birthplace, Scholes, near Wigan. He attended both Manchester and Liverpool Universities and holds a Bachelor of Science (Mathematics) and a Master of Science in Magnetohydrodynamics. He bought the Wigan Warriors in 2007 from Dave Whelan. The popular Wigan owner has other plans to expand our game throughout the world. He sees Perth as a good place to establish another team and if he does this, he wouldn't mind if it played in the NRL or the English Super League. Ideally the NRL would probably be his target, but he is very aware that distance did not stop the Canada-based Toronto Wolfpack competing in the English Rugby League competition.

Borh Wigan and Hull were well supported at Wollongong. An estimated 1,000 Wigan fans made the long journey to be at WIN stadium, while Bob Millward, a Vice President of the NSWRL and inaugural club manager for the Illawarra Steelers in 1982, said there were more Hull supporters at the game.

“Wigan fans certainly made their presence felt,” Millward said, “but I believe there were three times as many Hull supporters in the stadium. It was a great occasion and a very positive thing for Rugby League in general and Wollongong, in particular.”

“Ian Lenagan and the Wigan staff deserve a lot of credit for their foresight in bringing the first ever Super League competition game to be played outside Europe, to Australia.”

Millward also stressed what good work players for both English clubs did in the local community with school visits and other community-related things.

The two teams are in Australia until this coming Sunday, as the play in a double header this Saturday night, 17 February, at Sydney's ANZ Stadium. At 5.45pm, Hull play St. George/Illawarra, while at 7.45pm. Wigan meet South Sydney.

The 12 team English Super League competition began on 3 February. In round one Wigan beat Salford 40-12 at Salford, while Hull defeated the Huddersfield Giants 38-12 at Hull. When they return home, Wigan play Warrington away on 23 February and Hull are also away to Castleford on 24 February.

There are some other interesting trial matches this coming weekend. The Warriors-Storm game at Rotorua will give the respective coaches a chance to see their sides against strong opposition. It will be a similar situation on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, when the Bulldogs and Raiders meet. The Bulldogs new coach, Dean Pay, will be keen to see his charges in action, while in the background the new Canterbury Football club committee will be looking on. The Bulldogs elections took place last Sunday, 11 February and there were sweeping changes. Only Steve Mortimer from the current board, retained his place. Current Chairman, Ray Dib, finished 12th of the 18 candidates. Lynne Anderson (daughter of the late Bulldogs legend Peter Moore) and her husband Chris Anderson (former Australian player and coach, 10 Tests as a player and 24 Tests as Australian coach)) ran what was called a Reform ticket and in a bitter election, six of the Reform ticket won places on the Bulldogs Board. These six new members are Lynne Anderson (Chairperson), Chris Anderson, John Ball-esty (former Wallaby, Roosters Rugby League player and long term Canterbury Leagues Club CEO), Steve Price, (16 Tests for Australia and former Warriors captain) Paul Dunn (former Australian second rower, 7 Tests) and John Khoury. With the Des Hasler court case still to be resolved, things will interesting to say the least at Bulldogville over the next few weeks.





**A**UCKLAND, NEW Zealand, February 13, 2018 – Six of the Vodafone Warriors' new signings will have game time in the club's NRL trial against the Melbourne Storm at Rotorua International Stadium on Saturday (3.00pm kick-off).

Head coach Stephen Kearney's 23-man squad includes experienced Kiwi Peta Hiku, Cook Islands international Anthony Gelling, Mate Ma'a Tonga players Agnatius Paasi and Leivaha Pulu, Taupo-raised Matiu Love-Henry and 18-year-old Rotorua Boys' High School product Hayze Perham.

Also selected are wing David Fusitu'a, standoff Ata Hingano and centre Solomone Kata, back in the NRL arena after being involved in Tonga's fairytale campaign at the Rugby League World Cup.

The most seasoned first-grade player on show will be 167-game centre Blake Ayshford while he's joined by Toa Samoa World Cup forwards Sam Lisone and Bunty Afoa as well as former Tonga international Albert Vete, who were all NRL regulars last season.

Kearney will also use Toa Samoa wing Ken Maumalo, 2017 NRL rookies Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad, Isaiah Papali'i and Chris Satae plus Mason Lino, Ligi Sao and Jazz Tevaga who were used at first-grade level last season.

Halfback Lino, the club's Intrust Super Premiership captain last year, will lead the side on Saturday.

"You get a real sense the players are just looking forward to getting their hands on the ball at last," said Kearney.

"It has been a long preseason for most of them. We believe they've prepared as well as they can but right now they're just a bit anxious about playing.

"It's a chance for all these players to have a run and especially for our new players to experience playing alongside their new team-mates."

Kearney is yet to confirm his starting line-up.

The team travels to Rotorua this Thursday. The players will have a signing session at the Rotorua night markets in Tutanekai Street on Thursday night (7.00pm-8.00pm) and will train at Rotorua International Stadium on Friday morning.

A Harvey Norman Community Warriors contingent including Gerard Beale, Johnny Tuivasa-Sheck

and Junior Pauga will visit schools around the Rotorua region on Thursday and Friday as well as running a clinic in Tauranga en route to the Geyser City tomorrow afternoon.

**VODAFONE WARRIORS v MELBOURNE STORM**

Rotorua International Stadium, Rotorua

3.00pm, Saturday, February 17

## VODAFONE WARRIORS

Bunty Afoa	Ken Maumalo
Blake Ayshford	Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad
Sam Cook	Agnatius Paasi
David Fusitu'a	Hayze Perham
Anthony Gelling	Chris Satae
Chanel Harris-Tavita	Isaiah Papali'i
Peta Hiku	Leivaha Pulu
Mafoa'aeata Hingano	Ligi Sao
Solomone Kata	Lewis Soosemea
Mason Lino	Jazz Tevaga
Sam Lisone	Albert Vete
Matiu Love-Henry	

## For inquiries please contact:

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Vodafone Warriors

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# Everything old is new again – Rugby League football makes an audacious return to historic Wentworth Park

By Glen Dwyer - Media Officer for the Newtown Jets

Rugby League returned to Wentworth Park yesterday for the first time in many years, with the re-born Glebe Dirty Reds and the Newtown Jets both playing pre-season trials against the Blacktown Workers Sea Eagles.

In the Ron Massey Cup trial match that kicked off at 3.00pm, Blacktown Workers defeated Glebe 34-26 after leading the Dirty Reds 18-8 at half-time.

In the Intrust Super Premiership (ISP) NSW main game that commenced at 5.00pm, the Sea Eagles beat the Jets 24-4 after going in at half-time with a 12-4 lead. The Sea Eagles are Manly-Warringah's official partnership club in the ISP NSW competition.

Prominent rugby league identities seen in the crowd were the NSW Rugby League CEO, Dave Trodden, and the NSWRL's General Manager of Football, Barrie-Jon Mather. Rugby league icon Cliff Lyons was also spotted in the crowd. Cliffy had a nephew playing for Newtown, while Sean Garlick and Darrell "Tricky" Trindall were also at the ground to see their sons Jackson Garlick and Jake Trindall in action. Rugby league historian David Middleton was also on hand to take in what was very much a "feel good" occasion in rugby league history.

The Glebe RLFC officials deserve plenty of praise for the fine presentation of the afternoon. The Dirty Reds were appearing at Wentworth Park for the first time in eighty-nine years while the Jets (formerly Bluebags) were back at the ground after a ninety-one year absence. It is also worth noting that Glebe had played Newcastle in round one of the NSWRL first grade competition at Wentworth Park on the 20th April 1908, nearly 110 years ago!

All told, there was a real sense of history being enacted at the old ground and there clearly was an atmosphere of good-will amongst the 1100-strong crowd.

The Dirty Reds will be playing in partnership with the Burwood RLFC in the 2018 Ron Massey Cup competition.

No doubt rugby league people everywhere extend good wishes to the Glebe Dirty Reds on their astonishing and heart-warming return to our game.

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**7 FEBRUARY 2018**

**EXCLUSIVE WARRIORS DOCUMENTARY SERIES COMING TO SKY SPORT**

SKY Sport is excited to announce that work is currently underway on a two-part behind the scenes preseason documentary following the Vodafone Warriors as they prepare for the 2018 NRL season.

Kicking off February 26 on SKY Sport 2, **PRESEASON WITH THE WARRIORS** is a 2x 27 minute series that follows the team both on and off the field for three months. The SKY Sport produced documentary will give fans an unprecedented behind-the-scenes look into the Vodafone Warriors preseason preparations for the 2018 NRL season.

The series will feature time specific content which re-positions the viewer into the relevant stage of preseason as the team edges closer to the Vodafone Warriors' first NRL Telstra Premiership game vs the Rabbitohs on March 10.

SKY Sport Director Paora Ratahi says: "The Vodafone Warriors are a team New Zealanders are extremely passionate about, and this exclusive series will provide fans with a revealing and in-depth perspective into the Warriors organisation, its players, coaches and support personnel like never before".

**PRESEASON WITH THE WARRIORS**

**Episode 1** February 26, 8.30pm SKY Sport 2

**Episode 2** March 5, 8.30pm, SKY Sport 2

**CREDITS**

Director/Producer: Paora Ratahi

Executive Producers: Richard Last, Brian Hitchcock, Matt Quin

Editor: Mark Malaki Williams

Camera Operators: Jon Hill, Jono Drew

Production Manager: Emma Grey

For updates go to [sky.co.nz/sport](http://sky.co.nz/sport) or [facebook.com/skysportnz](https://facebook.com/skysportnz) or follow us on Twitter @skysportnz  
For further information, please contact Tom Frankish, Sport Content Media Manager, Phone: 021 0230 8846 Email: [tom.frankish@skytv.co.nz](mailto:tom.frankish@skytv.co.nz)



**JAMES GAVET**



**LIGI SAO**



**RTS**

*Continued on next page...*





TRAINING



WRESTLING



## Vodafone Warriors Vs Storm

**W**ITH NEW recruits such as Tohu Harris, Adam Blair and Blake Green in line to suit up in a Vodafone Warriors jersey, make sure you are front and centre when the new-look Vodafone Warriors take the field for the first time in 2018 when they run out onto Rotorua International Stadium for their only NRL trial in New Zealand against premiership winners the Melbourne Storm.

The NRL trial caps a two-day 'Festival of Rugby League' that includes a regional nines tournament for the Peter McLeod Cup, a trophy named in honour of the long-serving former general manager for Events and Venues Rotorua.

McLeod was the driving force behind the bid which resulted in the Auckland Warriors being introduced to the then-Winfield Cup in 1995.

With family passes from \$45, don't miss your opportunity to witness exhilarating tries and bone crunching tackles as some of the NRL's best to do battle right on your own doorstep.

Vodafone Warriors v Melbourne Storm

Saturday February 17

Rotorua International Stadium

[Tickets from Ticketmaster](#)





**WESTIE  
PIES**

PRESENTS

# BLUES vs HURRICANES

## PRE SEASON MATCH

THURSDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2018  
WARKWORTH A&P SHOWGROUNDS  
GATES OPEN 3PM / KICK-OFF 4PM

HOSTED BY NORTH HARBOUR  
& MAHURANGI RUGBY CLUB

ENTRY BY GOLD COIN DONATION TO  
MAHURANGI RUGBY CLUB

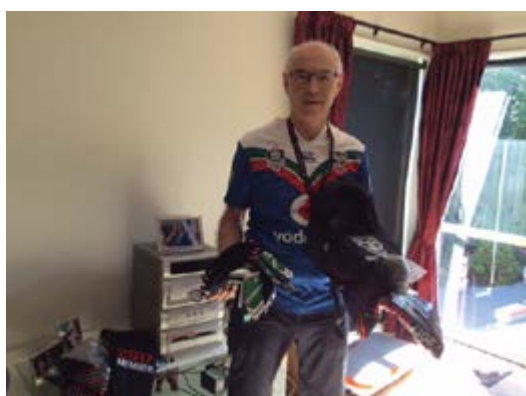
### BLUES V HURRICANES, THIS THURSDAY AT MAHURANGI!

Your first chance to see the 2018 Blues in action, and on Harbour soil!

All Blacks and Harbour players galore on display, and admission is only a gold coin donation to the Mahurangi Rugby Club! Plenty of nibbles available thanks to Game Day Sponsor Westie Pies, and Milo will also be on hand to dish out some sensational footy goodies for the kids! Click [here](#) to check out the full Blues 2018 Squad, including no less than EIGHT Harbour boys!

GATES OPEN AT 3, KICK OFF AT 4.

## READER MAIL

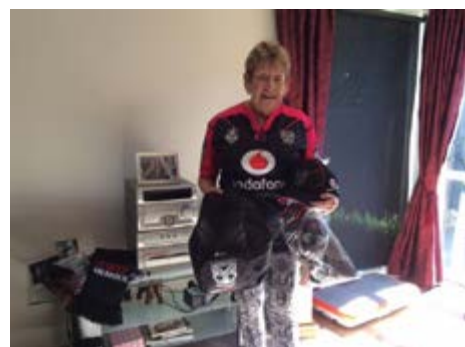


Dear Sir Peter

Well our Dear Friend Peter and our club just never cease to amaze Dave and I and many others. We would like to thank you both so much for the VODAFONE WARRIORS gifts you have sent for our grandchildren and great grandsons who will just love to receive these, they are just their size. Can't wait to see them wearing them. Our older Grandsons Tyson, Troy and Ethan will be stoked with the caps, also our son in laws scarf will be very handy in Christchurch's cold winter.

They can also rug up for the Christchurch game VODAFONE WARRIORS vs Manly. We are so looking forward to the season beginning catching up with all our friends. Once again thank you on behalf of our grandchildren we will see you soon.

Kindest regards Lorraine and Dave Mckee - Christchurch



# *Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!*

*Too slow and you miss out!*

The 2018 Season Guide is coming!

Limited copies are being shipped now.

It will be on a first come first served basis.

Handbooks are A5 size and show the  
NRL Player profiles, club records, stats and photos  
as well as premiership records from 1908 to now  
and much more.

These will be selling for only \$13

(this helps to cover shipping costs)

Please email Lorna and Trevor at [hephyr@hotmail.com](mailto:hephyr@hotmail.com)  
for your copy and to arrange delivery and payment.



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## The Newsletter Team

Here is the team that help me put together the newsletter each week. We have a number of fantastic contributors who send in content each week that along with my editorial gets wrapped up by our graphic designer and sent out by our distribution man to your inbox.

**Sir Peter Leitch** - Editor  
**David Kemeys** - Editor at Large  
**Emma Woodhead** - Graphic Designer

**John Deaker** - Correspondent  
**John Coffey** - Southern Correspondent  
**Barry Ross** - Australian Correspondent  
**Ben Francis** - Northern Correspondent  
**John Holloway** - Correspondent  
**Miles Davis** - Correspondent  
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