



THE HON KATE ELLIS MP Minister for Sport

MEDIA RELEASE

19 September, 2008

Sporting heroes making a difference to the community

Australia's elite rugby union players today launched a groundbreaking program to assist organisations tackle the biggest health, environmental and social issues facing our nation.

Joining Wallaby Captain, Stirling Mortlock to launch the Rugby Union Player Association Foundation and Community Code (RUPA Foundation), Federal Minister for Sport, Kate Ellis said the players would use their status to make a real difference in the community.

"Unfortunately negative stories related to football codes receive much more attention than the positive stories," Ms Ellis said.

"While good news doesn't make the front page, players who use their profile for the greater good can make an important community impact and elevate the standing of their sport.

"Sport is a very powerful tool, both on and off the field, and elite sportspeople are responsible for how they use it.

"Rugby players are superheroes to many Australians, particularly young fans, who follow the game and their favourite players and want to grow up to be just like them.

"With this in mind, today's announcement by the Rugby Union Players Association will have a significant impact on young rugby union players."

Ms Ellis said the RUPA Foundation has selected three worthwhile initiatives for the players to actively contribute to –

- the fight against ovarian cancer,
- protecting our natural resources through the Australian Conservation Foundation, and
- helping the Smith Family which assists thousands of disadvantaged people every year.

"The players will continue their ongoing commitment to developing the game, supporting educational, youth and family programs, and to other charities they are already affiliated with," Ms Ellis said.

“The Federal Government commends Australia’s elite rugby union players for their involvement in this great project in which they can use their sporting profiles to make a positive difference in the community.”

Additional information can be found at www.rupa.com.au

Media contact: Brent Hooley, 0434 561 033