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Minister for Sport

MEDIA RELEASE

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100 years of Rugby League

The Rudd Government today congratulates the great game of Rugby League on its 100th birthday.

Exactly a century ago this weekend one of the first games of League was played between Balmain and Wests at Birchgrove Oval in Sydney.

Since then the game has grown into one of Australia's most loved and most played.

2008 is obviously an enormously important year for the code. The naming of the Team of the Century on Thursday night captured the attention of the entire country and this is only one of many terrific events of centenary celebrations this season.

The Australian Government is very pleased to be contributing \$2.63 million for the Rugby League World Cup 2008 and to assist the centenary celebrations of Rugby League.

The NRL competition continues to entertain and inspire Australians of all ages. At a time when activity levels are actually declining it's terrific to have a national competition like the NRL constantly encouraging followers of the game not just to spectate but participate.

Australian Rugby League has long conducted development programs that concentrate right down to the grassroots junior and community level. These development programs include the players, coaches, referees, administrators, volunteers and all the associated infrastructure of clubs and competitions. This will continue to be the real strength of the code in the 100 years ahead.

League has some wonderful community building initiatives in both metropolitan and regional parts of Australia. The sport's close connection with our Indigenous community and its unique ability to cross ethnic and cultural divides is well known and much appreciated by the Australian Government. The NRL Reconciliation Action Plan is a real example for other sports to follow.

I extend my warmest congratulations to the game on a fantastic 100 years and wish the entire League community the very best for the year.

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