

CAM WINS TICKET TO BRING HIS GOLD CLASS TO BRISBANE



TROPHY WORTH GRABBING: Australia's World Cup heroes Johnathan Thurston and Cam Smith celebrate victory with coach Tim Sheens.

World comes home

EXCLUSIVE
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BRISBANE will host the 2017 Rugby League World Cup final and one of the two semi-finals.

On the day after Western Australia announced its 2019 State of Origin match coup, *The Courier-Mail* can reveal Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium will stage the December 2, 2017, final.

It is the second successive Rugby League World Cup final available to Australia to be held in the stadium, and the State Government believes it shows it does want to be a serious player in the major sports event market.

The State Government and

Tourism and Events Queensland will also soon escalate talks for Brisbane to host the 2019 NRL grand final while Sydney's ANZ Stadium is redeveloped.

Cairns and Townsville will host three World Cup pool matches each, including a double-header each, when the tournament starts in October 2017.

The State Government and TEQ see greater tourism value in paying to host events such as the 2019 NRL grand final and the 2017 World Cup, which will bring supporters of England and Wales to Australia.

Suncorp Stadium's 52,500 capacity means these matches offer more benefit to the Queensland hotel and enter-

tainment industries than an Origin match dominated by ticket buyers who live in the southeast.

Tourism and Major Events Minister Kate Jones said Queensland had scored the major games of the World Cup, reinforcing the state's standing as the home of rugby league.

It is not known ahead of Tuesday's official draw in Brisbane whether the city's semi-final at Suncorp Stadium, which had a capacity crowd for the 2008 World Cup final, will be scheduled to involve Australia or not.

"This is a major coup and will focus the attention of millions of rugby league fans on Queensland," Jones said.

"The games at Suncorp are expected to sell out attracting tens of thousands of interstate and international visitors and generate up to 120,000 visitor nights for Queensland.

"The World Cup's biggest games (will) drive visitation, supports jobs and foster pride in our state."

Townsville's 1300SMILES Stadium will host a pool-stage clash between Fiji and the United States, and a double-header pitting a European qualifying team against the US, and Fiji against a European qualifier.

Cairns will host a double-header including an all-European match and a Scotland-Tonga match, plus a stand-alone Samoa-Scotland clash.

The NRL signed an agreement with the WA Government to play the second match of the 2019 series at Perth's new 60,000-seat stadium without giving the Queensland and NSW Governments a chance to bid for the game of the 2019 series.

With Melbourne to game in 2018, Brisbane and Sydney will stage one each in both 2018 and 2019.

Sports industry sources estimate the WA Government may have had to pay as much as \$8 million to win the contract, but NRL commissioner Michael Bennett said the figure was not that high.

Bennett said the hire for the match was "several millions of dollars".



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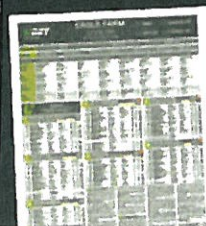
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the centre of the rugby league
world in 2017, with Suncorp
Stadium to host the final of
next year's World Cup.

FULL STORY, P93