



Speech by


## Jason Costigan

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Hansard Wednesday, 11 July 2012

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### NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (9.33 pm): I wish to advise the House of some history that was created in the great city of Mackay on Sunday, 24 June 2012 when the NRL came to my home town, the centre of the biggest regional economy of the north, thanks to the Canterbury Bulldogs and the Melbourne Storm. Although the biggest Bulldogs supporter in the House, the member for Gregory, was nowhere to be seen that day—

**Mr Johnson:** I was working hard for the electorate. Where do you think I would be?

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I will have to call for protection, Mr Deputy Speaker! I can advise the House that the biggest rugby league fanatic in the House certainly was at the game, along with thousands of league lovers from not only my electorate of Whitsunday but also much further afield. The game was played at Mackay's Virgin Australia Stadium, all thanks to the vision and commitment of the Bulldogs, originally scheduled to play in Adelaide—

**Mr Johnson:** Who won the game?

**Mr COSTIGAN:** Canterbury are still coming, aren't they? The game was originally schedule to be played in Adelaide but, due to venue unavailability, Canterbury brought their home game against the Storm to Mackay, the home town of Bulldogs star Ben Barba. And what a game it was, with the Dogs winning with Ben Barba, whose family is well known in local rugby league circles, the star of the show. It was great to catch up with Ben and his father, Kenny, and family after the game. Despite terrible weather that day, the attendance happened to be around the 12,000 mark. It was also a great showcase for not only rugby league in Mackay and the Whitsundays but also our region in general, with Fox Sports beaming the game live right around Australia and abroad through international affiliates such as SKY TV in New Zealand.

We have a great rugby league heritage in Mackay and the Whitsundays. Like other places around the north and, indeed, regional communities around Queensland, it is part of our social fabric. There are three senior clubs in my electorate. All of them had their fans there on 24 June, cheering for either the Bulldogs or the Storm—or perhaps neither. That is because they just wanted to be part of history or because they simply love rugby league—the greatest game of all.

I might add: our heritage for league is encapsulated in the fact that, ever since Dale Shearer represented Queensland in State of Origin in 1985, the Mackay-Whitsunday region has boasted at least one local boy in the Maroons team every year bar one, if memory serves me correctly. I will list a few of them: Martin Bella, Wendell Sailor, Kevin Campion, Owen Cunningham, Neville Costigan, Brett Dallas, Travis Norton, Clinton Schifcofske, Paul Bowman, Josh Hannay, Steve Jackson, Matt Sing, Mike McLean and, of course, more recently Dane Nielsen, a member of this year's successful Queensland side that made it seven consecutive series wins against New South Wales. It is a great nursery for league. It was a great event on 24 June not only for local league but also for local commerce. I commend my former colleague, Bulldogs CEO Todd Greenburg, for bringing the game to my home town. I look forward to more NRL games coming to this rugby league mad community in the years to come.