




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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ADJOURNMENT

Mackay-Whitsunday Region, State of Origin

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (9.05 pm): I was delighted to be back in my home town, the city that I represent, the city of Mackay, this morning to see so many local people, local constituents and others lining Gordon Street to provide a warm Mackay-Whitsunday welcome to the mighty Maroons, the XXXX Queensland State of Origin team. It was a great occasion in the sugar capital this morning to see so many people excited to welcome their heroes to Mackay.

When we look back at State of Origin since it was born on 8 July 1980, it has been one roller-coaster ride. It has been a huge success story, as we all know. The Mackay-Whitsunday region has played an instrumental role in that success, churning out players. From my recollection, 187 players have donned the Maroons jumper since the first game, and in that time we have seen 19 players from the Mackay-Whitsunday region. I will come to that in a moment and pay tribute to the great nursery that is the Mackay Junior Rugby League, which includes the three clubs in my own electorate of Whitsunday—the mighty Proserpine Whitsunday Junior Rugby League, the Pluto Brahmans as we call them; the Norths Devils, the red Devils; and my old club Magpies. It was great to catch up with Fatty Vautin, Beau and the boys from the *Footy Show* this morning. I am looking forward to seeing the *Footy Show* tomorrow night from the MECC. It was a big day in Mackay today.

On that Queensland State of Origin team, I actually took the liberty of picking my own side, which I think we have all done over the years. When we go through the Queensland side from the Mackay-Whitsunday region, it is a pretty impressive side with homegrown talent: fullback Clinton Schifcofske from Moranbah; wingers Brett Dallas from Brothers and Wendell Sailor from Sarina; centres Paul Bowman from Proserpine and Matt Sing, who started his career with the Dysart Bulls; halves Dale Shearer, who could play anywhere from 1 to 6, at five-eighth from Sarina, and Daly Cherry-Evans at halfback from Souths; Martin Bella in the front row from Sarina, along with my mate from Lenard's Mount Pleasant, Steve Jackson, from Magpies; hooker Kevin Champion from Sarina; second rowers Neville Costigan, my cousin, who captained Papua New Guinea, from Wests, alongside Mike McLean from Bowen, who is FOG No. 69, I might add; and Travis Norton locking the scrum from Moranbah. On an extended bench, we have: Owen Cunningham, OJ, from Wests; Dane Gagai from Souths; Dane Nielsen from Norths; Josh Hannay from Moranbah; Adrian Bruncker from Collinsville; and Shannon Hegarty from Brothers. From my calculations, they have 161 games between them. It is a tribute to Barry Blanchfield and the Mackay Junior Rugby League and all of the coaches and volunteers who put time and effort into all of these kids.

I was delighted a couple of years ago to successfully lobby the Queensland Rugby League to bring the origin side to Proserpine. It was great seeing them in Mackay today. It was also lovely to be alongside some of the Former Origin Greats, headed by Gene Miles, a couple of weeks ago when the FOGs donated money to some good causes. I was privileged to accept \$7,500 on behalf of the Proserpine Junior Rugby League, which was gleefully accepted by Cameron Bennett, Leanne Hoffmann and the team.