




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

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ADJOURNMENT

Ipswich Rugby League

 **Ms BOURNE** (Ipswich West—ALP) (9.26 pm): I rise this evening to speak on Ipswich's NRL bid. It is time for Rugby League to respect its own heartland and give Ipswich the NRL licence it so justly deserves. Let me quickly tell you why. Ipswich has been a city built on sport—a place where passion, talent and community spirit come together on the field, in the pool, on the court and beyond. Ipswich has produced some of Australia's finest sporting talent, whether in tennis, weightlifting, bowls, hockey or soccer. In fact, Ipswich has—and we say this with pride—produced the most Australian sport representatives of any region in Australia.

But there is one sport that has truly shaped our identity and that is Rugby League. Our proud history dates back to 1910 when Ipswich officially affiliated with Queensland Rugby League. That same year, we entered the Brisbane competition and won the premiership against Toombul, claiming senior and junior titles. That was just the beginning. In 1924 and in 1928, Ipswich played against England and, by 1932, during a Rugby League test between Australia and England in Sydney, three players from Ipswich took the field for Australia. Our local legend, JG Stephenson, not only led the Ipswich league but also went on to become a selector and President of the Queensland Rugby League, putting Ipswich and Queensland firmly on the world's Rugby League map. In 1959, the whole of the Australian front row were from Ipswich.

Fast forward to recent decades and our legacy only grows stronger. Ipswich is the heartland of Rugby League. It has given us household names like the Walter brothers, Allan Langer and the iconic Ali Briginshaw—all proud products of our community.

The Ipswich Jets, formed in 1982, have been a crucial stepping stone for countless players who have gone on to represent NRL clubs, their state and the nation. The Jets have become a cornerstone of Rugby League not just for our region but for Queensland. That is why I am incredibly proud that all three levels of government have committed \$40 million to upgrade the North Ipswich Reserve and create a centre of excellence. The commitment for a boutique stadium is hugely important for our region.

I have had many discussions with Steve Johnson who is a passionate Rugby League advocate and has been an integral part of the Ipswich Jets for 30 years. We are ready for the next big step—the 20th NRL licence. There is overwhelming support across Ipswich so it is time for the ARL Commission to recognise Rugby League heartland—its strength, history and future—and support a 20th NRL licence. On behalf of our players, clubs, the game's best fan and for the greater good of Queensland, let's bring home the fifth Queensland NRL team based in Ipswich. It is time to score the try we have been working towards for nearly two decades.