

Media Release

**Brisbane's record Indigenous sports carnival success means National and International Indigenous touch "tests" to stay**

**More than 17,000 turned up to see the Annual Indigenous Sport and Cultural Festival in Brisbane over the weekend, breaking all records for the event - which hosted national and international games of touch football for the first time in Australia.**

**As a result, Carnival organisers, First Contact, announced today that the selection and hosting of a national Indigenous Touch team to play against either the Australian Touch team or other international Indigenous teams would continue next year in Brisbane, and become an annual event.**

Many in the crowd, estimated at over 10,000, were there to see the first national Indigenous Touch team ever selected, play the current world champions of International touch football, the Australian national team, on the Saturday

Mr Williams also announced that next year's Brisbane's Indigenous Sports and Cultural Festival will be officially recognised by the Australian Touch authorities.

He said a meeting with touch officials after the carnival also confirmed the tournament would be used to "tag" talented Indigenous players for "fast track" development and inclusion in national touch teams, for the first time.

Formal accreditation for the tournament, already recognised as the biggest and most successful Indigenous event of its kind in Australia, will open up a whole new range of sporting opportunities for Indigenous people to represent their country, in the sport.

It will also boost the strength of Australian touch football by significantly increasing the number and flow of Indigenous players capable of winning places in national teams, at all levels.

"This means Indigenous touch is now firmly 'on the map', in national touch football in Australia like never before," he said.

Mr Williams said this year's carnival was "an economic, sporting, and cultural touchdown for the sport."

He said attendances rocketed up by more than 50 per cent from 10,000 in previous years to an estimated 17,000 people. On the Saturday car parks had to be temporarily closed, while caterers sold out of food and drinks.

**Indigenous Australians shock 1-0 lead over Australia**

An excited first day crowd of more than 10,000 saw the Indigenous Australians take a shock 1-0 lead over a full strength Australian National Team in the first ever exhibition "test" match held in the sport.

The upset try almost bringing the house down as the crowd anticipated a boil-over defeat for the World Cup holders.

Australia were undefeated by 51 teams from 21 countries when they took out the World Cup in Japan in 2003.

While the Australian team went on to win the match 5-1, national touch players and officials were astounded by the skills and competitiveness of the national Indigenous Team.

The Australian Team had been in training for three months ahead of their World Cup defence in South Africa in January.

The Indigenous side was selected only a few hours before the game and had never trained together.

Many Indigenous players had already played that morning for their community teams.

Rugby League legend Artie Beetson and a bevy of federal and state ministers presented the Indigenous team and officials with their Australian jerseys before the game.

While guest entertainer NSW singer Victor Simms sang the national anthem with local Indigenous singer Adam James before the main game.

Mr Simms said it was a “great moment” for him. Despite decades as an Aboriginal singer in the entertainment industry he had never been asked to sing the national anthem.

“That’s something hardly any Indigenous people will have experienced before,” according Robbie Williams,

“Hearing the national anthem sung by Indigenous artists, before actually playing in a major national and international Indigenous run event to represent their people nationally, all in front of thousands of people, for the first time ever,” he said.

A powerful squad of 14 young players was selected on the morning of the match, to become the first Aboriginal and Torres players ever to represent their country in a national Indigenous touch football team.

Queenslanders dominated the squad, with 10 of the 14 places on the team.

The history making team was :

Peter Stoddart(QLD)

Phil Gyemore(QLD)

Anthony Avery(NSW)

Cameron Costello(QLD)

Mook Harrington Jnr(QLD)

Mike Davey(QLD)

Ricky Morris(NSW)

Bo De La Cruz(NSW)

Nicky Suey(QLD)

Missy Shaw(QLD)

Teresa Anderson(QLD)

Jessy Shaw(QLD)

Katie Shaw(QLD)

Sarah Hamilton(NSW)

The national Indigenous team was coached by Queensland's Glen Andrews and NSW's Rick Luland.

Glen played in ACT and Queensland teams since 1987, and has played for his state and for Australia in two world cup teams.

NSW's Rick Luland has an impressive coaching record: State coach Men's 45's in 2000, and coach of the Under 20's NSW Men's State of Origin team that defeated Queensland in 2006.

He has also coached touring teams overseas, including the 2004 Men's 35's Australian team that toured South Africa and UK, and 2002 Men's veterans Australian team that toured South Africa and UK.

He is also a member of the national reference group for men, women and young people related to Indigenous issues.

### **Queensland politicians queue up for Indigenous sports over Ashes weekend**

A record field of federal and state ministers, MPs and local government politicians turned out in support of the Indigenous sports and cultural extravaganza.

And to help with the presentations of national jerseys to the Indigenous side, team officials and with more than 60 trophies.

Politicians attending major sports events is hardly new, but when they turnout to an Indigenous sports and culture event in the same town on the same weekend as the opening test of an Ashes series, it's quite an achievement.

One of the "political" highlights, was Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough, playing a full game with the team from Palm Island, as a "guest" player.

For the record, Mr Brough's team lost narrowly to local Brisbane side Jitty-Jitty

The Queensland Sports Minister, Andrew Fraser, became the first State Sports Minister to attend the event.

With him was State Communities Minister Warren Pitt, whose portfolio now includes Indigenous Affairs.

While Police Minister and former Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Minister, Judy Spence, who is also the local State MP, has been at or supported the event every year since it began in 1993, Mr Williams said.

Other first timers include the new Liberal Federal MP for Bonner, Ross Vasta, whose seat was named after Australia's first Aboriginal member of the Federal Parliament, the late Neville Bonner.

Other State MPs there were Gary Fenlon and Phil Reeves along with Brisbane City councillors, Kerry Rae, Catherine Birmingham and Adrian Schrunner.

For the small Murri organisation from Mt Gravatt, the First Contact Aboriginal Corporation, who have staged the event every year for 13 years, its "hard earned" recognition.

Robbie Williams and his wife Trish have seen the community festival grow to become widely recognised as one of the biggest and most successful fully Indigenous run sporting and cultural events in Australia.

This year, the \$250,000 tournament drew a record 2000 players and officials from 117 Indigenous teams from Queensland, the NT, New South Wales and Victoria to battle it out for \$30,000 in prizes - and bragging rights as the best in the world of Indigenous touch.

More than 280 games were played over the two days.

### **NRL Legend praises festival's cultural performers**

Queensland Rugby league great Artie Beetson has praised the carnival, held each year at Whites Hill Reserve in the Brisbane suburb of Camp Hill

In a speech at the final presentation he said he "was blown away" by the size, professionalism, and the scale of the event.

"I've seen nothing like this anywhere in the country and I've been a lot of places," he told the crowd.

Mr Beetson, was at the festival as an "ambassador" for the federal government's Human Services Department, to help promote government services to Indigenous people.

"I'm coming back next year for sure, with my family too, whether I'm still doing the government work or not," he said.

Mr Beetson said the culture and talented young people on show at the tournament was "impressive", covering both traditional and contemporary forms.

The Nunuckle - Yuggera dancers, trained by Eddie Ruska, came in for particular praise from the NRL and State of Origin legend.

More than 30 dancers, all from the region, performed, many of them young, males as well as females, some as young as seven.

"I've never seen our culture look so strong," Mr Beetson said.

### **In other highlights and results over the weekend:**

In the first Indigenous touch international ever held at the tournament, the New Zealand Maoris defeated Papua New Guinea, 10-3.

While PNG were outclassed, they won the cultural performance stakes with their traditional dance before the game, an honour usually reserved the Maori Haka in popularity with the 70 per cent Indigenous audience.

They were also up against a Maori side made up of players from the Galaxy touch team, which won the men's open final against Hoop and Health, 7-5.

Chris Larkins was "player of the final" taking home the prestigious Liam "Buck" Langton Memorial Trophy.

In the Battle of the States, Queensland took the overall honours 2-1, winning the schools and mixed open, but NSW clawing back respect, winning the men's open.

Top honours in the schools division went to NSW's Kempsey High, who defeated Woodenbong Central, 5-2.

NSW also went home winners of the Mens' Plate final with Toomelah Tigers beating local Brisbane team Kinsgridge Wanderers 5-4.

In the Mixed Plate Final Team "Nos + Rhys" beat Cairns Cobra's 4-3.

Most of the "Dash for Cash" also went NSW way with the Toomelah Tigers-Narwan taking out the men's sprint.

The Nos+Rhys team also backed up again to take out the mixed sprints, while NSW's Moree High were the top school sprinters.

The Festival was sponsored by: Brisbane City Council, the Queensland government through the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Australian government's Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts, and the Brisbane Metropolitan Touch Association

Photos and information on this year's sports and the extensive cultural program will be posted on First Contact's website: [www.firstcontact.asn.au](http://www.firstcontact.asn.au)

**Media Contact and Further Information:**

R.N.Williams

**Robbie Williams**  
**Chairman**  
**First Contact**

**Mobile: 0427034446 or phone 07 3420 4291**

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