



## Media Release

28 June 2019

### **NSW Wheelchair Blues to clash with Queensland Maroons in Saturday's NRL Wheelchair State of Origin**

The NSW Wheelchair Blues are gearing up for a mighty clash against the Queensland Maroons in the 2019 NRL Wheelchair State of Origin, taking place next Saturday at Quaycentre in Sydney Olympic Park.

Billed as one of the biggest events on the Wheelchair Rugby League calendar, the NSW Blues will be looking to maintain their four-year winning streak.

Brad Grove, the 2018 vice-captain of the Wheelchair Blues, said Saturday afternoon's match is going to be physical and fast-paced game.

"We're so passionate about our game and that really comes through in these interstate challenges. The Maroons will definitely be hungry for a win, so the crowd should be ready for some fierce competition and big hits!"

Grove, an icare Lifetime Care participant, was involved in a motor vehicle accident as a 19-year-old. The accident resulted in a complete low level spinal cord injury, requiring the use of a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

"About 18 months after my accident, I attended the first NRL Wheelchair come and try event in Australia. I have been playing ever since."

"Wheelchair rugby league is really unique because you don't need to have a disability to participate - it's a truly inclusive game. It allows people with disabilities to compete with and against able-bodied athletes on a level playing field. That's not something many other sports in the world have the ability to offer," Grove said.

Able-bodied athlete Michael Johnson started playing wheelchair rugby league in 2010.

"I always loved rugby league growing up so when a few of my mates started playing wheelchair footy, I had to give it a crack," Johnson said.

"The sense of community out on the court is second to none. We've got fathers who have been in wheelchairs all their lives able to get out there and play footy on the same team as their kids.

In wheelchair rugby league, each team has five players on the court at a time and, like Oztag, players are 'tackled' when a tag is removed from their shoulder.

"It might sound tame, but with wheelchairs screaming around the court at high speed, it's a ferocious and dynamic game to play, and to watch," Johnson said.



“Come down to the match on Saturday afternoon and check it out. We’re trying to build some awareness around the sport and encourage more people to have a crack and get involved!”

The 2019 NRL Wheelchair Rugby League State of Origin, proudly supported by [icare NSW](#), will kick off on Saturday 6 July at Quaycentre in Sydney Olympic Park. Entry is free and tickets can be reserved by visiting <https://www.nrlwheelchair.com.au/>

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#### **About Wheelchair Rugby League**

Wheelchair Rugby League Australia (WRLA) originated from the founding of the New South Wales Wheelchair Rugby League Association which was established in 2009, with the long term focus to make it a national sport.

WRLA introduced seasonal competition from 2010 which built awareness at all levels of the game including referees, players, coaches and administration of the sport and provide opportunities for athletes with disabilities within the league.

Our vision is to be recognised as an inclusive sport for all communities, provide pathways for participants to represent their respective states and to contribute to making it a global sport.

#### **About icare**

Insurance and Care NSW (icare) protects, insures and cares for the people, businesses and assets of NSW.

We provide workers compensation insurance to more than 326,000 public and private sector employers in NSW and their 3.6 million employees. In addition, we insure builders and homeowners, provide treatment and care to people severely injured on NSW roads; and protect more than \$193 billion of NSW Government assets, including the Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, schools and hospitals.

For more information, visit: [www.icare.nsw.gov.au](http://www.icare.nsw.gov.au)



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### **How is Wheelchair Rugby League played?**

This fast-paced game is played on an indoor court, about half the size of rugby league field. It follows a five-on-five format, using a rugby league football. A kick is achieved by a clenched fist and a tackle is achieved by removing a Velcro tag from the sleeve of an attacking player. The game can be played socially and there are defined player pathways to representative level.

The game allows up to 2 able bodied athletes per team, meaning that members of families and mates can play alongside their siblings and friends.

Wheelchair Rugby League is an inclusive sport – a variation of the running game allowing athletes with disabilities to compete with and against able-bodied people. The emphasis is on the participation, health and well-being of individuals, personal performance, social interaction and self- esteem.

Wheelchair Rugby League aspires to provide an inclusive recreational activity and to promote fun, fitness and self-development while fostering good sportsmanship in a safe and positive environment.

See the Wheelchair Rugby League for more: [here](#)

Wheelchair Rugby League Ambassadors are Brett Kimmorley and James Tamou.