



The Greatest Game of All

Media Release

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Cathy Neap leading female revolution with NRL's *League Bilong Laif* Program

The Australian Government's *League Bilong Laif* (League for Life) program has appointed Cathy Neap as Game Development Officer, in a sign of the changing face of Rugby League in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Australian NRL In-Country General Manager and former Kumuls Captain Mark Mom said the appointment is a sign of the new opportunities for women to forge a career in Rugby League in PNG.

In her role Cathy will deliver the League Bilong Laif program using Rugby League as a tool to support specific primary school level outcomes in four regions across PNG.

The League Bilong Laif program concluded in the National Capital District last week for the first term with special School Assemblies taking place at each of the three schools - Philip Aravure Primary School Gerehu, St. Michael's Primary School Hanuabada and St. John's Primary School Tokarara.

"It is wonderful to be implementing a program that is positively impacting on the lives of Papua New Guineans and delivering the key program messages on the importance of education and respect", Miss Neap said.

"I grew up watching my brothers and male relatives playing Rugby League and it has always been a part of my life."

"The League Bilong Laif program actively encourages females and males to participate equally and it is fantastic that through this program females are able to participate and won't have to go through what I went through as a young girl."

More than 2,000 students took part in the program this term. The assemblies co-delivered by Australian NRL staff including Cathy and SP Hunters players reinforced the program's key messages of Respect and the importance of Education for all Papua New Guineans.





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Mr Mom said he had seen the impact Rugby League has on young people in Papua New Guinea over the course of the program.

He said young people were turning their lives around by using the discipline and skills they learned in Rugby League in everyday life.

And Mr Mom said women were at the forefront of the program.

Women playing Rugby League is one of the fastest growing areas of our game with increasing on 20% annually, he said.

We are committed to further developing and enhancing women's pathways with a good presence in Game Development, Refereeing and on the Field.

The League Bilong Laif program is delivered through a partnership between the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian NRL and the PNG National Department of Education. The PNG Rugby Football League, PNG Women's Rugby Football League and the University of PNG are key supporters of the program.

Sport has tremendous potential to improve the lives of children, families and communities in PNG, Minister, Development Cooperation, at the Australian High Commission Stuart Schaefer said.

The League Bilong Laif Program shows how rugby league can shape how children learn and behave and promote values that make life better for children.

It is fantastic to see how involved women are in the program. Development officers, like Miss Neap, are role models for young girls, showing them that women can do anything that men can do.

The Australian Government is proud to support the NRL and Department of Education to deliver the League Bilong Laif program. I congratulate the NRL on their work to promote gender equality through this program, and showing boys and girls that they are equal on, and off, the sporting field.

The \$4 million League Bilong Laif program is part of the Australian Government's Pacific Sports Partnerships (PSP) which is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Pacific Sports Partnerships aim to strengthen the delivery of





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quality sport for development activities in Pacific communities by building the skills of local administrators, coaches and officials.

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