### Ken Stephen Medal Nominees – Biographies

#### *Angus Crichton – Roosters*

Angus was only a teenager when his passion for the community was born. A young player that is a role model both on and off the field.

He launched his charity, First People Project in late 2019. The charity is aimed at educating the broader Australian community about Indigenous ways through film.

A valuable contributor to the Roosters Community department, he is always willing to participate in the club’s programs, specifically Roosters Respect, Little Chooks Get Healthy, and Love Bites programs delivered to over 15 primary schools across the Eastern Suburbs.

He played a vital role in this year's Community Carnival programs in February, delivering the new League Stars Inspire Respect program to schools across the Central Coast and Eastern Suburbs.

Angus has been a State of Mind advocate since 2018 and would like to see the stigma around mental health removed. Angus is an inspiration to his peers and professional athletes across all sports for the way in which he has applied himself.

#### *Connor Watson- Knights*

At just 23 Connor is a leader at the Newcastle Knights in many ways, he inspires his community, teammates, colleagues and the broader community.

His efforts in the community space are inspiring people everywhere. He understands the opportunity his platform gives him, and he is determined to make a positive change.

Sparked by the loss to suicide of Connor’s cousin Parker at just 17 years of age, Connor, his parents Mark and Jodie and their Cultural Choice Association (CCA) have worked to make Boots for Brighter Futures a hallmark of Indigenous Round and a catalyst for important conversations in the Indigenous and broader community.

In 2020 he addressed all 16 NRL teams to educate them on Boots for Brighter Futures and CCA. Several Youth Justice Centres were involved in creating the artwork across 56 pairs of boots. The match worn boots were auctioned online raising $24,000 bringing the total raised to $51,000 since inception.

Connor plays an integral role in the Knights community programs, regularly putting his hand up for opportunities. On top of his club commitments he makes regular fortnightly visits in his own time to Indigenous boys at the Kirinari hostel at Garden Suburb.

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#### *Cody Walker – Rabbitohs*

A proud Bundjalung-Yuin man, Cody has established himself as one of the most influential and respected Indigenous players in the game.

He is continually supporting and championing South Sydney Rabbitohs, Souths Cares and NRL Community initiatives. With strong connections to both the North and South Coast of NSW he has led a range of initiatives to support these regions.

Cody has been a fearless and articulate campaigner against racism and bullying whilst promoting awareness around mental health and the inequalities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. He captained the NRL Indigenous All Stars side in 2019 and played a vital leadership role in 2020.

Cody visited bushfire affected regions providing support and assistance to those communities in need. Cody has consistently gone ‘above and beyond’ his normal Club commitments to make a significant contribution to supporting various community initiatives and promoting social justice issues to a broader Australian audience.

#### *Chris Lawrence – Tigers*

Being part of the game for 15 years, Chris Lawrence has become one of West Tigers greatest players, on and off the field.

Having managed his playing and community commitments from a very young age, Chris has always remained consistent with his time and energy for community engagement opportunities. As a Beyond Blue ambassador, Chris has worked tirelessly for players and fans alike to promote a healthy and positive lifestyle with a focus on mental health.

The challenges players faced this year did not hinder Chris’s impact in his team and community. He has continued his commitment this year to the community by donating his expertise and experience to continue to encourage those around him.

Whilst continuing his work as an Ambassador for Beyond Blue, Chris has contributed to the West Tigers community by being involved with the Annual West Tigers School Blitz, West Tigers Celebrating Differences presentation, Beyond Blue encourage healthy wellbeing video and Beyond Blue Zoom calls with AFL Club Hawthorn Hawks.

Chris opened his own online wellbeing platform called ‘Synergy’ to all players and staff of West Tigers. He organised challenges and goals for everyone to set, with long and short term focuses on improving the wellbeing of all at West Tigers. This inclusiveness to involve all players and staff was an incredible gesture as it came at a financial cost to him and his family.

The work that Chris has done for Wests Tigers and his community is second-to-none in terms of its consistency, genuineness and selflessness.

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#### *Jarrod Croker – Raiders*

Raiders local product and captain, Jarrod Croker continually strives to uphold and embody the strong values and characteristics that shape the great game of Rugby League and what it offers to the community.

Jarrod, labelled as a natural leader, constantly leads by example through his efforts to fulfil obligations as part of the Raiders commitment to sponsors, supporters and the wider community. His willingness to engage in community participation has seen him take part in countless programs across the community, while also pursuing a means to interact with the supporters in any shape or form, whether it be with the prominent gifting of his headgear, jersey partnership promotions or undertaking requests for personalised birthday messages.

Jarrod’s active involvement in the community and his commitment to go above and beyond has earned him the recipient of the Fred Daly Clubman of the Year in 2019, one of the most prestigious honours a person can receive from the Canberra Raiders.

With the impact COVID-19 has had on the NRL players, Jarrod has played an instrumental role mentoring fellow players and enabling them to cope with the increased restrictions placed upon them, demonstrating his ability to lead, persevere, whilst assisting in keeping team morale.

Jarrod has very much been the solid ‘rock’ to which the club has built success around, both on and off the field.

#### *Martin Taupau- Sea Eagles*

Martin Taupau isn't just a strong player; he has developed into a strong leader and role model.

Martin has a highly active role in the Northern Beaches community, with involvement in Junior League ‘come and try’ clinics and the Manly wellbeing program, The Boomerang Effect, aimed to reinforce the importance of a positive mindset during challenging times.

Bringing people together to help others is at the heart of what Martin does. Martin worked with PUMA to donate boot bags to frontline medical staff at the Sydney Children’s Hospital to assist with health contamination risks from staff scrubs.

Martin has previously been a Jeans for Genes ambassador and most recently has become a Share the Dignity Hero. As a Hero he will work to raise awareness of period poverty in Australia and raise funds to provide sanitary items to help vulnerable women and girls across Australia.

The Samoan Measles Christmas Relief was an initiative close to Martin’s heart. Martin sought out multiple partners such as Samoan Airways, Red Cross, Rugby League Samoa, and notable Samoan figures Ma’a Nonu and Tofiga, to assist in the delivery of the campaign. Martin also encouraged the general community to donate Christmas presents to be delivered to families in Samoa affected by the pandemic.

The NRL set-up various gift drop-off locations, which saw many gifts donated and distributed to more than 100 families. Whilst over in Samoa, Martin was able to visit families and deliver gifts to the children and their families. Martin’s passion for the campaign raised awareness of the pandemic, which led to an increase of vaccinations across Samoa.

#### *Reed Mahoney - Eels*

Reed has established himself as a forceful player and a dedicated individual in the Parramatta Eels community.

Reed is always one of the first players to volunteer and partake in any community work that the club is involved in. He is always in the top three Eels club player appearances hours since signing an NRL contract with the club. In 2019, he had the second most appearances and currently leads the 2020 tally despite COVID-19 restrictions.

Reed is heavily involved with the Eels community participating in numerous initiatives such as the Eels Community School Blitz, the Bushfire appeal in Bega; visiting farms and schools affected by the bushfires, Ronald McDonald House and Westmead Children’s Hospital visits and holds an Ambassador role for the Eels charity partner, Giant Steps.

Reed is also always an active individual with members, fans and the wider community. He has sent videos and messages of encouragement to many members and students.

Becoming an Ambassador for Giant Steps during his time in the 20’s squad, Reed worked full time as a teacher’s aide before signing full time with the Eels. He continues to use his social media platform to encourage donations and contributes his own donations and experience to various events to increase the money raised.

Reed’s passion for kids with disabilities extends to a business organisation called What Ability. Through this service, he can assist individuals with disabilities and provide them with everyday experiences.

#### *Dale Copley – Titans*

#### An active volunteer, Dale is regularly in the community helping those in need and working with various organisations.

Since being at the Club Dale has been the perfect role model for the younger players coming through. He has managed to juggle the demands of completing a Bachelor of Law at QUT, his professional Rugby League commitments, an active member of the RLPA, ambassador roles for the NRL State of Mind and Voice Against Violence programs, along with becoming a proud Dad in 2019.

Dale is one of those players which people only find out about half the community work he does, a humble man who is not someone who gloats. He is also never one to turn down a player request, even if it means travelling 2+ hours to attend an appearance on a weekend.

As part of his NRL Wellbeing & Education Titans Ambassador role, Dale recently presented a Wellbeing & Education workshop to the Gold Coast Titans, Burleigh Bears and Tweed Heads Seagulls U18’s players on “What makes news” and how to represent your personal and club brand in the community. Dale also spoke from a legal perspective and how poor decisions can lead you in trouble with the law.

In early 2020, Dale joined the NRL community initiative Road to Regions and headed to the border towns of St George and Lightning Ridge to visit local schools, complete community visits and hold coaching clinics. Dale committed to the visit with a mindset of giving back to those who had done it tough and including those who are sometimes forgotten in the Rugby League community.

#### *Ronaldo Mulitalo – Sharks*

Before being a contracted player Ronaldo was a regular at Sharks community events and initiatives, eagerly accepting roles to deliver community programs and attend as many community events as possible.

At one of the first schools Ronaldo visited representing the Sharks he made sure he spent time with a student with autism that he spotted away from the group of kids he was signing items for. After seeing this boy was distressed about missing out, Ronaldo gifted the young boy the Sharks polo off his own back and signed it.

Ronaldo has been a leader for community appearances at the Sharks, more recently taking time in the recent off season to travel to Papua New Guinea to engage with the Papua New Guinea community and assist in building a community hall and install a rainwater collection system.

In 2019, just his first year as a contracted NRL player, Ronaldo led the Sharks community with 110 hours contributed. HIs efforts continued into early 2020, with Ronaldo once again leading the community appearance hours for the Club before Covid-19 restrictions were implemented.

In 2020 Ronaldo has taken part in various Sharks commitments, including the Sharks Bushfire Relief efforts, Sharks School Community Carnival visits, attending the local White Ribbon Walk event and spending time at a local Ladies Golf Club event to thank them for their donation to the Sharks.

#### *Dale Finucane – Storm*

Dale is is a known leader on and off the field.

Since arriving at the Storm, Dale has consistently volunteered his time at community events, public appearances and community clinics across the state and for the NRL.

He is the first to volunteer to serve meals and meet those at the annual Salvation Army Christmas Lunch at which Storm players and staff attend. Dale is also a regular participant in activities and appearances for Storm’s charity partner, the Starlight Foundation.

Dale has been part of the NRL Road to Regions promotion in recent years and is also an ambassador for the NRL’s State of Mind program committing his time to various workshops, events and appearances, not just in Victoria but across the country.

Most notably, Dale was instrumental in the Storm’s response to the bushfires which devastated much of NSW and Victoria. He led a group of Storm players to his hometown of Bega and the surrounding area in late February, with the Storm players helping to boost spirits, help with some fence building and running a junior clinic.

Throughout the pandemic, Dale has helped to maintain a united and positive attitude to help inspire those who are impacted by COVID in Victoria and give them some joy through those times.

#### *James Tamou – Panthers*

Tamou is an accomplished front-rower who brings valuable experience and leadership to the Penrith Panthers. He has a long list of achievements in the game, but his actions during the most recent bushfires earnt him high praise from all.

He travelled from Sydney’s west to Braidwood, which is about 60 kilometres inland from Bateman’s Bay, to help his in-laws defend their home against a bushfire in the area. Tamou showed his resilience and spirit when joining forces with the Rural Fire Service to save many properties affected by the catastrophic fires. His selfless actions showcased that his profile as an NRL player is used for the greater good

#### *Adam Elliott – Bulldogs*

Adam is a passionate and motivated player who strives to demonstrate his abilities in the community.

Adam advocates for the Autism Community Network (ACN) and is motivated by a strong desire to decrease the stigma for people living with autism. In 2018, he partnered with ACN and would regularly dedicate time slots to the network and their events.

In 2019, the Canterbury Bulldogs delivered a community Minded Kids Program, directed at year 3 students as a means of civic engagement. Adam fought for the program to be delivered in non-mainstream schools and through this the Canterbury Bulldogs were able to form a partnership with Chalmers road School; a school targeted at students living with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities.

Adam’s passion for autistic individuals aided him in his commitment with ACN. He led an online fundraiser and awareness piece for the charity by dying his hair blue. He was able to raise over $10k for ACN which assisted the service as they were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Kyle Feldt – Cowboys**

Kyle’s down-to-earth nature and love for his region has seen him become one of the most loved Cowboys throughout the North Queensland Community. The winger is just as dedicated to rugby league off the field.

An affable North Queensland native, Feldt has taken this all in his stride to go above and beyond his club commitments to give back to the community. When COVID-19 forced the shutdown of the Townsville & District Junior Rugby League competition, Kyle, a big advocate for grassroots rugby league helped create and launch the Kyle Feldt Footy Throw Bin Challenge, calling on juniors across the region to post their best footy passes on TDJRL Facebook.

He has built a strong connection with Good Shepherd Catholic School over eight years of Adopt-a-School visits, usually visiting each term to join in with students and staff in a variety of school activities. Keeping in touch during COVID-19 has been a big priority, with video calls in terms 2 and 3 ensuring he can still contribute and be part of their school year.

Feldt has also become a role model for the club's Try for 5! school attendance challenge, motivating and rewarding students to come to school on time, every day. The program targets school attendance in 18 schools across Townsville and Far North Queensland, with Feldt filming messages of encouragement for schools to play in classrooms and assemblies.

His involvement reinforces positive school cultures and communicates high expectations of attendance, where poor school attendance has been linked to lower academic outcomes, early school leaving, substance abuse, poverty, unemployment and negative health outcomes.

Feldt is a popular member of the playing group, taking out the 2019 Townsville Bulletin Fans’ Choice Award and named 2020 Cowboys membership ambassador to represent the club in building its vibrant community of members. He also works hard behind the scenes to support those who reach out to him in times of need. Humble, relatable and reliable, Feldt inspires on and off the field.

**Roger Tuivasa-Sheck – Warriors**

As the Vodafone Warriors captain his deeds on and off the field have always captured the essence of what an NRL player should exemplify to the rugby league community.

He absolutely embodies what is good about the game. In a season of uncertainty his personal qualities have shone through like a beacon as he has galvanised those around him and, even more significantly, society at large. Roger is a major contributor to the Warriors community programme and gives his own time in more conventional ways off the field.

Roger supported a junior rugby league clubs initiative at the Otahuhu Leopards (Roger’s junior club). He took the lead in a special way by turning up at one of the player’s homes to meet a stunned young Rocco and drive him to training. Along some of his Vodafone Warriors teammates, they led the youngsters with their warm-up, skills and drills and then conducting a couple of conditioning blocks to test the team out.

Before departing for Australia Roger attended a Ronald McDonald House visit where he connected and interacted with patients and families in the house. An earlier visit saw him become the star of the show when he helped to prepare, cook and serve a roast meal. All while engaging with the many families who are doing it tough.

Soon after arriving in Australia, Roger was again connected with junior rugby league players through a personal approach by the Erina Eagles (Central Coast, NSW). The club reached out about the chances of Roger connecting with the club’s under-14 players. He responded by jumping online to chat to the team about his journey and what he has achieved so far as well as answering questions.

Immeasurable is the word that best describes Roger’s impact in the community in both New Zealand and Australia this year. Roger made his mark as not only the club’s leader but also as a community leader. Continually connecting with communities in New Zealand through digital platforms, Roger has not missed a beat.