





FOREWORD

Darren Lockyer

My first thought as the game reaches its centenary is that it's a privilege to be involved. In any walk of life the arrival at the milestone of 100 years is special — and I have no doubt that those of us fortunate enough to be playing the game in 2008 will hold onto the memories of this season for the rest of our lives. For me, and I'm sure for many players, there has been a growing sense of reflection as the centenary year approaches. I have found myself thinking especially of the early pioneers, the Kangaroos of 1908, and of the tours that followed ... and of the fantastic foundations those men laid down for the game. The photos I have seen and the stories I have read stay in my mind. The tales of hardship and dedication and long sea voyages and the battles on snow and ice in England have been part of my education and my coming of age in rugby league. I admire those men a great deal.

The game's history is a rich one. In my own case an education in the 'university of league' was acquired gradually over the years, beginning in about 1986. I remember barefoot days as a 9-year-old, playing rugby league in Wandoan, Queensland, wearing the maroon school jumper with the white V that provided an instant link in our minds to our maroon-clad heroes battling it out in the State of Origin arena. They were my idols, standing on pedestals, so to meet them later and to find them normal blokes like the rest of us meant a lot.

More and more as I play the game, the green and gold jersey and the history and tradition of the Kangaroos have come to mean a

great deal to me. My hope now for the next 100 years of rugby league in Australia, is that the groundwork of earlier generations of players can be built upon and sustained. Because, for me, international football stands at the very top of the tree — and this October and November, when the World Cup is played, will provide a wonderful opportunity to take the international game strongly into the second 100 years.

In 2008 rugby league is still a work in progress. It is challenged by other codes, but holds its position of strength within the Australian sporting scene. Club football at National Rugby League level goes from strength to strength. In its celebration of these first 100 years of league's story the National Museum of Australia has gathered wonderful treasures to remind all who visit the exhibition around the country of what this game has been ... what it is today ... and what it can be.

Rugby league has been good to me, and I am especially proud to be involved as a player at this landmark time. I wish the game good fortune for the next 100 years and I am grateful for the opportunities it has given me. And I believe very strongly that players today and into the future hold a special responsibility as 'keepers of the flame' — to carry on what the brave pioneers began all those years ago.

Darren Lockyer is captain of the Brisbane Broncos and captain of the Australian Kangaroos.