

# WHISTLEBLOWERS ACTION GROUP QLD INC

PO Box 859 KENMORE Q 4068

## PRESS RELEASE

### **ONE FAIR SCRUM AT THE THIRD STATE OF ORIGIN RUGBY LEAGUE MATCH TO HONOUR BARRY GOMERSALL & HIS CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHILD ABUSE**

Whistleblowers in Queensland are repeating their request to the Rugby League public for one fair scrum at the third State of Origin Rugby League match to be held next Wednesday.

‘We are hoping that Mal Meninga’s 2-0 lead against the Blues, and the Prime Ministers current campaign against child abuse in Northern Territory aboriginal communities, might bring life to the request that we made before the First State of Origin Match’, President Gordon Harris stated .

‘Barry Gomersall started his campaign in 2003’, Mr Harris stated. Barry waged his campaign against abuse of children at the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre in Brisbane, not the Northern Territory. The principal case of abuse at that Brisbane Centre, however, was alleged multiple gang rapes of an aboriginal girl. We believe that Barry Gomersall’s campaign comes within the umbrella of any legitimate campaign to arrest child abuse within our community.

Why, though, the request for ‘a fair scrum’?

Barry was Queensland’s choice as referee in the early State of Origin games. His approach towards any fighting on the field of play, whereby he ignored fighting and he continued to referee the game, made him famous in his sport.

Less well known are Barry’s efforts to address the abuse of children in Queensland’s State institutions. He pressed his own personal campaign to have justice authorities meet their responsibilities in investigating alleged rape and physical abuse of children in State care.

For his efforts in this regard, Barry was recently awarded, posthumously, the 2006 Whistleblower Supporter of the Year by the Whistleblowers Action Group. The citation for the Award made special mention of Barry’s action in 2004 to petition the Queensland Parliament for a special prosecutor to investigate the alleged abuse and rape of children at the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre. He also petitioned for the investigation of the destruction by government authorities of documentation on the events at that institution that were collected by Magistrate Heiner.

While footballers could look after themselves in a rugby league match, in Barry’s view, he could not leave children to defend themselves against abuse and rape. Barry insisted that the justice authorities in Queensland do their job, and bring the offenders to account.

# WHISTLEBLOWERS ACTION GROUP QLD INC

PO Box 859 KENMORE Q 4068

This is exactly what the Prime Minister is claiming should be happening in aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

The integrity of the processes whereby abuse of children in State care has been apparently ignored by justice authorities in Queensland has been compared to the integrity of a rugby league scrum – the ball goes round the leg of the prop instead of into the tunnel, and the referee signals ‘Play on’! International symposia and publications have parodied the performance of the Crime & Misconduct Commission in Queensland for not finding any suspicion of misconduct in the alleged abuse that occurred at the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre

The petition from ‘the Grasshopper’, Barry Gomersall, read in part:

*The law must be upheld honestly and impartially, particularly the Criminal Code (Qld) which underpins the administration of justice regarding (a) destruction of evidence; and (b) obstruction of justice in regard to possible improper interference with the administration of justice and covering up known abuse of children in a State-run institution and, therefore, request that the House take all steps to ensure the appointment of an independent Special Prosecutor with sufficiently wide terms of reference, time and resources to investigate all matters involving the Heiner Affair/Shreddergate and lay charges where sufficient evidence exists so that justice may be done to all and public confidence restored in the administration of justice so that all Queensland citizens are treated equally before the law.*

‘The matters in Barry’s petition are still unfinished business in Queensland’, Mr Harris stated.’ This is because justice authorities have failed to apply the law, it is alleged, something that Barry’s petition to the Queensland Parliament tried to change’.

Barry’s call for justice to be done and confidence to be restored are words that the Prime Minister might well repeat in his efforts for the Northern Territory. Why can not the Prime Minister’s concern be extended into Queensland, and find focus on abuse in the city as well as in bush towns. Why just the aboriginal communities, and not us all.

Qld State of Origin centre, Peter Jackson, a team mate of Qld’s coach, Mal Meninga, showed us that even the State of Origin history carries with it the scars of child abuse.

Whistleblowers ask the Queensland State of Origin team to provide a fair scrum at the first scrum feed that it receives at next Wednesday’s game, as an honour to Barry, and as an example to the Crime & Misconduct Commission of the thorough, fair and proper processes that it should employ whenever children in care are raped or abused

We are 2-0 ahead in the footy, but a long way behind in winning justice for our children.

Release approved by WAG Qld Inc, President G Harris.

POC: G McMahon 0411 757 231