

**MEDIA RELEASE
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ST MARYS RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB INVESTS IN FUTURE LEADERS THROUGH KOKODA YOUTH LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE



St Marys Rugby League Club is proud to continue its commitment to developing young community leaders by sponsoring 20-year-old twin brothers Caine and Danny Johnstone to participate in the 2026 Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge.

Caine and Danny, both St Marys Saints players, have been selected to undertake the life-changing 10-day trek across the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea, a journey designed to develop leadership, resilience, teamwork and a deeper appreciation of Australia's military history.

The Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge is a peer-based leadership program promoted by the RSL & Services Clubs Association. Developed by former Army Major Charlie Lynn of Adventure Kokoda, the program combines significant physical and mental challenges with historical, cultural and environmental learning, encouraging participants to develop self-confidence, leadership skills, resilience and a commitment to serving their communities.

The trek follows the original Kokoda Trail and includes visits to significant battle sites where participants learn about the courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice displayed by Australian soldiers during the Kokoda Campaign.

The Club has invested more than \$15,000 in the initiative, covering the program fee for the brothers, as well as the cost of essential equipment and preparation expenses including trekking boots, sleeping gear and other equipment required to safely complete the challenge.

Club President David Cartwright said the Club was proud to support opportunities that help shape the next generation of leaders.

"The Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge is far more than a trek. It is a unique opportunity for young people to challenge themselves physically and mentally while gaining a greater understanding of sacrifice, service, leadership and personal responsibility," Mr Cartwright said.

"Caine and Danny have demonstrated the qualities we look for in young leaders, and we are delighted to support them on what we know will be a life-changing experience."

Caine said he was looking forward to challenging himself and sharing the experience with his brother.

"I wanted to challenge myself with something I don't usually do, but something that has a lot of meaning behind it," Caine said.

"Representing my Club was also a great motivator. I'm hoping to gain valuable life skills, test myself mentally and physically and create a lifelong memory by taking on this challenge alongside my brother."

St Marys Rugby League Club has a proud history of supporting the Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge. Between 2011 and 2019, the Club sponsored 16 local young people to participate in programs before the initiative was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The selection of Caine and Danny marks the return of the Club's involvement and reinforces its ongoing commitment to investing in young people and creating opportunities that extend beyond the sporting field.

"As a Club, we are passionate about helping young people develop the skills, confidence and character needed to become positive contributors to their communities," Mr Cartwright said.

"Programs such as the Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge provide experiences and lessons that simply cannot be learned in a classroom. We look forward to seeing Caine and Danny embrace the challenge and bring their experiences and learnings back to the Saints family."

Caine and Danny will depart for Papua New Guinea on 28 September to undertake the 2026 Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge.



(Pictured: Ron Coskerie – SMRLC Snr Vice President, Danny Johnstone, David Cartwright – SMRLC President, Caine Johnstone)

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