



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Newcastle Knights celebrate Indigenous student's success**

Aboriginal students in Singleton have a new young ambassador to inspire them after one of their own received a state-wide Aboriginal student leadership award.

2009 Singleton High School graduate James Rinkin won the 2009 NSW Schools' Nanga Mai Student Leadership Award after being nominated by his school last year.

The Newcastle Knights congratulated James in front of his peers at EnergyAustralia Stadium recently after being involved in his personal development through its Community Alliance with major sponsor Coal & Allied.

Through the Community Alliance, the Newcastle Knights work with Indigenous youth at the Ka-Wul Education and Cultural Centre, which James joined in 2008.

The centre is based at Singleton High School and uses a combination of culturally appropriate strategies to provide learning opportunities for Aboriginal students and their immediate and extended families.

Newcastle Knights promotions and events manager Robert Vanderveer said the club is proud to be associated with the centre to help young Indigenous people like James.

"Through his interaction with the club, James has learnt a lot about being a team player, leadership, personal health and wellbeing, and sheer hard work," Mr Vanderveer said.

"Talking to the players and seeing how hard they train was a big motivation to him and made him realise that you only get out what you put in.

"We have been proud to watch James grow from someone who lacked confidence and interest in his future to someone who is highly respected by his peers and wants to give back to his community."

Coal & Allied Aboriginal relations specialist Cate Sims said since James joined the centre and participated in Community Alliance activities, he has grown into an excellent role model for other Aboriginal students in his school and local community.

“James has reconnected with his cultural heritage and been given the opportunity to learn life skills from his community, including being mentored by players from the Newcastle Knights,” Ms Sims said.

“James was able to form some strong bonds with some of the players who were more than willing to spend quality time with him and other students from the Ka-Wul centre.

“The programme has not only nurtured his potential and leadership skills but also ignited a desire to help other Indigenous students achieve.”

Ms Sims said Coal & Allied is committed to developing meaningful relationships with Aboriginal people within the communities in which it operates in.

“This is why we support education and cultural programmes that encourage Indigenous youth to develop a sense of belonging to their community, and create a learning environment that is responsive to their needs,” she said.

“In this way, we are able to help develop the capacity of young Aboriginal people in the Hunter Valley while ensuring that connections to their culture are not lost.

“We commend James on his personal journey and success and will continue to develop the potential of Aboriginal youth in the Hunter Valley.”

James won the Nanga Mai award for his outstanding leadership and strong advocacy for Aboriginal issues at Singleton High School.

He has helped establish an Aboriginal dance troupe performing at various events, mentored local primary school students, and took a lead role in presentations to The University of Newcastle and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conference about programmes involving Aboriginal students at his school.

The NSW Schools' Nanga Mai Awards celebrate and recognise innovation, excellence, and achievement in Aboriginal education in New South Wales public schools, school communities, and Department of Education and Training regional and state offices.

Awards are presented to selected high-achieving Aboriginal students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers, staff, community members, schools, and regions.

## Photo



**Pictured** – former Knights' player Mark Hughes and Coal & Allied general manager external relations Fiona Nicholls present James Rinkin with a signed Newcastle Knights jersey.

## Media Enquiries:

**Coal & Allied** – Matthew Klar 07 3029 1168 / 0457 525 578

**Newcastle Knights** – Frank Barrett 0439 535 055.