

In these tough financial times, junior sport has been struggling to maintain registration numbers. To compound this issue, the Government funded, Active Kids program was revamped this year, seeing many families lose part or all the subsidy they previously received under the program. With the very real prospect of this decision having an impact on numbers in junior participation for Rugby League, the Wyong Leagues Group last month launched the Junior Rugby League Subsidy program. This initiative has provided parents of kids between the ages of 5-13 with a \$100 per child subsidy toward their fees. Since the launch of the program, it has proved to be hugely successful. Results to date show that not only has the potential decline in registrations been arrested but it has led to many teams going well past last year's numbers in sign-ups.

Whilst registrations are not yet complete, NSWRL Zone Manager Grant Kelly states that "Overall, the figures look extremely promising. Since the program launched on February 23, we have seen our largest number of February registrations ever recorded for the Central Coast. As an indication of the impact, in terms of year-to-date results, Berkeley Vale is up by 53.82%, and already ahead of their end of year total on by 22.81%. Umina is up by 45.58%, Wyong 5.28%, Terrigal 8.83%. Blue Haven 8.79% and Ourimbah 4.98%. The impact of the subsidy has been extraordinary".

Matt Roberts from the Berkeley Vale Panthers claims "This year's nominations were very slow to start but since the announcement of the Wyong Leagues Group Junior Subsidy the impact was huge and the gains exponential. Berkeley Vale now has the highest number of Junior registrations in our 38-year history".

Tracy Sivyer, Secretary of the Terrigal Sharks states "I can report that we have had wonderful feedback on this program. Whilst the numbers are a little lower from last year, it is still early in the season and registrations for minis are still coming in. I also believe that the registrations would have been much lower had the program not been offered".

Wyong Leagues Group CEO, Ben Coghlan states. "We are absolutely delighted with the progress we have seen in junior registrations and of course pleased to have been able to play our part in making it all happen. We firmly believe that a highly active and engaged junior program, is essential for the health of the great game of Rugby League here on the Coast".