

# Graeme O'Grady

.... came to the attention of the Parramatta junior rugby league selectors in 1972 and was picked for the Parramatta President's Cup team that year. He played in a 10-15 semi-final loss to South Sydney and scored a try in that game. After finishing his Presidents Cup duties he was graded with the Parramatta Third Grade team.

**PRESIDENT'S CUP  
COMPETITION**  
 COPYRIGHT PRATTEN PARK  
 SATURDAY, MAY 20, 1972 2.15 p.m.  
 WESTERN SUBURBS  
 (Black and White)  
 Fullback: W. Ginn (1). Threequarters: S. Sellwood (2), D. Johanson (3), T. McGarry (4), D. Byrnes (5). Halves: M. Carr (6), N. Stubbs (7). Forwards: G. Derrn (19), S. Swan (8), Paul Young (C) (10), Peter Young (11), N. Newton (12), J. Churchyard (13). Reserves: J. McGuire (9), R. Smith (14), T. Bourne (15), W. Hill (16), L. Sinclair (17), S. Ashkar (18) D. White-law (20).

**PARRAMATTA**  
 (Blue and Gold)  
 Fullback: G. Butt. Threequarters: G. Cortwright (2), B. Zubryckyj (3), W. Levy (4), G. Gunn (5). Halves: G. O'Grady (6), W. Hutton (7). Forwards: J. Gallagher (8), R. Wells (9), J. Miller (10), J. Brown (11), T. McCarroll (12), M. O'Reilly (13). Reserves: D. Murphy (14), J. Cooper (15), J. Ring (16), D. Cairns (17), R. Coggan (18).

RLN 20 May 1972

**PRESIDENT'S CUP**  
 SOUTH SYDNEY 15 (G. Haigh, P. Austin tries; Austin 4 goals, field goal) beat PARRAMATTA 10 (G. O'Grady, W. Levy tries; Levy 2 goals), after extra time.

Parramatta Presidents Cup Team -Semi Final 1972

**THIRD GRADE — 12.00 Noon**  
**PARRAMATTA**  
 (Blue and Gold)  
 Coach: BOB JONES

Fullback:  
 53—N. BAILEY

Threequarters:  
 14—J. ARCHIBALD P. LANGMACK— 4  
 33—B. BENNETT P. O'BRIEN—54

Halves:  
 37—N. PARKE D. CAMPBELL—45  
 57—G. O'GRADY (One to be omitted)

Forwards:  
 44—R. BURNIE J. TOKARCZUK—40  
 30—P. BENNETT M. WILLIAMSON—11  
 43—G. DUCQUET R. DEVONSHIRE—17  
 (One to be omitted) M. O'REILLY—56

Reserves:  
 R. Dorrington (48), L. Sargent (32), S. Merry (26), R. Hosie (47), S. Dines (41), T. Karaskoutis (38), L. Varcoe (46), J. Walker (49).

RLN 20 August 1972

**LIVERPOOL 44** (G. O'Grady 3, R. Bampton 2, W. Tree 2, G. Butt, S. Peronis, B. Donaghy, W. Hutton, D. Harvey tries; G. O'Grady 4 goals) beat **BANKSTOWN 5** (E. Pender try; P. Green goal).

Liverpool RL – Sydney 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Reserve Grade 1972

Graeme was not to continue with Parramatta, as in 1973 he was graded with Wests and played nineteen Under 23's games as well as five Reserve Grade games. However, in 1974 he had a break out year making six First Grade appearances.

His first game was against Newtown, coming into the side to replace an injured John Heyward. It wasn't a great result for Wests with the team suffering a number of injuries to key players but it was a platform for Graeme O'Grady to become a regular First Grade player.

WESTERN SUBURBS		1974 Round 6 Sunday 5th May Lidcombe Oval		WESTERN SUBURBS	
Newtown 26		def.	Western Suburbs 13		
John FLOYD		<i>Fullback</i>	Tony FORD		
Lionel WILLIAMSON (c)		<i>Wing</i>	Stephen SATTERLY		
Peter GORDON		<i>Centre</i>	Stephen KNIGHT		
Steve KOSTA		<i>Centre</i>	Robbie PARKER		
Kevin BRADSTOCK		<i>Wing</i>	Russell MULLINS		
Ken WILSON		<i>Five-eighth</i>	Graeme O'GRADY		
Steve HANSARD		<i>Half</i>	Tom RAUDONIKIS (c)		
Neil PRINGLE		<i>Lock</i>	Warren SNODGRASS		
Chris DAWSON		<i>Second Row</i>	John ELFORD		
Gary SULLIVAN		<i>Second Row</i>	Geoff FOSTER		
Tom MELVILLE		<i>Front Row</i>	Jim MURPHY		
Mark ROBERTSON		<i>Hooker</i>	John PURCELL		
Col CASEY		<i>Front Row</i>	Steve RIGNEY		
Ken WILSON		<i>Replacement</i>	John DORAHY		
		<i>Replacement</i>	Mick LIUBINSKAS		

Graeme O'Grady's Debut in First Grade – Round Six 1974

Graeme was called on in the semi-final series of 1974. He came on as a replacement in Wests preliminary semi-final win against Souths, and then again as a second half replacement for John Dorahy in Wests preliminary final loss to Eastern Suburbs.



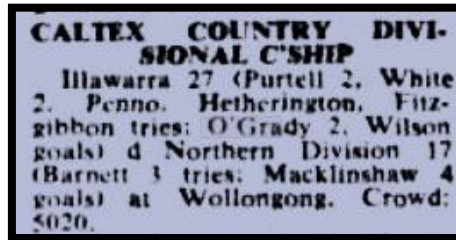
### Western Suburbs Rugby League Team 1974

**Back:** Shane Day, Graeme O'Grady, John Purcell, Geoff Foster, Tom Raudonikis (C), Don Parish (Coach), Robbie Parker, Warren Snodgrass, John Heyward, John Dorahy

**Sitting:** Stephen Knight, Steve Satterly, Russell Mullins, Pat Hundy, John Elford, Brian Isbester

**Front:** Russell Worth, Mick Liubinskas

In 1975, Graeme had a season with the West Wollongong club which played in the Illawarra competition. The West Wollongong team, in 1975, was very competitive and made the semi-finals. Graeme was selected to play with the Illawarra Firsts team that defeated Northern Division in a round one AMCO match. Graeme was also voted as Illawarra player of the year in 1975.



Canberra Times 14 April 1975

The year that Graeme spent in the Illawarra was helpful to his game and future prospects. He returned to Wests in 1976 and became a regular member of the First Grade team. He played every premiership game in First Grade as well as the three pre-season and two AMCO Cup games that Wests competed in that year.

In premiership games played during 1976, Graeme was the second highest try scorer with ten tries, just one behind Russell Mullins. In all games played in 1976, he was the equal highest try scorer with Russell Mullins. It was a great effort from the five-eighth and demonstrates his value as an attacking player.



### Western Suburbs DRLFC 1976

**Back:** Bob Rowland-Smith (Conditioner), Wayne Smith, Peter Young, John Elford, John Donnelly, Don Parish (Coach)

**Middle:** Les Boyd, Tom Raudonikis (C), Geoff Foster, Don Rogers

**Front:** Graeme O'Grady, John Purcell, Ron Giteau, Robbie Parker

**Absent:** Russell Mullins

Graeme had, what some consider, an even better year in 1977. With a positional change mid-way through the year, from five-eighth to lock forward, his new position worked well for both him and the team. However there was some interesting background leading up to his positional change.

West Wollongong made a strong bid to regain Graeme's services for the 1977 season which went on well after the premierships competition commenced. Wests ultimately came to a contractual agreement with Graeme.

Graeme was injured in a round three match, missed round four and returned in round five playing from the bench against Penrith. Wests came from behind in this game with Graeme having an influence on the outcome as the Wests Archive web site noted;

*"the Wests' pack, led by Donnelly, got on top and Wests scored four good tries. The injection of Graeme O'Grady for the injured Liubinskas provided the spark needed."*

**Source: [westsarchives.com.au](http://westsarchives.com.au)**

Graeme remained playing from the bench for his next three games before making the positional change to lock forward in the round eleven game against Newtown. In a round thirteen match, Graeme played extremely well with a note in the Sun newspaper stating that;

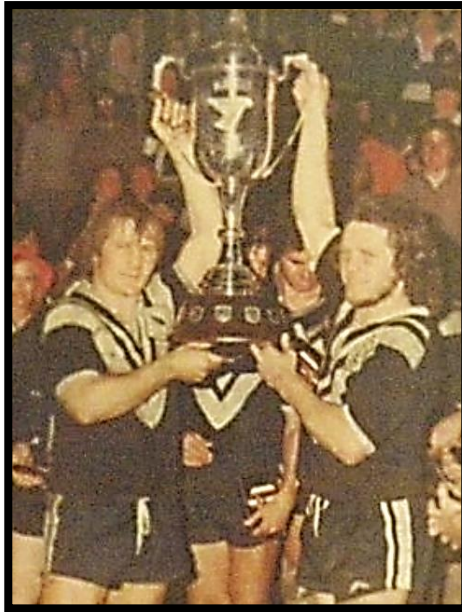
*"he had carved up Souths ..... being prominent in three of Wests five tries."* However in the interview with the "Sun", he declared that he was still in a quandary over his future. He said, *"I was close to going back down the coast, and I still might next season. At this stage I'm playing for the best contract I can get."*

Wests didn't perform all that well in the premierships rounds, but the focus towards the end of the season was winning the AMCO Cup competition. Graeme consolidated his position as lock forward and played in a satisfying AMCO Cup quarter final win over St George and then a tight one point win against Canterbury in the semi-final.

Wests took on Easts in the AMCO Cup final and came away with a 6-5 win against a very strong Eastern Suburbs side. Graeme had a sensational series taking out the "Man of the Match" award in the final as well as the AMCO Cup "Super Star" award as best player in the AMCO Cup competition.



Graeme O'Grady accepting the AMCO 'Super Star' and 'Man of the Match' Awards - AMCO Cup 1977



Tom Raudonikis and Graeme O'Grady lifting the AMCO Cup 1977



AMCO Cup Winners Plaque 1977



**Western Suburbs First Grade Team 1977**

**Back:** Robert Rowland Smith (Conditioner), Doug Lucas, Peter Young, Geoff Foster, Russell Mullins, Ron Giteau, Wayne Smith, Mick Liubinskas, Keith Holman (Coach), Stephen Blyth,

**Middle:** John Donnelly, Shane Day, John Purcell, Tom Raudonikis (C), Don Moseley, Neville Sinclair,

**Front:** Les Boyd, Gavin Miller, Graeme O'Grady, John Dorahy

The 1978 season saw a new coaching era at Wests with Roy Masters taking control after guiding Wests Under 23's to premiership success the year before. Graeme had another good season in 1978. He played every First Grade premiership game in 1978, more than any other Wests player.

Wests took out the minor premiership in 1978 and Roy Masters was voted as "Coach of the Year". There were high hopes that the club would take out the premiership title as Wests had not tasted premiership success in First Grade since 1952.

However, in an unusual semi-final series where there were two replays and six appearances by the Manly Warringah club, the title eventually went to Manly in a grand final replay. Wests tried hard but fell short in the finals series with semi-final losses to Cronulla, 14-10 and then Manly 14-7.



#### **Western Suburbs DRLFC First Grade Minor Premiers 1978**

**Back:** Graeme O'Grady, Shayne Day, John Dorahy, Buddy Cain, Bruce Gibbs, John Donnelly, Don Moseley,

**Front:** Ron Giteau, Peter Rowles, Roy Masters (Coach), Tom Raudonikis, Trevor Reardon, Wayne Smith, Stephen Blyth,

**Inset:** Les Boyd (left), Geoff Foster (right)

Graeme played his last season with Wests in 1979. He once again had a very solid season playing every premiership game up to round nineteen when he withdrew with injury. Graeme indicated that he felt that he was not playing as well as he could have, with niggling injuries.

Nevertheless, he was back the following game but played off the bench for the next two rounds. He was in the starting line-up for the final round against Norths and played well.

However, Coach Masters had a dilemma for the upcoming semi-final against Canterbury Bankstown. Tom Raudonikis was returning from injury and as captain there was no question that he would be excluded from the team. He was either going to replace Alan Neil at half back or Graeme O'Grady at

lock. Unfortunately it was Graeme who was dropped for the upcoming semi-final. Wests went on to play Canterbury in the semi-final and lost the match 6-20 to end the 1979 season.

WESTERN SUBURBS		1979 Round 22 Sunday 26th August North Sydney Oval		WESTERN SUBURBS	
Western Suburbs 30		def.	North Sydney 18		
Wayne SMITH	<i>Fullback</i>	Peter SCHOFIELD (c)			
Don MOSELEY	<i>Wing</i>	Allan SHEPPARD			
Mark BEAVEN	<i>Centre</i>	Mick GLASCOCK			
John DORAHY (c)	<i>Centre</i>	John ADAM			
Buddy CAIN	<i>Wing</i>	John VANDENBERG			
Peter WALSH	<i>Five-eighth</i>	Paul McCAFFERY			
Alan NEIL	<i>Half</i>	Kevin WILSON			
Graeme O'GRADY	<i>Lock</i>	Paul McCABE			
Les BOYD	<i>Second Row</i>	Keith HARRIS			
Bob COOPER	<i>Second Row</i>	John LONG			
John DONNELLY	<i>Front Row</i>	Don MCKINNON			
Ray BROWN	<i>Hooker</i>	Bruce FOYE			
Bruce GIBBS	<i>Front Row</i>	Steve MAYOH			

Graeme O'Grady's last game for Wests – Round Twenty Two 1979



### Western Suburbs First Grade Team 1979

**Back:** Jack Jeffries, Trevor Reardon, Bruce Gibbs, Gerard Crowe, Pat Hundy,

**Middle:** Bob Cooper, Wayne Smith, Don Moseley, John Dorahy, Graeme O'Grady, Mark Beavan, John Heyward

**Front:** Roy Masters (Coach), John Donnelly, Buddy Cain, Tom Raudonikis (C), Ray Brown, Warren Boland, Bill Cloughessy

During Graeme O'Grady's six seasons at Wests, he played eighty nine First Grade, thirty three Reserve Grade, nineteen Under 23's, ten Pre Season Cup and ten AMCO Cup games for a total of one hundred and sixty one games. He scored thirty eight tries and kicked sixty one goals and four field goals for a tally of two hundred and forty points.

Surname	Forename	Year	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	U/23's	Pre-Season Cup	AMCO Cup	Tries	Goals	Field Goals	Total Points
O'Grady	Graeme	1973		5				1			3
O'Grady	Graeme	1973			19			5	23		61
O'Grady	Graeme	1974	6								
O'Grady	Graeme	1974		17				2	16		38
O'Grady	Graeme	1976	22					10	3		36
O'Grady	Graeme	1976		1							
O'Grady	Graeme	1976				3		1	5		13
O'Grady	Graeme	1976					2				
O'Grady	Graeme	1977	16					1			3
O'Grady	Graeme	1977		6				3	14		37
O'Grady	Graeme	1977				3					
O'Grady	Graeme	1977					4	1		1	4
O'Grady	Graeme	1978	24					7		2	23
O'Grady	Graeme	1978		1							
O'Grady	Graeme	1978				1					
O'Grady	Graeme	1978					1	1			3
O'Grady	Graeme	1979	21					3		1	10
O'Grady	Graeme	1979		3				1			3
O'Grady	Graeme	1979				3		1			3
O'Grady	Graeme	1979					3	1			3
<b>Total</b>			<b>89</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>240</b>

Graeme O'Grady's Playing Record at Wests

It was well known towards the end of the 1979 season that Wests would lose John Dorahy, Les Boyd and Ray Brown to Manly Warringah. Wests could not compete with the contracts being offered by the north shore club. But it came as a double blow when Tom Raudonikis and Graeme O'Grady left Wests to join Newtown for the 1980 season.

Newtown already had a few former Wests players in their ranks including Steve Blyth and Peter Rowles. Graeme was sounded out to see if he was interested in making a move and so weighing up his options he recognised that many of the premiership winning Under 23's players that played under Roy Masters in 1977 were now moving through the grades and would be competing for First Grade positions.

The other factor was that Graeme was not highly paid at Wests and Newtown made an offer that was attractive by the standards of the time, although in Graeme's words you played very much for the love of the game in those days.

At Newtown, Warren Ryan who coached Wests Reserves in 1978 had moved across to coach the Newtown First Grade team in 1979. Newtown had collected three wooden spoons between 1976 and 1978 and were only one place higher in Warren Ryan's first year with the Club. In 1980 the club made a serious attempt to build up its playing ranks and Raudonikis and O'Grady were key signings.

Newtown finished just outside the semi-finals in 1980, a great improvement over the previous four seasons. Graeme played twenty of the twenty two premiership games with Newtown in his first year with the club. He indicated that he settled in well at Newtown which had a similar culture to Wests.





### **Newtown First Grade DRLFC 1980**

**Back:** J Mackay, C Ellis, S Blyth, P Ryan, G Bugden, W Noonan, B Jensen, M Ogilvie, C Doyle

**Middle:** F Farrington, T Ryan, K Wilson, T Raudonikis, G O'Grady, M Ryan, W Ryan

**Front:** P Sigsworth, M O'Brien, G Wall, L Brigginslaw

Newtown had a great 1981 season and Graeme O'Grady along with Mick Pitman and Phil Sigsworth played every premierships game and final series game in 1981.

The First Grade team finished runners-up in the minor premierships behind Easts and entered the finals series in great form. They had a narrow loss to Parramatta in the major preliminary semi-final, then defeated Manly in the minor semi-final and minor premiers, Easts in the preliminary final.

The grand final was played between Parramatta and Newtown. It was a great start for Newtown with Graeme O'Grady stepping through a number of would be Parramatta tacklers to post the first try of the match. Newtown was behind 6-7 at half time but a try to Newtown captain Tom Raudonikis put Newtown in the lead soon after half time. It wasn't to be Newtown's year as Parramatta took control of the match late in the game.



Graeme O'Grady stepping through Parramatta's defence to score the first try of the 1981 Grand Final



### **Newtown DRLFC Runners-Up 1981**

**Back:** W Ryan (Coach), M Ryan, C Ellis, S Bowden, S Blyth,

**Middle:** C Murphy, K Wilson, P Sigsworth, J Walters, B Hetherington, S McKellar, P Morris, J Ferguson

**Front:** D O'Connor (Treasurer), G O'Grady, B Jensen, T Raudonikis (C), B Caralis (President), P Gould, M Pitman, R Blacklock, F Farrington (Secretary)

Graeme had a further year with Newtown in 1982. The team just missed out on the semi-finals after suffering a number of losses in the early part of the season. Graeme missed the first three premierships but was a mainstay of the First Grade team for the remainder of the year which include playing in the 1982 KB Cup Final.

At the end of the season, Graeme was approached to join the St George club in 1983 on a three year contract, to which he agreed. Former Wests coach, Roy Masters had gone to St George in 1982 to coach the First Grade team.

During his time at Newtown, Graeme played sixty eight First Grade, four Craven Mild Cup, five Tooth Cup and five KB Cup games.

Graeme doesn't regret his time at St George but observed that there was a different culture to that of Wests and Newtown. St George had quite a history. The Club last picked up the wooden spoon in 1938 and since that time it had made the semi-finals on forty one occasion up to 1985, missing out on only six occasions, with grand final appearances on twenty three occasions.

Graeme remained with the St George Club until the end of 1985 with his last game being the 1985 Grand Final loss to Canterbury Bankstown by 6-7. During his three years with St George, Graeme had played sixty one First Grade premierships and four Panasonic Cup games.

NSWRL 1985 WINFIELD CUP GRAND FINAL					
Canterbury Bankstown <b>BULLDOGS</b>			7 – 6	St George <b>DRAGONS</b>	
TEAMS					
Michael POTTER	1	FB	1	Glenn BURGESS	
Matthew CALLINAN	2	W	2	Denis KINCHELA	
Peter MORTIMER	3	C	3	Michael BEATTIE	
Chris MORTIMER	4	C	4	Michael O'CONNOR	
Andrew FARRAR	5	W	5	Steve MORRIS	
Michael HAGAN	14	FE	6	Steve LINNANE	
Steve MORTIMER (c)	7	HB	7	Perry HADDOCK	
Paul LANGMACK	8	L	8	Graeme O'GRADY	
Steve FOLKES	9	2R	9	Graeme WYNN	
Brian BATTESE	10	2R	10	Billy NOKE	
Peter KELLY	11	FR	11	Craig YOUNG (c)	
Billy JOHNSTONE	12	HK	12	Phil RITCHIE	
Peter TUNKS	13	FR	13	Pat JARVIS	
David GILLESPIE	15	B	23	Steve FUNNELL	
Mark BUGDEN	17	B	38	Chris GUIDER	
Greg MULLANE	16	B	17	Chris JOHNS	
		B	20	Alan NEIL	
Warren RYAN		HC		Roy MASTERS	

Graeme O'Grady's last game in Sydney Rugby League – 1985 Grand Final

At the age of thirty two, Graeme realised that his time at the top level of Sydney football had come to an end. He was also looking at his longer term options with a likely move to the NSW north coast.

The announcement of his impending retirement from Sydney football attracted offers from Country rugby league clubs, one of which was Cudgen on the far north coast. He connected with the local community and with employment available in the electricity industry, his immediate future was set for the next few years.

Graeme captain-coached the Cudgen Rugby League team from 1986 until 1990, taking out premierships in the Group 18 competition in 1986 and 1988. He was selected to play for Country Firsts in a Panasonic Cup match in 1986 and then as captain of the Northern Division team that played against a touring New Zealand team in 1987.

In 1991 he moved across to the north coast town of Lismore where he played and coached the South Lismore Rugby League team. He played his last game in 1993 at the age of forty. David Krause, writing in the Coffs Harbour Advocate in 2005 was commenting on some of the best rugby league players from the northern region from his time and noted;

*"Hardest Hitter: Graham O'Grady, former Sydney star who played with South Lismore in early 90s. I only ran at him once. Let's say I learned my lesson."*

Graeme returned to Cudgen and took up an interest in the Cudgen junior rugby league club. When he first became involved, the Cudgen club had around seventy players whereas today their numbers have increased to more than three hundred.

He was involved from the grass roots up with the building of a canteen and other facilities at Cudgen's home ground to support the young players and create a family friendly environment. Graeme was the President of the Cudgen Junior Rugby League from 1995 until 2018.

In 2010, Graeme representing the Cudgen juniors joined with the local Police Force and schools to take a proactive approach to tackle rising youth violence and crime in the area. At the time there was a number of break-ins and theft from local businesses and there was an outside element that was encouraging the involvement of local youth.

He explained that the process was to work with players aged 13 to 16 and have them understand that local businesses that were affected by theft and damage were the same ones that were supporting rugby league in the area so in the end those perpetrating the crimes would only be hurting their club, their mates and themselves. Graeme said that within eight to nine months, youth crime was no longer a problem.



Graeme O'Grady with Cudgen Juniors and Local Police working together

Graeme was recognised for his contribution to the Cudgen Junior Rugby League Club and made a life member of the Tweed Byron Group 18 Junior Rugby League.



There have been three generations of the O'Grady family involved with the Cudgen club. Graeme's son Mark went to Sydney after leaving school and had a successful career playing for the Wentworthville Magpies Rugby League Club. In a heading that would be familiar to Graeme, the Sydney Morning Herald had the following banner in its publication on 6 October 2008;

## **“Magpies down Jets in Marathon Match”**

It was Wentworthville Magpies that downed the Newtown Jets in the 2008 Grand Final of the NSW Cup. The match made headlines as the scores were locked at 8-8 from the 49th minute, after which the two sides traded missed one-pointers.

It took 13 missed field goals and a record-equalling 104 minutes, but Wentworthville finally scored the premiership-winning try in golden point extra time to defeat Newtown 12-8. The marathon game equalled the longest-ever rugby league match, a Super League Tri-Series game between NSW and Queensland in 1997.

Wentworthville five-eighth Mark O'Grady, the son of former Newtown grand finalist Graeme, missed five field goal shots himself before laying on the grubber for winger Iwi Hauraki to score the matchwinner. An exhausted O'Grady told reporters; "My legs were gone. Every time I'd kick the ball I'd cramp up so I didn't really want it but no-one else was stepping up so I had to have a go."

Mark clearly inherited the determination of his father on the football field!

Mark O'Grady returned to Cudgen and played with the A Grade team from 2012 to 2022. He also coached the Cudgen A Grade team in 2018 and 2019. Mark now coaches the Cudgen juniors including the third generation of the O'Grady family, Graeme's grandson who played with the under elevens in 2024.

Graeme also took an interest in the Cudgen senior team and was a Board Member of the Cudgen Leagues Club up 1996 until 2020.

These days he is enjoying the quiet life at Cudgen but enjoys catching up with former team mates when he can.



Mini Reunion of Pratten Park Magpies held at the Dolphins Hotel, Tweed Heads  
L to R: Geoff Foster, Don Moseley, Pat Hundy, Graeme O'Grady, John Purcell and Greg Hodge