



[melbournestorm.com.au](http://melbournestorm.com.au)  
P. 1300 786 767



**Paul Munnings**  
PR & Communications Manager  
[pmunnings@melbournestorm.com.au](mailto:pmunnings@melbournestorm.com.au)

# Media Release

September, 1 2021

## Storm and Coles to help First Nations players reach the NRL

Coles has extended its first nations pathways program and support of indigenous aspiring athletes, partnering with the Melbourne Storm to help young Indigenous rugby league players realise their dreams of becoming an NRL player in the future.

The three-year partnership builds on Coles' indigenous programs and includes support for education, employment and health and wellbeing outcomes.

Storm CEO Justin Rodski said the Storm First Nations Pathway Program would provide emerging indigenous talent with the unique opportunity to have a full immersive experience at the club, focusing on professional and personal development, mentoring, elite training and preparation.

The partnership was officially launched at Melbourne Storm training by two of Melbourne's current day Indigenous stars, Josh Addo-Carr and Nicho Hynes, and head coach Craig Bellamy who officially announced the program's first participants in front of the playing group.

The inaugural indigenous talent identified to be selected for the program are Ammaron Gudgeon, a 19-year-old Noongar man, who has been playing for the CQ Capras in Rockhampton; and Seamus King-Smith, a 19-year-old Kulkalgal man from the Northern Pride, based in Cairns.

They will be part of Storm's 2022 NRL pre-season and the annual Geelong camp, giving them the opportunity to work with Bellamy and his coaching staff and alongside the NRL squad.

"We're very excited and proud to be launching this program and partnership with Coles over an initial three-year period," Storm CEO Justin Rodski said.

"Coles, like our organisation, is genuine and committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities right across Australia," he said.

"By creating a First Nations talent pathway, and utilising the resources we have here at Storm, we hope more Indigenous kids will have NRL careers and hopefully many will be wearing our famous purple jersey.





[melbournestorm.com.au](http://melbournestorm.com.au)  
P. 1300 786 767



**Paul Munnings**  
PR & Communications Manager  
[pmunnings@melbournestorm.com.au](mailto:pmunnings@melbournestorm.com.au)

## Media Release

“This is a first for our club and is part of a broad range of initiatives and programs we will be focusing on into the future, including starting our new health-focussed partnership with Deadly Choices which we announced earlier this week.

“The partnership with Coles is ground-breaking and reflects both organisations’ investment into providing mentoring and professional development opportunities for young talent in indigenous communities and providing a worthwhile immersion experience in Melbourne to support their footballing dreams.

“Our recruitment and development staff will identify those players with potential and then they will get an opportunity to be immersed in our club, learning and developing their skills, on and off the field, in an elite environment.”

With the support of Coles, the Storm First Nations Pathway Program will assist with relocation, cultural and wellbeing support, training, work experience, mentoring, education and they will learn from some of the best players and coaches in the league.”

The program participants will be involved in all training sessions, team meetings and club events, including the annual pre-season camp.

“Coles is excited to partner on this program to inspire and support young Indigenous footballers to help realise their dreams of playing NRL,” Coles Chief Marketing Officer Lisa Ronson said.

“Supporting Indigenous communities is something we are passionate about at Coles. We have a proud history of taking action and forming strong relationships with the Indigenous community, and that commitment extends to working better together to ensure that we continue to grow our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team member representation in our stores and in trade and management roles, and to support Indigenous suppliers.” she said.

The Storm First Nations Pathway Program aligns with the Coles Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander plan established in 2010 and launched in 2011 to drive Indigenous employment, supply chain and partnerships.

Coles Group is one of the largest private sector employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia with 4% of current team members identifying as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The aim is to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team member representation to 5% of the company’s total workforce and 3% of trade and leadership roles by 2023.





[melbournestorm.com.au](http://melbournestorm.com.au)  
P. 1300 786 767



**Paul Munnings**  
PR & Communications Manager  
[pmunnings@melbournestorm.com.au](mailto:pmunnings@melbournestorm.com.au)

# Media Release

## Player profiles

### **Ammaron Gudgeon**

Ammaron is 19 this year and grew up in both Western Australia and New Zealand. He moved to Rockhampton almost two years ago and trialled for the Central Queensland Capras 2020 Mal Meninga Cup team (under-18s). He wasn't selected in the squad but went away and trained hard over the course of the interrupted 2020 season. With his hard work and perseverance, he was selected in the Capras 2021 Hastings Deering Colts (under-21s) squad and has become one of the standout fullbacks of the competition. He currently lives with teammates in Rockhampton and works in the Disability Support industry

### **Seamus King-Smith**

Seamus is 19 in 2021 and grew up in the Far-North-Queensland town of Weipa. He boarded at Ipswich Grammar School for his high school years where he played rugby union and captained the First XV team in the elite GPS tournament. Upon finishing school, he started an apprenticeship in Cairns and now plays five-eighth for the Northern Pride Hastings Deering Colts (under 21s) team. He is a strong runner of the football and has excellent vision.

- Ends -

Media contact: Paul Munnings 0427 224394

**RedZed™**



**TRADIE**

