



**Sharon Grierson MP  
Federal Member for Newcastle  
Members Statement**

**ANDREW JOHNS  
9 May 2007**

**Ms GRIERSON** (Newcastle) (9.42 am)—On behalf of tens of thousands of Novocastrians, I pay tribute in the House to Newcastle's very own sporting hero and favourite Knight, Andrew Johns. For his fans, his colleagues, his family and friends, 10 April, the day he announced his retirement from the game, was one of great sadness but also of great relief. There is nothing quite like 25,000 people holding their breath when Joey goes down in a game, so I suppose the relief was about him not ever compromising his future life through crippling injury.

Joey's record in Rugby League is exceptional—15 years at the elite level; three Dally M awards; two golden boots; 23 State of Origin games for New South Wales; 21 tests, including two World Cups and a Kangaroo tour; a 10-year representative career, including captaining New South Wales and Australia; Rugby League's all-time highest points scorer; second highest goal scorer; and the most capped player for the Newcastle Knights, with 249 first-grade games.

Joey deserves a tangible legacy. After leading the Knights to a heroic grand final victory in 2001, Andrew Johns, trophy in hand, told fans and the Prime Minister: 'I think you deserve a new stadium.' He was right. Andrew Johns was part of a delegation to this place in 2002, asking the federal government for funding for our stadium. Regrettably, however, that proposal for stadium funding has sat idle with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for five years. In that time, the state Labor government has spent \$34 million to build a new eastern stand, now named the Andrew Johns Stand in his honour. In March, the state government pledged a further \$30 million for the western stand, if only the feds would put in. I have tabled petitions from 10,000 people from right around the Hunter supporting the upgrade. But as budgets come and budgets go, this government has given nothing and totally ignored the call of 10,000 voters.

Bob Baldwin, the member for Paterson, is the only member in the Hunter still sitting on the sideline, and his government cannot even come onto the park.

In last night's budget, yes, we saw the tick-off for \$25 million for Adelaide Oval and \$25 million for the Sydney Cricket Ground, but nothing for Newcastle. We have also seen similar funding in the past—St George's Kogarah Oval, \$8 million; Penrith stadium, \$10 million; Toyota Park, \$9 million; Whitten Oval, \$8 million; but nothing for Newcastle. Just what kind of clout does the member for Paterson actually have when he lets \$85 million in sports stadium funding pass by our region?

When Andrew Johns retired, Kevin Rudd noted that whenever Joey took the field he "delivered in spades". It is very important that the Prime Minister now delivers in spades to the people of Newcastle and it is very important that our very own legend—we hope the next immortal in the game of Rugby League—will be recognised in a very tangible way with the western grandstand being completed with much deserved federal money. Andrew Johns, you will always have our support and our hopes for your future in our hearts. *(Time expired)*