

ITEM 10: LMM 27/04/2021 - Bob Palmer Oval – Tuxford Park, Shortland

MOTION

That City of Newcastle:

1. Notes that on 12 December 2020, Mr Robert 'Bob' Palmer was tragically killed in his beloved suburb of Shortland leading to expressions of grief from the local community ;
2. Notes that the Shortland Devils Rugby League Football Club Committee, Club Members, the local Shortland community, and Bob's family have requested that Tuxford Oval Number 1 at Tuxford Park be renamed the Bob Palmer Oval, to honor Bob's lifelong commitment to the Shortland Community, and to the Shortland Devils RLFC;
3. Recognises Mr Palmer's incredible contribution to Shortland, the Shortland Devils RLFC and to Rugby League, and re-names Tuxford Oval Number 1 as the Bob Palmer Oval.
4. Works with the Shortland Devils RLFC, Mr Palmer's family and the community to officially dedicate the Bob Palmer Oval, through the installation of a memorial to Mr Palmer and appropriate naming signage at Tuxford Park, Shortland.



BACKGROUND:

Shortland locals gather to pay tribute to Bob Palmer

If ever there was a man who lived for his community it was Bob Palmer.

From enjoying a beer with his mates to investing thousands of hours with his beloved Shortland Devils, the 54-year-old left an indelible mark on those who knew and loved him.

His alleged unprovoked stabbing murder while he was walking his daughter's dog on Saturday evening left the tight-knit western Newcastle community shaken to its core.

"I've known him since high school. I just wanted to bring him some flowers," Suzanne Woolfrey said after laying flowers at a memorial on the corner of Sandgate Road and Bardia Street on Sunday afternoon.

"He was very loved by everyone in Shortland."

Another school friend Gail Camps said she and many others were struggling to come to terms with Mr Palmer's death.

"Everyone is in shock, she said.

"He was just a lovely fellow.

There was nothing he wouldn't do to help someone."

Even those who only knew him to say hello to recognised his warmth and generosity.

"I didn't know him that well but he always said hello when he saw me and had a smile. He was a true gentleman," Wendy Heys said.

Many of those who laid tributes were members of the Shortland Rugby league football club, a lifelong passion for Mr Palmer.

"Bobby was Shorty through and through, from playing for the club in his younger days, his service continued right up until this year where he regularly marked the lines at Tuxford Park, and was known to mow the field by push mower after the recent theft of the club ride on," a Facebook tribute from the Shortland Devils read.

They were sentiments shared by dozens of people who expressed their grief via social media.

"Heaven has gained an angel. He was a beautiful man and it is such a tragedy that he is gone too soon. Thinking of all Bobby's family, friends and the Shorty community today with great sadness," Cecelia Collier wrote.



The community memorial created following Mr Palmer's death.



Mr Palmer was looking forward to spending Christmas with his son and daughter.

He was walking his daughter's dog at about 8pm when he encountered 24-year-old Zack Mavin who had allegedly just attempted to rob the 7-11 service station on Sandgate Road with a knife and chemical agent.

Police allege he was attempting to rob the nearby Metro service station when he became involved in an altercation with Mr Palmer.

Police opposed bail on the basis of Mavin's admissions following his arrest, CCTV footage and witness statements.

"There doesn't appear to be anything to explain his behaviour; it was entirely unprovoked," the police prosecutor said.

Eulogy delivered by Bob's sisters

Robert Edward Palmer (Bob / Bobby) was born on the 31st March 1966. 3rd child for Dorothy and Ted Palmer. He was named after Mum's brother Robert and our beautiful Dad. He will be happy to know that we found out last week that each time Mum was pregnant, they were hoping for a boy but kept getting girls.

Robert grew up in Blanch Street Shortland surrounded by great families. He attended Shortland Primary School and then Jesmond High. Our neighbour, Mrs Wilson remembers one day when all the kids were in her back yard playing cricket when Robert came to the door. Robert said ever so calmly "Mrs Wilson, Paul (Mullins) is strangling Peter". She said before she could get there he calmly walked over and said Paul stop doing that to Peter and it finished.

Bob was 14 when we moved to Marsden Street and he became great mates with our neighbour Neil Flannery. Neil has been doing it tough this year and it really rocked Bob, so he made sure that on his big adventure, he stopped in to visit Neil on the way home.

Bob and Janelle were the athletic members of the family and attended Wallsend Athletics. Like many in the Shortland Community he got involved in most activities on offer and was a proud member of the Shortland Scouts group and also played cricket.

He started playing footy at 6 with the Shortland Devils. Mum taught him to tackle in the backyard. He was a great footy player and we were his biggest fans. I remember one day Shorty was playing the Tigers in a final and something happened on the field to Bob, and a man sitting behind Mum, who was going for the Tigers yelled out a negative comment about Bob, Mum turned around to him and said "Careful mate that's my boy!" That man later changed sides and came to Shorty and became friends with Bob and they laughed about it.

With Shortland unable to field a team in his early teen years he ventured over to Waratah and Wests to play first grade but his heart lied with the Shortland Devils and he returned to play with his mates in U18's.

The family even went to one senior grandfinal to watch Shorty, where although we were going for Shorty we were mainly there to support the water boy on the sideline, as we were so proud of him and knew how much the club and team meant. Not sure too many other water boys have that many supporters although a couple of weeks ago, he was also proud to go and watch the Wallabies and cheer on their water boy/(assistant coach) who happens to be our cousin. It

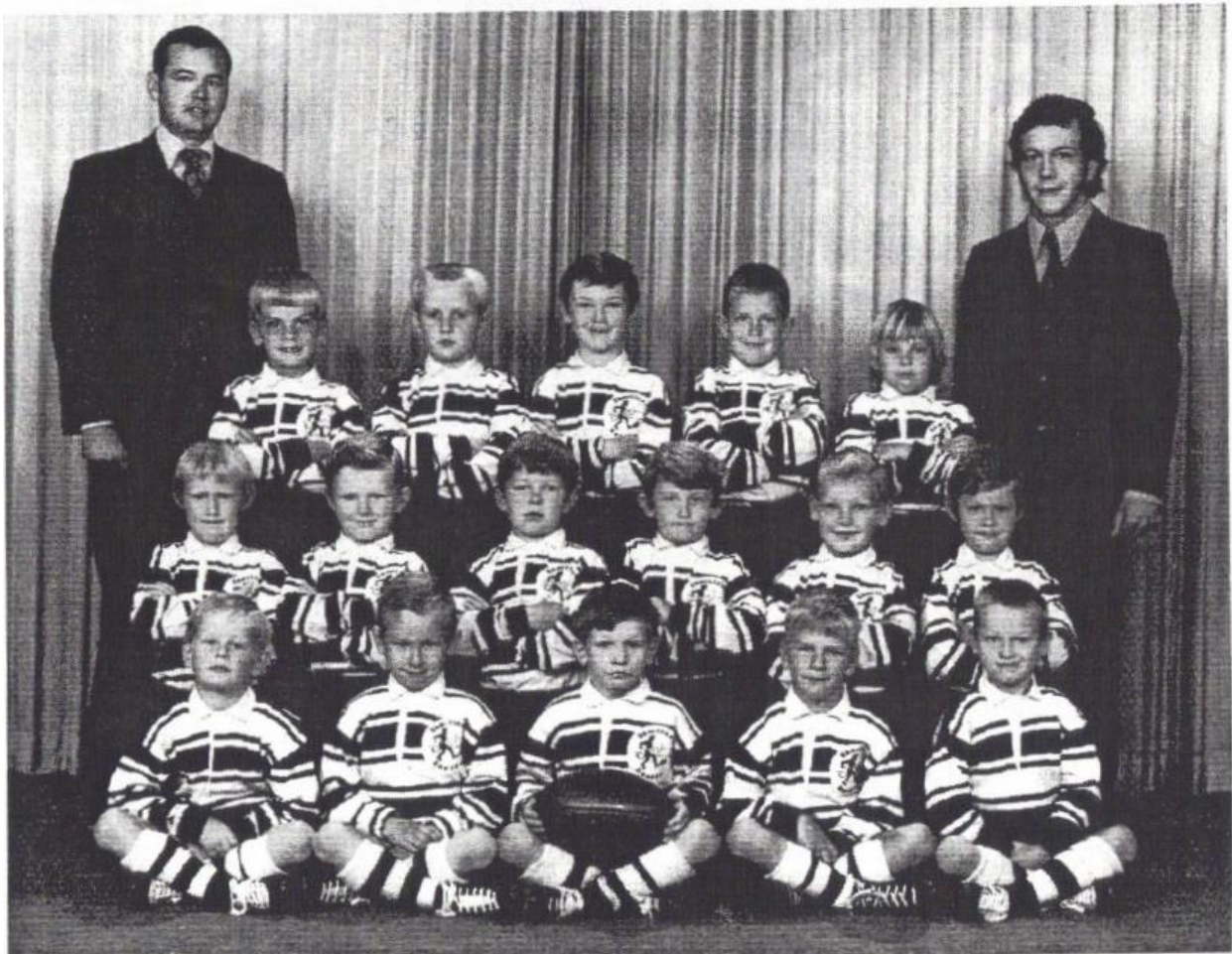
must run in the family. Janelle said he was so happy that night. I think he secretly hoped he'd get a call up.

JOHN AND PHILLS BOYS. U/7S 1972

Manager John Lundy

Coach Phill Butler

Back Tony Heien-D.Northam-Tony Pickin-Paul
Tunningley-D.Hogan.
Center Rodney Castles-M.Fullick-David Kaiser-
Neil Lindus-Robert Palmer-Troy Lundy.
Front Paul Nielson-P.Oliveira -Gary Onslow
Scott Winegardner-Ken Cornish.



In recent years he had started playing lawn bowls at the Waterboard Bowling Club. He loved the challenge of being in a competitive sport as well as the social aspect of talking to people.

When he was young, for pocket money Dad and Bob would mow lawns and he worked at the Sandgate Fruit Markets with many of his mates.

He left school after Year 10 and started a boilermaker apprenticeship at ComSteel, where Dad worked. After he finished his apprenticeship, he headed off to Casino to play footy and worked at the Meat Works with Rodney Sharp. He then followed his girlfriend at the time to Brisbane and worked with Russell Webster and others at the World Expo in 1988. From here he moved to Sunshine Coast with Rocka and Adrian Cater.

He then moved back to his beloved Shortland and worked for Reg Flannery constructions, then Forgacs and lastly at Transarle at Rutherford where he injured his back in 2000.

In the early 90's He experienced a tragic loss of his own when his girlfriend Tracey Plain lost her life in an Asthma attack. He was devastated for some time.

He later met Camila and they were both as proud as punch when Trent arrived followed by Mollie. He adored them both, they were his world. Camila and Bob's relationship ended but they must both take credit for raising two beautiful Independent, kind and hard working kids. I know he was so proud with them both joining the Defence Force and it also gave him an opportunity to explore Australia.

When we were kids, our annual holiday was caravanning at Tuncurry for four weeks. His best buddy at Tuncurry was Paul 'Gus' Bratfield and Mum and Dad would often drop Bob up to his family's property at Stroud Rd for holidays. Other holidays he enjoyed heading to Uncle Ronny's at Cooplacaripa where he learnt to ride calves and brand cattle. He also spent time with our family at Bulahdelah and accompanied Uncle Don in his cattle trucks.

Bob loved to fish. When on our annual Tuncurry family holiday he would go outside fishing with a fellow camper Leo. Dad tried to go too but he would get seasick. In recent years he and Mollie would spend some time with my family, on our caravan holidays, fishing with John. Their last fishing trip was 4 weeks ago and Bob had a great day. Catching his personal best flathead of 65 cm, and winning the days fishing comp. Must've been the new Iron Jack fishing shirt that brought him luck.

During his teenage years he was always bringing people to Mum's. Sometimes to ride the calf down the back which claimed a few victims or to sleep after a big night out. One Friday night his mate Darren Sparks got home to Bob's bed but Bob didn't. All of us girls worked on Saturday's, so we would be up, hair dryers blaring in the bathroom next to his room. That morning when we realised it wasn't Bob in the bed, we headed out to the back bathroom to do our hair, so we didn't wake Darren. When Bob heard of this he went crook "You never do that for me. I have to sleep through the noise". Never once prior, had he complained to us that it annoyed him.

Helen vividly remembers two incidents with Bob. The first one, Helen was returning home in a car with a few girlfriends from a doe show, as they drove around the butcher shop corner she noticed a person laying in the garden – "stop the car I need to check if that's my brother", yep it was so she picked him up and took him home. The other was on Sandgate Rd, after a few beers, Bob decided to double Helen home on his push bike, after passing a couple of police cars, they drove into the driveway of the old BP servo and went head over heels , they got up and stumbled home together pushing the bike.

Bob never had to worry about anything, as us girls did the worrying for him:

I was his financial controller as Bob thought if he didn't open a bill or letter he didn't have to worry about it. If he needed anything he'd just call and I'd get it organised for him. I remember one Sunday morning when the kids were young and they were due to catch a flight that afternoon to the Gold Coast, that he called me 'Trish I have a massive tooth ache, can you get it sorted for me before our flight?'. So of course, I sourced a dentist that was open, got him in, fixed the tooth and he still made the flight. When I was organising his flight back to Townsville from Darwin on his first trip with Mollie, I said listen I can get you a direct flight to Townsville or you can go via Cairns and it will save \$150. He said take me via Cairns and I'll tick another place off I've been too.

Janelle was the paperwork girl and worked and fought together with him to get approval for the Disability Pension. He struggled for years with his injured back and leg to get support and was so incredibly happy the day it got approved. He rang her and they both shouted 'We did it, We did it'.

When he needed a car Helen the negotiator went with Bob and Barry Sharp in toe. He just wanted to buy the blue RAV4 that he saw. Well didn't he choose a great one. That car has just gone and gone and gone. As Janelle said last week, who would've thought that blue car would out last Bob.

Russell brought him into the 21st century during COVID, updating his phone so he could bet online. Apparently he was even getting on youtube to listen to songs and learnt all about WiFi.

This does not surprise me as he was a very intelligent man, he remembered important dates and excelled in Maths. Would always check his change and knew if he was ripped off. I think he just wanted his sisters, to do it all for him.

The only time we didn't organise things was when he went on his adventure this year to deliver Henry to Mollie in Katherine then back to visit Trent in Townsville.

We were so worried about him and concerned whether the blue car would make it, but in true Bob style he said "I'll be right, it's all about the challenge".

Well, as we know he did make it and had a fabulous roadtrip with Henry, an 8 week old Golden Retriever. To quote his text to Janelle when he arrived 'Me and car did it challenge achieved thanks'. Janelle replied – So awesome – Both you and your blue car are bloody legends! Nailed it. He was so proud of himself. He even learnt to take phone photos and message them to us.

Some nights on his trip he slept in an old one man tent of Trent's. He sent me a photo when he got back to Ballina of the tent with the message "I might be able to upgrade one day". I asked if he had a blow up mattress he said 'No I just put my doona on the ground and sleep on that'. That night it got windy so he used the car as a wind break and he tied the tent to it. That was Bob nothing fancy everything simple.

He did dream of one day selling up and buying a van and heading around Australia. But there was no way he was going to do that whilst our Mum was still with us. He wouldn't leave her. Bob and Trent saved her back on the 16th December 2010 and last Sunday night we were to celebrate Mum's "Not Dead Yet 10th anniversary. He was so concerned that he hadn't done the right thing keeping her alive and that she would not have the same quality of life but as we know they did a great job. Bob and Trent moved back to his home at Milne Street in January 2011.

Even after moving back to Milne St, he continued to take care of Mum, mowing her lawn and helping when he could in the garden, however his body would ache for days after but he couldn't say no. On Friday 11 December, I went to clean Mum's house before she got back from holidays. I pulled up to this beautiful front yard that he had freshly mowed. I sent him a message to say thank you Mum's house looks so nice. Inside in the kitchen, was the evidence he always left Mum to show that he had been there – his coffee cup and Granny drink cup. I left them there for her to see. When she got home the first thing she said to Nola when she walked in "Bob's been here".

U-10/S 1975. WAYNE AND FRANKS TEAM.

MANAGER
FRANK BLOCK.

COACH
WAYNE CORNISH

Back Row R.Schofield-B.Collins-K.Martin-R.Palmer
P.Tunningley-P.Campbell-P.Mullins.
Front Row J.Hempson-G.Onslow-K.Cornish-D.Block
P.Moate-C.Herden.



Bob would've done anything to still be working but what his injury did give him was time to take the trips with the kids and to build lasting relationships with his nieces and nephew.

'Janelle's girls, say Bob was the best uncle they could ask for. As he lived at Granny's they saw him every day after school and school holidays. Playing cricket with him in the front yard was a summer regular, and on Christmas Eve he would walk them around Shortland, sometimes for hours on end to keep them out of the house so Janelle could wrap presents and Granny could have peace to do the cooking. One year they even walked the old pipeline to Hexham. Another fond memory for the girls was him popping up at their Saturday netball games.

Helen's girls, Michaela and Mackenzie remember always seeing his smiling face as they pulled up to Granny's. Sitting in his chair with his coffee, smoke and paper on the front verandah ready to greet them. Also how he sat at the family table surrounded by females listening to all the gossip and when he had had enough, and needed some quiet time he would get up and head back out to the chair with a beer. He always had the best tan from Granny's verandah.

Like our father before him, he only spoke when he had something to say but listened to everything. Trent and Logan will need to carry the male flag in the family for him now.

But the most cherished memories for Janelle and Helen's families are the annual Forster summer holidays, when Bob, Trent and Mollie would join them for a week. The long beach days taking up the biggest front row family spot next to the flags, people watching and walking to get ice cream in the main street, these were the best times and they all loved him very much.

Bob became my son's babysitter after Mum's heart attack and would take care of him at mum's so she could still be involved. This continued into school holiday care and Bob would walk Logan to his park which Logan called "Bob's Park". Logan recalls being swooped by magpies, but they never went for Bob cause they knew him as he would talk to them on the Mum's verandah. He remembers Bob teaching him how to kick a goal and one day he got one from 30 metres out and he said Bob was so proud of him. He enjoyed their NRL banter about Logan's Bullfrogs and Bob's Roosters. "Bloody Bullfrogs he would say".

I was blessed to see him on that fateful Saturday night, just before 7pm, when he came out with his kebab. He looked so well and happy and had a grin from ear to ear. Bob said "I'm on my way home. Trent is arriving in an hour. I'm so happy to have both my kids at home with their dogs." He shook John and Logan's hand and I gave him a kiss, the first since the beginning of COVID. Forever grateful we saw Bob then and Trent arrived early to see his Dad.

Although we'll never make sense of what has happened, it seems fitting that he would take his final breath at Shortland across the road from Bob's pub as we knew it. The family thanks everyone that helped him that night and it gives us comfort that he was surrounded by beautiful people and he was not alone.

Our Father, Son, Brother, Uncle, Nephew, Cousin and mate was not perfect as none of us are, but we all loved him and were proud to call him ours. Bob was Bob nothing fancy but always had time for everyone and never a bad word to say.

Bob, we don't know why you've been taken so early but it gives us comfort to know that you are reunited with our Dad, Poppa and others that have gone before you. We know you will be looking down on us all full of pride especially your two amazing kids. We also need to let you

know that not only have you gone nationwide, but you have also gone Global and finally been recognised for the hero and top bloke that you are.

Love you, Cheers Bob.

Eulogy from Bob's School mates

For those of you who don't know, I have also known Bob since kindergarten.

After living in Shortland for the first 30 years of my life, I moved away 25 years ago.

If I was talking to a Shorty person, I was always keen to find out what was going on with the people I grew up with. When this conversation came around to discuss Bob, there seemed to be a recurring catch-call; "well, Bob being Bob, he did this or that". Now I'd like to share a few stories about Bob being Bob.

Bob was a prefect in 6th class. I'm sure he got all the girls' votes. An incident occurred and he had his prefect badge taken from him. Dot can't recall what happened, but insists that he got his badge back. Trish stuck up for Bob at the time, saying that he didn't do anything wrong. In their eyes, Bob could do no wrong.

Troy Lundy was telling a story about how when Bob was playing for Wests, he had a corked thigh. He came to see Troy's dad to use his heat lamp. Mr Lundy set Bob up and after 5 minutes, he asked Bob if he could feel the heat. Bob said, "not really", so they moved it closer. Bob stated, "Oh, I can feel it now", and Mr Lundy said, "that means its working". Bob couldn't play the next week because he had third degree burns.

As Venturers in the Shortland Scouts Group, Peter Wilson's dad, Bruce, was in the army. He took us to Singleton army barracks for the weekend for an introduction to army life. Over the course of the weekend, we got to do different activities. This is the one that Neil and Ross recall. We were on the static rifle range firing SLR's and the instructor came up to Neil and congratulated him on his great grouping on the target. Bob said, "that's my target". We then realised that Bob had been shooting at Neil's target, thinking it was his.

When we were around 16 years old, we would tell our parents that we were going into town for Thursday night shopping, which we did, but we would then catch the bus back to Shortland, get off at the church and crossover to slip in the back door of the pub. Being a Thursday night, DV8 were the resident band at the time. The place was rocking and we would hide out downstairs out the back. Older friends would go to the bar to get us beers. As we became more comfortable, we roamed the pub. One night we were celebrating Bob's 18th. The barmaid heard it was Bob's birthday, and she asked how old he was. He said, "I'm 18", and her jaw dropped.

Another time, Blandy, Bob and I went to the Gold Coast in Blandy's infamous Kombi. I was driving when we got to the Gold Coast on a Friday afternoon in the 4 o'clock traffic. I stalled the Kombi at the lights and with the car being hot, it wouldn't start. Typical Blandy kicked Bob and I out and told us to start pushing so he could clutch it. All the boys loved that party bus.

This is the Skipper Bob story. Our punting group had our end of year trip. We went house boating on the Myall Lake. We got 2 x 18-gallon kegs from Bulahdelah Pub delivered down to the house boat. The hire company had insisted that Oz, being the oldest, was the sole designated captain. We made our way down the river and others started having a go at steering the boat. Bob was

behind the wheel when we were approaching Leggs Camp right near the ferry crossing. We wanted to stop there, but Bob yelled out as he realised we were going to hit the telegraph pole channel marker. It snapped off and the people on the shore were gobsmacked. We didn't know what to do, so we kept moving further up the lake. Later that night, the gas on the keg started playing up and we couldn't pour beers. In the morning, we returned to Leggs Camp so we could call up Bulahdelah Pub on the public phone. We picked a spot to pull up at and as we got closer, there was the channel marker laying on the shoreline. Within 5 minutes, the Ranger came aboard and said, "righto fellas, who was driving?" Bob couldn't own up, so Oz had to take the wrap. He was supposedly going to be billed but it never eventuated.

Adrian remembers a Cruise to Nowhere on the Fairstar. The boys, with Bob included, had stopped at a pub and preloaded before boarding the boat. While boarding, they were a bit rowdy and the crew said they needed to calm down a bit. The group laughed and said, "you wouldn't lock us up". But they did, in the ship's lockup. They were locked up for a few hours before they left port and were let out after they sobered up some, when the boat set sail.

Last Christmas Day, Bob had a turn and ended up getting stents inserted. I knew of this at the time and was amazed when I saw him a week later, beer in hand, with Russ on New Year's Eve at the Mezz Bar seeing DV8. I asked him "what are you doing, Bob?". He replied, "it's just like getting your car serviced. I've had a grease and oil change. Now I'm good to go".

The last conversation I had with Bob, he came to say good night to our table at the pub. He said, "it's got to that time of the night where I feel like stripping off, so I best be leaving as they don't like me doing that here".

A lifetime ago, when I was talking to Janelle at Freedom Furniture, she was saying how they had a young guy working there. She was trying to make sure that she could look after him and she stated, "I would hope that somebody would look after our Bob in this position".

Last week I was messaging old friends, and quite a few of them referred to him as "our Bob". The penny dropped, and I realised that Bob had often been referred to as "our Bob".

The Palmer family is unique. They are loved by all for their kindness and friendly nature. As all of you will know, Dot and Ted have raised 4 lovely children. We are better for knowing them and having had them in our lives. I'm sure that this connection will continue for many of us.

I'm 100% confident that with Bob, our Bob, its once a mate, always a mate.

Rest in peace, our Bob.

Shortland Devils RLFC Bobby Palmer Memorial Day speech

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am Brock Johnson, President of the Shortland Devils Rugby League Football Club and on behalf of my fellow committee members, players, coaches, support staff, volunteer staff and myself, I would like to welcome you to Tuxford Park on what is a very special occasion for our club and the greater community.

I would like to extend a special welcome to the Palmer family, some of which have travelled quite a distance to be here today, and as always our love and thoughts remain with them all.

Robert "Bobby" Palmer was an extremely special member of our club, and also the greater Shortland Community.

Bobby was and shall remain one of the true legends of Shortland.

Bobby's involvement in our club extends back to the 70's when he first began playing junior footy for the Devils, and continued all the way through to his passing in many different capacities.

Bobby was passionate about our club, and donated countless hours to his beloved devils , marking lines, mowing the fields (sometimes by push mower), cooking bbq's, running water, coaching, time keeping, and too many other activities to mention.



Bob working at Tuxford Park 2010

• **SHORTLAND R.L.F.C.** •
- MINOR AND MAJOR PREMIERS - 1983. -



- Back Row: G. ONSLOW, T. HEIEN, A. CATER, D. SPARKES, D. DEATH. -
- Centre Row: A. TUNNINGLEY, K. CORNISH, R. PALMER, P. TUNNINGLEY, J. STEWART, C. LANG, T. CAMPS, R. TODD
- Front Row: C. BLAND, R. CASTLES, G. STEWART, D. BLOCK, T. LUNDY, A. SHEDDON, S. WINEGARDNER, P. LUCK

Therefore it is completely befitting and essential that we gather at the home of Shortland Rugby League to celebrate Bobby, and pay tribute to the great man.

We have a number of ways in which we as a club are wanting to say thank you to Bobby, and we will announce these now.

First and foremost, mens jersey # 11 which I am told Bobby played the majority of his footy in will be retired for the 2021 season in tribute to Bobby.



The 1983 U18s Minor and Major Premiers reunion, members of the team remain close friends to this day.

Secondly, each year, the club awards a member of our club an award for their efforts off the field to recognise their service to the club. This award is called the Clubperson of the year award. As I've learnt more and more about Bobby and his involvement in the club, it has become my firm belief that you could replace the definition of Clubperson in the dictionary with a picture of Bobby, and this would provide a better description of what it means to be a true clubman.

Therefore going forward, the Shortland Devils Clubperson of the year award will now be known as the *Bobby Palmer Clubperson of the Year Award*.

When we first lost Bobby, obviously it was quite a shock, and the club had a lot of people contacting it, and we actually had a member of the media contact us with an image of Bobby which made this next recognition an easy decision.

It was a picture of bobby, shovel in hand, working on the new sheds as they were being built. It is quite fitting that we now dedicate our playing sheds to the man who helped build them, and spent so much time here ensuring that our facilities we ready for our men and ladies to play on a weekend.

So we are pleased to reveal a plaque, which will be placed into the home sheds dedicating them to Bobby Palmer, once a devil, always a devil.

I'd now like to call on Dean Bosnich from the National Rugby League to say a few words also.

To close our ceremony today, I'd like to call on the Palmer family, to come forward onto the field, as we have 11 Shortland coloured balloons, to represent Bobby's playing number, which they can release together, which will be immediately followed by a minutes applause for the great man, Bobby Palmer.