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THE SPORT OF BASKETBALL IS "ALIVE AND WELL" IN NSW COMMUNITIES

In recent times, there seems to be a focus in the media on the fact that basketball is seen as a "sport with problems". Some have even gone as far as to suggest that basketball is "dying".

Well, nothing could be further from the truth.

Nobody in basketball would deny that there have been problems with the National Basketball League (NBL) for some time now. However, basketball as a sport and the NBL itself has faced up to these issues and is working together to find a solution. It may be a long road, it may not be an easy road, but basketball will get there, because its community base is still "alive and well".

In the current Women's National Basketball League (WNBL), NSW still has the successful Sydney University Flames Club performing extremely well with a team containing many NSW born and developed players and coaches and in the men's "new NBL", NSW will be represented by the Wollongong Hawks, one of the few surviving foundation clubs of the NBL.

There is some widely held consensus on the fact that there are really only two "world sports" that are almost universally played all over the world. They are basketball and football (soccer). Therefore, the intensity and quality of competition at international level is incredibly high in both these sports. At an international level, the Australian Senior, Junior, Wheelchair and PWID men's and women's national basketball teams continue to excel.

It is clearly acknowledged in the international basketball fraternity that Australia as a nation performs way, way above its size and resources in the sport of basketball. The Australian junior basketball development system also has great international respect. The highly respected international players and coaches that make up our national teams came from the Australian basketball community. Among them are players and coaches that come from the NSW basketball community. For the basketball community to consistently produce players and coaches of this caliber is no small achievement.

BNSW CEO Daniel Martinez congratulates all those involved in basketball in this state. "I am always impressed by the resilience and tenacity of the basketball community," said Martinez.

"Our local associations and our local individual members have recently had to literally overcome hell and high water to continue to deliver the sport that they love so much in their local communities," Martinez added. "It is this type of character shown by basketballers at all levels that will ensure a successful future for the sport in New South Wales and Australia."

At a community level, basketball in NSW is still strong. After showing slow, steady growth for the last 5 or 6 years, the number of registered players in NSW playing at Basketball NSW affiliated associations is holding in the face of the worst recession most of our nation's population has ever seen. Compared to the same time last year, registered membership this year is ahead of predictions at the moment.

Community involvement in basketball helps to keep Australian healthier. It helps the fight against childhood obesity through healthy activity. It increases the sense of community from big cities to little country towns. It teaches teamwork, respect for others, respect for community facilities, leadership, striving for improvement, pride in your personal effort, reward for effort and self-respect. It helps to bring communities together, like all sports do. Playing basketball is good for you, for your family and for your community.

Times have been tough in country NSW for a long time now. Coming out of the longest drought in living memory into floods and financial recessions has been a very difficult experience for our country basketball communities. But out there they are tough. They work hard and play basketball hard and as always, they are bouncing back.

Numbers of teams competing in the traditional NSW Country Tournament over the recent Queen's Birthday long weekend were excellent. After being subdued for the last few years, numbers of BNSW registered members in NSW country associations are also showing encouraging signs of growth again in 2009.

The number of teams in Basketball NSW junior representative competitions is also holding steady whilst those in many sports are declining. At present there are 533 Junior teams playing in Basketball NSW representative leagues across the state, representing their local Associations and districts. From all these teams, we will emerge with regional league championship winners for each league age division and thence on to State Champions in each age division.

School basketball is also thriving in NSW, particularly in the private school sector. The schools are committing more quality resources to their basketball programs and their competitions are growing in size and quality. This is a very

encouraging sign and bodes well for the future strength of the game. The schools are to be congratulated on their commitment to the sport and Basketball NSW applauds them for the support they give to basketball.

So there are good news stories in the basketball world. In fact, there are far more "good news" stories than there are "bad news" stories and Basketball NSW encourages everyone in the community to focus on the good things.

Play hard, play often, enjoy basketball with your family and friends. Just enjoy your basketball full stop.

Basketball is alive and well in NSW!

For more information please contact:

Andrew Tilley

Marketing & Communications Manager

Basketball New South Wales

T: 8765 8555

E: andrew_tilley@nswbasketball.net.au

