

Dragons Abreast Sydney

Sydney Coordinator – Cynthia Kuiper
PO Box 133, Pyrmont NSW 2009
Ph: 9449 6855
Email: cynthiagkuiper@yahoo.com



Don't Forget!

Your DA Membership Renewal is now due.
If you need a Membership Renewal Form
contact Muriel Buckeridge on 0403 504 948
or email buckeridgem@yahoo.com

Drought-Breaking Flab

Hmmmm! Note to self: Must keep repeating... "Really am happy drought has broken! Really am happy drought etc..." Since Sydney's big storms, and then more rainy days and some high wind days, plus a few when we didn't have enough paddlers to go out and then I missed two paddles with a cold, then more high wind ... gasp!! It's howwww long since I last paddled? Aarrgggh!! Well, so much for trying to maintain a shred of last summer's fitness!

The winter months are always challenging months for this newsletter as we are generally bereft of paddling news. Still, it gives me more time to reflect and marvel anew at how dramatically things have improved for breast cancer patients since the days when I worked in hospitals over 30 years ago. There's something we often forget when we view our own situation today – how dramatically different it would have been if we'd been diagnosed back then.

People always talk about the five year survival rate after breast cancer but rarely mention any stats after that – so I dug up a few. Of the 39 girls who replied to my query about their date of diagnosis, 20 of them have passed the five year mark already. Pam Telfer wins gold in the survivor stakes at 26 years out! Lucky Pam, you might say, but I say she had a horror run in the dark ages of BC treatment and we should appreciate how truly blessed we are that things have changed so much for us now. Awareness has increased dramatically in the public arena and in the medical profes-

sion, while treatments and management have improved out of sight too.

Pam was reluctant to write her story because she's absolutely not one to dwell on her breast cancer or on the past, but I pleaded with her to do it in some detail and I think you'll find her story amazing. Here it is in her words:

On 21st July this year it will be the 26th anniversary of my diagnosis of breast cancer. I was 34 years old and had two children aged nine and three. A somewhat bizarre set of circumstances led up to this diagnosis. Nine months before I had finally decided to have a lump in my breast checked out by a doctor. It had been there for a little while but was now actually visible. I decided that instead of going to my GP I would have it checked by my obstetrician. He examined it and explained to me that every lump or bump was not necessarily cancer and not to be too worried about it – "some women can be a bit paranoid about this sort of thing". He even suggested that it was a prominent rib or breastbone! So, feeling very relieved with this expert advice, I went home and waited another nine months before going to him again because this "prominent rib or breastbone" was actually growing bigger. Again, he sighed and said I was being a bit paranoid but to set my mind at rest he would refer me to a surgeon who would do a biopsy – "but there's no hurry – it's not urgent".

A week later I was seeing the surgeon who said he would book me into hospital the following Wednesday and do the biopsy, then added he would have it tested straight away and if it was found to be malignant he would



Pam Telfer, our Star Survivor

immediately do a mastectomy. At this I was horrified – No! No! I didn't want that – I wanted to be aware of what was going on and make a decision myself, not just go under an anaesthetic not knowing if I was going to wake up with a breast missing! At that he

Continued from page 1

grudgingly said, "Well, I was going to the farm this weekend but I suppose I could come in on the Friday and remove the breast".

Well, I high-tailed it out of there and got a referral to the Breast Clinic in the city where I had my first mammogram. There I was given the news that indeed it did look like breast cancer and I should see a surgeon immediately. I went to a surgeon in Macquarie Street who did a biopsy on one Monday and then I came back and had the mastectomy on the following Monday – 28th July, 1981.

It was handled almost like going in and having my appendix removed – a few days in hospital and then home to get on with my life. My surgeon advised that he didn't think chemotherapy or radiotherapy would be needed and he would see me in six months. No such thing as counselling or treatment plans in those days!

Less than a year later I had another tumour in exactly the same place. The surgeon who had performed the mastectomy was overseas so I saw his off-sider who removed the lump and suggested I see an oncologist. The oncologist was horrified to find that the tumour had not been sent to pathology and so he had no idea the exact nature of it. The treatment therefore was a bit hit and miss – I was put on Tamoxifen (I believe I must have been one of the guinea-pigs for this as no-one had ever heard of it back then).

At that stage I was having eight-weekly blood tests and chest x-rays, which went on for many years. The tumour returned, again in the same place, but for some reason it was decided to "just keep an eye on it" i.e. measure it with a ruler at each check-up. In 1987 I had some radiotherapy to try and get rid of it. It shrunk the tumour but it was still there and so in 1991 they did some major surgery removing a rib and a large chunk of my chest.

But I survived! I didn't feel deprived by not having counselling or back-up support because it just didn't exist – or if it did, nobody bothered mentioning it to me. What I did find, though, was that it shattered my confidence in any aspect of my health. For a while there, every little symptom of any kind had me convinced that this was the end! Thankfully this feeling didn't last. However the one thing that used to really drive me mad was women who said "Oh, I know exactly how you feel – I had a lump in my breast, but luckily it turned out to be benign"!!

If there was one thing I would have loved back then it would have been to have a group like Dragons Abreast to join and enjoy the fun, laughter and confidence that we take for granted today. Go girls!

Pam Telfer

We Need YOU – changes afoot!

Another year stronger and what a lot of fun we've all had doing that! Once every year, at the AGM, it's time for you to get an update on the administration of the club and to elect your new office bearers for the coming year. Well, of course, you can get news what the committee is up to any time by checking the minutes of the meetings on the group site, but if you get yourself elected and become part of what makes the club tick it's even more exciting than just being a paddling member. Keep that in mind.



Wilma has already sent you the notices for the AGM and you will also see that we want to change the constitution. That takes a huge majority of the membership to vote to make it happen, so we need EVERYBODY present to vote (or to have your proxy so your vote is still counted – proxy forms were sent out too).

I've been Coordinator now for three years and I truly believe it is unhealthy for a club not to have turnover in its management, so I believe a clause should be inserted in the constitution to restrict Coordinators to 3 years in office. That's long enough to really get on top of the role, but hopefully not so long as to wear out one's welcome. Without your attendance at the meeting, or your proxy, this change may not be adopted and that would be a shame.

The meeting will be held right after the paddle on Saturday 4th August. Because there are so many of us now and we can't guarantee the weather will be good enough to sit outside at the café, Margaret Cantwell has kindly arranged for us to be able to hold the meeting at Sydney Secondary College (across the bay from the Fish Market and right next to that lovely boathouse where the rowers launch their boats – we just walk around the end of the bay to the opposite side). So we don't all collapse with caffeine withdrawal please bring whatever you want to drink and some nibbles to share (plus a garbage bag or two so we can leave the classroom spotless). Wilma will be sending out more details on the email.



Newly minted coaches – Vicki McLean, Robin Shoebridge and Sue McClelland.

Three New Coaches

To complement their existing skills as sweeps, Robin Shoebridge, Vicki McLean and Sue McClelland attended the recent DBNSW coaches course. This is great for the club because it is a huge help to us all when the sweep can also coach the boat. We believe having our sweeps do this course really rounds out their training as sweeps. It's taken

time and dedication, but the club can now be justifiably proud of having eight fully accredited sweeps (which shares the sweeping load – because paddling's what we're really there for) who can also coach. This is quite an achievement when you consider that up until a couple of years ago we relied on the goodwill of people from other clubs like Zeus and Akal to sweep for us and Mel to coach us.

The 07 Tour de Homebush

It didn't start off very promisingly, weather-wise, for our annual bike ride but a goodly contingent from DASydney was already medicating with caffeine in the coffee shop when I arrived and spirits were high. It wasn't very long before everyone was itching to get going. Carolyn New, DASydney's official bike tragic, was there in charge with her pedalling pals, Pam and Ali from Bike North, to help the beginners find bikes to fit, show them how to use gears, how to stay upright and to generally nurse us along us for the day.

The weather was clearing when we set off, so rainslickers were enough to keep us dry and counter the wind. Carolyn rode up front, leading the way – there are miles of tracks out there at Homebush so this was a different route to the one we'd taken last year. Pam and Ali kept watch over us in the middle of the field and rounding up the stragglers. We were like a bunch of kids at Christmas, wreathed in smiles and relishing the freedom of free-wheeling on bikes. It's probably appropriate to mention that there were some other bikie hard cases among us, like Jan and Wendy Jensen and some of the kids (people who don't really need to stay on the flat like us wobblier ones), who made us look a bit less of a circus – but since the day was all about having fun nobody really cared what the rest of the world thought. We were getting the hang of this bike-riding thing and enjoying it!

By the time we reached the old Armoury area down by the river at Homebush, it was getting time for another caffeine fix. Great planning by Carolyn, because there was a nice warm, dry café waiting to top us up. Having completely overrun that place, we all suddenly evacuated and wheeled off in a flock as the sun came out.

The ground was still wet but the rain had pretty much stopped. There are rail lines embedded in the path there around the Armoury (guess artillery and ammo are pretty heavy) and as Carolyn turned back to see if we were all okay her bike slipped on the rails in a freak accident resulting in her falling nastily. Our nurses went into action right away and looked after her until the ambulance arrived shortly after (aren't mobile phones wonderful and how fortunate we were on a disused road where the ambos could find us easily).

Before you worry too much about Carolyn, the hospital reduced her dislocated finger and tended to her wounds and she was home again by evening, thank goodness – she even showed up for paddling the following week ("the inactivity is driving me crazy") for a gentle paddle – her hand is still strapped and not fully functional. Had to laugh at Claire Hendy's remark – "These land-based sports are



A goodly gang at the outset



Headcount break to make sure we're all still "on Tour"



A bikie and his moll – the Millgates



Tour de Homebush leader, Carolyn New

much more dangerous say us who slide down our ramp on a regular basis!"

Once we knew Carolyn was getting the best possible care Pam, Ali and Jan Jensen got us all under way again and guided us back to the start of the ride uneventfully. Having turned in the hired bikes we then settled down

and enjoyed our picnic together. While we were all distressed at Carolyn's accident, overall it was still a very happy and successful day – so we'd all highly recommend it to the rest of you next year!! Special thanks to Carolyn for organising it all and making it so much fun and commiserations on the rotten luck.

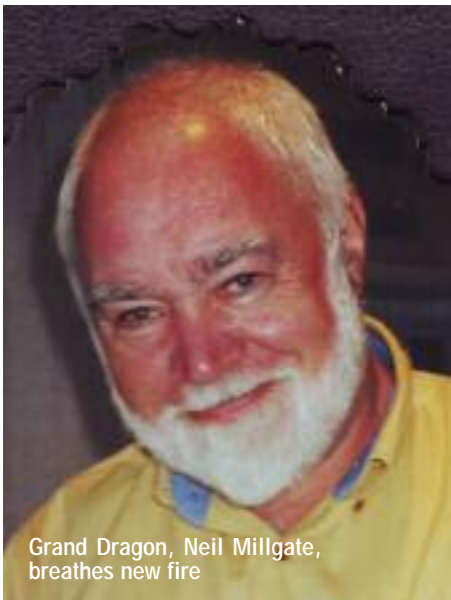
Diarise these 2007-8 Regatta Dates NOW!

Always being caught off guard when regattas pop up and you find you're committed to other things? Well, there's no excuse this coming season – all the regatta dates have been published already – so put them in your diary NOW! They're also in the calendar at the back of this newsletter, together with the craft days etc. The most important regattas are:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 9th August | Dobroyd Regatta |
| 9th September | Ryde Regatta |
| 29/30th September | Caloundra Regatta |
| 21st October | Roseville Regatta |
| 4th November | Penrith Regatta |
| 12th January | Bank St Regatta |
| 19th January | Tacoma Regatta |
| 16/17th February | Chinese New Year Regatta |
| 5/6th April | State Titles Regatta |

Caloundra snippet

The DA Walk of History: Earlier in the year, each DA club was sent three pink, plastic, circular discs on which to identify their club. These discs will all be joined up with discs from other clubs to form the "scales" of a huge dragon in the Expo tent at Caloundra. Robin Shoebridge, our gifted crafty paddler, headed up the DASydney effort and we believe it shows us up for what we are – a big bunch of happy souls offering hope and inspiration to those faced with a diagnosis of breast cancer and promoting the fact that there is quality of life after breast cancer (it was too hard to display what we do for awareness as well).



Grand Dragon, Neil Millgate, breathes new fire

Grand Dragons Redux

Well, you'd think, since half their crew members have since pulled out of the AusSquad, that the Queenslanders who beat our Grand Dragons at the Nationals would have to cede their right to represent Oz to the team they only beat by 0.7 of a second or whatever it was. Sadly they seem reluctant to do the right thing and have since called on NSW to top up

their team (will be a con unless only their worst paddlers pulled out!) Not to worry, some good comes of all things with the result that Neil Millgate and Sergio Pineiro were invited to join the Queensland Grand Masters squad (but training here of course). We're all so proud of them both but feel desperately sorry for Sergio who had, since the disappointment at the Nationals, signed up to go with Kathy and some friends to Spain on vacation (anybody interested in two tickets to Spain in September?). So while Neil's putting in the hard yards here on the cold, wet, dark, windy nights in Sydney, Sergio will no doubt be working equally hard on his sun and san-gria. D'em's da breaks!

Group Email guidelines

Yet another reminder to you all that the fabulous group email facility brings with it the responsibility to use it properly. With so many of us in the club now it's important that members do read the emails they need to keep up to speed on club activities. Outside info on the group email results in busy members not having time to work out what's important, then they miss out on things they need to know. The following policy was drawn up by the committee, in accordance with the written privacy permissions you have given us, to encourage the proper use of this handy communication tool.

The purpose of this policy is to restrict the number of emails sent via the Yahoo group site to those dealing essentially with DASydney matters.

Acceptable emails include all membership matters as well as information and social emails directed to all or part of the membership as part of their membership of DASydney (eg. birthdays, congratulations, social news when away from Sydney).

Not acceptable are requests for fundraising or other events that are not specifically for DASydney. There are opportunities for non-DASydney events to be verbally communicat-

ed after paddling sessions and over coffee.

Information about breast cancer and other breast cancer-related activities should be directed to the Coordinator so that information flow is not done on an ad hoc basis and can also be passed to other groups where appropriate.

Trivia Night

When the Fashion Show Extravaganza had to be deferred, due to Gael's illness, Jo Jeffcoat sprang forward to claim the reserved venue in Five Dock for our Terrific Trivia Night (Howzat for initiative! Go Jo!). This will be a real friends and family affair with heaps of prizes, lots of fun and almost no cost – what more can you ask? Jo is an absolute Trivia Maven (so is Vicki McLean, I hear, so be warned there'll be pros amongst us) but fear not! Just bring your own drinks and nibbles, hand over your \$10 and you'll have only your trivia ignorance to lose (in my case there's a lot of ignorance to lose). Make up your own table or come alone – Jo will be putting tables together and that could be even more fun. Make sure you contact Jo by July 18th to let her know you are coming. She's on JoJeffcoat@yahoo.com.au or 9810 3392.

DASydney Winter Family Bushwalk

Once again it's coming up to the time for DASydney members, family and friends to have another meander around Sydney's northern suburbs bushland, on Sunday 15 July. This year we're attempting the beautiful foreshore walk from Taronga Zoo over to Balmoral Beach with a detour around Middle Head and the Sydney Harbour National Park. And all it costs you is a bit of shoe leather! There's a great web link to the walk on <http://www.harbourtrust.gov.au/topics/parkstracks.html#cbwalk> which also has a map of the route.

We'll be starting from Taronga Zoo at 10.00 am and it is expected the walk will take about 3? hours. Bring food, drink and sunscreen and make sure you're wearing comfortable shoes. There are a couple of places on the way where we'll be able to get a caffeine hit.

For those coming by car, you can park in Mosman around the Military Road/Raglan Street area and then get a bus down to the Zoo to start the walk. At the end of the walk you can either walk up the hill, or catch a bus back to your car.

If you're interested in coming along, contact our Boss of Bushwalks, Wilma Kippers, on wkippers@bigpond.com and she'll put you on the list so we remember to wait for you before we set out.



Crafty Paddlers Crafting Cards

Ooooohweee! You should have seen the lovely cards we made at Craft Group in June. This time Kathy Dundas was our teacher and it was such fun. There were eight of us all up. Jenny Petterson came along just a week after having her gall bladder removed (there's absolutely no keeping her down) and Geri Hill, Pam Telfer, Pam Bell, Robin Shoebridge and yours truly made up the student body for most of the day, while Lyn Tyson managed to drop in for a couple of hours as well. Given the amount of excited chatter you'd have been amazed to see the wonders that still emerged at the end of the day (I was tickled pink with the lovely oriental-looking cards we made – they look extra special!). Huge thanks to Kathy for sharing her expertise and lovely design ideas with us.

Next Crafty Paddlers Day

The Word from the craftiest of us all – Robin Shoebridge:

The next DASydney Crafty Paddlers group will be on Friday, 20 July at Cynthia's from 9.30am onwards. If you've never been before, why not come along – we'll organise something for you, if you like. Others might work on their 'in progress' projects or scrapbooking or maybe a few greeting cards or even put together a "thingy" (I'll bring the "thingy" bits).

These craft day dates are in the Calendar at the back for any of our paddlers to come and join in – we love new faces. If you find it difficult to make it to a daytime get-together, please contact me and I'll try and get one up and running for either an evening get-together or a Sunday. I do understand that there's quite a few paddlers out there who are full-time workers and might like to join in, so this is an opportunity to let me know and I'll do my darndest to organise either a weeknight or Sunday for us. Hoping to hear from you soon. Please call me on 9520-7793 or email rsho3799@bigpond.net.au to let me know if you are coming.

Robin Shoebridge



Jenny Petterson setting up a group photo of us all



Pam Bell and Pam Telfer in another world



Robin Shoebridge oozing creativity

Fashion Show Extravaganza

Great news is that Gael Ellis is back on deck again (after her illness) and so is the Fashion Show – but now it's going to be on Friday 26th October instead (put it in your diary). This is quite unlike anything we've come across before – there'll be a super parade of all the cool new season's summer fashions after which you get to actually try on any of the gear. Then if you like it, you can buy it on the spot at a great discount from the shop prices. There's a Bistro on site if you want to grab a bite before it begins and you'll kick yourself if you miss out on the cool gear at these prices! Put the night in your diary now and watch the email for more details.

Twaddling Twosome

Pam Bell has written up our latest PR activities:

Cynthia and I have been talking up a storm again – this time travelling to the Central Coast as a result of an invitation to talk to the Erina Prostate Group about Dragon Boating. Addressing an audience of about 40 men and their partners, our two budding public speakers extolled the role of Dragon Boating as a way to maintain fitness levels and regain control following a cancer diagnosis. The presentation also focused on their opportunity to use paddling as an awareness-raising device to encourage other men to go for an early check-up if symptoms present. We were particularly impressed by one sprightly 83-year-old who not only kayaked, canoed and rode a motor bike, as well as belonging to cycling group, but who also assured Cynthia that he still had time for lady friends!

A presentation I gave recently about the work of Dragons Abreast has just resulted in the surprise donation of a cheque for \$1,000 from the Neutral Bay Rotary Club. This generous gift was inspired by the community service aspect of Dragons Abreast – a philosophy that is a central tenet of Rotary International. A big 'Thank You' to Neutral Bay Rotary membership.

Have you been asked to speak to a group but don't know how to start?

We have compiled a set of Overhead Transparencies and assorted photos as part of a resource kit for any club members who are willing to spread the word re the good work of Dragons Abreast. You can come along with either or both of us as observers to get the

Feet Up and Thumbs Down

It's never all good news, is it? But it's not all bad either. Except to hear that just days after her recent liver op, our indomitable Jenny Petterson's gall bladder turned up its toes, so she was right back in theatre again days later. In true Jenny fashion she showed up at Craft Group with her trademark glowing smile just a week later, hoping to restart her AusSquad training any day. Is there any other word than awesome for our Jen?

Thank goodness Gael Ellis seems to be over her long bout of illness and getting back on deck again.

Happily Debbie Story has done amazingly well since her back fusion, being now completely relieved of that acute back pain and starting physio soon. Well done, Deb!

Not doing so well there for a while, our Mistress of Merchandising, Brenda Owen really has had to put her feet up – literally – after having bunions on both feet operated on. Sadly one got infected and she ran into some real trouble for a while. Hopefully she'll be tiptoeing gingerly back into the boat again before too long (good thing we don't need feet too much in paddling, eh?).

For all the other folks with various ailments and winter colds – get well - and for those of you with musculo-skeletal issues – be sensible, take the opportunity afforded by this lousy winter weather to get yourself properly treated, rested and 100% pain free before you think about coming back to paddling. Cautious thumbs up at last for Muriel with her shoulder – will be lovely to have her back in the boat again.



hang of it (if we can do it, you can too). We'd like to set up our own little "Speakers Bureau" of girls happy to talk about DA.

Pam Bell

The Numbers

Special thanks to those who volunteered to paint numbers for the worlds. The project's coming along splendidly and we can look forward to seeing a couple of them being worn by our own Angie Aston and Neil Millgate in competition at the Worlds.

Special thanks

As always thanks to Kerry Enemark for turning my mess of copy and pics into the lovely looking newsletters we all receive. To the folks who contributed to the newsletter with photos and newsy bits, thousand thanks and please keep up the good work

Milestones

Not too much birthday cake on offer in July – 4th July saw Kerry Enemark and Neil Millgate share commiserations on ageing, 11th it's Muriel's turn and on the 29th another year's up for Jenny Petroni. Happy Birthday all four of you!

However, August looks a whole lot more nourishing, birthday cake-wise: Kicking off on the 1st with Anne Tibbitts; 2nd Michele Streight; 5th Yolande Franklin; 18th Jo Jeffcoat; 24th Judy Dykes and Kathy Dundas; 25th Cathy Seddon; 28th Christine Fitzgerald (haven't seen you for ages – where are you?); and on the 30th Geri Hill. Happy Birthday to yooooooooo!

**Paddles Up
(if this rotten weather ever stops!)
Cynth**

DAS CALENDAR 2007-2008

| Date(s) | Event | Location | Details |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| July 2007 | | | |
| Sun 15th | DASydney Winter Bushwalk | Along the foreshore from Taronga to Balmoral | It's fun – it's free – and bring the family. Contact Wilma Kippers: wkippers@bigpond.com |
| Fri 20th | DASydney Craft Group – scrapbooking | Pymble | Everyone welcome. Email Robin Shoebridge: rsho3799@bigpond.net.au |
| Fri 20th | DASydney Trivia Night | Mustard Seed Anglican Church, Ultimo | Huge fun for friends and family – not a fundraiser! Contact Jo Jeffcoat: jojefcoat@yahoo.com.au |
| Sat 21st | BCAG Forum | Sydney Uni Women's College | It's free! More details www.bcagnsw.org.au |
| August 2007 | | | |
| Sat 4th | DASydney AGM | At the school, across the bay from the Fish Market | We need you all there after paddling, please!! |
| Sat 11th | Field of Women Live | Telstra Stadium, Homebush | Organised by BCNA: Details www.bcna.org.au |
| Mon 13th | DASydney Craft Group – scrapbooking | Pymble | Everyone welcome. Email Robin Shoebridge: rsho3799@bigpond.net.au |
| Sun 26th | Dobroyd Aquatic Club Regatta | Dobroyd Point | 200m racing – warmup for the season |
| September 2007 | | | |
| Sun 9th | Ryde Aquatic Festival Regatta | Ryde | 200m racing again |
| 19th – 23rd | IDBF: World Dragon Boat Championships | Penrith SIRC | We'll need lots of volunteers |
| 27th – 30th | Abreast in Australia Dragon Boat Festival | Kawana Lakes, from the Fish Market | You'll kick yourself if you miss it! Remember to register family too. |
| October 2007 | | | |
| Sun 21st | Roseville Regatta | Davidson Park, Roseville | 500m racing – lovely picnic day |
| Fri 26th | Fashion Extravaganza | Canada Bay Club, William Street, Five Dock | Great Show, then try and buy – incredible bargains. Contact Gael Ellis: galee@bigpond.com |
| November 2007 | | | |
| Sun 4th | Penrith Regatta | SIRC | 500m racing |
| Sat 17th | Twilight Regatta | Blackwattle Bay | Lovely informal evening |
| Sat 24th | DASydney Christmas Party | TBA | Well, you wanted to know well ahead of time! |
| December 2007 | | | |
| Sun 2nd | Penrith Regatta | SIRC | 200m racing |
| January 2008 | | | |
| Sat 12th | Skins Event | Blackwattle Bay | |
| Sat 19th | Tacoma Regatta | Wyong River, Tacoma | Great day out on the river bank |
| February 2008 | | | |
| Sat 16th/Sun 17th | Chinese New Year Regatta | Darling Harbour | Mad to miss this! |
| April 2008 | | | |
| Sat 5th/Sun 6th | NSW State Titles | Penrith SIRC | Vastly exciting! |