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Open Letter to John Sattler

7 Apr 2007

Below is a letter written by Rabbitohs Executive Chairman Peter Holmes à Court to Life Member John Sattler that will appear in tomorrow's Sunday Telegraph.

A letter written by Member John Barrass, referred to in Mr Holmes à Court's letter, can be found in the Official Members Only forum on this website. Members can [click here](#) to access the thread directly.

Open letter to John Sattler

Life Member, South Sydney Rabbitohs

Dear John,

Over the last year the sporting world has watched us change a lot of things at Souths. We've improved conditions for our players, strengthened our coaching staff, and worked to present a professional image in everything we do.

All of this very public progress has been built on a very personal value: Respect.

Respect for our players, by creating the best environment for them today as professional athletes as well as preparing them for their lives after football. We are seeking to create a culture that respects their families, their communities, their country of origin, and their religion.

We are also rebuilding the image of South Sydney, the foundation of which is a deep respect for our heritage. Our colours, emblem and team song have been polished but remain fundamentally unchanged. While Giorgio Armani might be making our suits many miles from Redfern, the blazer pocket proudly displays an image of a rabbitoh--men who had the unglamorous job of skinning rabbits as an economical source of protein for families across the south of this great city.

Our respect for the individual must be extended throughout the entire South family. When our famously passionate fans voted last year, many knew it was about the very survival of our Club and in the heat of the moment, some harsh words were said.

I regret that some of the very people who helped shape our proud Club were hurt by those words.

The Club has recently let our Members know that while we encourage passionate support and always want to hear our fan's opinions (and we don't even mind a blue word or two), we denounce all personal attacks, cyber bullying or "playing the man, not the ball."

There is simply no place in our Club for anyone who uses the pen or the keyboard to personally attack other members of our family.

Russell and I are building an inclusive Club and, as always, we know our fans will lead the way.

One fan, John Barrass, has learned that some of his words, posted on a fan website have hurt certain of the Club's Legends and he has posted a heartfelt apology on the Club's website, www.souths.com.au , which can also be seen in full at the Daily Telegraph's website, www.dailytelegraph.com.au.

Mr Barrass describes himself as an ordinary Australian, married for nearly 20 years, three kids and a hell of a mortgage. He has dreamed in red and green for 40 years and clearly remembers when he witnessed Bobby McCarthy, Gary Stevens and the late Lurch O'Neill playing for the Rabbitohs.

He has only one deep regret, and that is that he never saw you play.

It is particularly sad for him that you have said you don't feel welcome at the Club.

You may not know this, but as our players walk into our training rooms each day they walk under a giant photograph of you. The iconic image is from the 1970 Grand Final, where our players have learned you played most of the game with a broken jaw. So tough was the game that even the bunny logo on your jumper was torn.

The words on the poster read: "I play to win, everybody knows that." Those words have been in our players hearts since the start of this season.

We can't achieve all we want to achieve as a Club, for rugby league and for our community without our entire family back supporting our team.

You are one of our greatest, you are one of the league's greatest. Please know you are welcome back whenever our boys run out.

They play to win now John, everybody knows that.

Peter Holmes à Court
Executive Chairman
South Sydney Rabbitohs