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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome back to Fortress Suncorp to all our Queensland Reds family, for the first home game 2026 Super Rugby Pacific season.

After a tough opening round against the Waratahs the Reds are ready to unleash their exciting brand of attacking rugby against tough New Zealand opposition.

The Reds and the Highlanders have always had a healthy rivalry - Queensland has won the last two outings against the South Islanders, including last year's comeback in in Dunedin.

The Reds have been strong in the off-season with wins over Tonga and Japanese champions the Panasonic Saitama Wild Knights.

We have had a host of players committing to the Reds for the long term - including just this week Joe Brial and Dre Pakeho - with the next year's Rugby World Cup on the horizon.

I'm excited to see who the stars will be this year – Massimo de Lutiis, the strongest player in any Queensland football code? Or the experienced Carter Gordon, finally realising his dream of playing for the

On a personal note this is my final game as President of the Queensland Rugby Union, as I am stepping down at the Annual General Meeting in a fortnight. I have loved being a part of the game in this State, since my debut as Queensland Red #913 in Canada 48 years ago. I am humbled to admit that the game has given me more than I have given it.

*Roger Gould*

**QRU President**



*Carter Gordon at Captains Run pre Highlanders match.*

**Gullivers**

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2-NIGHT PACKAGE**

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# WILSON, GORDON RETURN ON FRIDAY NIGHT

WORDS | **Jim Tucker**

In all, five returning Wallabies are stiffening the Reds for their first big home game of 2026 with outside back Filipo Daugunu, hooker Josh Nasser and halfback Kalani Thomas to come off the bench

The infusion of experience is significant. No.8 Wilson, the Wallabies skipper, is in his seventh season of Super Rugby after being named in World Rugby's 2025 Dream Team of the Year.

Flyhalf Gordon played in the Reds' trials against the Western Force and NSW Waratahs. On Friday, he will live out his schoolboy dream of a Reds Super Rugby debut, having first signed for the club at 17 in 2018 and signing up again late last year.

Gordon will partner in the halves with fellow Sunshine Coast product Louis Werchon. Off the bench, Harry McLaughlin-Phillips will offer spark as a No.10 option. Reserve halfback Thomas is coming off a career-best season in 2025 when he was regularly a game-changer from the bench.

Playing at Suncorp Stadium in front of family, friends and fans has a special energy for the team. The Reds have won 10 of their 14 matches at Suncorp Stadium across the 2024 and 2025 seasons in Swyftx Super Rugby Pacific.

"I'm buzzing. I love playing at Suncorp. It's a unique ecosystem with a run of people coming into the ground from Caxton Street so the energy is infectious," Reds hooker Matt Faessler said.

Skipper Fraser McReight said the Reds had worked on improvements to their game and had full respect for the Highlanders.

"The Highlanders look like they have a bag of tricks and they've got some very talented players. We're prepared," McReight said.

The Reds have picked a strong all-Wallabies front-row with Aidan Ross, Zane Nonggorr and Faessler to start. Nasser, former All Black Jeffery Toomaga-Allen and George Blake will sustain the front-row performance through the full 80 minutes when they come on from the bench.

Reds Head Coach Les Kiss said the team was looking forward to the match at Suncorp Stadium in front of the Reds' loudest fans.

"This is our home and we always want to put out a performance worthy of the Queensland jersey," Kiss said.

"We have been working hard on areas that will be important against the Highlanders. We know how getting all those little moments right do add up in rugby."





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# JOE BRIAL RE-SIGNS WITH QUEENSLAND REDS

WORDS | **Jim Tucker**

The QRU is today delighted to announce that Brial, 24, has inked a two-year deal through 2028 to build on his 27-game career as a Queensland Red.

His influential ball-running and versatile skills have already generated match-turning moments for the Reds since his debut in 2024. The national selectors have seen the same strengths to reward him with Australia A selection in 2024 and 2025.

Brial dabbled the kick ahead for the Reds' first try against the NSW Waratahs in the opening round of Swyftx Super Rugby Pacific in Sydney when he also received the last pass for a try of his own.

The Reds are back at Suncorp Stadium on Friday night for a big first home game of 2026 against the Highlanders.

Brial said his re-signing reflected the positives at the Reds and in Queensland rugby.

"It's an exciting time for rugby in Queensland. We have a good group at the Reds with more strength coming through," Brial said.

"We have really good leadership with guys like Fraser (McReight), Tate (McDermott) and Harry (Wilson). The mix of senior players with younger guys coming through like 'Vice' Latu, Kingsley (Uys) and Xavier Rubens means I'm looking forward to what the group can produce this year and into the future.

"This has definitely been part of my decision as well as the growth I can see in myself in this program. The sky is the limit for the Reds."

Brial appeared 14 times for the Reds in Super Rugby Pacific last year when his 80-minute display against the Chiefs in Hamilton was a standout performance.

Consistent minutes have helped develop his game and confidence which extended to the Reds' international games against English club Bristol, Tonga and the British & Irish Lions in 2025.

"It's been awesome to be involved in these international games. You are experiencing different cultures and conditions but the main thing is it keeps you playing in a Reds jersey," Brial said.

"I don't know of any other Super Rugby club that does this as well.

"For me, this is my third season around international backrowers like Harry and Fraser and Liam Wright, before that, plus the world-class coaching here. Development has come through in my defence, attack, everything.

"Any goals I have around a home World Cup next year come from what I do at the Reds so I'm not too caught up in anything but performing for Queensland."

Brial has built on his strong upbringing in rugby which saw him represent the 2019 Australian Schools & Under-18s team and the New Zealand Under-20s in 2022.

The son of former Wallabies forward Michael Brial also developed his game through the Crusaders Academy and Canterbury in New Zealand's National Provincial Championship before his first season as a Red in 2024.

Reds Head Coach Les Kiss is upbeat about Brial committing to the Reds through 2028.

“Joe is a big lad. It’s not just strength and power but a smart game that he brings,” Kiss said.

“He’s being used more in lineouts, for example. He’s made massive improvements over the past two years and he understands he has to continue to work on his game to get better still.”



Joe Brial of the Reds celebrates a try during the round one Super Rugby match between NSW Waratahs and Queensland Reds at Allianz Stadium

An advertisement for La Banderita Authentic Tortillas. The background is pink with various food-related icons like a taco, a burrito, a sombrero, and a sombrero. In the center, a woman in a white embroidered blouse is smiling and holding a taco. To the left, the La Banderita logo (a bull) is prominent. Below the logo, the text reads: "BACK TO THE REDS. BRING THE FLAVOUR. Lift your taco game with authentic tortillas, the whole team will love." A QR code is located in the bottom left corner. In the top right corner, there is a star logo with the letter 'K' and the word 'PARVE' below it. At the bottom, a red banner contains the text: "Discover delicious recipes via the QR code" followed by a globe icon and the website "labanderita.tv", and a social media icon followed by "labanderita\_aus".

# TEAM LIST



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## STARTERS

- 1 AIDAN ROSS
- 2 MATT FAESSLER
- 3 ZANE NONGGORR
- 4 JOSH CANHAM
- 5 LUKHAN SALAKAIA-LOTO
- 6 JOE BRIAL
- 7 FRASER MCREIGHT (C)
- 8 HARRY WILSON
- 9 LOUIS WERCHON
- 10 CARTER GORDON
- 11 TIM RYAN
- 12 HUNTER PAISAMI
- 13 JOSH FLOOK
- 14 LACHIE ANDERSON
- 15 JOCK CAMPBELL

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## RESERVES

- 16 JOSH NASSER
- 17 GEORGE BLAKE
- 18 JEFFERY TOOMAGA-ALLEN
- 19 HAMISH MULLER
- 20 VAIUTA LATU
- 21 KALANI THOMAS
- 22 HARRY MCLAUGHLIN-PHILLIPS
- 23 FILIPO DAUGUNU

## HEAD COACH

LES KISS



# TEAM LIST



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## STARTERS

- 1 ETHAN DE GROOT
- 2 JACK TAYLOR
- 3 ROHAN WINGHAM
- 4 WILL STODART
- 5 MITCH DUNSHEA
- 6 TE KAMAKA HOWDEN
- 7 SEAN WITHY
- 8 LUCAS CASEY
- 9 ADAM LENNOX
- 10 CAMERON MILLAR
- 11 JONA NAREKI
- 12 TIMOCI TACATAVANAWAI
- 13 JONAH LOWE
- 14 CALEB TANGITAU
- 15 JACOB RATUMAITAVUKI-KNEEPKENS

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## RESERVES

- 16 SOANE VIKENA
- 17 DANIEL LIENERT-BROWN
- 18 SOSEFO KAUTAI
- 19 OLIVER HAIG
- 20 VEVENI LASAQA
- 21 FOLAU FAKATAVA
- 22 REESJAN PASITOA
- 23 TANIELU TELE'A

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# DRE PAKEHO RE-SIGNS WITH QUEENSLAND REDS

WORDS | **Jim Tucker**

Australia's 2025 Super Rugby Pacific Rookie of the Year will continue his development under a new two-year deal for 2027-28.

Pakeho, 21, demonstrated his strengths with a standout display in Perth on Saturday when an emerging Queensland Reds line-up, aged 18 to 21, won the Super Rugby Next Gen trophy.

It was another worthy milestone for Pakeho, who has developed his skills with aplomb since his full Reds debut at just 19 against Wales in July, 2024.

He has racked up 17 caps for the Reds, including 12 in Super Rugby Pacific when called on last year at inside and outside centre.

"I feel at home at Ballymore. That's a big thing because I want to show up every day for work," Pakeho said of his new contract.

"Nearly every week, I'm learning and asking questions beside (Wallaby centre) Hunter Paisami and the coaches. Getting that experience and playing the games I have so early in my career is crucial.

"Adding some extra weight has helped me play a more physical game. With games behind me, my confidence has gone up in trusting what I can do.

"The Reds have shown they want me, my family is in Brisbane and it was a pretty easy decision for me."

Pakeho, who has built his frame to a powerful 102kg, said playing in the Next Gen series has been a valuable springboard into 2026.

The 57-17 win over the Western Force Next Gen team on Saturday completed a 3-0 sweep of the series for the trophy.

"You want to be getting 80 minutes to get your game time up. We came out with a bang (21-0 after 11 minutes) after some slow starts earlier in the series," Pakeho said.

"It was good playing beside boys of a similar age. I went out to enjoy myself and passing down some experience was important to me because I've felt the benefits of that myself."

Pakeho's breakout 2024 season included a Hospital Cup grand final triumph with Brothers.

Pakeho was eight-years-old when his family moved from New Zealand to Brisbane. He attended Wavell State High and Bray Park State High before rugby polish was added at Churchie, Brothers Colts and the Buildcorp Reds Academy.

Reds Head Coach Les Kiss said Pakeho was a strong example of the successful pathways nourishing Queensland rugby.

"Dre has stepped for us since his debut against Wales. He's been versatile, he's been very coachable, he works on the range of his skills and there is still plenty of potential there to develop," Kiss said.

"He's a great example of how the Reds Academy continues to work to strengthen Queensland and Australian rugby."



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# ‘OWN THE MOMENT’: KISS ENCOURAGED BY RETURNING WALLABIES FOR HIGHLANDERS

WORDS | **Murray Wenzel - AAP**

A Wallabies quintet led by Test skipper Harry Wilson and flyhalf Gordon will reinforce the side in Friday's crucial home Super Rugby Pacific opener against the Highlanders.

No.8 Wilson (knee) and flyhalf Carter Gordon (leg) will start at Suncorp Stadium while hooker Josh Nasser, scrumhalf Kalani Thomas and utility back Filipo Daugunu will bolster the bench.

The high-profile returns after a week two bye offer some relief for the Reds, who had a double-figure injury list even before a season-opening loss to the NSW Waratahs a fortnight ago.

After first signing a contract at Ballymore as a 17-year-old in 2018, he will make his Reds debut alongside fellow Sunshine Coast product Louis Werchon in the halves.

Gordon left the Reds for a Super Rugby chance at the Melbourne Rebels and earned a Wallabies call-up before signing with Gold Coast in the NRL and then rejoining the Reds last year and resuming his Test career.

"He (Gordon) has been very generous with how he's blended in with the team, finding out how we work and how we can work with him," Kiss said.

"He was gutted he couldn't play that first game but he's revelling in that preparation this week.

"He's owned the moments and grown with it ... this is the chance.

"Opportunity to put it on the main stage for sure and he's always wanted to put this jersey on at Suncorp.

"He can rip a width pass that can make space, but it's important we can go forward first."

Harry McLaughlin-Phillips will deputise while Thomas, who made his Test debut in the final game of the Wallabies' European tour last year, is coming off a career-best season in 2025.

They will need to be sharp against an improved Highlanders side that beat reigning premiers the Crusaders in the first round.

An all-Wallabies starting front-row of Aidan Ross, Zane Nonggorr and Matt Faessler will set the tone.

"When is the heat not on, I would say," Kiss said of the high-stakes nature of the clash.

"The boys relish it, they're ready for it."

The ladder-leading Brumbies, fresh off a magnificent defeat of the Crusaders in Christchurch, have named an unchanged side for the third-straight week to face the Blues in Canberra.

The winless Force have added Argentina scrumhalf Agustin Moyano to their bench for a possible debut, while winger Darby Lancaster will also earn a cap after overcoming a thigh injury.

Hooker Nic Dolly also returns to the Force starting side for Friday's clash with Moana Pasifika in Pukekohe, south of Auckland.

The NSW Waratahs, who have won both home games against the Reds and Fijian Drua to begin the season, have a third-round bye.



# 2026 SEASON DRAW



## TRIAL 1

VERSUS  
WESTERN FORCE

FRI, JAN 23	LOCAL 4:35PM	AEST 6:35PM
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SCOTCH COLLEGE, PERTH

## TRIAL 2

VERSUS  
WARATAHS

SAT, JAN 31	LOCAL 2:00PM	AEST 2:00PM
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BALLYMORE STADIUM

## ROUND 01

WARATAHS

FRI, FEB 13	LOCAL 7:35PM	AEST 8:35PM
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ALLIANZ STADIUM

## ROUND 02

REDS

FEB 20-22  
BYE

## ROUND 03

HIGHLANDERS

FRI, FEB 27	LOCAL 8:35PM	AEST 8:35PM
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SUNCORP STADIUM

## ROUND 04

BRISTOL BULLDOGS

SAT, MAR 7	LOCAL 7:35PM	AEST 8:35PM
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GIO STADIUM

## ROUND 05

WARATAHS

SAT, MAR 14	LOCAL 8:35PM	AEST 8:35PM
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SUNCORP STADIUM

## ROUND 06

PIAA  
DRUA

SAT, MAR 21	LOCAL 3:35PM	AEST 1:35PM
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CHURCHILL PARK, LAUTOKA

## ROUND 07

HURONIA

SAT, MAR 28	LOCAL 4:35PM	AEST 1:35PM
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SKY STADIUM

## ROUND 08

RUSSIE FORCE

SAT, APR 4	LOCAL 8:35PM	AEST 8:35PM
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SUNCORP STADIUM

## ROUND 09

CRUSADERS

SAT, APR 11	LOCAL 5:35PM	AEST 7:35PM
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SUNCORP STADIUM

## ROUND 10

REDS

APR 17-19  
BYE

## ROUND 11

BLUES

SAT, APR 25	LOCAL 7:35PM	AEST 5:35PM
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ONE NZ STADIUM

## ROUND 12

BRISTOL BULLDOGS

SAT, MAY 2	LOCAL 7:35PM	AEST 7:35PM
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SUNCORP STADIUM

## ROUND 13

CHIEFS

FRI, MAY 8	LOCAL 5:35PM	AEST 7:35PM
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SUNCORP STADIUM

## ROUND 14

RUSSIE FORCE

SAT, MAY 16	LOCAL 5:35PM	AEST 7:35PM
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HBF PARK

## ROUND 15

MOANA PASIFICS

SAT, MAY 23	LOCAL 4:35PM	AEST 2:35PM
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NORTH HARBOUR STADIUM

## ROUND 16

PIAA  
DRUA

FRI, MAY 29	LOCAL 7:35PM	AEST 7:35PM
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SUNCORP STADIUM

## QUALIFYING

TBC

FRI JUN 5	SAT JUN 6
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## SEMI-FINALS

TBC

FRI JUN 12	SAT JUN 13
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## FINALS

TBC

SAT, JUN 20



HOME AWAY

\*SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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# RUGBY RUNS RED