

Date: 15 May 2003

Subject 12th NIB Festival of Sport launched

The 12th annual NIB Festival of Sport was launched today ahead of the two week sporting event set to begin on 5 July, 2003.

The NIB Festival of Sport is one of the Hunter's biggest sporting events and last year attracted around 10,000 athletes.

That number is expected to be topped this year with the arrival of 1,000 participants from the United States along with athletes from all over Australia.

NIB Health Funds has been the festival's major sponsor since its inception and is delighted to support such a significant event on the Hunter Region's sporting calendar.

NIB's CEO, Mr Mark Fitzgibbon, believes the festival reinforces NIB's core message of better health in the community.

"A large part of NIB's responsibility is to ensure our members have access to the best medical care when they need it, however, prevention is better than cure," Mr Fitzgibbon explained.

"We would rather see everybody maintain their health and fitness by getting involved in sporting activities such as those that will be on display here in July," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

While NIB's branch network extends throughout NSW, ACT, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia, the organisation was formed, and is still based, in the Hunter and has strong ties to local sporting organisations.

"We have been involved with the Newcastle District Cricket Association for many years and are foundation sponsors of the Newcastle Knights and the Hunter Academy of Sport, who are responsible for organising the annual festival," Mr Fitzgibbon explained.

"The Hunter Academy of Sport does an outstanding job running the festival each year and NIB is incredibly proud to be associated with the event".

"We hope to see the NIB Festival of Sport become the single biggest sporting event in the region by 2004," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

The 2003 program will feature more than 30 sports, including soccer, netball, athletics, and for the first time disabled swimming, trampoline events and mountain bike riding.

The NIB Festival of Sport provides children from all sporting levels with a chance to hone their skills and enjoy some friendly competition.

The event not only gives elite athletes the chance to compete in their chosen fields, but also provides children with the opportunity to learn and have fun with sport through coaching clinics and 'Come and Try' days.

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