

Nelson Bay's Northern Blues will survive

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BUSINESS as usual is the message for next season from the new president of the Nelson Bay Rugby League Club Ray Fewell.

Fewell, elected at the recent annual meeting, said the uncertainties about the club finding sponsors and being able to field a competitive team in the Newcastle first grade next year were behind it.

"It's business as usual and there's no fears the players won't get paid," Fewell said.

"While we don't have the wealth of a leagues club behind us we're already drawing good support."

"Our approach is to build a little bit of support from a lot of people."

Next year is going to be a busy one for Nelson Bay.

It is the centenary of the Newcastle league and Nelson Bay through its links to the former North Newcastle club is a foundation club.

As a result Fewell said the club's name would switch back to the Northern Blues to reflect the Norths origin.

Blues reclaim name to help celebrate 100th anniversary

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NELSON Bay rugby league plan to celebrate their 100th season in style and took the first step by changing their name back to the Northern Blues to link with their proud history.

The Port Stephens side joined forces with foundation Newcastle Rugby League club North Newcastle in 1989 and played the following decade as North Nelson Bay.

They changed to the Northern Blues in 2000, moved their playing base from Anna Bay to Tomaree Oval and won the 2005 premiership under that banner.

For the past four seasons they have played as Nelson Bay but with that change came troubled times on the financial front.

A failed sponsorship deal and lack of community and volunteer support almost broke the Blues, but president Ray Fewell said they are finally kicking some goals off the field.

"We held a meeting on Wednesday night to discuss some of the concerns that players and sponsors might have had with the club," Fewell said.

"It's been a tough time for the club over the last year with a well-documented sponsorship falling over and some issues with council.

"We didn't owe a great deal but we've completed all player payment obligations, and we've got a new sponsor on board.

"There has been some negativity around the club and we just wanted to assure everyone next year will be a great year to be involved with the Northern Blues."

Coach Robert Relf signed on for his fifth season as coach but they have lost NSW Country front-rower Simon Osborne to Western Suburbs.

Outside backs Haydon Topliss and Tim Slater returned to North Queensland at the end of last season and they are searching for replacements.

"We've got a few players that we're talking to but no one signed at this stage," Fewell said.

"We've kept all the players from last season except for Simon Osborne, so that's another positive for the club.

"James McCabe is the club captain and the backbone of the team, so having him here certainly helps."