

DEAN A TOP CLASS ROLE MODEL



Dean with Governor John Landy (left); with John Landy, Bounce Back Foundation Chairperson Justin Peckett and CEO Mal Healy; and making his speech (right).

Parramatta Eels star Dean Widders has been awarded the Bounce Back Foundation Community Athlete of the Year award for his work with children in remote communities.

The inaugural award is the only National award that recognises the contribution that elite athletes make to the Australian community.

Dean was nominated by NRL CEO David Gallop for his commitment to remote communities. The judges were impressed by his compassion and generosity in helping young kids from the bush recognise their potential.

When he's not playing or training, Dean spends his spare time visiting remote communities from Arukun in far North Queensland to Alice Springs and his home town Armidale in NSW.

His visits are more than just a footy clinic. Dean leaves a business card with an email address on it so kids can have a permanent link to him should they need extra encouragement.

In accepting his award, which was presented by former athletic great Governor John Landy, Dean said he was proud to be recognised for his involvement in isolated communities.

"I love working with kids," he says. "It's extraordinarily satisfying for me to help them achieve their goals. Everyone needs a bit of help now and then and I'm pleased that I can give something back to a community which has rewarded me."

Dean is also the patron of the *Books in Homes* program, personally delivering books to isolated communities to promote reading among disadvantaged youth.

BOUNCE BACK FOUNDATION