

# SEASON 23



Annual Report





## SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE

>170m

Total viewers, making Rugby League Australia's most watched sport

19.6k

Average crowd attendance at live matches

1/3

Games decided by less than 6pts

75%

Fans said game speed is 'just right'

8.4m

NRLW viewers (including 1m+ Grand Final audience)

## CONNECTED SPORTS COMMUNITY

9.7m

NRL fans – up 12%

+5% M | +12% F

Growth in registered participants

3.1m

NRL Accounts

~3,000 / month

Participating in our community programs

70.9m

YouTube video views



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN PETER V'LANDYS

**PETER V'LANDYS**  
Chairman  
Australian Rugby League Commission

It is with pleasure that I deliver you the 2023 National Rugby League season results, following one of the most successful years in the game's history.

#### A Record Year for the Greatest Game for All

The Commission is pleased to announce a 2023 operating surplus of \$58.2 million. With outstanding yearly results compounding over several years, the NRL's balance sheet continues to considerably improve, with net assets now exceeding \$260 million future-proofing the game.

The 2023 key highlights are:

- » **Record revenues:** total revenue up by \$107.3 million to a record \$701 million.
- » **A cost-effective operation:** An operating expense ratio to revenue of 22.2 per cent, down from 25.5 per cent in 2022 continues to be the lowest of any major sport in Australia by far.

- » **Acquisition of diversified income-producing investments:** including the Quest Hotel Woollooware Bay and Mercure Sunshine Coast Kawana Waters. Improvements have also been made to the previously acquired Gambaro Hotel.
- » **Record viewing:** Rugby League is Australia's most watched sport. In 2023, total viewership across the full year was 171.8 million, up 14 per cent from 150.6 million in 2022, while year on year crowd attendance increased by 25 per cent.
- » The State of Origin Series continues to attract incredibly high audience numbers with the growth of the women's series a particular highlight.
- » The 2023 NRLW season reached an historic 8.4 million viewers becoming the most watched NRLW season on record. The 2023 NRLW Grand Final was the first women's match to exceed a television audience of 1 million viewers.





# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN PETER V'LANDYS

- » The ARLC concluded an historic Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Rugby League Players Association. As full partners in the game, players will now share in a record \$1.347 billion of total payments and benefits.
- » The 2023 NRL season delivered further improvements in game continuity with more tries per game, tighter game margins, faster play the ball speeds and fewer infringements.
- » The ARLC's expansion strategy delivered immediate success with the Dolphins producing stunning performances on and off the field.
- » After the expansion to ten NRLW teams with the inclusion of the North Queensland Cowboys, Canberra Raiders, Wests Tigers and Cronulla Sharks, play the ball speed and overall match quality improved across the competition, showcasing the incredible opportunities for growth that still exist in the women's game.
- » **Expanded International Calendar:** 2023 saw the delivery of the inaugural Pacific Championships featuring Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Cook Islands. Along with a confirmed international calendar, elite international tournaments and grassroots game development forms part of the Australian Rugby League Commission's growth strategy.

» **Grassroots growth:** At a grassroots level, total registered participation across all participant programs and competition formats grew by 9 per cent. Critically, these increases include strong growth in key youth age groups.

» Rugby League has seen strong growth in non-contact participation with the NRL Beach Series growing to 16 touch, tackle and tag events.

## An Exciting Year Ahead

2024 will see the ARLC continuing to drive strong all of game performance across Australia and New Zealand. It will also see efforts to expand Rugby League's footprint into new markets, including the South Pacific and United States.

In particular, the successful delivery of the Las Vegas double-header in March is part of an overall vision and strategy for the growth our of game.

The Commission considers ventures such as Vegas Round as laying the foundation for the development of new fans and revenue streams in multiple markets. These efforts have the sole purpose of making Rugby League strong and sustainable long into the future.

As part of its US effort, Rugby League will host its inaugural NRL Talent Combine and the Vegas 9s Rugby League tournament. This will provide the opportunity for North American-based Rugby League teams and players to showcase their talents to NRL scouts. These will be in combination with the elite NRL double-header where Telstra Premiership sides will compete for points on US soil. Events such as these will link a new pipeline of players and fans to the broader Rugby League community. Over time, this investment will grow the game in ways not before imagined.

2024 will also be the first time we see a three-match Women's State of Origin Series, proving the women's game continues to go from strength to strength.

At a grassroots level, we will continue to grow the number of registered male and female participants playing Rugby League in schools and clubs, both in metropolitan and regional areas.

To continue to broaden the access and appeal of our game, we will build on the success and growth of our new NRL Beach Touch, Tag and Tackle competitions in partnership with Surf Life Saving Australia.

On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express my immense gratitude to our Chief Executive Andrew Abdo for his extreme hard work and conscientious efforts and to all the NRL staff. These results would not have happened without Andrew's dedication and drive.

I also extend a thank you to the Chairs and Management of all NRL Clubs and State Leagues, the RLPA, loyal NRL partners and sponsors, and all players and participants from grassroots to the elite. Together, you have all made 2023 our best season to date.

As always, our biggest thanks are reserved for the most important people in the game: our fans. Everything we do is for you.

# AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE COMMISSION (ARLC)

The Australian Rugby League Commission (ARLC) is the single controlling body and administrator of the game in Australia, made up of eight independent Commissioners. The ARLC's objectives are set out in its Constitution. They are to:

- » Foster, develop, extend and provide adequate funding for the game from the junior to elite levels and to act in the best interests of the game;
- » Liaise with and delegate appropriate functions to governing bodies of the game in the States and Territories of Australia, including the NSWRL and QRL;

- » Organise and conduct all State of Origin and Australian representative games, recognising that the selection and management of the State of Origin teams representing New South Wales and Queensland shall be undertaken in accordance with the ARLC Constitution;

- » Organise and conduct the NRL Competition;

- » Foster the NRL Competition;

- » Liaise with the International Rugby League and organisations controlling the game in other countries in the fostering and control of the game of Rugby League throughout the world;

- » Promote and encourage either directly or indirectly the physical, cultural and intellectual welfare of young people in the community and, in particular, the Rugby League community; and

- » Promote and encourage either directly or indirectly sport and recreation, particularly Rugby League football, in the interests of the social welfare of young persons.





# AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE COMMISSION (ARLC)

The Directors present their report for the National Rugby League Limited ("NRL" or "the Company") for the year ended 31 October 2023.

## DIRECTORS

The names and details of the Company's Directors in office during the financial year and until the date of this report are as follows. Directors were in office for this entire period unless otherwise stated.



Peter V'landys AM  
(Chairman)

Mr V'landys is Chief Executive and board member with Racing NSW, a position he has held since February 2004. Mr V'landys holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree majoring in Accounting and serves across a number of Boards associated with the thoroughbred racing industry. Mr V'landys was appointed Chairman of the ARLC in October 2019 and in 2022 was appointed a Director of the International Rugby League Board. Mr V'landys is Chairman of the Fairy Godfather Foundation which assists people in Australia in necessitous circumstances. In 2014, Mr V'landys was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to the racing industry.



The Hon. Peter Beattie  
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Mr Beattie is a Director of the Investment Fund Brandon BioCatalyst, the largest life science investment fund in Australia. Mr Beattie is also an Ambassador for Life Sciences Queensland, joint adjunct professor at the University of Queensland's Australian Institute for Bioengineering & Nanotechnology and Institute for Molecular Bioscience. Mr Beattie served as the 36th Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade from 1998 to 2007 and Leader of the Australian Labor Party in that state from 1996 to 2007 and Health Minister from 1995 to 1996.



Tony McGrath

Mr McGrath is a former partner at KPMG and is a co-founder of McGrathNicol. Mr McGrath is a Director of the National Foundation for Medical Research and a Non-Executive Director for Servcorp Limited and 360 Capital Limited.



Alan Sullivan KC

Mr Sullivan is one of Australia's leading barristers. Mr Sullivan joined the bar in 1978 and has specialised in Appellate, Commercial Law, Equity, Insurance, Medical & Professional Negligence, Sports Law, Intellectual Property and Public Law. Mr Sullivan is currently Senior Commissioner, Cricket Australia Code of Conduct and President of the Football Federation of Australia Appeals Committee. Mr Sullivan is also a member of the Court of Arbitration for Sport, a Commissioner of the International Cricket Council Code of Conduct Commission and Director of the Family of League Foundation.



Wayne Pearce OAM

Mr Pearce is a former Kangaroos representative who also captained and coached the New South Wales State of Origin side. Mr Pearce is a business consultant and Director of Wayne Pearce Advantage and the Wayne Pearce Academy. Mr Pearce is Chair of the ARLC Innovation Committee and he is also Chair of the ARLC Player Safety Committee. Mr Pearce holds an Order of Australia medal for services to Rugby League and the community.



Dr Gary Weiss AM

Dr Weiss is Executive Director of Ariadne Australia Ltd, Chairman of Ardent Leisure Limited, and Cromwell Property Group. He is a Non-Executive Director of Myer Holdings Limited, Hearts & Minds Investments Limited, Thorney Opportunities Limited, the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute and The Centre for Independent Studies. Dr Weiss was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia in 2019 for significant services to business and to the community.



Professor Megan Davis

Professor Davis is a Scientia Professor, Pro Vice Chancellor and the Balnaves Chair in Constitutional Law, UNSW. Professor Davis is an Acting Commissioner of the NSW Land and Environment Court. Professor Davis is a constitutional law professor specialising in constitutional design and constitution building and one of the nation's leading public constitutional lawyers. Professor Davis is a co-recipient of the 2022 Sydney Peace Prize.



The Hon. Kate Jones

Ms Jones has more than 20 years' experience in senior leadership and government positions and now serves on numerous national boards. Ms Jones is an Executive Director for the Tech Council of Australia and on the board of the Institute of Molecular Bioscience. Ms Jones is an Independent Commissioner on the ARLC, Chair of the ARLC Participation Australia Committee and is also an Independent Director on the Paralympics Australia Board.



MESSAGE  
FROM THE CEO  
ANDREW ABDO



**ANDREW ABDO**

CEO

National Rugby League

**2023 stands as one of the most compelling and exciting seasons of Rugby League in recent history. New teams entered the NRL and NRLW Telstra Premierhips, a new international tournament – the Pacific Championships – commenced, and we enjoyed record TV audiences and live crowds.**

From grassroots participation right through to the elite game, Rugby League created new experiences for everyone and engaged more people than ever. New teams, new players and new fans.

In 2023, the NRL maintained a focus on three key areas:

**1. Providing the best sports entertainment experience**

» The 2023 NRL season delivered improvements in continuity and attacking play, meaning more tries per game, more line breaks and faster play the ball speeds.

» The NRL Premiership was also closer than ever. A third of all Premiership matches were decided by less than six points. In both the NRL and NRLW Premierhips, it came down to the very last match of the regular season to determine the configuration for the Finals Series.

» The NRLW play the ball speeds were up significantly and the overall quality of the Premiership has kept an upward trajectory. NRLW athletes exhibited the highest levels of speed, skill, intensity and entertainment in the history of the competition.

» The unprecedented strength of our game is only made possible through the passionate loyalty of Rugby League fans. Millions of fans turned out for their teams, resulting in a 25 per cent increase in live match attendance in season 2023. A record 171.8 million viewers made 2023 the most watched season ever.



# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO ANDREW ABDO

## 2. Creating the largest sports community in Australia and the Pacific

- » The Commission is focused on creating compelling touch, tag and tackle Rugby League experiences for all ages and abilities, and in 2023 I am pleased to say that total registered participants grew by 9 per cent.
- » In 2024, we will continue to expand participation in touch, tackle and tag Rugby League in clubs, schools and recreational formats.
- » I've had the pleasure of experiencing our game at a grassroots level, seeing up close the lasting friendships, connections and memories that only our truly special and unique Rugby League community can create.
- » We have the most passionate and dedicated team of volunteers, referees, coaches and participants and Rugby League will continue to make a positive difference in people's lives, both on and off the field.

## 3. Running an effective, efficient and innovative sports administration

- » Exceptional on field performances have generated outstanding financial returns, allowing for further investment in the game.
- » In 2023, we delivered a strong operating surplus, driven by both growth in revenues and an improving efficiency ratio.

- » We continue to invest in assets that will diversify our revenue streams, enhance fan experiences and provide a strong and sustainable future.
- » Our partners are deeply invested and connected in everything we do, and our game's financial security and growth would not be possible without them.

### Thank you

- » Thank you to our naming rights partner Telstra for an enduring partnership. Telstra's association with the NRL stands at 23 years and provides a positive impact for players, volunteers and club communities.
- » We welcomed Westpac as the NRL's official bank in 2023 as they became the official match ball sponsor for both the NRL and NRLW competitions.
- » KIA became the official naming rights partner of 'KIA Thursday Night Football' while KFC, Asahi, Hisense and Chemist Warehouse extended their partnerships.
- » Our partnership with government plays a huge role in our success. Whether at a local, state or federal level, we are deeply thankful for the spirit of collaboration afforded to us by governments of all jurisdictions.
- » In 2023, the Rotorua Lakes Council made the dream of the first ever All Stars in New Zealand a reality. Together the Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council helped us make Magic Round a complete sell out for the first time.

- » Thanks also to the South Australian Government who helped deliver State of Origin 1 at Adelaide Oval and the New South Wales Government who supported us for State of Origin 2, Women's State of Origin 2 and of course the unforgettable NRL and NRLW Grand Finals.

- » In 2023, we launched the inaugural Pacific Championships, with games played across Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. This was not possible without the support of the Australian and Papua New Guinea Governments.

- » Thank you to our broadcast partners, Nine, Fox Sports and Sky Sports New Zealand whose investment in support for the game is critical to its success.

- » Thank you to the players and for the new CBA agreed with the RLPA that sets up a transformational change in the relationship between the game and players as partners for the future.

- » Thank you to the Clubs and State Leagues for their contributions to a remarkable season.

- » On behalf of everyone connected with the game, I'd like to thank the Australian Rugby League Commission for its vision, passion and energy in ensuring Rugby League continues to grow and prosper. I acknowledge and thank Commission Chairman Peter V'landys AM for his strong leadership and wise counsel, and thank all Commissioners for their tireless dedication to the game.

- » I thank each and every member of the NRL team for their effort and enthusiasm in delivering season 2023.

- » Thank you to the loyal, passionate and enthusiastic participants, coaches, referees, volunteers and fans at every level of the game.

### Looking forward

- » The 2024 season will see an extended 38 weeks of football for fans and the first ever NRL schedule to feature Premiership matches across Australia, New Zealand and the United States.
- » The women's 2024 schedule continues the significant growth of the women's game and the elite competition, featuring 45 matches played over nine rounds across 15 venues. All teams will have more home matches than ever before.
- » 2024 will mark the biggest ever State of Origin series in the game's history, including three men's games, a three-match women's series for the first time, and continuation of the successful Under 19s matches.
- » We will continue our focus on developing the international game with the Pacific Championships to complete the 2024 season.
- » We will continue to work with all stakeholders to enhance the experience at grassroots level, seeking to provide as many touch, tag and tackle format competitions as possible, across all age groups, genders and geographies.

I cannot wait for season 2024 to kick off.

CHAPTER

# 01

COMPETITIONS REPORT





Penrith Panther's Nathan Cleary celebrates a try during the Grand Final against Brisbane Broncos.

## A new era commenced for the NRL Telstra Premiership in 2023 with the Dolphins joining the competition.

The Penrith Panthers became the first side in 40 years to win three premierships in a row, becoming the first team of the NRL era to achieve the feat, defeating the Brisbane Broncos in an extraordinary Grand Final in front of 81,947 people at Accor Stadium.

Panthers halfback Nathan Cleary won his second Clive Churchill Medal as player of the match and became only the third player to have won the award more than once.

The Panthers also claimed their third Minor Premiership in the last four seasons.

The NRL Telstra Premiership, including the Finals Series, was watched by a cumulative audience of 144.1m (up 8.8 per cent), including linear and streaming, making it the most watched season on record.

A total attendance of 329,255 (including Grand Final) was recorded for the 2023 NRL Telstra Premiership Finals Series.

Across the 2023 season, game margins were 1.3 points closer on average compared to 2022, while games were comparatively in the balance for longer this season. This was demonstrated by 31 per cent of all games being decided by six points or less (compared to 25 per cent in 2022).

The 2023 season delivered an increase in tries and line breaks per game and faster play the ball speed. The percentage of live play per game increased by 2.1 per cent this season and there were eight more play the balls per game on average compared to 2022.





## NRLW TELSTRA PREMIERSHIP

◀ Tamika Upton celebrates the Newcastle Knights win against the Gold Coast Titans after the NRLW Grand Final.

**Four Clubs entered the 2023 season for their debut season which saw the NRL Telstra Women's Premiership add 30 regular season matches to the schedule, with 10 Clubs vying to lift the trophy.**

For the first time, all matches throughout the season were broadcast on Nine and Fox Sports, meaning nearly 8.5m people watched NRLW over the course of the 2023 Premiership.

They saw Canberra Raiders, Cronulla Sharks, North Queensland Cowboys and Wests Tigers join the competition. All recorded wins within the first two rounds, and by the end of the regular season, Canberra Raiders were a win away from qualifying for the semi-finals. They fell at the last hurdle, meaning minor premiers Newcastle and the second-placed Sydney Roosters hosted semi finals for the first time – taking on Brisbane and Gold Coast respectively.

A record crowd of nearly 12,689 fans cheered the Knights to victory while the Titans upset premiership favourites the Roosters to set up what was to be a thrilling Grand Final at Accor Stadium. A come-from-behind victory to the Knights courtesy of some brilliance from Karyn Murphy medallist Tamika Upton thrilled the 40,649 fans at the ground and sealed back-to-back titles for the Novocastrians.





# HARVEY NORMAN ALL STARS



The Indigenous All Stars played the New Zealand Maori Kiwis for the All Stars Round at Rotorua International Stadium.

For the first time ever, the Harvey Norman All Stars matches were played in New Zealand.

Rotorua hosted the 2023 Harvey Norman All Stars, which saw the Indigenous Men's team prevail 28-24 over the Māori Men's team. Nicho Hynes was awarded the Preston Campbell Medal for player of the match.

The Māori Women's team won 16-12 over the Indigenous Women's team, with Gayle Broughton winning the Trish Hina Medal.

A crowd of 17,644 watched from Rotorua International Stadium.

Nothing could separate the two Touch Football teams with the match ending in a 10-10 draw.





**NRL Indigenous Round 2023 (Round 12) highlighted the importance of Moving Forward Together towards reconciliation.**

NRL Indigenous Round elevated and celebrated First Nations history and culture through the game and encouraged greater understanding across the Rugby League community.

Bringing the round to life across the weekend, all venues used their traditional custodian land names, matches were preceded by welcome ceremonies and Indigenous cultural performances, and teams took to the field in specially designed jerseys inspired by local Indigenous art and storytelling.

To help fans learn more about Indigenous land and history, and provide education on the Voice, the NRL provided a range of resources, information and stories via [NRL.com/indigenous](https://www.nrl.com/indigenous).

The NRL has supported the Uluru Statement From the Heart in full since 2017.

NRL Indigenous Round was delivered by DoorDash, which supported its commitment to Indigenous Australians via the DoorDash Scholarship Program. The program was created in 2021 to assist Indigenous students across the NRL School to Work Program with financial needs, to help them move forward in completing their HSC and pursue further education or employment.

Since 2021, DoorDash has helped 142 students through the program and in 2023, it pledged another \$30,000 to help more future leaders achieve their goals and aspirations.





## BEANIE FOR BRAIN CANCER ROUND



**More than \$3.5m was raised across the 2023 NRL Beanie for Brain Cancer Round (Round 18).**

In a special moment during 2023 Beanie Round, Mark Hughes presented beanie number 1,000,000 to the family of Beanie Round founder Matt Callander.

More than 140,000 Mark Hughes Foundation beanies were sold during the Beanie for Brain Cancer campaign.

Sportsbet donated \$72,000 after 72 tries were scored in Round 18 (\$1000 per try).

As part of the Big Three Trek, 61 trekkers departed McDonald Jones Stadium, Newcastle on Friday to walk 150km across three days to 4 Pines Park, raising more than \$254,000 for the Mark Hughes Foundation.



# AMPOL STATE OF ORIGIN

**A total of 176,398 people attended the three matches in a gripping Ampol State of Origin series, won 2-1 by Queensland.**

Queensland won Game One 26-18 in a come-from-behind win at Adelaide Oval, watched on by a crowd of 48,613. The Maroons then clinched the series in Game Two with a 32-6 triumph in front of 52,433 people at Suncorp Stadium.

NSW salvaged some pride with a 24-10 victory in Game Three at Accor Stadium before a crowd of 75,342.

Reuben Cotter was awarded the Wally Lewis Medal for Player of the Series.





# AMPOL WOMEN'S STATE OF ORIGIN

Ampol Women's State of Origin expanded beyond one match for the first time with a two-match series held at Commbank Stadium in Sydney and Townsville's Queensland Country Bank Stadium. The two-match series was to be decided on an aggregate points system in the event of the series resulting in a win apiece, with the overall points scored per team in the series to determine who would lift the shield.

Victory to Queensland 18-10 in Game One in front of a record crowd of 12,972 meant New South Wales needed to win by nine points of more in Game Two if they were to become back-to-back series winners.

The Game One result set up a tantalising contest in Townsville in front of another record crowd of 18,275. For the first half it was going all Queensland's way, but an enormous comeback effort in the second half by the Sky Blues brought the aggregate system into play when they took the lead. In the end, their 18-14 victory wasn't enough overall to claim the series and the shield returned to Queensland.

Tazmin Gray took out the Nellie Doherty Medal for Player of the Series, the second time she has been awarded the medal.

The NRL announced that the 2024 Women's State of Origin would for the first time become a three-match series, with all games to be played as standalone fixtures in Brisbane, Newcastle and Townsville.





# PRIME MINISTER'S XIII

>  
The Australian Women's  
PM's XIII defend against  
PNG Women's PM's XIII  
at Santos National  
Football Stadium in PNG.

## The Prime Minister's XIII matches returned to PNG for the first time since 2018.

The Australian Women's PM's XIII triumphed 56-4 over PNG Women's PM's XIII at Santos National Football Stadium, Port Moresby, while the Australian Men's PM's XIII won 30-18 against PNG Men's PM's XIII in a tight affair.

The PM's XIII matches were played as part of a huge weekend of Rugby League in PNG which saw the ADF take on the PNG Defence Force in both men's and women's and the Australian Schoolboys and Schoolgirls teams take on the Under 18s PNG boys and girls teams.







New Zealand played Samoa at Eden Park for Round 2 of the Pacific Championships.

The Pacific Championships was played over four weeks at the conclusion of the NRL Premiership season involving men's and women's teams from Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Cook Islands.

Six men's teams and seven women's teams took part in the 2023 Championships across two pools. The 2023 Championships included two match days in Australia, two in New Zealand and four in Papua New Guinea.

In the men's tournament, New Zealand defeated Australia 30-0 in the Pacific Cup final and Papua New Guinea defeated Fiji 32-12 in the Pacific Bowl final.





Hamiso Tabuai-Fidow equalled a 115-year-old premiership record for consecutive tryscoring for a new NRL Club in Round 6.



» Dolphins fullback Hamiso Tabuai-Fidow equalled a 115-year-old premiership record for consecutive tryscoring for a new premiership Club in his team's clash with North Queensland at Queensland Country Bank Stadium in Round 6. Tabuai-Fidow scored at least one try in the first six games played by the Dolphins, equalling a record set by winger Horrie Miller, who scored in the first six games played by Eastern Suburbs in 1908.

» The Dolphins equalled the record for the greatest comeback win in premiership history when they defeated the Gold Coast Titans 28-26 at Suncorp Stadium in Round 8. The Dolphins trailed 26-0 late in the first half before dominating the second period. The Dolphins equalled the record of North Queensland, who came from 26-0 down to defeat Penrith 36-28 in 1998.

» Veteran mentor Wayne Bennett reached the remarkable milestone of 900 games as premiership coach when the Dolphins played Cronulla in Round 10. After his milestone game, Bennett's career record stood at 563 wins, 323 losses and 14 draws for a winning percentage of 62.6. His premiership coaching career kicked off with the Canberra Raiders in 1987. He has won seven premiership titles.

» Rabbitohs winger Alex Johnston moved to outright third on the list of all-time premiership tryscorers when he scored against Brisbane at Sunshine Coast Stadium in Round 21. Hall of Fame winger Ken Irvine heads the list with 212 tries ahead of Billy Slater on 190. Johnston overtook Steve Menzies to move to 181.

» Sydney Roosters winger Daniel Tupou broke the all-time record for most tries for the foundation Club when he scored against Brisbane at The Gabba in Round 22. Former captain Anthony Minichiello had held the record, with 139 tries.

» Gold Coast Titans winger Alofiana Khan-Pereira broke the Club record of team-mate David Fifita for most tries in a season when he scored against North Queensland at Cbus Super Stadium in Round 22. Khan-Pereira eclipsed Fifita's 2021 record of 17 tries for the season.

» Broncos halfback Adam Reynolds became only the second player in premiership history to kick 1,000 goals when he landed his ninth goal of the game against Parramatta Eels at The Gabba in Round 24.

» Dolphins winger Jamayne Isaako broke the record for most points by a player at a new premiership Club in his team's clash with North Queensland in Round 26 when he overtook the mark of 224 points set by Wests Tigers winger Joel Caine in 2000. Isaako finished the game on 230 points.

» Dolphins winger Jamayne Isaako became the first player to finish a (regular) season as the leading tryscorer and leading pointscorer since Immortal Mal Meninga in 1990 (with Canberra). Isaako topped the tryscoring tally with 24, one ahead of Newcastle winger Dominic Young and headed the point scorers list with 244.

» Newcastle winger Dominic Young broke the Knights' Club record for most tries in a season when he scored twice in his team's clash with St George Illawarra at Netstrata Jubilee Stadium in Round 27. Young surpassed the record of 21 tries set by Timana Tahu (2002) and equalled by Akuila Uate (2010) to finish the night on 23.

» Winger Dallin Watene-Zelezniak broke the Warriors' record for most tries in a season, established by Francis Meli in 2003, with 23, and equalled by David Fusitu'a in 2018, when he scored twice in the preliminary final against Brisbane Broncos at Suncorp Stadium.



Jarrod Croker and his family celebrate his 300th NRL appearance for the Canberra Raiders in Round 15.

**Jesse Bromwich, Ben Hunt, Jarrod Croker and Daly Cherry-Evans made their 300th NRL appearances during the 2023 NRL Telstra Premiership season.**

Dolphins captain Bromwich made his 300th NRL appearance when the NRL's 17th team played St George Illawarra at WIN Stadium in Round Five.

St George Illawarra captain Hunt surpassed the milestone when the Dragons played North Queensland at Queensland Country Bank Stadium in Round 11.

Croker made his 300th NRL appearance when the Raiders clashed with the Warriors at GIO Stadium in Round 15, becoming just the 18th player to reach the 300-game milestone for a single Club.

Manly captain Cherry-Evans became the 49th player to appear in 300 NRL games when he took the field against St George Illawarra at WIN Stadium in Round 22.





# 2023 RETIRING CLASS

The following players were recognised as the Official Retiring Class of 2023:

Name	Club
Andrew McCullough	St George-Illawarra Dragons
James Tamou	North Queensland Cowboys
Jarrold Croker	Canberra Raiders
Brad Takairangi	Parramatta Eels
Mitch Rein	Parramatta Eels
Josh Reynolds	Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs
Korbin Sims	St George Illawarra Dragons
Daniel Alvaro	St George Illawarra Dragons

Name	Club
Renee Targett	St George Illawarra Dragons
Lachlan Coote	North Queensland Cowboys
Sam Williams	Canberra Raiders
Andrew Fifita	Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks
Josh Hodgson	Parramatta Eels
Tevita Pangai-Junior	Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs
Sam Bremner	Sydney Roosters





# THE DALLY M AWARD



**Newcastle Knights took out a rare Dally M double, with Kalyn Ponga winning the men's Dally M Medal and Tamika Upton earning the women's Medal.**

The two fullbacks capped an historic night for the Knights, with both men's and women's medals going to players from the same Club.

Ponga became the first Knights men's player to win the award since Danny Buderus in 2004 during a ceremony at Winx Stand at Royal Randwick Racecourse.

Ponga polled 56 points, taking out the Dally M Medal ahead of New Zealand Warriors halfback Shaun Johnson (55 points) and Cronulla Sutherland Sharks halfback Nicho Hynes (54 points).

The Dally M Medal was determined by a 3-2-1 voting system from two independent judges each game for the first time ever.

A Dally M Female Team of the Year was named alongside a Dally M Male Team of the Year during a fully integrated awards ceremony.

Brisbane Broncos Grand Final skipper Adam Reynolds won Dally M Captain of the Year. The Broncos also had four players in the Dally M Team of the Year – centre Herbie Farnworth, five-eighth Ezra Mam, prop Payne Haas and lock Pat Carrigan. The Panthers earned two positions in the Team of the Year – centre Stephen Crichton and second-rower Liam Martin – while Sunia Turuva was also crowned Rookie of the Year.

Warriors mentor Andrew Webster won Coach of the Year honours, as reward for his Club's stunning rise in 2023, while Gold Coast Titans' Karyn Murphy was named Coach of the Year for the NRLW.

2022 Dally M winner Nicho Hynes won the Provan-Summons Medal, having also won the prestigious award last year.

Expansion Club the Dolphins earned the Peter Frilingos Headline Moment Award for their first-up win over the Roosters, while winger Jamayne Isaako won a Dally M trifecta, winning Winger of the Year, the Ken Irvine Medal for top try-scorer, and the top point scorer awards.

Male Awards	Name
<b>Dally M Medal</b>	Kalyn Ponga – Newcastle Knights
<b>Dally M Fullback of the Year</b>	Kalyn Ponga – Newcastle Knights
<b>Dally M Winger of the Year</b>	Dallin Watene-Zelezniak – Warriors
<b>Dally M Winger of the Year</b>	Jamayne Isaako – Dolphins
<b>Dally M Centre of the Year</b>	Stephen Crichton – Penrith Panthers
<b>Dally M Centre of the Year</b>	Herbie Farnworth – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Dally M Five-Eighth of the Year</b>	Ezra Mam – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Dally M Halfback of the Year</b>	Shaun Johnson – Warriors
<b>Dally M Prop of the Year</b>	Payne Haas – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Dally M Prop of the Year</b>	Addin Fonua-Blake – Warriors
<b>Dally M Hooker of the Year</b>	Harry Grant – Melbourne Storm
<b>Dally M Second-Row of the Year</b>	Liam Martin – Penrith Panthers
<b>Dally M Second-Row of the Year</b>	David Fifita – Gold Coast Titans

Male Awards	Name
<b>Dally M Lock of the Year</b>	Patrick Carrigan – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Peter Frilingos Headline Moment</b>	Dolphins' "phin-credible" Roosters boilover
<b>Provan-Summons Medal</b>	Nicho Hynes – Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks
<b>Dally M Coach of the Year</b>	Andrew Webster – Warriors
<b>Dally M Rookie of the Year</b>	Sunia Turuva – Penrith Panthers
<b>Dally M Captain of the Year</b>	Adam Reynolds – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Dally M Try of the Year</b>	Mathew Feagai – St George Illawarra Dragons
<b>Dally M Tackle of the Year</b>	Haumole Olakau'atu – Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles
<b>Ken Irvine Medal</b>	Jamayne Isaako – Dolphins
<b>NRL Top Point Scorer</b>	Jamayne Isaako – Dolphins
<b>VB Hardest Working Player of the Year</b>	Addin Fonua-Blake – Warriors



# THE DALLY M AWARD

Female Awards	Name
<b>Dally M Medal</b>	Tamika Upton – Newcastle Knights
<b>Dally M Fullback of the Year</b>	Tamika Upton – Newcastle Knights
<b>Dally M Winger of the Year</b>	Jakiya Whitfeld – Wests Tigers
<b>Dally M Winger of the Year</b>	Julia Robinson – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Dally M Centre of the Year</b>	Isabelle Kelly – Sydney Roosters
<b>Dally M Centre of the Year</b>	Mele Hufanga – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Dally M Five-Eighth of the Year</b>	Tarryn Aiken – Sydney Roosters
<b>Dally M Halfback of the Year</b>	Ali Briggshaw – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Dally M Prop of the Year</b>	Shannon Mato – Gold Coast Titans
<b>Dally M Prop of the Year</b>	Sarah Togatuki – Wests Tigers
<b>Dally M Hooker of the Year</b>	Destiny Brill – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Dally M Second-Row of the Year</b>	Yasmin Clydsdale – Newcastle Knights
<b>Dally M Second-Row of the Year</b>	Olivia Kernick – Sydney Roosters

Female Awards	Name
<b>Dally M Lock of the Year</b>	Simaima Taufa – Canberra Raiders
<b>Provan-Summons Medal</b>	Lavinia Gould – Brisbane Broncos
<b>Dally M Coach of the Year</b>	Karyn Murphy – Gold Coast Titans
<b>Dally M Rookie of the Year</b>	Annessa Biddle – Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks
<b>Dally M Captain of the Year</b>	Simaima Taufa – Canberra Raiders
<b>Dally M Try of the Year</b>	Jesse Southwell – Newcastle Knights
<b>Dally M Tackle of the Year</b>	Jakiya Whitfeld – Wests Tigers
<b>NRLW Top Try Scorer</b>	Teagan Berry – St George Illawarra Dragons
<b>NRLW Top Point Scorer</b>	Ali Briggshaw – Brisbane Broncos







St George Illawarra Dragons' Teagan Berry plays the Wests Tigers at CommBank Stadium during Round 5.

Award	Name
<b>The Players' Champion</b>	Teagan Berry and Shaun Johnson
<b>Rookie of the Year</b>	Annessa Biddle and Jahream Bula
<b>Dennis Tutty Award</b>	Chelsea Lenarduzzi and Wade Graham
<b>The Players' Dream Team (NRL)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reece Walsh</li> <li>2. Dallin Watene-Zelezniak</li> <li>3. Herbie Farnworth</li> <li>4. Stephen Crichton</li> <li>5. Brian To'o</li> <li>6. Cameron Munster</li> <li>7. Shaun Johnson</li> <li>8. Payne Haas</li> <li>9. Harry Grant</li> <li>10. Addin Fonua-Blake</li> <li>11. Haumole Olakau'atu</li> <li>12. Liam Martin</li> <li>13. Patrick Carrigan</li> </ol>
<b>The Players' Dream Team (NRLW)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teagan Berry</li> <li>2. Jakiya Whitfeld</li> <li>3. Mele Hufanga</li> <li>4. Shanice Parker</li> <li>5. Annessa Biddle</li> <li>6. Tarryn Aiken</li> <li>7. Ali Briggishaw</li> <li>8. Shannon Mato</li> <li>9. Emma Manzelmann</li> <li>10. Sarah Togatuki</li> <li>11. Yasmin Clydsdale</li> <li>12. Otesa Pule</li> <li>13. Simaima Taufa</li> </ol>



# 2023 ACADEMIC TEAM OF THE YEAR



**Ethan Bullemor – Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles**  
Bachelor of Advanced Economics  
(University of Queensland)

**Nat Butcher – Sydney Roosters**  
Bachelor of Commerce – Data Analytics  
(Australian Catholic University)

**Shenae Ciesiolka – Brisbane Broncos**  
Bachelor of Education – PDHPE  
(University of Southern Queensland)

**Yasmin Clydesdale – Newcastle Knights**  
Graduate Certificate in Career Development  
(Australian Catholic University)  
Bachelor of Education  
(University of Newcastle)

**Moeaki Fotuika – Gold Coast Titans**  
Certificate IV in Youth Work  
(DaV'ange Training)  
Certificate IV in Family Intervention  
(DaV'ange Training)

**Reuben Garrick – Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles**  
Carpentry Apprenticeship  
(TAFE NSW)  
Bachelor of Property and Real Estate  
(Deakin University)

**Luke Keary – Sydney Roosters**  
Master of Business Administration  
(University of New South Wales)  
Bachelor of Business  
(Australian Catholic University)  
Certificate IV in Fitness  
(Mission Australia)  
Certificate IV in Small Business  
(Elite Athlete Business School)

↑  
Luke Keary celebrates a try against St George Illawarra Dragons in Round 8 at Allianz Stadium.

↑  
Ethan Bullemor battles Wests Tigers' defence in the rain at Campbelltown Sports Stadium in Round 8.

**Blake Lawrie – St George Illawarra Dragons**  
Building Surveying Certificate  
(College of Professional Development)

**Mark Nicholls – Dolphins**  
Graduate Certificate of Program Management  
(Queensland University of Technology)  
Diploma of Business  
(Australian Vocational Training Company)  
Bachelor of Sport Management and Coaching Science  
(University of Canberra)

**Cory Paix – Brisbane Broncos**  
Carpentry Apprenticeship (Housing Industry Australia and Reebuild Constructions)

**Kaitlyn Phillips – Gold Coast Titans**  
Bachelor of Echocardiography and Cardiac Physiology  
(Central Queensland University)  
Bachelor of Paramedicine  
(Charles Sturt University)

**Tayla Predebon – Newcastle Knights**  
Bachelor of Physiotherapy  
(University of Newcastle)

**Tyran Wishart – Melbourne Storm**  
Bachelor of Construction Management and Property  
(University of New South Wales)  
Carpentry Apprenticeship  
(Trades Institute Victoria)





Kasey Badger and Belinda Sharpe at the Referee Announcement Press Conference at Rugby League Central.

The 2023 season saw Belinda Sharpe and Kasey Badger make officiating history in Round 27 as the first females to referee in the NRL under the single referee system.

Ashley Klein refereed all three Ampol State of Origin matches, and Adam Gee was appointed to referee the 2023 NRL Telstra Premiership Grand Final for the first time.

The most capped referee ever, Ben Cummins, retired after the 2023 season. Cummins finished his career with 443 NRL matches to his name, including 5 Grand Finals.





← Ashley Klein was awarded the Col Pearce Medal for Referee of the Year.

### Col Pearce Medal for Referee of the Year

**Ashley Klein**

### Max Tomsett Award for Touch Judge of the Year

**David Munro**

### NRL Debut as Referee

**Kasey Badger** 3rd September Round 27  
Titans v Bulldogs, Cbus Super Stadium

### NRL Debut as Touch Judge

**Dan Munroe** 26th March Round 4  
Warriors v Bulldogs, Mt Smart Stadium  
**Damian Brady** 1st April Round 5  
Sea Eagles v Knights, Glen Willow Stadium  
**Dan Schwass** 27th August Round 26  
Bulldogs v Sea Eagles, Accor Stadium

### 350 Games as Referee

**Gerard Sutton** 20th April Round 8  
Rabbitohs v Panthers, Accor Stadium

### 250 Games as Referee

**Grant Atkins** 15th July Round 20  
Roosters v Storm, Sydney Cricket Ground

### 200 Games as a Touch Judge

**David Munro** 3rd June Round 14  
Sharks v Broncos, PointsBet Stadium

### 100 Games as a Touch Judge

**Drew Oultram** 26th March Round 4  
Dragons v Sharks, Netstrata Jubilee Stadium  
**Peter Gough** 9th June Round 15  
Sea Eagles v Dolphins, 4 Pines Park  
**Todd Smith** 17th June Round 16  
Knights v Roosters, McDonald Jones Stadium  
**Chris Sutton** 17th June Round 16  
Eels v Sea Eagles, CommBank Stadium

### NRL All Stars Māori Men's vs Indigenous – Men's Match Officials

**Referee** Gerard Sutton  
**Touch Judges** Belinda Sharpe and Drew Oultram  
**NRL Bunker** Adam Gee

### NRL All Stars Māori Women vs Indigenous – Women Match Officials

**Referee** Rochelle Tamarua  
**Touch Judges** Paki Parkinson and Viggo Rasmussen  
**NRL Bunker** Adam Gee

### Ampol Men's State of Origin – Series Match Officials

**Referee** Ashley Klein  
**Touch Judges** Drew Oultram, Phil Henderson and David Munro  
**NRL Bunker** Grant Atkins and Ben Galea

### Ampol Women's State of Origin – Series Match Officials

**Referees** Adam Gee, Belinda Sharpe  
**Touch Judges** David Munro, Belinda Sharpe, Darian Furner and Wyatt Raymond  
**NRL Bunker** Kasey Badger and Ben Galea

### Ampol Men's Under 19s – State of Origin Match Officials

**Referee** Darian Furner  
**Touch judges** Dan Munroe and Clayton Wills  
**NRL Bunker** Kasey Badger and Matt Noyen

### Ampol Under 19s Women's – State of Origin Match Officials

**Referee** Rochelle Tamarua  
**Touch Judges** Dan Schwass and Tori Wilkie  
**NRL Bunker** Matt Noyen and Kasey Badger

### Australian PM'S XIII – Women's V PNG PM'S XIII Women's

**Referee** Ziggy Przeklasa-Adamski

### Australian PM'S XIII – Men's V PNG PM'S XIII Men's

**Referee** Peter Gough  
**Touch Judges** Dan Schwass and Clayton Wills

### NRL Telstra Premiership – Grand Final Match Officials

**Referee** Adam Gee  
**Touch Judges** David Munro and Chris Sutton  
**NRL Bunker** Ashley Klein and Ben Galea

### NRLW Telstra Premiership – Grand Final Match Officials

**Referee** Belinda Sharpe  
**Touch Judges** Mitch Currie and Rochelle Tamarua  
**NRL Bunker** Kasey Badger and Ben Cummins

### NRL State Championship – Grand Final Match Officials

**Referee** Wyatt Raymond  
**Touch Judges** Cameron Paddy and Tyson Brough  
**NRL Bunker** Chris Butler and Ben Cummins

### Pacific Championships – Pacific Cup Final Match Officials – New Zealand v Australia

**Referee** Adam Gee  
**Touch Judges** David Munro and Chris Sutton  
**NRL Bunker** Ashley Klein and Peter Gough

### Pacific Championships – Pacific Bowl Final Match Officials – Papua New Guinea v Fiji

**Referee** Grant Atkins  
**Touch Judges** Todd Smith and Liam Kennedy  
**Video Referee** Gerard Sutton and Ziggy Przeklasa-Adamski



**Rugby League lost South Sydney Rabbitohs legend John Sattler, along with an array of players, coaches, administrators, and Rugby League identities.**

Sattler, a member of the NRL Hall of Fame, played 16 matches for Australia including four Test matches. He played in six Grand Finals with South Sydney, winning four as Captain, and was honoured as one of Australia's greatest 100 players in the Centenary season in 2008.

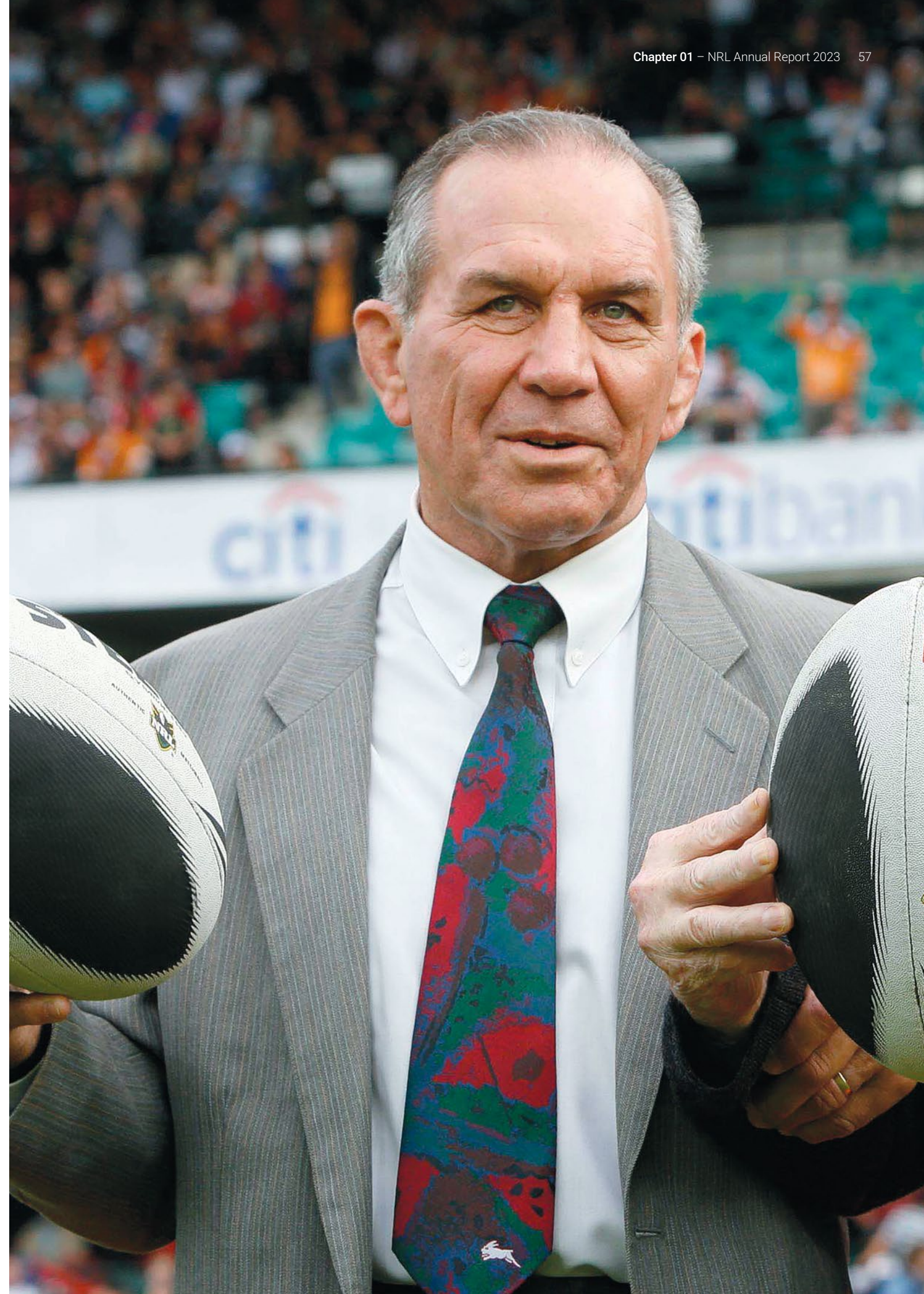
The NRL also lost a pioneer of Australian sport, Lionel Morgan, who was the first Indigenous Australian to represent Australia in any major code. Morgan played two Rugby League tests for Australia against a touring French team in 1960 before he was chosen to represent Australia at the 1960 World Cup in England.

The NRL also mourned the loss of administrators Paul Broughton OAM, Alan Overton OAM and John McDonald AC, as well as Kyle Turner, Bob Cooper, Ken Wilson, John 'Chow' Hayes, and singer Tina Turner, who became synonymous with the sport.

John Sattler celebrating 100 years of the South Sydney Rabbitohs in 2008 at Sydney Cricket Ground.

Tim Murphy*	Kyle White	Matt Johnston
Keith Outten*	Jack Lumsden	Dr Merv Cross OAM
Jim Cody*	Phil Elliss	Lionel Morgan
Dennis Spagarino*	Jeff Withers	John McDonald AC
Paul Broughton OAM*	Billy Bischoff Jnr	Tommy Ryan
Bob Cooper*	Dr John Yeo	John 'Chow' Hayes
Roy Ferguson*	Kevin Considine	Barry Ross
Ken Wilson*	Don Fenton	Warren Saunders
Tony Charlton*	Tina Turner	Bobby Bugden
Brian Walsh	Alan Overton OAM	Paul Sait
John Sattler	Kyle Turner	
	Tom Melville	

\* late 2022







CHAPTER

# 02

PARTNERSHIPS REPORT





The 2023 NRL Telstra Premiership season has marked a significant milestone with substantial revenue growth and ground-breaking game day innovations, strengthening our commercial partnerships and enhancing the overall fan experience.

In 2023, NRL commenced a new five-year naming rights partnership with Telstra across both the men's and women's Premierships. The extension will take the partnership to 26 years and will help continue to grow the men's and women's Telstra Premierships, ensure more people are connected to Rugby League and continue to improve the overall experience for fans, participants and volunteers.

We also welcomed new partners of major brands including Westpac, KIA and Arnott's Shapes.

Westpac has become NRL's official bank and payment platform, with support across the men's and women's competition and extension into other major events and elite teams. Westpac also became the official match ball sponsor, featured on the NRL and NRLW competition balls, as well as across NRL RISE Rookie Academy apparel. Their partnerships have helped NRL invest in meaningful community initiatives and helped the game grow female grassroots participation.

KIA became the official naming rights partner of KIA Thursday Night Football while also taking on key media assets throughout all NRL major events including Premiership matches, State of Origin and Magic Round Brisbane.

Asahi, Hisense and Chemist Warehouse all commenced new partnerships with the NRL in 2023, extending their long-standing partnerships with Rugby League, which deliver benefits to our fans and their customers.







KFC extended its partnership into KFC Friday Night Footy. Alongside the renewal KFC engaged with Shannon Noll to create a new 2023 footy season 'Fried Night Footy' anthem to celebrate the start of the NRL Premiership season. Shannon also headlined at State of Origin Game One at Suncorp Stadium.

In 2023, the Magic Round event reached new heights as the NRL elevated the fan experience with enhanced offerings. Present at the event were new branded activation containers, providing fans with the opportunity to engage and test their skills against our elite athletes. These activities included Solo Virtual Kick, Telstra Virtual Race, Be a Commentator, and Ball Skills and Drills. This year fans had the opportunity to win the Ultimate Magic Ticket at the event, a prize that included every major NRL event, flights and accommodation for the year.

In partnership with Westpac, the 'Westpac Catch and Keep' initiative was introduced at designated NRL Major events. This program offered fans in the stands the chance to retain a match ball as a distinctive souvenir when they successfully caught one. This exciting opportunity was activated at key events such as Magic Round, Women's Ampol State of Origin, Ampol State of Origin, and the Grand Final.

During the Origin series, Ampol continued its highly acclaimed Ampol Little Origin initiative, captivating the dreams of young Rugby League enthusiasts. This program allowed aspiring kids to envision themselves emulating their Origin Heroes, wearing the revered jerseys of the Blues or Maroons, and ultimately representing either NSW or QLD on the grand stage of the State of Origin. Participants not only had the unique

opportunity to engage in an official NRL clinic led by legendary NRL figures but also gained access to an exclusive NRL League Stars learning session. The pinnacle of this experience was the once-in-a-lifetime chance to partake in a halftime match at a live Origin game. Going beyond the field, Ampol demonstrated its commitment to community development by generously donating \$5,000 school grants to each of the ten represented schools. This donation aimed to provide crucial funding for grassroots community initiatives, ultimately enhancing the quality of education for young children.

Telstra celebrated their love for footy, launching a new national campaign 'Telstra Footy Country' to shine a light on grassroots sports. Telstra demonstrated their support for grassroots footy and the communities by delivering the NRL Telstra Footy Country

Tour. The tour took both NRL and NRLW Telstra Premiership trophies on the road and supported grassroots footy across New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria from 6th September through to the Grand Final on 1st October. The tour gave kids access to NRL legends and players, footy clinics and community events. The tour engaged with over 55 schools and clubs, reaching approximately 10,000 kids and regional community participants, starting in the remote community of Aurukun in Far North Queensland. Telstra helped support identified communities in need by donating new Rugby League packs filled with new gear to equip and inspire the next generation.



To extend the support into grassroots, Telstra continued the Telstra Junior Club Grants initiative, donating over \$200,000 worth of grants to 72 regional and nominated clubs across the country. Each junior Rugby League club received \$3,000 per club to help cover everything from player development through to much needed equipment and registration fees.

Sportsbet's annual Try July campaign returned in 2023 as players across the NRL and NRLW unveiled their try-scoring celebrations to help raise funds for a special part of the Rugby League family.

For every try celebration in July this year – featuring four rounds of NRL, two rounds of NRLW and the third State of Origin fixture – Sportsbet donated \$5,000 to the recovery efforts of Nathan Stapleton and Daniel Anderson. This year the initiative raised \$400,000, the best on record.

The Grand Final Fan Fest made its debut at a new location, the Overseas Passenger Terminal, marking a significant shift for this iconic event. Spanning three exciting days, the festival boasted a line-up of player appearances and engaging activations by major partners such as Telstra, Harvey Norman, KFC, Chemist Warehouse, and Solo. Attendees were treated to KFC food giveaways, interactive experiences like Solo Virtual Kick, and a dedicated Harvey Norman kid zone. The excitement reached a peak with hourly giveaways from over 15 partners, offering participants diverse opportunities to win coveted prizes, including the chance to walk away with Hisense TVs each day. The move to the Overseas Passenger Terminal added a fresh and dynamic dimension to the Grand Final Fan Fest, creating an unforgettable experience for all who attended.





Digital partnerships across 2023 saw continued success across both organic NRL content as well as production and amplification of bespoke NRL led content, across NRL digital channels.

The Youi Life Changers series continued for another year, highlighting key moments in the lives and careers of notable Rugby League personalities, as well as NRL referees.

The Westpac “Art of the Catch” content series was launched, connecting the Westpac “Catch & Keep” activation to our wide-ranging audience on social media.

Telstra Hersday returned, with a refreshed format, to celebrate the NRLW competition and players. Shared every Thursday of the NRLW Season, the series highlighted one player from each NRLW Club, sharing a unique story on their career.

Along with Telstra Hersday, the Telstra Trackers series was extended into 2023, with an increased focus on Women’s State of Origin. The series outperformed expectations with some social posts performing to +1000 per cent of the average.

The Bundy Mixer was back for its second year, breaking new ground with more registered players and continuing to be a ground-breaking concept as the world’s first mixed gender fantasy sports competition.

## Our Valued Partners

### Commercial



### Broadcast





**Our ongoing partnerships with State and Federal Governments have been incredibly crucial throughout 2023, with their continued support for the NRL and NRLW Premierships, major events and our key community programs.**

2023 saw great success across our major events which wouldn't have been possible without the investment and collaboration from our Government Partners. We wish to extend our thanks to the Rotorua Lakes Council for helping us take All Stars to New Zealand for the first time. The Queensland Government and the Brisbane City Council helped us reach new heights with Magic Round being sold out each day for the first time. The South Australian Government helped deliver State of Origin One at Adelaide Oval, the first time we were able to deliver an Origin there without COVID restrictions. The New South Wales Government provided great support for men's and women's State of Origin matches in Sydney and the Grand Finals.

In 2023 we launched the inaugural Pacific Championships, with games played across Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. The Queensland Government supported the matches at Queensland Country Bank Stadium and the Victorian Government supported the matches at AAMI Park. Our partnership with the Australian and Papua New Guinean Governments enabled the Pacific Bowl matches to be hosted in Papua New Guinea and we'd like to extend our sincere appreciation to the governments for their contribution and commitment to making Rugby League the number one sport in the Pacific. Additionally, we are incredibly appreciative of the Australian Government's continued support for important programs such as School to Work, Battlefields to Footy Fields, Vocational Education and Training Pathways, State of Mind and the broader programs within the Pacific.

The NRL would like to also acknowledge the New South Wales and Victorian Governments for their investment into important programs such as In League in Harmony and State of Mind.

  
The Hon. Pat Conroy,  
Prime Minister the  
Hon. Anthony Albanese  
and the Hon. Kate Jones  
at the announcement  
of the 2023 Pacific  
Championship in Brisbane.





CHAPTER

# 03

FAN EXPERIENCE REPORT





# DIGITAL AND CONTENT



←  
NRLW content performed strongly in 2023, with an expanded NRLW season delighting and engaging fans.

**The NRL Digital Network – which is developed and run by the NRL in partnership with Telstra, NRL Clubs, QRL and NSWRL – continued to ignite the passion of Rugby League fans in 2023.**

The 2023 season marked the renewal of NRL’s highly successful digital partnership with Telstra. Telstra and the NRL launched a rebuilt NRL Mobile App, with the aim of delivering the most intuitive, entertaining, and trusted sports app in Australia. After launch, fans visited the app 7 per cent more times per week, spending 16 per cent more time each visit.

The NRL reached the 3m milestone for NRL Account, the fan identity platform which enables fans a tailored experience and benefits across the NRL Network, with 450,000 new fans registering.

The NRL’s digital content strategy in 2023 focused on delivering engaging short-form video and continuing to provide outstanding editorial content for Rugby League fans who

consumed on average a massive 3.5m videos per week across NRL.com, NRL App and YouTube, up 29 per cent year-on-year.

The NRL focused on delivering more engaging and localised content for fans in New Zealand and the Pacific, leaning into peak season moments like All Stars, PMs XIII and the Pacific Championships.

Social Media and YouTube continued to help us reach new fans in 2023. YouTube video views grew 40 per cent year-on-year. Our cumulative social following grew 10.7 per cent year-on-year – driven largely by youth-focused channels as we increased our lead as the largest Australian sport on TikTok with 1.22m followers (+21 per cent), and grew +14 per cent followers on Instagram (1.63m).

On NRL.com, State of Origin video views were up 16 per cent year-on-year. State of Origin was one of the NRL’s most successful organic social media campaign for 2023, with content reaching 27m views on TikTok.

NRLW content performed strongly in 2023, with an expanded NRLW season delighting and engaging fans. On NRL.com, NRLW content views were up 31 per cent, and video views up 48 per cent compared to 2022. The most viewed video across all NRL social media accounts was a highlights package of Emma Manzelmann (9.4m views). Five of the Top Ten viewed videos on NRL social media came from the NRLW 2023 Season.

In 2024, NRL Digital and Content will continue to focus on optimisation of fan experience, supporting the game’s expansion into growth markets, and delivering exceptional content, experiences and digital services for fans, the game and its stakeholders.

Telstra and the NRL look forward to delivering an even better digital experience and game-changing innovation in the new NRL App in 2024.

3.5m Average weekly users on the digital network.

9% Increase in visits to the NRL network (year-on-year).

3.5m Average weekly video views on NRL.com, NRL App and Youtube (up 29% year-on-year).

3.1m NRL accounts (up 17% year-on-year).

12% Increase in fantasy and tipping registrations (year-on-year).

6.95m Social media followers (+10.7% growth through the season).

\* Numbers represent regular season



# MARKETING AND TICKETING

Having established a new Masterbrand in 2022 – UNREAL – the NRL continued to build on the platform in 2023, kicking off the NRL Telstra Premiership season with 'Run to What's Real', a TVC and multi-channel campaign showcasing the excitement of real fans to get back to live NRL games after the off-season. The campaign helped usher in a record-breaking start to the season, with attendance up 24.9 per cent and viewership up 15.2 per cent across the first three rounds.

The marketing momentum extended across major events, with a first-ever three-day sell-out at NRL Magic Round Brisbane, new crowd records at both Women's State of Origin games, multiple Finals Series sell-outs and a second successive capacity Grand Final in Sydney.

In total, over 700,000 fans attended the NRL's major events in 2023, with over 60,000 (9 per cent) of these attending a major event for the first time. This growth was also reflected in the game's overall fan base, which increased to 9.7m (up 8 per cent on 2022), and across the following key marketing performance indicators:

Year	Total NRL fans	NPS	Brand health
2022	9.0m	30.4pts	29.1pts
2023	9.7m	31.1pts	30.4pts



Fans enjoy the Magic Round at Suncorp Stadium.



# GAME DAY EXPERIENCE REPORT



**2023 was the biggest and most-attended season in NRL history commencing in February with the revamped Pre-Season Challenge and ending in November with the newly-created Pacific Championships, providing more opportunities than ever for fans to see their heroes in action.**

The pre-season kicked off with the All Stars match being played in New Zealand for the first time at Rotorua International Stadium and featured performances from local star Luke Whaanga, Mitch Tambo, Reigan and Jackson Owens. The super-charged Pre-Season Challenge culminated with the World Club Challenge at BlueBet Stadium where, much to the delight of a strong contingent of travelling fans, St.Helens R.F.C. defeated the Penrith Panthers by a drop goal in an extra-time thriller.

Magic Round continued to reach new heights with all three days sold out for the first time and more fun than ever for fans both inside

and outside the stadium. It was the greatest fan precinct yet featuring interactive sponsor activations, skill testers, an array of food and drink options and live music keeping everyone entertained all weekend.

Game One of the Ampol State of Origin Series returned to Adelaide for the first time since 2020 where rock legends, The Living End, opened the night with some of their greatest hits. A sell-out crowd in Brisbane for Game Two heard Shannon Noll take the stage before the Maroons secured the series victory. New Zealand stars SIX60 concluded the series entertainment in Sydney in front of 75,342 fans.

The season featured the traditional themed rounds including Multicultural Round, Indigenous Round, Beanie for Brain Cancer Round and Harvey Norman Women in League Round, providing the opportunity to celebrate the game's diversity and raise awareness and money for fantastic causes.

Dally M Medal night returned to Royal Randwick with Knights stars Tamika Upton and Kalyn Ponga taking out the top individual awards while Peking Duk entertained attendees along with Dale Finucane and his heart-warming cover of 'The Best'. Grand Final week also featured the three-day NRL Fan Fest at Circular Quay where fans once again had the chance to get close to, and hear from, their heroes.

The cast of the Tina Turner Musical headlined the Grand Final entertainment and paid tribute to the late superstar with a sing-a-long for the ages for the 81,947 fans in attendance. Northeast Arnhem Land stars King Stingray also headlined, performing their cover of 'Down Under' in Yolŋu Matha, before two of the greatest Grand Finals in history.

## Corporate Hospitality

The NRL's corporate hospitality went from strength to strength in 2023. A total of 11 new hospitality products were launched, including a number that were held at Gambaro's.

## Licensed Merchandise

The NRL's licensed merchandise program saw strong sales results across all NRL major events as well as from general retail. These results were further strengthened by the Penrith Panthers back-to-back Premiers merchandise range as well as the introduction of the Dolphins and the popularity of their merchandise. In 2023 total retail sales of NRL merchandise grew by 20 per cent year-on-year. This enabled the NRL to yet again maintain its position as the largest licensed merchandise program in Australian sport.





CHAPTER

# 04

PERFORMANCE AND PATHWAYS











**The Wellbeing, Diversity & Performance team aims to create a positive impact on the culture and personal growth of people involved in the game while fostering a high-performance environment. This team comprises NRL's wellbeing and education programs, the game's diversity & inclusion strategy, and leadership development programs.**

**Player Wellbeing & Education Programs**  
 In 2023, the NRL has continued to deliver positive outcomes across our NRL, NRLW, and Pathway teams. The dedicated Wellbeing, Careers, and Education staff have been pivotal in this success, conducting individual meetings with players. These sessions covered a variety of topics crucial to player welfare and career progression. Through these engagements and numerous programs, the Wellbeing and Education staff have created an environment where players are equipped to manage the demands of professional Rugby League alongside their personal growth and educational aspirations.

Robert Derby training with the PNG Kumuls.

Every Club has a qualified Career Coach whose job it is to deliver the CAREERWISE program and help players plan for life after sport.

**NRL and NRLW Players Career Development Outcomes**

Our end-of-season data reveals a promising trend in career planning among our athletes. Players have confirmed that they have post-football career plans in place demonstrating our players are proactive in their approach to life after football and actively engaging in career direction education. Our players are also actively engaged in career-directed education, as seen in the following statistics.

**Professional Growth and Responsible Conduct**

The 2023 season has seen the NRL continue reinforcing the importance of professional development and social responsibility among our players. A variety of targeted programs have been successfully rolled out to educate and empower both NRL and NRLW players in key aspects of their careers and personal lives.

3,320

Individual meetings with NRL players

889

Individual meetings with NRLW players

73%

Of NRL players confirmed that they have post-football career plans in place

72%

Of NRLW players confirmed that they have post-football career plans in place





### Prioritising Wellbeing in the NRL and NRLW

The season showcased our commitment to mental health and wellbeing, with over 80 per cent of NRL players flourishing according to the new mental health assessments. In the NRLW, positive mental health was also prominent, with nearly 63 per cent of players flourishing. Financial literacy emerged as a key focus, with a concerted effort to bolster support in the upcoming season. The investment in mental health resources saw an overall spend of over \$600,000, highlighting the NRL's strong commitment to the comprehensive wellbeing of our players.

### NRL and NRLW Rookie Induction – Laying the Foundation for Success

The NRL and NRLW Rookie Camp serves as a key introduction for new players stepping into the elite arena, designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for the challenges and responsibilities of professional sports.

^ Sarah Togatuki congratulates Mia Wood as she debuts for the Sydney Roosters in Round 6 at Allianz Stadium.

^ Andrew Webster was awarded the 2023 Dally M Awards Coach of the Year.

### Coach Framework

In 2023 the NRL has undertaken extensive consultation and co-design with NRL and NRLW head coaches on the introduction of an Elite Coach Development Framework. This collaborative approach has helped shape a comprehensive framework that resonates deeply with the needs and insights of those at the forefront of the sport.

The framework will include an Elite Coach Qualification providing future head coaches with the required skills. Coaches have provided direct input to enrich the wellbeing framework, which addresses their unique mental and emotional challenges.

To increase diversity and opportunities, particularly for Indigenous, Pasifika, and female coaches, we have developed streamlined coaching pathways with input from those who understand the nuances of the game. This year's collaborative efforts ensure that the Elite Coach Development Framework sets the stage for a future where coaching in the NRL and NRLW is defined by excellence, inclusivity, and shared growth.

### Māori and Pasifika

In 2023, the NRL and RLPA's Pasifika and Māori Wellbeing Advisory Group continued to play a vital role in enhancing cultural understanding and inclusivity in the support of NRL and NRLW athletes. The group's inaugural conference this year was a profound cultural exchange, focusing on creating supportive pathways and building capacity. This initiative not only benefits players but also provides invaluable insights to staff, fostering a more culturally aware and inclusive environment in Rugby League.

80%+

Of NRL players are flourishing according to the new mental health assessments





◀ The 2023 PNG Kumuls Captains Run.

### 2023 Pacific Championships

The inaugural Pacific Championships was held across Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea in October and November, seeing the best from each of the seven nations competing in the Pacific Cup and Pacific Bowl. Men and women from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tonga played over four weeks as part of the ARLC's ten-year Pacific Strategy aimed at growing Rugby League in the Pacific from grassroots through to the elite and ensuring in-country capability is built through the delivery of the tournament.

The Pacific Cup saw a three-match series kick off in Townsville with rematches of the 2021 Rugby League World Cup Finals with the Australian Kangaroos taking on Toa Samoa and the Australian Jillaroos beating the Kiwi Ferns. Subsequent matches were played in Auckland, Melbourne and the Final in Hamilton where the Kiwis set a new record, beating the Kangaroos 30-0, moving the Kiwis to number one world ranking.



The Pacific Bowl was played in Papua New Guinea over four weeks between the PNG Kumuls, Fiji Bati and Cook Islands Aitu, with the PNG Kumuls edging out the Fiji Bati 32-12 in front of a sell-out crowd of almost 15,000 at Santos Stadium, Port Moresby.

The Pacific Cup also saw test matches played between the Australian Jillaroos, New Zealand Kiwi Ferns and Tonga Mate Ma'a, and the Pacific Bowl included matches between the Fetu Samoa and Fiji Bulikula, and PNG Orchids Cook Islands Moana. The inclusion of the women's game in the tournament aligns to the ARLC's commitment to growing the women's game and to the Commission's 10-year Pacific Strategy of increasing playing opportunities for elite women representing their nations ahead of the 2026 Rugby League World Cup.

For the first time ever, all participants in the tournament were paid an equal playing fee regardless of gender or which nation they were representing. This landmark move made possible by the ARLC, and the Rugby League Players Association through the Collective Bargaining Agreement sets up the future of international Rugby League as the Commission aims to provide pathways opportunities for in-country players to become the next NRL and NRLW stars.

The Pacific Championships not only saw the return of international football to the Rugby League calendar with almost 4.4m Australians viewing the tournament, but through a new dedicated international window the tournament celebrated all seven cultures on and off the field.

The Pacific Championships trophy at Santos National Football Stadium for Fiji versus Papua New Guinea.

The Australian Jillaroos at the Pacific Championships.

Over four weeks, all teams engaged with the local communities in each of the host countries, with almost 10,500 school students and junior Rugby League participants reached. Engaging with local communities and enabling social change is at the heart of the ARLC's Pacific Strategy and the inaugural tournament saw memorable activities including:

- » Australian Jillaroos visiting Thursday Island to better understand some of Australia's First Nations culture and pay homage to former Jillaroos from the Torres Strait. The Jillaroos were the first non-indigenous players carrying out our First Nations flags
- » The Cook Islands Aitu and Moana teams visiting Hanuabada Village where the first Cook Islands missionaries arrived into Papua New Guinea more than 150 years ago
- » The Fiji Bati running Hohola Flies coaching clinics for kids and community reaching 2000+ community members

- » NRL Match Officials hosting a referee development session for PNG Digicel Cup Referees
- » PNG Kumuls visiting Hagara Primary School reaching 1000 students
- » Jersey Presentation in Melbourne with Australian Kangaroos and Jillaroos and New Zealand Kiwis and Kiwi Ferns alongside 100 In League in Harmony Students.

The inaugural Pacific Championships was a collective commitment from International Rugby League, Asia Pacific Rugby League and seven member nations who all have a desire to grow Rugby League across the Pacific. The tournament was made possible with thanks to the Australian Government via the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Papua New Guinean Government through the Tourism Promotion Authority.





# SUB-ELITE PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES

## Harvey Norman Women's National Championships

Held at the Burleigh Bears grounds on the Gold Coast, the 2023 Harvey Norman Women's National Championships again boasted another successful event, cementing itself as a key foundation of our National Female Pathways Strategy. With the inclusion of a New Zealand team for the first time, Ahi Ka Aotearoa, the event continues to be a source of establishing and identifying talent for the growing NRLW, and ensuring players and staff are readily accessible and prepared for the elite level. In 2023 the event hosted 240 players and over 80 staff, across all 12 participating teams.

The event provides an opportunity for female players to display their abilities, gain exposure, and contribute to the growth and development of women's Rugby League. The event is significant in promoting and providing equal opportunities for female athletes in Rugby League. It helps raise the profile of women's Rugby League, attract more participants, and inspire future generations of players.

2023 saw the introduction of a new format for the tournament, featuring three pools and no finals matches. The change in structure and removal of finals dictating an outright winning team/s, was implemented to put less pressure on coaches to win, and more pressure on them to give every player the same access and ability to be seen by NRLW Clubs. 2024 looks to be even bigger and better with the potential expansion of the tournament to involve further Pacific nations.

Victoria plays QLD Sapphires on Day 4 of the Women's National Championship at Gold Coast, QLD.



Shellie Long, Shakiah Tungai and Tallisha Harden at Cbus Super Stadium in Round 8.



## Women's Indigenous Pathways

Over the past two years our pathways team has been committed to the research surrounding women's health and expanding the educational opportunities for Indigenous women. Specifically, we have partnered with Griffith University undertaking research projects in the areas of injury prevention, physical testing, menstrual cycle research education and movement patterns of elite female Indigenous Rugby League players.

These initiatives aim to provide pathways for Indigenous players to excel in Rugby League, encourage cultural pride, and raise awareness about the contributions of Indigenous communities to the sport. They also work towards addressing historical barriers and inequalities faced by Indigenous athletes. This year the Pathways team held two camps which involved 60 female athletes and introduced seven new First Nations staff to the pathways.





### RISE 2023 Program

RISE continues to expand as the only Rugby League evidence-based player development program in the country. Aligned with the philosophies established in the Player Development Framework, the RISE program aims to provide aspirational players with the education and opportunity to become the best version of themselves in a Rugby League context. In 2023 we saw a 51 per cent increase in program participants nationally with the largest increases coming from NSW (144 per cent increase) and Affiliated states (340 per cent increase) compared to 2022. The program catered for a total of 4093 participants and over 500 staff members and volunteers including head coaches, development coaches, strength and conditioning coaches and program managers. With the support of Westpac as a major sponsor of the coach development program the RISE team was able to hold two major conferences and over 20 regional seminars to educate local coaches and develop coaching depth and competency particularly in our regional areas.

The Westpac partnership of the RISE program will play a role in providing communities with greater access to the game and supporting women and girls with the tools they need to reach their potential on and off the field.

Expansion of the RISE Rookie program continued in 2023 with the program hosting over 550 women across 14 different satellite locations, including a program in New Zealand as an initiative to grow the pathway in the game's areas of investment in the Pacific. The program aims to address key areas in the development of female Rugby League and grow the participation pool to progress through the elite performance pathways as the NRLW continues to expand. Tackling ability and being tackled, strength training, and conditioning and physical preparation, formed the foundations of the program, with seven NRLW top 24 players and one NRLW development player being part of the RISE Rookie program in the lead up to their selection in the 2023 squads.

RISE Rugby League Delivery Program aims to transition and nurture performance through providing an introduction of the aspirational pathway.

Redcliffe Dolphins Under 16s Carter Welfare plays against the Brisbane Tigers Under 16s at Kayo Stadium.

### Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League National Championships

Following the introduction of the inaugural Australian Schoolgirls team in 2022, we continue to expand and develop our female pathways with the addition of the Under 18s and Under 16s girl's divisions into the ASSRL National Championships. With this brings the inclusion of 16 female Rugby League teams from all around Australia, giving the stage to 320 up and coming female athletes to showcase their talent.

The introduction of the new divisions also saw a change in format for the Championships, with the Under 18s boys and girls being held mid-year at the home of the NRL Dolphins, Kayo Stadium, and the Under 15s boys and Under 16s girls taking place in September in Port Macquarie.

The ASSRL Championships also allow for the NRL to provide education sessions to both players and their parents with regards to player managers and vital wellbeing topics.

### Australian Schoolgirls and Schoolboys

Selected from the Australian Secondary Schools Rugby League Under 18s National Championships, the Australian Schoolgirls and Schoolboys were fortunate to be involved in the Prime Minister's XIII tour for 2023. The players were given the opportunity to experience the culture of Papua New Guinea with some of the best NRL and NRLW players in Australia, travelling with the Australian Men's and Women's PM XIII teams.

Being only the second year, the Australian Schoolgirls team has been implemented, both teams showcased amazing young talent which saw them come away victorious against the two Junior PNG sides.

Australian Schoolgirls **26 - 0** PNG Junior Orchids

Australian Schoolboys **20 - 16** PNG Junior Kumuls





Georgia Hale and Hannah Southwell prepare for the NRLW Grand Final.

Diversity & Inclusion

- » **Gender Equality:** Focus on Gender Equality has led to a significant improvement in our Gender Pay Gap. From WGEA reporting our pay gap has improved from 12.4 per cent to 6.6 per cent. Female representation has improved internally by over 3 per cent. A key area of focus will remain on removing the gender pay gap and achieving a gender balanced workforce at all levels of our business in 2024.
- » **LGBTIQ+:** As part of our Partnership with Pride in Sport Australia, the NRL attended the annual Pride in Sport Awards for 2023. The awards celebrate and recognise key individuals and organisations that are playing their part to ensure inclusion of the LGBTIQ+ community. Each year, the NRL submits a Pride in Sport Index which is a benchmarking instrument specifically designed to assess the inclusion of people with diverse sexualities and genders within Australian sport and sporting organisations. We are pleased the NRL were awarded Bronze tier status.

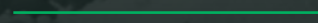




CHAPTER

# 05

COMMUNITY AND  
PARTICIPATION REPORT





# KEY STATISTICS

5%

Male club participation growth.

12%

Female club participation growth.

38%

Junior program growth.

1,383

School ambassadors in the inaugural year of the program.

5,001

People completed safety educational courses.

3,000

Schools engaged in competition, events, and gala days, both tag and tackle formats.

24,470

Students engaged in 'League for Life' in classrooms across the Pacific.

49,300

Participants attended community programs.

# PARTICIPATION



^  
A Telstra Ring Kid presents Penrith Panthers' Dylan Edwards with a NRL Premiership Ring.

The NRL Participation team has made substantial strides in 2023, enabling communities to participate in a Rugby League journey filled with opportunities to safely play, connect, and thrive. Key accomplishments this year include the delivery of the nationally recognised junior participation programs, League Stars, and proactive support for emerging growth initiatives. Growth initiatives extended beyond traditional formats to encompass recreational formats including Beach Touch and, Rugby League suited to wheelchair users, and individuals living with physical and intellectual disabilities.

In partnership with major sponsors Telstra and Ampol, the Participation team provided schools and junior clubs the opportunity to take part in major events including the State of Origin and NRL Finals Series. These initiatives emphasised the NRL's dedication to providing unforgettable experiences for junior participants of the game.

There are now 15,915 registered coaches, an increase of 11 per cent within the Community Coach Education Program which received an average of 8.7/10 satisfaction rating. The program demonstrated the commitment and excellence of the coach education team in delivering quality services and outcomes.

The MyLeague App provided coaches with access to resources, courses, feedback, and support. The platform had an NPS of 32, indicating an elevated level of loyalty and recommendation.

A range of safety education programs were delivered, such as the League First Aid and Sports Trainer qualifications, concussion management and injury prevention which increased the awareness and skills of the game's critical safety personnel. The programs had a participant increase of 9 per cent on the previous year.

Amongst a host of highlights in 2023, most prominent were the growth results in the delivery of our key introductory programs, NRL Sporting Schools and League Stars. League Stars Program output hit a record high, both in terms of program offerings and participants, with the Delivery team running 591 individual programs, totalling 13,334 participants. More than 7,000 of these participants had no prior experience of Rugby League.

This excellent outcome contributed to a 6 per cent growth in registered Club Rugby League, with more than 192,000 participants, while the game enjoyed a 9 per cent growth in total registered participants across all participant programs and competition formats.



# SCHOOLS PARTICIPATION



2023 has been a massive year for our expansion in schools. We have launched our new NRL School Ambassador program which recognises, supports and rewards school staff through Rugby League. The launch of the NRL Teacher Ambassador Program was held at Optus Stadium, before the NRL Perth double-header, where 50 School Ambassadors were invited to attend.

Guest speaker Wayne Bennett provided them with a once in a lifetime experience, reflecting on his career and discussing the vital role that teachers and sport play in shaping the lives of school students. The program will continue to grow in 2024 as our primary connection tool for our team to collaborate with staff in schools.

Students from Kings Langley Public School participate in the NRL School Ambassador program.

Mabel Park State High School took out the inaugural NRL National Schoolgirls Cup after defeating The Hills Sports High School 26-8 at Allianz Stadium.

2023 also saw the introduction of the NRL National Schoolgirls Cup, with Mabel Park SHS crowned as the inaugural winners. The continued growth in the female game is replicated in schools with the excitement and entertainment of this competition worthy of the national coverage it now receives.

The use of MySideline for school student registration when playing school Rugby League has also been a significant step forward as we continue to focus on providing a safe and supportive environment for players, families, and staff.

1,383

School Ambassadors in our first year of the program.

22%

Increase in the number of schools playing in Rugby League competitions.

15%

Increase in the number of schools engaged in our NRL delivered school activities.



The growth and promotion of female Rugby League continued to advance across the Pacific in 2023. Major achievements included the launch of the Fiji National Open Age women's competition and the staging of the first ever Tongan secondary schools tackle Rugby League competition for Under 16 year old girls.

Primary school program 'League For life' engaged

25,470 students

in classrooms across PNG, Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga.

78 Voices Against Violence workshops conducted to

3,934 students

This program is core to our gender equality work and aligns with our overall goal to ensure that Rugby League provides a safe, welcoming, and inclusive community space for Pacific Island women and girls, and people with a disability.

Members of the FNRLW Women's Premiership at a Press Conference.

In 2023 the NRL Community department celebrated our volunteers, supported our communities, and addressed social issues by providing pathways and opportunities to inspire positivity, inclusiveness, and healthy living for young people.

The success of our programs is due to the positive contributions from many partners, including NRL Clubs and players, schools, State Leagues, NRL community experts and funding partners, federal and state governments, and our committed NRL community staff.

Road To Regions

In 2023 the NRL's Road to Regions presented by Your Local Club reached over 25,000 participants in 12 regions, expanding right across Australia and New Zealand. NRL continued the successful 'Your Local Club' partnership with Clubs NSW by connecting local club communities with the game.

Both NRL and NRLW players joined NRL ambassadors, including Joe Galuvao, Luke Lewis, Botille Vette-Welsh and Kennedy Cherrington, visited communities across Australia, including some affected by natural disasters. NRL also acknowledges Westpac as supporting partner for the Road to Regions campaign in 2023.

Young fans enjoyed a visit from NRL Road to Regions in Ipswich.







**NRL Community Awards**

NRL Community Awards presented by Westpac recognise and celebrate the contributions of those who make Rugby League the greatest game for all. In 2023, over 700 nominations were received.

**Grassroots Winners**

- » Volunteer of the Year: Andrew Unger, South Australia
- » Community Rugby League Club of the Year: Zenadth Kes Junior Rugby League, Thursday Island
- » Young Person of the Year: Douglas Brown, QLD
- » Teacher of the Year: Kylie Boulous, NSW
- » Women In League Award: Poihaere Birtles, NSW
- » Indigenous Community Award: Candita Collins, NSW

**Elite Awards**

- » Ken Stephen Medal, Man of the Year: Latrell Mitchell, South Sydney Rabbitohs
- » Veronica White Medal, Woman of the Year: Tahlulah Tillet, North Queensland Cowboys

**Fan Vote Winners**

A combined total of 42,471 votes were cast to determine your 2023 fan vote winners.

- » Veronica White Medal fan vote winner: Sophie Holyman, Canberra Raiders
- » Ken Stephen Medal fan vote winner: Latrell Mitchell, South Sydney Rabbitohs

↑ Celebrating at the NRL Community Awards at Accor Stadium.

↑ Young fans participate in a NRL League Stars Inspire session.

**NRL League Stars Inspire**

In 2023 we introduced the League Stars Inspire Inclusion and Diversity one or five session program; an enriching experience using the platform of Rugby League to educate and inspire. Endorsed by the NSW Department of Education and featured in their student wellbeing external programs catalogue, our program is designed to instil values of Inclusion and Diversity among primary school students.

Through League Stars Inspire, students get to participate in exciting NRL-themed activities, developing valuable communication skills, fostering interpersonal relationships, and nurturing a powerful sense of belonging and teamwork. These attributes are invaluable, extending beyond the classroom to family life, sports, and interactions within the wider community.

Since launching in July 2023, the program has been delivered to 506 students across 8 schools where 100 per cent of teachers found the program to be very engaging and provided insight into how Rugby League can be used to give positive messages.



**NRL Indigenous Youth Summit**

The 2023 NRL Indigenous Youth Summit, held during Indigenous Round in Sydney, engaged 68 Year 11 participants representing all 17 NRL Clubs. The summit focused on developing leadership skills, cultural identity, and personal growth for successful career choices and further studies. Participants, nominated by NRL Clubs, demonstrated consistent school attendance, leadership qualities, and aspirations for future education and employment.

The summit, featuring workshops, team-building activities, and cultural sessions, delivered immediate and long-term benefits in areas such as cultural identity, education, job readiness, public speaking, further learning, and healthy living. The event provided a platform for peer interaction and discussions on higher education, employment, goal setting, and community leadership.

The 2023 Indigenous Youth Summit was deemed a remarkable success, yielding positive outcomes in workplace skills, cultural connection, leadership, confidence, and communication. Staff observed transformative changes in participants, attributing them to the impact of diverse activities fostering a safe environment for open expression.

James Tedesco with students at the NRL Indigenous Youth Summit.



**NRL School to Work**

In 2023, the NRL School to Work Program celebrated another successful year, providing crucial support to young First Nations participants in 11 NRL Club catchments. The program focuses on mentoring, career guidance, cultural connection, and access to resources to aid participants in completing their Higher School Certificate (HSC) and pursuing employment or educational opportunities post-school.

During the year, the program assisted 1165 participants from 144 partner schools. Notably, 309 students successfully transitioned from school to employment or further education by the end of October 2023, while 224 young people participated in leadership development summits. The program's impact was further highlighted by the dedication of 13 NRL project officers who together conducted 520 school visits. This outreach supported 446 Year 11 and 345 Year 12 participants, reinforcing the program's commitment to the educational and vocational success of young First Nations individuals. For every dollar invested by the NRL, government and corporate sponsors, \$4.70 was generated in social return.

Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs presented their School to Work participants with a polo.







### In League In Harmony

In League In Harmony continued to use Rugby League as a vehicle to promote social cohesion by addressing issues including social disengagement, racism, gender inequality and bullying. In 2023 the program was delivered to 927 participants from 28 schools across NSW and Victoria. It was also delivered to 2,289 students in 17 primary schools via the League Stars Inspire – Inclusion and Diversity program.

Since 2013 In League in Harmony has engaged:

- » 11,978 secondary school students
- » Hosted 60 Harmony League Tag Gala Days
- » 883 Youth Advocates
- » Hosted Cultural Awareness workshops with 214 participants
- » Facilitated the 2022 Youth Advocate-led Anti Racism Campaign which reached 4,400 people.

^  
The Youth Advocate Program unites students from different backgrounds in an inclusive environment where youth feel a sense of belonging and pride.

^  
The NRL State of Mind program has created a range of workshops to help improve the mental health and wellbeing of our Rugby League communities.

### State of Mind

Since the inception of the NRL State of Mind program we have reached over 20,000 people across Australia. In 2023, the program continued its vital work in improving the mental health and wellbeing of the Rugby League family and the broader community. Through three mental health and wellbeing programs, a total of 4,395 participants ranging from ages 5 to 70 and located across Australia were reached.

Vital funding from The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care and The Healthy Communities Foundation Australia, enables the NRL State of Mind team to contribute to creating a more informed and supportive environment around mental health difficulties and challenges.

Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, the program's goal and mission are focused on furthering mental health education. The focus is on encouraging the adoption of the NRL's 10 tips to wellbeing, reducing the stigma surrounding mental health issues, fostering understanding of how to support friends, and loved ones, normalising help-seeking behaviours, and cultivating mental health leaders within communities.



**Voice Against Violence**

The Voice Against Violence program continues its focus on preventing violence against women and children. VAV partnered with the Melbourne Storm and gained funding through the Victorian government to deliver education workshops across junior Rugby League clubs and high schools throughout 2023/24. VAV continues its work across NSW with a total of 1818 participants across NSW and Victoria in 2023.

Beyond Australia, VAV reached 3,394 participants in 78 workshops in the Pacific nations of Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Papua New Guinea.

The NRL is committed to take action to prevent violence.



**Supporting our communities**

The NRL is wholeheartedly committed to bringing people together to enrich their lives. Each year the NRL provides experiences and support to communities across Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific. We understand each community is diverse and face unique challenges. Our aim is to ensure the game of Rugby League continues to be a beacon of hope and inspiration for those who have fallen on challenging times, be a source of motivation, and unite people to achieve their individual and group aspirations.

In 2023, the NRL was able to support a wide range of community and charitable organisations. Methods of support included match day experiences, ticket donations, merchandise donations, supporting natural disaster zones i.e., floods and bush fires, as well as fundraising opportunities via the 5050 Foundation (fundraising is exclusive to official NRL partners).

A fan enjoys the Magic Round match day event at Suncorp Stadium.



In partnership with the 5050 Foundation charity raffle, the NRL hosted 16 major match day events in the 2023 season including State of Origin, Magic Round and the 2023 Finals Series, raising a combined total of \$238,865.50. To date, the NRL has raised a total of \$709,638 through its partnership with the 5050 Foundation which has contributed to a variety of causes including mental health, Family of League, cancer research and sport development.

Across the 2023 NRL and NRLW season, over 27,200 tickets were donated to community and charities across Australia and New Zealand totalling over \$500,000 worth of ticket donations.



# KEY STATISTICS



Find below a list of organisations NRL Community were able to support in the 2023 season:

- » Prelude Australia
- » Headspace
- » Black Dog Institute
- » Gotcha 4 Life
- » Hunter Melanoma Foundation
- » Sharks Have Heart
- » Healthy Community Australia
- » Lifeline
- » Kids Helpline
- » Racism Stops with Me
- » Fullstop Australia
- » 1800Respect
- » Family of League
- » Cowboys House
- » Clontarf Foundation
- » Moving Forward Together

South Sydney Rabbitohs' defend against Cronulla Sharks' Sione Katoa at PointsBet Stadium in Round 1.

49,300

Participants attended Community programs.

718

Schools/Junior Rugby League Clubs received Community programs.

## SCHOOL TO WORK

1,165

Indigenous students from 144 schools provided 1:1 mentoring support.

309

Students were placed in post-secondary education or employment.

91%

Of Year 12 students supported through S2W completed year 12.

520

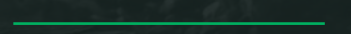
1:1 mentoring sessions were provided to year 11 and 12 students.



CHAPTER

# 06

INDIGENOUS STRATEGY





# INDIGENOUS STRATEGY



Nicho Hynes in a traditional Welcome with Mayor of Rotorua, Tania Tapsell

**In 2023 we further strengthened our commitment to learning from, working with and celebrating the success of First Nations people, who continue to make a significant contribution across all facets of the greatest game for all.**

The pre-season fixtures were again headlined by one of our showpiece events, the Harvey Norman All Stars and in our 12th instalment of the fixture, the games were played at Rotorua International Stadium in February 2023, marking the first occasion the fixture has been played outside of Australia. With a 17,644 strong crowd in the stadium, more than 175,000 supporters watched the broadcast of the women's game and another 450,000 fans tuned in to watch the men battle it out. Activations during the week promoted Indigenous business, further developed our understanding of our shared history and recognised the 50-year anniversary of the First Australian Aboriginal team who toured New Zealand in 1973.





2023 has been a time of reflection, consultation and deep listening on our Reconciliation journey. We are also excited to share that we are now in the final stages of the development of our second Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan.

We are committed to our next transformation projects across the next four years, which demonstrates our dedication to promoting inclusivity, education and empowerment.

The five project areas aim to create opportunities for cultural exchange and education between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and all Australians. We will create a positive impact that goes beyond the sport itself, by addressing a range of social, cultural, and educational aspects.

Key achievements as part of our RAP commitments over the past year include:

» **Beyond the Field representation** – the game values the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and we are proud of the level of representation we have across the game:

- 16.5 per cent of our workforce
- 60 per cent of head coaches in the NRLW
- A dedicated independent voice to the game on Indigenous issues with our Australian Rugby League Indigenous Council

- » **Uluru Statement from the Heart** – the NRL supported the Uluru Statement from the Heart along with our broadcast partners and fellow National Sporting Organisations to provide a united show of support for self-determination through the Voice to Parliament. We delivered dedicated sessions to key stakeholders including Clubs, players and our partners to give them the information they needed to make informed choices in the referendum discussions.
- » **Truth telling** – we continue to use a whole of game approach to include cultural protocols in our events and communications, elevate information on traditional place names and languages and ensure the long history of success of First Nations people is recorded, remembered, and respected across our game. This included recognition for the 1973 First Indigenous All Stars touring team and ensuring the legacy of Lionel Morgan was appropriately honoured this year after his passing.

Action	Targets met
Relationship	26 / 29
Respect	19 / 23
Opportunities	36 / 36
Tracking	6 / 13





CHAPTER

# 07

STATE LEAGUE REPORTS





# NEW SOUTH WALES RUGBY LEAGUE REPORT



The NSWRL enjoyed a successful season in 2023, highlighted by record-breaking numbers for participation, memorable Grand Finals, success in NSWRL pathways programs, and an unwavering commitment to community Rugby League.

Participation increased in both the men's and women's games, with 86,580 males and 26,187 females, bringing the total for the season to 112,767 registered players. The overall participation figures were up almost seven per cent on 2022, while the men's game recorded an almost five per cent increase and women more than 14 per cent. It was the third consecutive season a new benchmark had been set for women's Rugby League after female participation broke the 20,000 mark for the first time in 2021 (22,810) and again in 2022 (23,203). It was also a significant increase on the almost 106,000 participants who registered to play in a season that had been severely affected by rain and floods in 2022, and surpassed the previous record-breaking year of 107,528 participants who signed up in 2021.





NSW Under 19s celebrate winning the Under 19 State of Origin at Kayo Stadium.



South Sydney Rabbitohs celebrate winning the Knock-On Effect NSW Cup at CommBank Stadium.

The Westpac NSW Blues were unable to wrestle the Ampol State of Origin away from Queensland but finished the three-game series on a high note after winning the third and final game in front of more than 75,000 hometown fans in Sydney. The series also proved popular with viewers with a combined national audience of 9.23m tuning in across all three games. It was the last time that True Blue Brad Fittler would coach the Blues after six years at the helm with series wins in 2018-19 and 2021.

The Harvey Norman NSW Sky Blues surrendered the Ampol Women's State of Origin Shield to Queensland after the two-game series finished 1-all. It was the first time the series had moved to two games with the winner to be determined on aggregate. The Sky Blues won Game Two in Townsville 18-14 but lost the series after Queensland won Game One in Sydney 18-10. The women's game continued to prove popular with fans, with a record crowd of 12,272 turning up to Game One only for the mark to be beaten again after 18,275 turned up to Game Two in Townsville.

The NSW Under 19s men's team maintained their dominance of the interstate clash after scoring a decisive 32-14 win over Queensland. It was the second time in as many seasons the NSW Under 19s team had won since the match returned to the representative calendar in 2022.

The NSW Women's Under 19s were also looking to maintain their unbeaten record in the interstate clash which started in 2019, but fell just short 20-14.

The NSWRL administered 15 Major Competitions and Junior Representative Competitions, which assist with the development of players and provide vital pathways for players seeking to pursue professional careers.

The Knock-On Effect NSW Cup, which is the state's premier competition, saw 44 players go on to make their NRL debuts in 2023. The Grand Final was contested by foundation Clubs South Sydney Rabbitohs and North Sydney Bears at CommBank Stadium on 24 September. The match was enjoyed by more than 10,000 fans at the ground, while a combined audience of 164,492 tuned in to watch the live stream on 9Now and NSWRL TV. The decider was a highly entertaining affair with the Rabbitohs scoring the match-winning try in the final five minutes to clinch the Club's first NSW Cup premiership in 40 years. Fox League on Fox Sports continued to broadcast games and recorded a 10 per cent increase in viewership from 2022, with the Round Six match between Penrith Panthers and Manly Warringah Sea Eagles being the most watched with 55,345 viewers.

The Harvey Norman NSW Women's Premiership, which is the state's premier competition for women, was just as memorable after Mounties beat Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs with an historic 1-0 scoreline at Leichhardt Oval in April. The match was not decided until Mounties halfback Matilda Power landed a field goal two minutes before full-time to leave it as the only Grand Final in Rugby League history to be decided 1-0.

NSWRL TV, which is the dedicated channel for all NSWRL matches and content housed on the NSWRL Facebook page, continued to perform strongly with more than 200 matches live streamed and a 42 per cent increase in average watch time from 2022. The matches shown included NSWRL Major Competitions and Junior Representatives Competitions, as well as community events such as the Harmony 9s multicultural Rugby League tournament.

NSWRL social media channels also performed strongly with the number of followers increasing nine per cent from 1,730,695 in 2022 to 1,885,270 in 2023. There was a 48 per cent increase in the number of followers on the Westpac NSW Blues TikTok channel and a 15 per cent increase on the NSWRL Instagram page.

The NSWRL continued to invest heavily in community programs across the core engagement pillars of First Nations people, All Abilities, LGBTQ+, Gender, Equity and Cultural Diversity. The season started with a campaign throughout March to promote inclusion and diversity culminating with a free Inclusion Gala Day at the NSWRL Centre of Excellence.

The NSWRL acknowledged its strong connection to the Indigenous community during the season, including releasing an Acknowledgment of Country video with media personality Stan Grant that could be used by all Clubs around the state. Other partnerships and initiatives to cement that bond included the KARI Foundation, the Deadly Choices campaign, the Clontarf Academy, the TAAP (Talented Aboriginal Athlete Program) camp, and First Nations tournaments and gala days including the Nations of Origin tournament and the Outback Rugby League challenge. The participation numbers from the First Nations community around NSW is strong with a combined total of 26,590 for players, coaches, trainers and volunteers.



Harvey Norman Girls  
Clinic at NSWRL  
Centre of Excellence  
at Homebush, NSW.

This year marked the final year of a four-year agreement with Multicultural NSW, funded by the NSW Government, to run the NSWRL's multicultural Try League Program, aimed at Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. The program was run in conjunction with the Australian International Sports Organisation and reached more than 2500 participants who were taught how to play the game in a fun, non-competitive format.

The NSWRL's Mental Fitness Changing Rooms program, spearheaded by True Blue and NSWRL Mental Fitness and Wellbeing Manager Paul Langmack, continued to make a difference to the lives of young people around the state after it was delivered to more than 5000 participants aged 11 to 20. The program tackles issues including mental fitness, suicide prevention and bullying with the support of a qualified social worker.

The NSWRL and Transport for NSW in November delivered three Regional Roadshow programs in areas around the state including the Northern Tablelands, the Orana Region, and the Sapphire Coast. The campaign, which is run in conjunction with Transport for NSW's The Knock-on Effect initiative, featured a video with Westpac NSW Blues skipper James Tedesco and teammates Josh Addo-Carr and Cameron Murray encouraging road users to make smart choices. The Regional Roadshow program has already helped deliver positive messages about road safety to more than 4000 teenagers at 40 regional areas around the state.





# QUEENSLAND RUGBY LEAGUE REPORT



Six QRL statewide competitions, headlined by the Hostplus Cup and BMD Premiership, provided exceptional opportunities for players, coaches, referees and administrators in 2023.

With the inclusion of the Western Clydesdales strengthening the Hostplus Cup's footprint across Queensland, the competition once again delivered quality Rugby League each week.

For some players, it was a significant step in their Rugby League journey with their Hostplus Cup form the catalyst for selection in the National Rugby League.

Twenty-nine players who featured in the 2023 Hostplus Cup regular season took the field for either the Brisbane Broncos or Melbourne Storm in their final round NRL clash.



Gold Coast Titans prospect Keano Kini was the recipient of the Duncan Hall Medal.

There was also an abundance of current and former NRL talent on display in the grand final between the Brisbane Tigers and Burleigh Bears at Kayo Stadium.

The Tigers prevailed 22-18 in a thriller to land their first Cup premiership after a number of near misses in recent grand finals.

The match showcased the talents of some emerging stars, including exciting Burleigh and Gold Coast Titans prospect Keano Kini who was the recipient of the Duncan Hall Medal.

Earlier in the year, the Burleigh Bears beat the Wynnum Manly Seagulls 24-10 to claim the BMD Premiership.

Queensland Origin selectors picked 15 players who impressed in the premiership rounds.

There will be even more competition for the premiership trophy and Origin spots next year, with the Western Clydesdales and Sunshine Coast Falcons to compete in an expanded 10-team competition.

Moving forward, the BMD Premiership and Hostplus Cup will be underpinned by a new statewide competitions structure for aspirational male and female players.

The 2024 season will see the removal of the male Under 21 competition, with the current Cyril Connell Challenge and Mal Meninga Cup competitions moving to Under 17 and Under 19 age groups.



Under the guidance of Billy Slater, the Maroons made it back-to-back State of Origin victories.

With a strong and proven pathways model in place, Queensland representative teams are well placed to remain a force in coming years. Under the superb guidance of Billy Slater, the Maroons made it back-to-back series victories after brilliant performances in the opening two games.

It took all of Queensland's renowned fighting spirit to earn the series win, with the Maroons overcoming a spate of adversity to win the opening match in Adelaide 26-18.

The victory ensured the Maroons had vital momentum heading into Game Two at Suncorp Stadium, where more than 50,000 passionate fans witnessed a stunning attacking blitz from the home team.

Game Three belonged to the new-look Blues, who produced their best performance of the series to outplay the Maroons 24-10 in Sydney.

The Harvey Norman Queensland Maroons brought the State of Origin shield back to the Sunshine State after a gripping two-match series against the Sky Blues.

Having won the opening game in Sydney 18-10, the Maroons ran out in front of 18,275 fans at Queensland Country Bank Stadium in Townsville knowing anything bar a loss by eight points or more would see them crowned champions.

While the Maroons didn't get the clean sweep they so desperately wanted, the tight 18-14 loss to the Sky Blues was enough for Queensland to lift the shield in front of their home fans.

Head coach Tahnee Norris was immensely proud of her team's efforts, which will provide the foundations for an assault on next year's three-match series.



›  
Dolphins fans at  
Suncorp Stadium for  
Round 4 against the  
Brisbane Broncos.

Both Queensland Origin teams engaged regularly with fans, community Rugby League clubs and partners to generate enormous goodwill throughout the state.

Queensland's three regions – South East, Central and North – all welcomed an influx of new players this year as registered club participation grew by five per cent.

The strong start to QRL statewide competitions, the excitement generated by the emergence of The Dolphins; and the blistering early form of the Brisbane Broncos in the National Rugby League ensured Rugby League was the talk of Queensland.

Each weekend, local footy fields were filled with junior and senior players as 67,700 registered players enjoyed club competitions.

Female participation increased by 10 per cent, with numbers eclipsing 10,000 for the first time.

The QRL team – led by new Chief Executive Officer Ben Ikin – worked diligently to support and deliver community leagues, statewide competitions and Origin programs.

Volunteers were again exceptional across community competitions, with more than 23,000 people playing a pivotal role in the season's success.

In line with its 2024 'Game Plan', the QRL is committed to building healthy clubs and leagues that inspire and support Queensland communities.





# STATE AND TERRITORY LEAGUES REPORTS WESTERN AUSTRALIA



The NRL "Roads to Regions" tour visited Karratha, Roebourne, and Port Hedland in The Pilbara. This tour was spearheaded by ambassadors Alan Tongue, Joel Thompson, and home-grown Jillaroo star Kennedy Cherrington.

Highly productive participation development trips to Broome and Kununurra in The Kimberley as well as to Christmas and Cocos Islands (Indian Ocean Territories) were also conducted this year, providing amazing opportunities to kids from these difficult to access regions.

The impressive, highly competitive performances of WA State Rep and Pathways teams, including WA Men's, Women's, Under 15 and Under 17 Boys, and Under 18 and Under 16 Girls in the various CAS and National Championship events, were major highlights in 2023. These results proved that the continued NRL WA investment into pathways and opportunities for WA participants is vital.

Growth in the Under 10-12 age groups in Club Rugby League, posted a 7.6 per cent increase, as well as a noteworthy 65 per cent increase in registrations at one of the fledgling clubs, the Kwinana Titans.

Major event organisation and activations in 2023 included the Anzac Challenge, Indigenous Round, Junior & Senior Grand Final Days, and the 7th Annual Harmony Cup

## KEY STATS

395 League Stars programs.

30 NRL Sporting Schools programs.

Nines. The Harmony Cup Nines is now widely considered the number one multicultural sporting event in WA and the success of the 2023 event reinforced this. The Harmony Cup Finals were also for the first-time broadcast LIVE by SBS on DEMAND, taking the WA game and its key inclusiveness messages to a national audience.

In early August, the Telstra Premiership returned to Perth, by way of the Round 23 double-header between the Dolphins and the Newcastle Knights followed by the South Sydney Rabbitohs taking on the Cronulla Sharks. NRL WA staff collaborated very closely with the promoters and the Clubs to generate awareness and excitement around the return of the first NRL Premiership fixtures in WA since March 2018. These efforts were rewarded with a crowd of 46,000 on what was a magnificent day for Rugby League in the state.

The alignment of the NRL RISE Program with WA Junior Rep structures in 2024, leading into our ASSRL rep team pathways remains a strong focus for the future. The RISE program will be expanded to be delivered in three regions in 2024, North, South, and Central, culminating with our Junior State Championships for Under 13 and Under 15 Boys as well as Under 14 and Under 16 Girls. In what has been another year of significant progress, NRL WA would like to thank our valued partners and sponsors.

WA plays NT on Day 4 of the Women's National Championship at Gold Coast, QLD.





# STATE AND TERRITORY LEAGUES REPORTS NORTHERN TERRITORY



## KEY STATS – CLUB RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION

6.7% Growth	3-7 yrs
4% Growth	10-12 yrs
17.2% Growth	16-18 yrs
5.7% Growth	Overall female registration

In season 2023, NRL NT cemented the 'Our House' Initiative, aimed at creating respectful behaviours towards each other and our 'Community Connect Program'. Most pleasingly, Danila Dilba Health Services also joined us on Grand Final day to promote greater awareness of FASD Day.

NRL NT built a schedule of themed rounds in 2023, focussed on generating more excitement and tailored to allow our game to demonstrate positive, engaging messaging across the broader community. Most importantly, this was only achieved through the commitment and support of our Clubs to create fun, safe and inclusive environments for all participants and volunteers.

18 NT school teachers registered for the NRL Schools Ambassador Program in its inaugural year. As part of the finals series, 20 teachers were invited to an appreciation event including free hospitality at Territory Rugby League Stadium as part of creating stronger connection and valued partnerships.

The Annual NRL NT Junior Presentation Night set a new standard this year. 130 guests attended on the night, held at Events Cinemas, Palmerston. New awards introduced included:

- » Junior Volunteer of the Year (17 yrs and under).
- » Juniors Adult Volunteer of the Year (18 yrs+).
- » Junior Coach of the Year. (Coaching a junior team in 2023).
- » NRL NT "Our House Rules" Junior Team of the Year.
- » Junior Club of the Year.

In senior Rugby League, the annual Frank Johnson & Gaynor Maggs Medal Awards were rebranded to better align with the true diversity of participation in the NRL NT senior competitions. All awards across both Frank Johnson (males) & Gaynor Maggs (females) medals were presented, with special guest, Canberra Raiders legend, Alan Tongue attending the night. Excellent recognition of the night was received from NT Sports Minister, Kate Worden, General Manager Sport & Rec Mitch Hardy, Corporate, and Media partners included in the 220 guests that attended.

›  
Caption



^  
The Brisbane Broncos and the Parramatta Eels compete at TIO Stadium for the ANZAC Round.

The Parramatta Eels' ongoing relationship with the Northern Territory saw the Eels return to Alice Springs for the first time since 2019. The Eels Community team spent three days in the lead up to the NRL ANZAC round game against the Brisbane Broncos in Darwin, visiting schools, hosting coaching and skills clinics, educational programs, and a community BBQ.

The NRL Dolphins also visited the NT in May with excellent engagement across several communities. The delegation, which included fullback superstar Hamiso Tabuai-Fidow, Edrick Lee, Herman Ese'ese, Mason Teague, Kurt Donoghoe and Jack Bostock, all worked directly to grow the game in remote and Indigenous communities in conjunction with our NRL NT team. The group travelled from Darwin, through Katherine, Elliot, and Daly Waters, delivering skills clinics to children whilst also giving the locals a chance to meet their NRL heroes. The success of this tour was most evident in Katherine, where 200 kids, along with many parents and fans attended, demonstrating strong demand for Rugby League across the NT.

In 2023, initiatives were introduced that assisted in driving a more inclusive and structured participation and pathways platform, based on a stronger female influence and culture within the NRL NT community. A positive reinforcement of our commitment to building a more inspired and united culture within our pathways system was the unveiling of a large, highly visible team image at Territory Rugby League Stadium, featuring and acknowledging the 2023 undefeated Senior Women's Team from the Harvey Norman National Championships. Three female pathways players; Latoniya Norris, Elisa Niki & Ivana Schober, were also invited to attend the Gems Pathways program Camp, along with Coach Bianca Scrymgour. Proof that the female pathways system in the NT is providing amazing opportunities for locals. In other outstanding achievements, Shari Togo was appointed as an Assistant Coach with the Prime Ministers XIII Women's team, Latoniya Norris was selected to represent the PNG Orchards and Siniva Nielsen Sa'anga from Alice Springs represented Fiji at the 2023 Pacific Championships.

Finally, our thanks to all our clubs, schools, volunteers, corporate partners, the ARLC and the NT Government, who all provide tremendous support for our game throughout the Northern Territory.



# STATE AND TERRITORY LEAGUES REPORTS

## VICTORIA



### KEY STATS

29% (4.6K) overall growth and record Club Rugby League participation

43% Growth in female Club Rugby League participation

1st Schoolboy Trophy won by a Victorian school – Hallam Secondary College

Victoria experienced a record-breaking year in 2023 with more people playing Rugby League than ever before across the state. With over 4,600 registered Club players (up 29 per cent on 2022 numbers), records tumbled for junior participants (up 36 per cent) and for female participants (up 43 per cent). Supporting this unprecedented growth, were record numbers of registered coaches, referees, and volunteers.

Work in the community continued through connecting schools and clubs across Victoria. School-based blitzes were connected to club-run 'come and try' events, supporting Melbourne Storm's community-based training sessions and events, innovative program delivery and competition structures.

Continued support from Melbourne Storm has been instrumental to the growth of participation and development of the game. This includes use of their brand across all club and school competitions, direct engagement initiatives with clubs, educational support to school academies, partnered community outreach programs, pathway program enhancements and advocacy with governments and other stakeholders for the betterment of the game.

Progress of school based development in Victoria was highlighted with Hallam Secondary College winning the 2023 NSW Schoolboy Trophy, the first time a Victorian school has won this competition. Expansion

to pathway programs in 2023 saw the addition of schoolgirl programs for the first time, with Victorian teams participating in the 16 years and 18 years schoolgirl programs.

A highlight for the pathway programs this year was the Victorian Men's team winning the Combined Affiliated States Championships for the third time.

Pathway programs received a boost this year by accessing the playing fields at the Victorian State Rugby League Centre in Broadmeadows. These fields were also used by the Jillaroos in their preparations for the Pacific Championship match in Melbourne. This centre will be enhanced further in early 2024 by the Victorian Government and Hume City Council with the completion of the pavillion, which will house gymnasium and recovery facilities as well as administration and educational training rooms.

Other highlights for Victoria were the first beach tag event in the state, held on the iconic St Kilda Beach and the return of the Harmony Cup, in a revamped format which was supported by 10 communities across 45 teams.

NRL Victoria extends a heartfelt thanks to the players, coaches, teachers, volunteers, and parents for their continued support in the growth of the game.

The Melbourne Storm run through the banner at Marvel Stadium in Round 18.





# STATE AND TERRITORY LEAGUES REPORTS SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Commencing the year with a Harmony Cup event, over 200 participants across 14 teams took part in a fantastic day for the community. This event featured men's and women's teams, Under 16s boy's and girl's teams, Under 18s boy's teams and mixed tag for Under 15s. Other participation events conducted throughout 2023 included:

- » Spring 9s – featuring, junior tag, mixed tag, and open women's formats.
- » Beach tag event on iconic Glenelg Beach.
- » Nunga Tag festivals – over 1,000 tag participants across 2 events.
- » Limestone Coast – regional event days, including teams from Victoria.

Following the success of 2022, a female only competition was conducted for players from Under 13s girls to senior women. Supported by the Rookie RISE program, this provided a platform for the SA team to participate in the Harvey Norman Women's National Championships in May.

The metropolitan Adelaide club season enjoyed the introduction of a new team formed from the local PNG community. The amazing cultural impact of this side on the local Rugby League community was highlighted at full time of the Grand Final, which the side reached in their inaugural year. Whilst they weren't successful in winning on the day, they celebrated the success of their opposition through song in very moving scenes following the final whistle.

## KEY STATS

National Volunteer of the Year – Andrew Unger

**48,613** Attendance at Adelaide State of Origin

For the first time in over four years a state SA men's team participated at the Combined Affiliated States Championship. This represented a significant step forward for Rugby League in South Australia. Additionally, through the opportunities afforded with alignment to programs out of Victoria, 12 players from South Australia were able to attend the same championships in the Under 17s event. The opportunities for these aspiring young players were a highlight of the Championships and this initiative will help support the retention of talent in South Australia moving forward.

NRL SA also supported several major event activations across South Australia and Adelaide, including the State of Origin Trophy tour, Ampol Little Origin Series, Touch Football event on Adelaide Oval, public media events, Referees forum with State of Origin officials and the hosting of a Teacher Ambassador launch, attended by over 30 local teachers.

South Australia enjoyed a jam-packed year of Rugby League action in 2023, highlighted by a spectacular State of Origin at the iconic Adelaide Oval, viewed by 48,613 spectators.

State of Origin  
Game One was played  
at Adelaide Oval.



The SA Rugby League season ended with a special highlight, with the well-deserved awarding of the NRL National Volunteer of the Year to Andrew Unger on NRL SA Grand Final Day. Andrew is a long serving volunteer, who is an incredibly well-respected person within our community. This award was thoroughly deserved and excellent recognition for an amazing person who has dedicated most of his life to serving our sport in SA.

NRL SA expresses its appreciation and thanks to all its volunteers, coaches, referees, parents, and players for their ongoing support of Rugby League in our state.





CHAPTER

# 08

FINANCIAL REPORT





# 2023 NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## HIGHER REVENUES

Revenue has grown by \$107.3m to \$701.1m, or 18 per cent over the prior year. Revenue has been driven by the new media rights deal and record sponsorship, wagering and game day revenues.

## IMPROVED OPERATING EFFICIENCY

Operating margin, or the operating expenses ratio to revenue, reduced to 22.2 per cent. The ratio in the prior year was 25.5 per cent. The improvement in the ratio has resulted from a continued focus on cost management and improving operational efficiency.

## RECORD DISTRIBUTIONS

Distributions to clubs, players, states and development increased by \$80.3m or 22 per cent compared to the prior year. The ARLC and the Rugby League Players Association negotiated a Collective Bargaining Agreement during the financial year providing long term certainty for NRL and NRLW Players. The ARLC was also pleased to agree a long-term funding arrangement with NRL Clubs providing financial security for all NRL Clubs.

## CONTINUED GROWTH OF SECURE INVESTMENTS

The ARLC continued its strategy to develop a strong, stable balance sheet to provide financial security and steady, passive income. The ARLC purchased the Mercure Sunshine Coast Kawana Waters Hotel in December 2023 and also entered into a contract to purchase a new hotel in Woollooware leased to Quest Apartments under a long term lease. The Woollooware property is due to settle in early 2024. Both assets are expected to provide long term growth and regular passive income.

## STABLE BALANCE SHEET

The net assets of the ARLC have grown to \$260.1m, a 29 per cent increase on the prior year. Net assets include \$210.6m in cash assets invested in at call and fixed term deposits.



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## Income Statement Analysis

The following tables provide an analysis of the operations of the Group that is used by management to access the financial performance of the Group. The 'Controlling Body' column contains the consolidated financial results for the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited ("ARLC") and National Rugby League Limited ("NRL") legal entities.

The 'Controlled Entities' column contains the financial results for the various State League entities and NRL Foundation that are controlled by the ARLC. The accounting policies used to prepare the tables are consistent with those used by the Group.

PROFIT & LOSS (\$'000)	THE CONTROLLING BODY (ARLC & NRL) <sup>1</sup>										
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>320,612</b>	<b>344,878</b>	<b>354,261</b>	<b>366,165</b>	<b>377,230</b>	<b>520,465</b>	<b>552,941</b>	<b>417,273</b>	<b>570,345</b>	<b>585,375</b>	<b>689,370</b>
<b>Expenses<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>(105,952)</b>	<b>(130,267)</b>	<b>(149,030)</b>	<b>(148,884)</b>	<b>(158,362)</b>	<b>(177,347)</b>	<b>(207,560)</b>	<b>(134,037)</b>	<b>(185,899)</b>	<b>(163,452)</b>	<b>(193,375)</b>
Event, Game and Sponsorship	(61,726)	(79,919)	(90,769)	(87,183)	(97,898)	(103,083)	(128,865)	(65,445)	(102,805)	(98,588)	(119,196)
Football	(9,597)	(13,034)	(16,089)	(19,427)	(20,063)	(21,845)	(25,042)	(19,358)	(18,953)	(20,424)	(20,944)
Football related Covid exceptional costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(11,376)	(27,892)	(2,293)	-
Community and Player Welfare	(14,474)	(14,907)	(16,726)	(16,860)	(16,350)	(16,010)	(17,179)	(6,428)	(7,271)	(6,249)	(6,874)
Integrity and Salary Cap	(2,240)	(2,516)	(2,595)	(3,221)	(3,776)	(3,864)	(3,375)	(3,331)	(3,110)	(2,984)	(3,361)
Administration	(15,550)	(16,995)	(18,951)	(19,390)	(17,714)	(18,559)	(20,342)	(12,229)	(14,016)	(24,912)	(26,599)
Insurance and Finance	(2,365)	(2,897)	(3,900)	(2,802)	(2,561)	(13,986)	(12,757)	(11,300)	(11,497)	(5,657)	(7,678)
Restructure Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(4,569)	(355)	-	-
Investment Servicing Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(2,345)	(8,723)
<b>FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION</b>	<b>214,660</b>	<b>214,611</b>	<b>205,231</b>	<b>217,281</b>	<b>218,868</b>	<b>343,118</b>	<b>345,381</b>	<b>283,236</b>	<b>384,446</b>	<b>421,923</b>	<b>495,995</b>
<b>Distributions</b>	<b>(169,319)</b>	<b>(192,769)</b>	<b>(217,698)</b>	<b>(227,445)</b>	<b>(226,350)</b>	<b>(295,996)</b>	<b>(316,505)</b>	<b>(308,417)</b>	<b>(341,596)</b>	<b>(358,955)</b>	<b>(437,401)</b>
Clubs and Players	(132,280)	(146,663)	(162,334)	(167,696)	(160,717)	(222,760)	(228,132)	(253,545)	(278,224)	(292,297)	(360,832)
States and Affiliates	(16,300)	(22,914)	(27,847)	(30,473)	(32,784)	(38,111)	(47,940)	(25,620)	(35,437)	(36,500)	(42,958)
Development	(20,739)	(23,192)	(27,516)	(29,276)	(32,850)	(35,125)	(40,433)	(29,253)	(27,935)	(30,158)	(33,611)
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>45,341</b>	<b>21,842</b>	<b>(12,466)</b>	<b>(10,165)</b>	<b>(7,482)</b>	<b>47,122</b>	<b>28,876</b>	<b>(25,181)</b>	<b>42,850</b>	<b>62,968</b>	<b>58,594</b>

BALANCE SHEET (\$'000)	THE CONTROLLING BODY (ARLC & NRL) <sup>1</sup>										
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Assets	188,074	194,816	192,892	249,304	226,956	248,431	267,335	238,553	254,330	289,525	337,766
Total Liabilities	123,383	108,282	118,824	185,400	170,534	154,537	144,564	140,963	113,890	92,176	81,824
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>64,691</b>	<b>86,534</b>	<b>74,068</b>	<b>63,904</b>	<b>56,421</b>	<b>93,894</b>	<b>122,771</b>	<b>97,590</b>	<b>140,440</b>	<b>197,349</b>	<b>255,942</b>

## NOTES

- The Controlling Body comprises:
  - Australian Rugby League Commission (ARLC)
  - National Rugby League (NRL)
- The Consolidated Group comprises:
  - The Controlling Body
  - ARLC WA Ltd (100% owned by ARLC and acquired 8 June 2015)
  - ARLC SA Ltd (100% owned by ARLC and acquired 30 June 2015)
  - ARLC VIC Ltd (100% owned by ARLC and acquired 1 July 2015)
  - ARLC NT Ltd (100% owned by ARLC and acquired 6 July 2015)
  - NRL Foundation Limited (100% owned by ARLC and the Trustee to NRL Foundation Trust)
  - NRL Foundation Trust
  - Australian Rugby League Development Limited (50% owned by ARLC; 50% owned by NRL)
- Depreciation and amortisation are included in these categories whereas in the statutory accounts it is separately disclosed in the Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income.

PROFIT & LOSS (\$'000)	2022		2023	
	CONTROLLING BODY	CONSOLIDATED GROUP	CONTROLLING BODY	CONSOLIDATED GROUP
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>585,375</b>	<b>593,798</b>	<b>689,370</b>	<b>701,145</b>
<b>Expenses<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>(163,452)</b>	<b>(164,494)</b>	<b>(193,375)</b>	<b>(196,096)</b>
Event, Game and Sponsorship	(98,588)	(98,535)	(119,196)	(120,324)
Football	(20,424)	(20,298)	(20,944)	(21,829)
Football related Covid exceptional costs	(2,293)	(2,293)	-	-
Community and Player Welfare	(6,249)	(6,249)	(6,874)	(6,874)
Integrity and Salary Cap	(2,984)	(2,984)	(3,361)	(3,361)
Administration	(24,912)	(24,911)	(26,599)	(26,528)
Insurance and Finance	(5,657)	(6,879)	(7,678)	(8,457)
Restructure Costs	-	-	-	-
Investment Servicing Costs	(2,345)	(2,345)	(8,723)	(8,723)
<b>FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION</b>	<b>421,923</b>	<b>429,304</b>	<b>495,995</b>	<b>505,049</b>
<b>Distributions</b>	<b>(358,955)</b>	<b>(366,401)</b>	<b>(437,401)</b>	<b>(446,866)</b>
Clubs and Players	(292,297)	(293,050)	(360,832)	(363,710)
States and Affiliates	(36,500)	(35,367)	(42,958)	(39,956)
Development	(30,158)	(37,984)	(33,611)	(43,200)
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>62,968</b>	<b>62,903</b>	<b>58,594</b>	<b>58,183</b>

BALANCE SHEET (\$'000)	2022		2023	
	CONTROLLING BODY	CONSOLIDATED GROUP	CONTROLLING BODY	CONSOLIDATED GROUP
Total Assets	289,525	285,760	337,766	345,354
Total Liabilities	92,176	83,880	81,824	85,291
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>197,349</b>	<b>201,880</b>	<b>255,942</b>	<b>260,063</b>



The Directors present their report for the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited (the 'Company') for the year ended 31 October 2023.

## DIRECTORS

The Company's Directors in office during the financial year and until the date of this report as well as their Board meeting attendance are as follows:

	DATE	BOARD MEETINGS	
	APPOINTED	ELIGIBLE	ATTENDED
Peter V'landys AM (Chairman)	20-Mar-18	12	12
The Hon. Peter Beattie AC	25-Jul-17	12	11
Tony McGrath	8-Jul-14	12	12
Alan Sullivan KC	7-Feb-22	12	12
Wayne Pearce OAM	10-Feb-12	12	11
Dr Gary Weiss AM	30-Aug-16	12	12
Professor Megan Davis	25-Jul-17	12	11
The Hon. Kate Jones	10-Nov-20	12	12

## COMPANY SECRETARY

	DATE APPOINTED
Daniel Dressler	12-Jan-22

## PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY

The principal activity of the Company is the fostering and propagation of the game of Rugby League football throughout the States and Territories of Australia and internationally.

The short and long term objectives of the Company are to:

- » foster, develop, extend and adequately fund the game from grassroots to elite level;
- » conduct State of Origin and Australian representative matches;
- » organise, conduct and foster the National Rugby League ("NRL") competition;
- » liaise with the Rugby League International Federation on the international game; and
- » promote and encourage sport, recreation and the general welfare of young people in the community.

The success of the Company's achievement of its objectives is indicated by growing awareness and participation in Rugby League.

## REVIEW OF OPERATIONS AND KEY FINANCIAL METRICS

There were no significant changes in the Company's operations during the year.

KEY FINANCIAL METRICS	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Revenue	701,145	593,798
Net Operating Result	58,183	62,903

## DIVIDENDS

No dividends have been paid, declared, or recommended by the Company during the financial year.

## LIKELY DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE RESULTS

There are no foreseen changes to Company operations which will materially impact future year results.

## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AFTER THE YEAR END

Continuing with its investment strategy, the Company purchased the Mercure Sunshine Coast Kawana Waters Hotel on 15 December 2023 for \$22.5m including transaction costs. The results of its operations from the date of purchase will be included in the 2024 financial results.

There have been no other significant events since the date of this report that, in the opinion of the Directors, are likely to significantly impact the operations or finances of the Company in future years.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Company operations are not regulated by any significant environmental regulations under a law of the Commonwealth or of a state or territory.



**DIRECTORS' INTERESTS AND BENEFITS**

Since the end of the previous financial year, no Director of the Company has received or become entitled to receive any benefit because of a contract made by the Company or a related body corporate with a Director or with a firm of which the Director is a member, or with a company in which the Director has a substantial interest.

**INDEMNIFICATION OF OFFICERS**

The Directors and Executive Officers (D & EO) of the Company are indemnified by an insurance contract against liabilities and expenses arising from the performance of their official duties, to the extent permitted by law and up to insurance policy limits.

	2023	2022
	\$'000	\$'000
D & EO insurance premiums	555	578

**INDEMNIFICATION OF AUDITORS**


To the extent permitted by law, the Company has agreed to indemnify the auditors (Ernst & Young) as part of the terms of its audit engagement agreement, against claims by third parties arising from the audit (for an unspecified amount). No payment has been made to indemnify Ernst & Young during or since the financial year.


**MEMBERS' GUARANTEE**

The Company is a company limited by guarantee. If the Company is wound up, the Constitution states that each member is required to contribute a maximum of \$10 each towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the Company.

	2023	2022
Number of members at year end	27	26

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Directors.

  
Peter V'landys AM  
Chairman

  
Tony McGrath  
Director

31 January 2024  
Sydney, NSW



Ernst & Young  
200 George Street  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia  
GPO Box 2646 Sydney NSW 2001

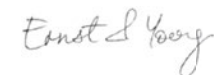
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**Auditor's Independence Declaration to the Directors of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited**

As lead auditor for the audit of the financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited for the financial year ended 31 October 2023, I declare to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- No contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the Corporations Act 2001 in relation to the audit;
- No contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit; and
- No non-audit services provided that contravene any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

This declaration is in respect of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited and the entities it controlled during the financial year.



Ernst & Young



Siobhan Drury  
Partner  
31 January 2024



# STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Year ended 31 October 2023

	NOTES	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Revenue	3(a)	701,145	593,798
		<b>701,145</b>	<b>593,798</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>			
Event, game and sponsorship		(84,979)	(70,883)
Media contra		(34,112)	(24,582)
Football		(21,723)	(22,484)
Community and player welfare		(6,873)	(6,248)
Administration, Integrity and Salary Cap		(25,424)	(23,566)
Clubs and Players		(363,710)	(293,050)
States, Affiliates and New Zealand Rugby League		(39,956)	(35,367)
Development		(42,901)	(37,818)
Depreciation and amortisation	3(b)	(9,184)	(7,676)
Insurance and finance costs	3(c)	(6,303)	(6,879)
Investment servicing costs		(7,797)	(2,342)
		<b>(642,962)</b>	<b>(530,895)</b>
<b>NET OPERATING RESULT</b>		<b>58,183</b>	<b>62,903</b>
Income tax expense	2(d)	–	–
<b>NET SURPLUS AFTER TAX</b>		<b>58,183</b>	<b>62,903</b>
Other comprehensive income		–	–
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE SURPLUS</b>		<b>58,183</b>	<b>62,903</b>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of this Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income.

# STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL POSITION

Year ended 31 October 2023

	NOTES	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	210,602	182,553
Trade and other receivables	5	62,361	27,091
Prepayments and other assets	6	3,893	10,696
Inventory	7	314	170
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>277,170</b>	<b>220,510</b>
<b>NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	8	43,818	42,963
Intangible assets	9	9,208	8,741
Right-of-use lease assets	10	10,543	11,510
Other receivables	5	4,615	2,036
<b>TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>68,184</b>	<b>65,250</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>345,354</b>	<b>285,760</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Trade payables	11	11,204	8,699
Other payables	12	53,538	54,297
Lease liabilities	13	3,546	2,605
Provisions	14	6,734	5,353
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>75,022</b>	<b>70,954</b>
<b>NON CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Lease liabilities	13	9,286	11,613
Employee entitlements	14	983	1,313
<b>TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>10,269</b>	<b>12,926</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>85,291</b>	<b>83,880</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>260,063</b>	<b>201,880</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Reserves		2,228	2,228
Retained surplus		257,835	199,652
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>260,063</b>	<b>201,880</b>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of this Statement of Consolidated Financial Position.



# STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CHANGES IN EQUITY

Year ended 31 October 2023

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Balance at beginning of year	2,228	2,228
Total comprehensive surplus	–	–
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>2,228</b>	<b>2,228</b>
<b>RETAINED SURPLUS</b>		
Balance at beginning of year	199,652	136,749
Total comprehensive surplus	58,183	62,903
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>257,835</b>	<b>199,652</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		
Balance at beginning of year	201,880	138,977
Total comprehensive surplus	58,183	62,903
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>260,063</b>	<b>201,880</b>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of this Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income.

# STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOWS

Year ended 31 October 2023

	NOTES	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Receipts from ordinary operations		689,614	616,035
Payments to suppliers and employees		(299,328)	(296,366)
Payments to NRL Clubs		(356,107)	(273,312)
Interest received		7,057	1,026
Interest paid		(761)	(1,804)
<b>NET OPERATING CASH IN-FLOW</b>		<b>40,475</b>	<b>45,579</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Payments for land and buildings		(489)	(27,039)
Payments for leasehold additions and plant and equipment		(2,838)	(1,800)
Payments for intangible assets		(3,844)	(2,376)
Deposit for investment property		(2,185)	–
Proceeds on disposal of leasehold additions		500	–
<b>NET INVESTING CASH OUT-FLOW</b>		<b>(8,856)</b>	<b>(31,215)</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Lease payments (principal component)		(3,570)	(3,447)
<b>NET FINANCING CASH OUT-FLOW</b>		<b>(3,570)</b>	<b>(3,447)</b>
<b>CASH AND EQUIVALENTS NET INCREASE</b>		<b>28,049</b>	<b>10,917</b>
<b>CASH AND EQUIVALENTS AT BEGINNING OF THE YEAR</b>		<b>182,553</b>	<b>171,636</b>
<b>CASH AND EQUIVALENTS AT END OF THE YEAR</b>	4	<b>210,602</b>	<b>182,553</b>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of this Statement of Consolidated Cash Flows.



# NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Year ended 31 October 2023

## 1. CORPORATE INFORMATION

The Australian Rugby League Commission Limited (the Company) is a company limited by guarantee incorporated in Australia.

The registered office and principal place of business is Rugby League Central, Driver Avenue, Moore Park, NSW Australia 2021.

The nature of the operations and principal activities of the Company are described in the Directors' report.

## 2. FINANCIAL STATEMENT PRESENTATION

The consolidated financial statements of the Company and its subsidiaries and controlled entities (the 'Group') for the year ended 31 October 2023 were authorised for issue in accordance with a resolution of the Directors on 31 January 2024.

### (A) BASIS OF PREPARATION

The Group is a not-for-profit, private sector entity which is not publicly accountable.

This financial report is a General Purpose financial report, which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Corporations Act 2001, AASB 1060 General Purpose Financial Statements – Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Tier 2 Entities and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board.

The financial report has been prepared on a historical cost basis except where otherwise stated.

The financial report is presented in Australian dollars (AUD) which is the functional currency of the Company.

All values are rounded to the nearest thousand (\$'000), except where otherwise indicated under the option available to the company under ASIC Corporations Instrument 2016/191 (Rounding in Financial/Directors' Reports).

Comparative information has been reclassified where necessary to achieve disclosure consistent with the current reporting year.

### (B) STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

In the opinion of the Directors, having regard to the not-for-profit nature of the Group's business, the terms used in the prescribed format of the Statement of Comprehensive Income have been updated to align with the Group's not-for-profit status. 'Profit or Loss' in the prescribed format of the Statement of Comprehensive Income has been substituted by 'Surplus or Deficit'.

The Group has adopted all of the new, revised or amending Accounting Standards and interpretations issued by the AASB that are mandatory for the current reporting period. No other new, revised or amending Accounting Standards or Interpretations that are not yet mandatory have been adopted early.

### (C) FOREIGN CURRENCY TRANSLATION

Transactions in foreign currencies are converted to local currency at the rate of exchange on transaction dates. Foreign currencies outstanding at the reporting date are translated using the spot rate at the end of the financial year.

### (D) INCOME TAX

The Group is a not-for-profit organisation in accordance with section 50-45 of the Income Tax Assessment Act of 1997.

### (E) GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of GST except:

- » when the GST incurred on a purchase of goods and services is not recoverable from the taxation authority, in which case the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense item as applicable; and
- » receivables and payables, which are stated with the amount of GST included.

The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is included as part of receivables or payables in the Statement of Financial Position.

Cash flows are included in the Statement of Consolidated Cash Flows on a gross basis and the GST component of cash flows arising from investing and financing activities, recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is classified as operating cash flows.

Commitments and contingencies are disclosed net of the amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority.

### (F) SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING JUDGEMENTS, ESTIMATES AND ASSUMPTIONS

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of revenues, expenses, assets, liabilities, contingent liabilities and accompanying disclosures.

The inherent uncertainty in these judgements, estimates and assumptions could result in outcomes that require material adjustments to the carrying amount of assets or liabilities in future periods.

Impairments of financial assets applied in the financial statements involve judgements, estimates and assumptions which are based on information available at the time of preparation of the financial statements. Actual outcomes may be different due to circumstantial and market changes beyond the control of the Group.

### (G) GOING CONCERN

The financial report has been prepared on a going concern basis which assumes continuity of normal business activities and realisation of assets and settlement of liabilities in the ordinary course of business. The going concern basis includes an assumption that there will be no suspension of the 2024 NRL season.



### 3. INCOME STATEMENT DISCLOSURES

(A) REVENUE	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Licencing (comprising Media, Wagering Product Fees and Merchandise Royalties)	485,985	409,867
Operations and Events (comprising Sponsorship, Game Receipts, Investment Income and Government Income)	189,963	168,392
Other income	25,197	15,539
Financing income	7,057	1,026
Digital Services income	2,692	3,221
Sundry income	15,448	11,292
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>701,145</b>	<b>593,798</b>

#### Accounting policy for revenue

##### Media

The Group grants media organisations the right to broadcast Rugby League matches on television, radio or online in exchange for consideration that includes both cash amounts and contra (which are rights the Group is granted to use advertising slots provided by the media partner). The broadcasting rights provide the media partner with a right to access the Group's intellectual property as it exists as the games are played.

The method of measuring progress for the transfer of broadcasting rights is costs incurred associated with the competition for the broadcasting period. The costs incurred are reflective of club grants that are paid to the Clubs over the 5 year performance period necessary to fund and support each NRL Club's participation in the National Rugby League competition and where applicable, the State of Origin grants paid to the respective State Leagues. The pattern of revenue recognition in each reporting period will follow the movement in the cost profile. Cash received is recorded as deferred revenue and recognised as revenue as and when ARLC carries out its obligation.

##### Wagering Product Fees

The Group grants sports betting operators a licence being a promise to provide rights to the sports betting operators to access the Group's intellectual property. In exchange, the Group will receive royalties from the Sports Betting operators as the sales relating to each bet occurs or is settled.

##### Merchandise Royalties

The Group grants licences to merchandisers to manufacture and sell Club and Player merchandising containing NRL branding. Revenue is recognised when it becomes probable that the Group will collect the consideration to which it will be entitled in exchange for the services transferred to customers.

##### Sponsorship

The Group grants sponsors the right to operate as a sponsor of the National Rugby League and its Rugby League matches in exchange for consideration. Sponsors are also granted access to the intellectual property of the Group which they are able to access throughout the contract term and so benefits are received and consumed simultaneously as the Group is performing its obligation. Sponsorship income is therefore to be recognised over time and measured as time elapses over the contract term.

##### Game Receipts

The performance obligation of the Group is defined as the operation and management of each match. The measure of progress for revenue recognition is the completion of each Rugby League match where the Group is entitled to the game receipts revenue relating to tickets purchased by event attendees.

##### Investment Income

The ARLC acquired the Gambaro Hotel (GH) in Brisbane on 1 July 2022. GH includes a 68 room five-star hotel, signature restaurant, function and conferencing centre, bar and ancillary facilities. The hotel derives income from accommodation and food & beverage sales and is managed on behalf of the ARLC by an experienced operator.

##### Government Income

Government funding contracts require the Group to stage Rugby League events on behalf of the Government or at locations chosen by the Government. Revenue is recognised when contracted obligations are fulfilled. Payments received in advance of contracted Rugby League events are recorded as deferred revenue and revenue is recognised on completion of each event.



**Financing Income**

Interest revenue is recognised as interest accrues using the effective interest method.

**Digital Services Income**

Digital services income is recognised over contract terms.

**Sundry Income**

This includes football statistics revenue, player agent registration fees, and shared service charges to entities affiliated with the Group. The performance obligation is the provision of service, and the measure of progress for revenue recognition is when the service is provided. In addition, salary cap and other fine revenue are brought to account when the amount of the fine has been approved by the Board and any appeals process is concluded.

<b>(B) DEPRECIATION AND AMORTISATION</b>	<b>2023 \$'000</b>	<b>2022 \$'000</b>
Land and buildings	581	–
Leasehold additions and plant and equipment	1,707	1,478
Intangible assets	3,687	3,003
Right-of-use lease assets	3,209	3,195
<b>TOTAL DEPRECIATION AND AMORTISATION</b>	<b>9,184</b>	<b>7,676</b>

<b>(C) INSURANCE AND FINANCE COSTS</b>	<b>2023 \$'000</b>	<b>2022 \$'000</b>
Interest charges – AASB 16: Lease liabilities	761	770
Interest charges – AASB 1058: Not for Profit	–	1,034
Insurance	5,076	4,842
Provision for expected credit losses	1,117	10
Net bad debts (recovered)/written-off	(765)	6
Bank fees and charges	175	174
Foreign exchange differences	(61)	43
<b>TOTAL INSURANCE AND FINANCE COSTS</b>	<b>6,303</b>	<b>6,879</b>

<b>(D) EMPLOYEE BENEFITS EXPENSE</b>	<b>2023 \$'000</b>	<b>2022 \$'000</b>
Salary and wages	57,876	52,816
Annual leave	529	179
Long service leave	816	(20)
<b>TOTAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS EXPENSE</b>	<b>59,221</b>	<b>52,975</b>

**4. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS**

	<b>2023 \$'000</b>	<b>2022 \$'000</b>
Cash at bank and on hand	79,949	159,322
Short term cash deposits	130,653	23,231
<b>TOTAL CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS</b>	<b>210,602</b>	<b>182,553</b>

Cash at bank earns interest at variable business deposit rates. Short-term cash deposits are on fixed interest rates and terms. Cash at bank includes a bank guarantee of \$397,025 (2022: \$397,025) provided to Primewest Funds Limited as a security deposit for a Queensland premises lease. These are restricted funds.

**5. TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES**

<b>Current trade and other receivables</b>	<b>2023 \$'000</b>	<b>2022 \$'000</b>
Trade receivables	53,052	18,345
Provision for expected credit losses	(2,666)	(2,306)
<b>NET TRADE RECEIVABLES</b>	<b>50,386</b>	<b>16,039</b>
Other receivables	6,139	6,281
Contract assets (accrued income)	5,836	4,771
<b>TOTAL CURRENT TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES</b>	<b>62,361</b>	<b>27,091</b>
Total non-current other receivables	4,615	2,036
<b>TOTAL TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES</b>	<b>66,976</b>	<b>29,127</b>



<b>Movement in provision for expected credit losses</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>
<b>BALANCE AT BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>(2,306)</b>	<b>(2,398)</b>
Provision for expected credit losses during the year	(1,117)	(10)
Provision utilisation	–	102
Provision released	757	–
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>(2,666)</b>	<b>(2,306)</b>

#### Expected Credit Losses (ECLs)

The Group applies the simplified approach for calculating and recognising ECLs based on lifetime ECLs at each reporting date.

A provision matrix is utilised based on historical credit loss experience, adjusted for forward looking factors specific to the debtors and the economic environment.

#### Other receivables

Other receivables includes a sub-lease as a lessor on one of the leased premises.

<b>Sub-lease receivable</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>
Current	616	–
Non-current	848	2,036
<b>TOTAL SUB-LEASE RECEIVABLE</b>	<b>1,464</b>	<b>2,036</b>

<b>Movement in carrying value</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>
<b>BALANCE AT BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>(2,306)</b>	<b>2,553</b>
Interest income	79	101
Payments received	(643)	(618)
Adjustments	(8)	–
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>1,464</b>	<b>2,036</b>

<b>Maturity profile of undiscounted lease payments</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>
Within a year	669	643
Between 1 and 5 years	874	1,543
After 5 years	–	–
<b>TOTAL LEASE PAYMENTS</b>	<b>1,543</b>	<b>2,186</b>
Unearned finance income	(79)	(150)
<b>NET INVESTMENT IN SUB-LEASE RECEIVABLE</b>	<b>1,464</b>	<b>2,036</b>

#### 6. PREPAYMENTS AND OTHER ASSETS

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>
Prepayments	1,708	1,783
Deposit for investment property	2,185	–
Investment in managed cash fund	–	8,913
<b>TOTAL PREPAYMENTS AND OTHER ASSETS</b>	<b>3,893</b>	<b>10,696</b>

#### 7. INVENTORY

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>
<b>FOOD &amp; BEVERAGE</b> (provided as part of hospitality services)	<b>314</b>	<b>170</b>

#### Accounting policy for inventory

Inventory on hand is reported at cost in accordance with AASB 102.



## 8. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
(A) Land and buildings	26,947	27,039
(B) Leasehold additions and plant and equipment	16,871	15,924
<b>TOTAL PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>43,818</b>	<b>42,963</b>

(A) LAND AND BUILDINGS	2023 \$'000		2022 \$'000		2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
	LAND	BUILDINGS	LAND	BUILDINGS	TOTAL	TOTAL
Cost	3,815	23,713	3,815	23,224	27,528	27,039
Accumulated Depreciation	–	(581)	–	–	(581)	–
<b>CARRYING VALUE</b>	<b>3,815</b>	<b>23,132</b>	<b>3,815</b>	<b>23,224</b>	<b>26,947</b>	<b>27,039</b>

Movement in carrying value	2023 \$'000		2022 \$'000		2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
	LAND	BUILDINGS	LAND	BUILDINGS	TOTAL	TOTAL
<b>BALANCE AT BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>3,815</b>	<b>23,224</b>	–	–	<b>27,039</b>	–
Additions	–	489	3,815	23,224	489	27,039
Depreciation	–	(581)	–	–	(581)	–
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>3,815</b>	<b>23,132</b>	<b>3,815</b>	<b>23,224</b>	<b>26,947</b>	<b>27,039</b>

(B) LEASEHOLD ADDITIONS AND PLANT AND EQUIPMENT	2023 \$'000		2022 \$'000		2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
	LEASEHOLD ADDITIONS	PLANT AND EQUIPMENT	LEASEHOLD ADDITIONS	PLANT AND EQUIPMENT	TOTAL	TOTAL
Cost	21,144	8,919	21,133	12,402	30,063	33,535
Accumulated Depreciation	(7,407)	(5,785)	(7,194)	(10,417)	(13,192)	(17,611)
<b>CARRYING VALUE</b>	<b>13,737</b>	<b>3,134</b>	<b>13,939</b>	<b>1,985</b>	<b>16,871</b>	<b>15,924</b>

Movement in carrying value	2023 \$'000		2022 \$'000		2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
	LEASEHOLD ADDITIONS	PLANT AND EQUIPMENT	LEASEHOLD ADDITIONS	PLANT AND EQUIPMENT	TOTAL	TOTAL
<b>BALANCE AT BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>13,939</b>	<b>1,985</b>	<b>14,239</b>	<b>1,363</b>	<b>15,924</b>	<b>15,602</b>
Additions	522	2,316	289	1,511	2,838	1,800
Disposals	(142)	(42)	–	–	(184)	–
Depreciation	(582)	(1,125)	(589)	(889)	(1,707)	(1,478)
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>13,737</b>	<b>3,134</b>	<b>13,939</b>	<b>1,985</b>	<b>16,871</b>	<b>15,924</b>

**Accounting policy for land and buildings**

Land and buildings comprise the Gambaro hotel property which was acquired on 1 July 2022 and is accounted for as an operating hotel.

The property is carried at cost less accumulated depreciation which is applied to the buildings on a straight line basis over 40 years (2.5% per annum).

**Accounting policy for leasehold additions and plant and equipment**

Leasehold additions and plant and equipment are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Eligible parts replacements and major works are capitalised when incurred.

All other repairs and maintenance are recognised as expenses when incurred.

Leasehold additions and plant and equipment are depreciated on a straight line basis as:

» Leasehold additions: 10-20 years

» Plant and equipment: 3-10 years

Residual values, useful lives and amortisation methods are reviewed, and adjusted if appropriate, at each financial year end.

Assets are derecognised on disposal or when no further future economic benefits are expected from continued utilisation.

Gains or losses (calculated as the difference between net disposal proceeds and the carrying amount) are recognised on derecognition.



## 9. INTANGIBLE ASSETS

	2023 \$'000		2022 \$'000		2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
	DIGITAL ASSET	SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT & LEGAL TRADEMARKS	DIGITAL ASSET	SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT & LEGAL TRADEMARKS	TOTAL	TOTAL
Gross carrying amount	18,718	3,154	14,876	3,152	21,872	18,028
Accumulated amortisation	(9,610)	(3,054)	(6,369)	(2,918)	(12,664)	(9,287)
<b>CARRYING VALUE</b>	<b>9,108</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>8,507</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>9,208</b>	<b>8,741</b>

### Movement in carrying value

	2023 \$'000		2022 \$'000		2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
	DIGITAL ASSET	SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT & LEGAL TRADEMARKS	DIGITAL ASSET	SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT & LEGAL TRADEMARKS	TOTAL	TOTAL
<b>BALANCE AT BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>8,507</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>8,940</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>8,741</b>	<b>9,368</b>
Additions	3,842	2	2,338	38	3,844	2,376
Work in progress	305	5	–	–	310	–
Amortisation	(3,546)	(141)	(2,771)	(232)	(3,687)	(3,003)
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>9,108</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>8,507</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>9,208</b>	<b>8,741</b>

### Accounting policy for intangible assets

Intangible assets are carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and any impairment losses.

Amortisation is calculated on a straight-line basis over the useful lives of the assets which are estimated to be between 3 and 10 years.

## 10. RIGHT-OF-USE LEASE ASSETS

	2023 \$'000		2022 \$'000		2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
	PREMISES	MOTOR VEHICLES	PREMISES	MOTOR VEHICLES	TOTAL	TOTAL
Cost	15,509	2,146	15,454	2,968	17,655	18,422
Accumulated depreciation	(6,160)	(952)	(4,101)	(2,811)	(7,112)	(6,912)
<b>CARRYING VALUE</b>	<b>9,349</b>	<b>1,194</b>	<b>11,353</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>10,543</b>	<b>11,510</b>

### Movement in carrying value

	2023 \$'000		2022 \$'000		2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
	PREMISES	MOTOR VEHICLES	PREMISES	MOTOR VEHICLES	TOTAL	TOTAL
<b>BALANCE AT BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>11,353</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>13,990</b>	<b>852</b>	<b>11,510</b>	<b>14,842</b>
Additions	96	2,146	–	250	2,242	250
Work in progress	–	–	(331)	(56)	–	(387)
Amortisation	(2,100)	(1,109)	(2,306)	(889)	(3,209)	(3,195)
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>9,349</b>	<b>1,194</b>	<b>11,353</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>10,543</b>	<b>11,510</b>

### Accounting policy for right-of-use lease assets

The Group recognises right-of-use assets at the commencement date of leases (the date leased assets are available for use).

Right-of-use assets are measured at cost, less accumulated depreciation and any impairment losses, and adjusted for any remeasurement of lease liabilities.

The cost of right-of-use assets includes the amount of lease liabilities recognised, initial direct costs incurred, and lease payments made at or before the commencement date less any lease incentives received.

Right-of-use assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the shorter of the lease term and the estimated useful lives of the assets, as follows:

- » Plant and equipment: 25%
- » Computer equipment: 25%
- » Buildings: 3.33%
- » Motor vehicles: 25%

If ownership of a leased asset transfers to the Group at the end of a lease term or the cost reflects the exercise of a purchase option, depreciation is calculated using the estimated useful life of the asset.



**11. TRADE PAYABLES**

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
<b>TRADE PAYABLES</b>	<b>11,204</b>	<b>8,699</b>

**Accounting policy for trade payables**

Trade payables represent unpaid liabilities for goods and services received prior to financial year-end, are carried at historical cost and generally expected to be settled within two months.

**12. OTHER PAYABLES**

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Accruals	28,312	31,947
Goods and Services Tax payable	1,024	118
Other payables	9,278	5,782
Deferred revenue	14,924	16,450
<b>TOTAL OTHER PAYABLES</b>	<b>53,538</b>	<b>54,297</b>

**13. LEASE LIABILITIES**

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Current liabilities	3,546	2,605
Non-current liabilities	9,286	11,613
<b>TOTAL LEASE LIABILITIES</b>	<b>12,832</b>	<b>14,218</b>

**Movement in carrying value**

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
<b>BALANCE AT BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>14,218</b>	<b>17,803</b>
Renewals / Additions	2,271	–
Terminations	–	(138)
Interest expense	761	770
Payments	(4,331)	(4,217)
Adjustments	(87)	–
<b>BALANCE AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>12,832</b>	<b>14,218</b>

**Amounts recognised in statement of consolidated comprehensive income**

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Interest revenue from sub-lease receivable	79	101
Depreciation expense on right-of-use assets	(3,209)	(3,195)
Interest expense on lease liabilities	(761)	(770)
<b>CONSOLIDATED COMPREHENSIVE INCOME IMPACT</b>	<b>(3,891)</b>	<b>(3,864)</b>

**Maturity profile of undiscounted lease payments**

	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Within a year	4,136	3,240
Between 1 and 5 years	5,454	7,476
After 5 years	11,344	12,076
<b>TOTAL LEASE PAYMENTS</b>	<b>20,934</b>	<b>22,792</b>

**Lessee leases overview**

The Group leases various premises and motor vehicles.

Premises leases are generally for durations of up to 5 years, some with options to extend.

The headquarters premises lease has a duration of 41 years with a natural conclusion in 2060.

Motor vehicle leases are generally for durations of up to 4 years.

Lease terms are renegotiated upon renewal.



### Accounting policy for lease liabilities

Lease liabilities are recognised for contracts where the Group has a right to control and use an identified asset for a period of time in exchange for consideration.

The Group applies a single recognition and measurement approach for all leases, except for short-term leases and leases of low-value assets.

The Group has several lease contracts that include extension and termination options. These options are negotiated by management to provide flexibility in managing the leased-asset portfolio and align with the Group's business needs. Management exercises significant judgement in determining whether these extension and termination options are reasonably certain to be exercised.

The Group recognises lease liabilities measured at the present value of lease payments to be made over the lease term at lease commencement date.

Lease payments include fixed payments (including in-substance fixed payments) less any lease incentives receivable, variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate, and amounts expected to be paid under residual value guarantees.

Lease payments also include the exercise price of a purchase option reasonably certain to be exercised by the Group and payments of penalties for terminating the lease, if the lease term reflects the Group exercising the option to terminate.

Variable lease payments that do not depend on an index or a rate are recognised as expenses (unless they are incurred to produce inventories) in the period in which the event or condition that triggers the payment occurs.

The Group uses its incremental borrowing rate at the lease commencement date if the interest rate implicit in the lease is not readily determinable.

The carrying value of lease liabilities is increased to reflect the accrual of interest and reduced for the lease payments made.

The carrying value of lease liabilities is remeasured if there is a modification, a change in the lease term, a change in the lease payments (e.g., changes to future payments resulting from a change in an index or rate used to determine such lease payments) or a change in the assessment of an option to purchase the underlying asset.

### 14. EMPLOYEE ENTITLEMENTS

Employee entitlements (including on-costs)	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Current	6,734	5,353
Non-current	983	1,313
<b>TOTAL EMPLOYEE ENTITLEMENTS</b>	<b>7,717</b>	<b>6,666</b>

#### Accounting policy for employee entitlements

Provision is made for employee entitlements accumulated as a result of employees rendering services up to the reporting date. These benefits include wages and salaries, annual leave and long service leave.

Liabilities arising in respect of wages and salaries, annual leave and any other employee benefits due to be settled within twelve months of the reporting date are measured at their nominal amounts based on rates which are expected to be paid when the liability is settled.

### 15. EXPENDITURE COMMITMENTS

(A) CONTRACTED GRANTS (EXCLUDING REPRESENTATIVE PLAYER PAYMENTS) PAYABLE TO:	2023 \$'000	2022 \$'000
<b>NRL CLUBS</b> (incl. salary cap other player benefits)	<b>1,360,855</b>	<b>299,736</b>
Not later than one year	330,444	299,736
Later than one year but not later than five years	1,030,411	–
<b>RUGBY LEAGUE PLAYERS ASSOCIATION</b>	<b>85,640</b>	<b>–</b>
Not later than one year	21,410	–
Later than one year but not later than five years	64,230	–
<b>TOTAL CONTRACTED GRANTS</b>	<b>1,446,495</b>	<b>299,736</b>

#### (B) GRANTS TO STATE LEAGUES

ARLC provides funding to New South Wales Rugby League Limited and Queensland Rugby League Limited to administer the game in their respective states in accordance with the New Members Agreement dated 10 February 2012. The funding is agreed on an annual basis.



<b>(C) OTHER OPERATING EXPENDITURE COMMITMENTS PAYABLE:</b>	<b>2023 \$'000</b>	<b>2022 \$'000</b>
Not later than one year	4,195	3,381
Later than one year but not later than five years	1,609	3,548
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE COMMITMENTS</b>	<b>5,804</b>	<b>6,929</b>

Operating expenditure commitments includes Information Technology contracts.

## 16. AUDITORS REMUNERATION

	<b>2023 \$'000</b>	<b>2022 \$'000</b>
<b>ERNST &amp; YOUNG (AUSTRALIA)</b>		
Group statutory audit fees	277	264
Other assurance and compliance services	80	27
<b>ERNST &amp; YOUNG (INTERNATIONAL)</b>		
Tax advisory services	17	–
<b>TOTAL AUDITORS REMUNERATION</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>291</b>

## 17. PARENT ENTITY DISCLOSURE

Australian Rugby League Commission Limited (ARLC Ltd).

<b>(A) FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE</b>	<b>2023 \$'000</b>	<b>2022 \$'000</b>
Net operating surplus	59,482	62,968
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE SURPLUS</b>	<b>59,482</b>	<b>62,968</b>

<b>(B) FINANCIAL POSITION</b>	<b>2023 \$'000</b>	<b>2022 \$'000</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>276,049</b>	<b>226,410</b>
Current assets	243,582	196,164
Non-current assets	32,467	30,246
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>19,219</b>	<b>29,062</b>
Current liabilities	18,175	27,031
Non-current liabilities	1,044	2,031
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>256,830</b>	<b>197,348</b>
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>256,830</b>	<b>197,348</b>
Reserves	2,228	2,228
Retained surplus	254,602	195,120

## 18. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

If a NRL Premiership club is unable to pay its respective player contracts as a result of the Club being insolvent, the Group will assume liability for player payments guaranteed or underwritten by the club that was a party to that player contract.

The Group has received claims made against it. The Directors have obtained external advice with respect to these matters. The Directors do not expect these matters to have a material financial impact on the results of the Group.

## 19. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

Continuing with its investment strategy, the Company purchased the Mercure Sunshine Coast Kawana Waters Hotel on 15 December 2023 for \$22.5m including transaction costs. The results of its operations from the date of purchase will be included in the 2024 financial results.

There have been no other significant events since the date of this report that, in the opinion of the Directors, are likely to significantly impact the operations or finances of the Company in future years.



# DIRECTOR'S DECLARATION

Year ended 31 October 2023

## 20. KEY MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL (KMP)

KMP are those who have the authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of the Group, directly or indirectly.

	2023	2022
<b>AGGREGATE KMP REMUNERATION</b> (in \$ including all entitlements as defined in AASB 119)	<b>6,163,192</b>	<b>6,090,483</b>

## 21. RELATED PARTIES

Related parties comprise the Company's KMP (note 20) and the other Group companies as follows:

	AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS / COMPANY NUMBER
<b>CONTROLLING BODY</b>	
Australian Rugby League Commission Limited (ARLC Ltd)	94 003 107 293
National Rugby League Limited (NRL Ltd) (100% owned by ARLC Ltd)	23 082 088 962
<b>CONTROLLED ENTITIES</b>	
ARLC WA Limited (100% owned by ARLC Ltd)	81 602 143 199
ARLC SA Limited (100% owned by ARLC Ltd)	27 602 142 914
ARLC Vic Limited (100% owned by ARLC Ltd)	79 602 143 126
ARLC NT Limited (100% owned by ARLC Ltd)	70 602 142 718
NRL Foundation Limited (100% owned by ARLC Ltd) (Trustee to NRL Foundation Trust)	604 253 358
NRL Foundation Trust	90 728 528 868
Australian Rugby League Development Limited (ARLD Ltd) (50% owned by ARLC Ltd; 50% owned by NRL Ltd)	73 089 809 745

## 22. MEMBERS' GUARANTEE

The Company is a company limited by guarantee.

The Company Constitution requires each member to contribute a maximum of \$10 towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the Company if the Company is wound up.

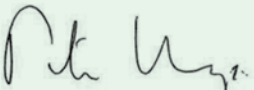

	2023	2022
<b>NUMBER OF MEMBERS</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>

In accordance with a resolution of the Directors of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited, we state that:

In the opinion of the Directors:

- a. the financial statements and notes of the consolidated Group are in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001,
  - i. giving a true and fair view of the Group's financial position as at 31 October 2023 and of its performance for the period ended on that date; and
  - ii. complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and Corporations Regulations 2001; and
- b. there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Group will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

On behalf of the Board


  
 Peter V'landys AM      Tony McGrath  
 Chairman                      Director

31 January 2024  
Sydney, NSW





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## Independent auditor's report to the Members of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited

### Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited (the Company) and its subsidiaries (collectively the Group), which comprises the statement of consolidated financial position as at 31 October 2023, the statement of consolidated comprehensive income, statement of consolidated changes in equity and statement of consolidated cash flows for the year then ended, notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of the Group is in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001, including:

- a. Giving a true and fair view of the consolidated financial position of the Group as at 31 October 2023 and of its consolidated financial performance for the year ended on that date; and
- b. Complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures and the Corporations Regulations 2001.

### Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report section of our report. We are independent of the Group in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the Corporations Act 2001 and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards) (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Information other than the financial report and auditor's report thereon

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information obtained at the date of this auditor's report is the directors' report accompanying the financial report.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.



### Responsibilities of the directors for the financial report

The directors of the Company are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures and the Corporations Act 2001 and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the directors are responsible for assessing the Group's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the Group or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

### Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

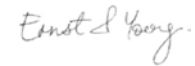
As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- ▶ Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- ▶ Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Group's internal control.
- ▶ Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- ▶ Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Group's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Group to cease to continue as a going concern.
- ▶ Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.



- ▶ Obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the Group to express an opinion on the financial report. We are responsible for the direction, supervision and performance of the Group audit. We remain solely responsible for our audit opinion.

We communicate with the directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.



Ernst & Young



Siobhan Drury  
Partner  
Sydney  
31 January 2024



National Rugby League Ltd  
Rugby League Central  
Driver Avenue, Moore Park  
NSW 2021  
**NRL.COM**

