



16.6m

THE NUMBER OF VIEWERS WHO TUNED INTO THE 2021 FINALS SERIES 9,000

COVID TESTS CARRIED OUT DURING THE RELOCATION PERIOD

130,059

TOTAL CROWD FOR MAGIC ROUND

28%

YEAR ON YEAR
VIEWERSHIP INCREASE
FOR THE FINALS SERIES

7%

INCREASE IN OVERALL VIEWERSHIP FOR THE 2021 SEASON

\$4.1m

RAISED FOR THE MARK HUGHES FOUNDATION DURING BEANIE FOR BRAIN CANCER ROUND

NUMBER OF POSITIVE COVID TESTS

100,000

MASKS USED DURING
THE RELOCATION PERIOD







MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN PETER V'LANDYS AM

I'm pleased to report that the NRL has posted a surplus of \$43.1 million. This is even more pleasing considering an additional \$25 million was paid to clubs and players compared to the previous year.

This strong performance is a result of revenue growth across multiple areas of the business and effective cost management, building on the major restructure undertaken at the end of 2020. These actions enabled the game to absorb the significant Covid costs including the relocation costs of the competition when it was moved to Queensland. The total cost of the relocation and other COVID-19 costs (Club Covid Support Payments, NRLW Player Support Payments and biosecurity measures) cost the game nearly \$40m in direct expenses. These costs were partially offset by two State of Origin series which contributed \$20 million to net revenue.

It was also due to the Australian Rugby
League Commission taking the unprecedented
decision to relocate the entire NRL Telstra
Premiership to Queensland. It was a decision
that safeguarded the continuity of the
competition and protected the Commission's
members and players.

The decision was made on 11 July, prior to mass outbreaks in NSW and Victoria. It ensured the Premiership could be completed in full for our players, clubs and our fans. It also ensured we met our broadcast and commercial obligations and guaranteed our revenue streams.

When the Commission relocated the competition there were 77 cases in NSW that day. As we know, that number grew to over 1000 cases a day during the remainder of the competition. Like every decision made during the pandemic, the decision was a risk assessment based on data analysis to ensure we remained ahead of the curve – which we did.

Under the direction of Andrew Abdo and his management team, the NRL created three quarantine hubs, on the Gold Coast, Brisbane and Sunshine Coast, to ensure the safety of the players and the safety of the Queensland community. A family quarantine hub was also built to reunite players with their families. Because of our strict protocols there was not a single positive case that entered Queensland from the NRL.

Although the financial result was pleasing, the highlight for me was the Commission securing long-term broadcast deals from Nine Entertainment and Sky TV New Zealand, which join Fox Sports, with long-term investment in our game until 2027. From 2023 to 2027 NRL broadcast revenue will be over \$400 million per annum, the most ever received for broadcast rights, and placing rugby league in the strongest financial position in our history.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the players and their families for their role in this. We completed the season because of their sacrifices and compliance with the toughest biosecurity protocols in Australia. Many players were separated from their families for long periods of time and gave up liberties to ensure the season could continue.

I also thank our clubs for your support and flexibility in 2021. In addition to \$6.9m of Club relocation support payments due to the loss of home games following the relocation of the competition, I'm pleased to report the NRL returned \$8m in out performance dividends back to the clubs, a further \$1m to the States and is in a position to return \$11m to Players based on the 2021 financial performance and the forecasted 2022 financial position. The Commission strongly believes the clubs, players and states should share in the NRL's out performance results and that will continue.

I would also like to acknowledge the NSW and Queensland Governments, without your ongoing support we would not have been able to compete the 2021 season.

Firstly, the NSW Government for your flexibility in allowing major events to be transferred to Queensland and also for your assistance in ensuring we could commence the start of the competition. In particular, I would like to acknowledge former Deputy Premier John Barilaro along with current Premier Dominic Perrottet and Deputy Premier Paul Toole and Minister for Enterprise, Tourism, Sport and Western Sydney Stuart Ayres. I also thank then Police Commissioner Mick Fuller and Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant for your guidance and flexibility during the season.

2021 will forever be remembered as the year that Queensland hosted its first Grand Final, all three State of Origins and our 16 teams. This would not have been possible without the assistance and investment of the Queensland Government, in particular the support of Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, Deputy Premier Steven Miles and then Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young. The Commission is indebted to the role you played in ensuring we could complete the season. Rugby league heartland is in our regions and the Commission was delighted to work with the Queensland Government to take games to Mackay, Rockhampton and Toowoomba this season.

As referenced, the Commission finalised a new broadcast agreement with Nine Entertainment for the 2023-2027 seasons. It's however more than a broadcast deal, it's a partnership. Nine have agreed to play a role in promoting and growing the game across all levels. I would like to thank Nine's Chairman Peter Costello and Chief Executive Mike Sneesby for their support and continued loyalty to our game.

We also completed a long-term deal with Sky TV New Zealand until the end of the 2027 season. This deal is the largest broadcast deal with a New Zealand network in our game's history. I would like to thank Sky for their investment in the game, particularly given the Warriors have not been based in Auckland. We look forward to seeing the Warriors potentially return to play in Auckland during the 2022 season.

I would also like to acknowledge all three broadcast partners, Nine, Fox Sports and Sky, for their flexibility in ensuring the continuity of the season. At various stages during the year venues and timeslots had to be moved at short notice and we could not have achieved that without the support of our broadcast partners.

In 2021 the Commission also took the decision to expand the NRL Telstra Premiership to 17 teams for the 2023 season, with the inclusion of the Dolphins as a fourth team in Queensland and a second team in the Brisbane area. I would like to congratulate the Dolphins on their exemplary bid and acknowledge the efforts and the professionalism of the other bid teams.

The key to long-term success is growth and it's important we continue to dominate our heartland markets such as southeast Queensland. A condition of the Dolphins' licence is that the Dolphins spend \$2 million annually on participation and growing the game - this is a strong outcome for rugby league. A priority for the Commission was ensuring a new team plays a prominent role in growing participation because when you create a participant you create a fan and I am confident The Dolphins will achieve that goal and further strengthen our dominance in Oueensland.

Thank you to Fox Sports and Chief Executive Patrick Delany for your increasing investment from 2023 with the additional 12 games that are created as a result of The Dolphins entering the competition. With the broadcast cycles now all aligned the Commission can give further consideration to potentially increasing the competition to 18 teams in the future.

The Commission was pleased to approve the expansion of the NRLW from 4 to 6 teams with the Titans, Eels and Knights entering the Telstra Women's Premiership. Semi-Finals matches will also be played for the first time in the competition's history. The Commission's objective for further NRLW expansion is a priority and all stakeholders will be engaged in formulating the expansion timeline.

Congratulations to the Penrith Panthers on winning the 2021 NRL Telstra Premiership. You are the great entertainers of our game and your Premiership is richly deserved. I also congratulate the NSW Blues on winning the Ampol State of Origin Men's Series and Queensland on winning the Ampol Women's Origin. I would also like to acknowledge the Warriors for again relocating from Auckland, the game will forever be indebted for your sacrifices.

2021 was also a sad year for rugby league. The game lost two immortals in Norm Provan and Bob Fulton whose legacy will remain for generations to come. The Provan-Summons trophy will forever be a reminder of two great legends who defined the spirit in which our game should be played in. We also farewelled the great Tommy Raudonikis, a legend of the people and the Commission was proud to assist the family in a public memorial at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Thank you to my fellow Commissioners for your loyalty, dedication and innovative vision for our game. We are blessed to have a Commission which brings unique skillsets to rugby league. Every Commissioner plays a large role in growing our game and I'm grateful for your support and input in 2021.

I would also like to thank our Chief Executive Andrew Abdo for the successful implementation of the Commission's strategy. Andrew's work ethic, commercial acumen, loyalty and vision is extraordinary. I can't express the Commission's appreciation enough for Andrew's conscientious efforts.

And thank you to NRL management and staff for your efforts in another challenging year. Your commitment to our game was vital to the continuation of the competition.

The 2022 NRL Telstra Premiership season will be another challenging year. The Commission will remain dynamic and ready to adjust to unforeseen challenges, but we enter the season with the game in the strongest financial shape it has been in. This provides us with the opportunity to invest for the long-term future and continue to grow the game from grassroots participation to the elite level. Objectives I look forward to building on next year.

Peter V'landys AM ARLC Chairman

AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE COMMISSION (ARLC)

The Australian Rugby League Commission 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 generally 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)



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 is also 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 AC

Mr Beattie is Deputy Chairman of the Medical Research Commercialisation Fund, Ambassador for Life Sciences Queensland, joint adjunct professor at the University of Queensland's Australian Institute for Bioengineering & Nanotechnology & Institute for Molecular Bioscience and former Chairman of GOLDOC. Mr Beattie is also a Director of the International Rugby League Board and Director of the Asia Pacific Rugby League Board. 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.



Professor Megan Davis

Professor Davis is Pro Vice Chancellor and the Balnaves Chair in Constitutional Law, UNSW. Professor Davis is an Acting Commissioner of the NSW Land and Environment Court and an expert member and Chair of the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People in Geneva. Professor Davis is a constitutional law professor specialising in constitutional design and constitution building and one of the nation's leading public constitutional lawyers. She is a co-recipient of the 2021 Sydney Peace Prize.



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 also a Director of the International Rugby League Board and Chair of the ARLC Innovation 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, Estia Health Limited, and Cromwell Property Group. Dr Weiss is a director of Thorney Opportunities Limited, Hearts & Minds Investments Limited, 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.



The Hon. Kate Jones

Ms Jones has 20 years' experience in senior government and leadership positions. Ms Jones served as a Minister in the Queensland Government in a range of portfolios including State Development, Education, Tourism, and Major Events. Ms Jones was also the Minister responsible for the successful delivery of the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast and secured new major events to Queensland including the NRL Magic Round and global sports conference, Sport Accord in 2019. Throughout 2020, Ms Jones was instrumental in working with many national sporting codes to ensure they could continue

to operate safely during

the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms Jones now serves on a

number of boards and works

in leadership roles in both the tech and tourism industries.



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. Mr McGrath is also Chair of the Commission's Risk, Investment and Audit Committee.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO ANDREW ABDO

2021 was a season filled with challenges and opportunities. The challenge of relocating the Telstra Premiership, the challenge of postponing the NRLW competition and the challenge of delivering participation outcomes during a pandemic.

The opportunity was seized and under the leadership of the Commission, we played all Ampol State of Origin games, the second half of the Telstra Premiership and the Grand Final in Queensland for the first time in our history. It proved to be the right call by the Commission, and we delivered a full season after a historic relocation.

We have also now developed the most comprehensive line-up of female elite competitions in the game's history for 2022, when two NRLW Premierships will be played.

Despite the challenges, our State Leagues and game development officers around the country found new ways to connect with communities.

Working together we successfully completed the 2021 season in the most unlikely of circumstances.

Everyone played a part. Our players and officials sacrificed so much to ensure the continuity of the competition for our fans. Our partners showed incredible flexibility to put our fans and competition first. Our fans supported their teams from around Australia and New Zealand in record audience numbers.

We again showed what our game can achieve when we work together. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Commission Chairman, Peter V'landys AM, and all Commissioners, for their strong leadership, decision-making and tireless commitment in guiding the game through these challenges.

The result was a year with increased TV audience, increased revenues and increased interest in our game. But we can get even better, even more effective and drive improved outcomes for everyone from the grassroots to the elite parts of our game.

Football

Our goal remains to be the number one sports entertainment business enabled by a large, connected rugby league community. There are two key metrics we are striving to achieve, the largest possible audience, whether on TV, streaming or live; and fastest growing participation base, whether it is touch, tag or tackle. Volunteers, coaches and parents are the lifeblood of this community. At the elite end of the game, the Commission is continuing to refine the rules to make the game both entertaining and safe. At a grassroots level, we are investing in policies and practices to make the game accessible and enjoyable.

The outcome of a strong Telstra Premiership and Ampol State of Origin series in 2021 was an outstanding year for television ratings. These numbers were aided by lockdowns across much of our key markets, but our research shows that fans are enjoying the free-flowing football. This year was the highest rating Finals Series in over a decade, with a cumulative finals audience of over 16 million – up 28 per cent on last season while the overall viewership for the whole season was up seven per cent. Free To Air, Subscription and Streaming numbers all increased in 2021.

Media Partners

The game has secured its three major broadcast partners Nine, Fox Sports and Sky TV New Zealand until the end of the 2027 season with annual investment in our game at more than \$400 million a year from 2023. This will be the highest media rights total in the game's history. All three media partners have invested for the long-term and this will enable us to invest in all parts of the game.

A number of matches were relocated at short notice and transferred to regional venues. Our media partners put our fans and the game ahead of their own interests and time and time again found a way to make broadcasts work at challenging locations. These are more than broadcast agreements, they are genuine partnerships and I thank the chief executives Mike Sneesby, Patrick Delany and Sophie Moloney for your contribution and coverage of the game for fans.



Message from the CEO

Partnerships

Telstra, our Naming Rights partner for both the NRL and NRLW Premierships, celebrated their 20th Anniversary as a major partner in the game. This is one of the longest commercial partnerships in Australian sport. Telstra's innovation and commitment to growing the men's and women's game benefits all of rugby league, from grassroots to the elite competition.

In addition to Telstra, we want to build our reputation as the best commercial partner in Australian sport and I am proud of the fact that we retained all major partners, despite the financial and fan engagement challenges associated with COVID-19. Thank you to Sportsbet, Asahi CUB, Ampol, Harvey Norman, KFC, Diageo, Chemist Warehouse, Hisense and Youi for the loyalty and investment.

We also welcomed DoorDash as a major partner and the game's official on-demand delivery partner, Anaconda, Coates Hire and Gallagher as new partners in 2021.

Clubs, State Leagues and Players

Rugby league is a game of tribes. NRL Clubs are the connection to fans and community. I would like to acknowledge the role our Clubs have played in a relocated season, supporting the move to Queensland, adhering to the protocols and staying connected to fans, most of whom were unable to attend games across Australia and New Zealand.

Players have made big sacrifices, both financial and in terms of the protocols and restrictions to everyday life. This resulted in a season where every game was played safely, despite a pandemic. I would also like to acknowledge all the NRLW players for their patience as we had to make the difficult call to postpone the 2021 NRLW by a few months. We look forward to repaying this patience with the greatest season of women's rugby league in our history in 2022 as we continue to grow the most exciting female sport on the planet.

The State Leagues have also been challenged by the disruption of Covid-19, but have adapted and ensured that wherever possible, football competitions could be played safely.

Part of the reason our game has been so successful over the last two years is the collaborative way in which the Clubs and States have worked together for the benefit of rugby league.

The Commission continues to invest in funding the financial sustainability of all NRL Clubs, increasing Club funding to record levels, providing an outperformance return to Clubs and State Leagues, and returning cash to NRL players based on the strong financial performance in 2021.

Fans, Participants and Volunteers

Professional sports do not exist without fans. This year, rugby league fans supported their teams and players more than ever, despite lockdowns and relocations. Record TV audience and record online engagement meant that we had over 4 million fans every weekend watching or streaming, 3 million fans engaging on social media and 2 million fans interacting on our digital network, app and fantasy products. Thank you for your support, feedback and for your passion for rugby league. It motivates all of us working in the game.

We acknowledge and thank grassroots participants, coaches, volunteers at clubs right across Australia. 2021 was different. Many of you spent more time in lockdown then on the field, but you continued to ensure the spirit of our grassroots competitions remained strong through the most challenging of times. In 2022 the smell of the BBQ on a fresh winter Saturday morning will bring us all back together. To our junior participants, continue to inspire us to do better. You are the future stars – on and off the field. To our coaches and parents, continue to mentor and develop the life skills that only a team sport like rugby league can develop.

The Business

The NRL financial result of a \$43m surplus was the result of both revenue growth and cost reduction. It also reflects the carry over of two State of Origin series. Normalised for this, we still have a healthy \$23m surplus, despite a \$30m extraordinary relocation cost. The revenue growth is linked to improvements across each line of the business from ticket sales, licensing, wagering product fees and sponsorship.

This surplus will be reinvested wisely, under the direction of the Commission to ensure we grow the game at all levels. We are working on creating a new leaner, faster and more effective NRL.

We will continue to be innovative in the way our head office is structured and remain efficient in the way we execute key priorities.

The Future

Our plan has been to stabilise, renovate and grow.

We stabilised by getting back on the field, restructuring our commercial arrangements and reducing costs at head office to become more sustainable. We have locked in all long-term media revenue and we have ensured the continuity of the competition.

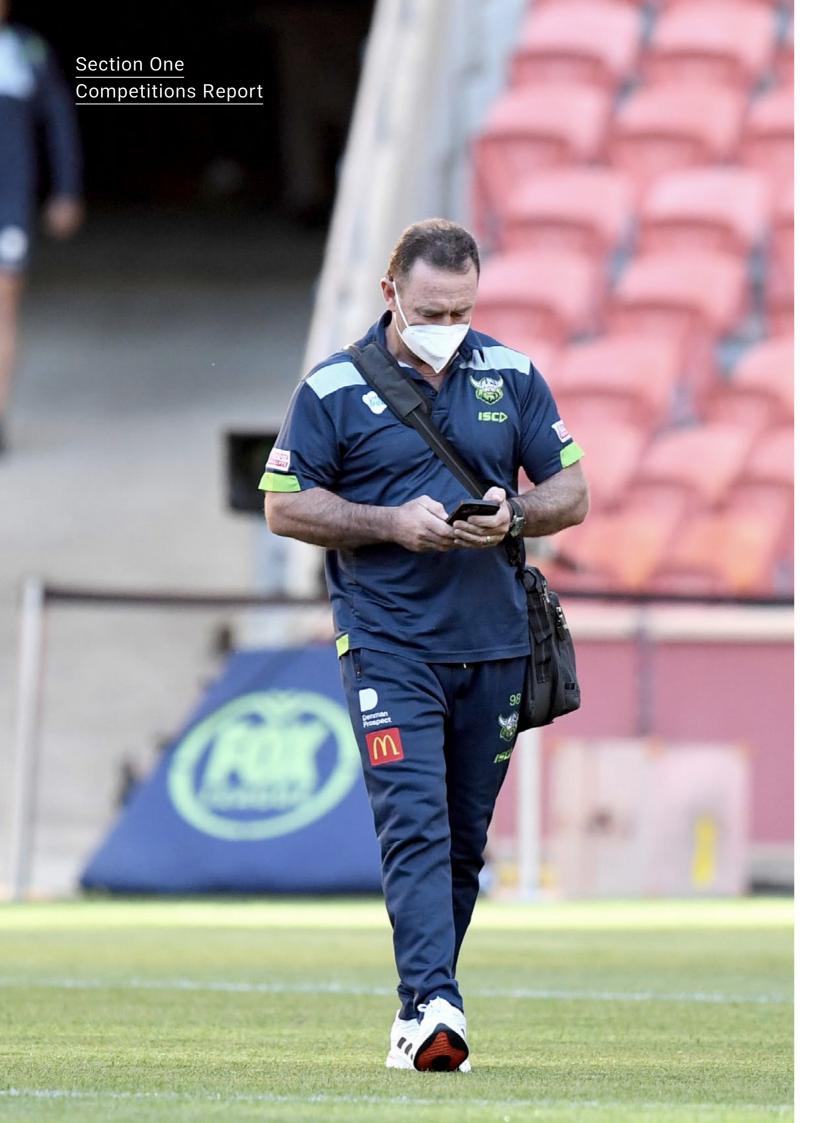
We began the renovation phase, under the direction of the Commission, by being innovative with our rules to make our game more open, entertaining and attacking. The pandemic has also allowed us to do game days differently and more efficiently. And we have commenced the growth phase with the Commission's decision to expand the NRL to 17 teams in 2023 and the NRLW to 6 teams in 2022. We have a bold plan for continued growth with the Commission's focus revitalising our participation strategy and growing the women's competition, not just at the elite level but at all levels. We also look forward to reinvigorating the international game as borders re-open.

Thank you

I would like to thank the Commission for their leadership. The dynamic and innovative decision making in the most challenging of circumstances has ensured the game has continued to grow despite the challenges of the last two years.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Chairman Peter V'landys AM for his mentorship, guidance, and leadership. The game is incredibly fortunate to have a leader like Peter driving positive outcomes for the game.

Andrew Abdo NRL CEO



SUCCESS OF THE 2021 SEASON



Throughout the relocation period, 9000+ COVID tests were carried out and 100,000+ masks were used.

2021 was an historic year for rugby league. For the first time in the game's history, the NRL Telstra Premiership was relocated to Queensland to ensure the continuity of the competition.

The Commission made the pro-active decision to relocate the competition on 11 July after conducting a detailed risk assessment. At the time there was less than 100 COVID-19 cases in NSW a day, but that number quickly grew to over 1000 per day.

The forced relocation gave the game challenges it had never faced before. Thirteen teams, including staff and players, and the NRL Match Officials, were based in three hubs across south-east Queensland; Gold Coast, Brisbane and Sunshine Coast.

Over the relocation period, there were 35,000 room nights and 100,000 meals organised and prepared in order to allow the teams to complete the season. COVID-19 safe gyms and training venues were constructed to allow the teams to prepare.

Throughout the relocation period, more than 9000 COVID-19 tests were carried out, covering players, team staff, referees, medical staff, family members, broadcasters and media, as well as NRL staff. More than 100,000 masks were used across the relocation period.

Through that period, detailed protocols allowed the teams to operate out of a "bubble" environment.

In 2021, there was an uplift in all key attacking metrics, including line breaks and tries. The season delivered more tries per game than any of the past five seasons. Penalties have also declined year-on-year since 2018.

The result was a season, despite the turbulence, which captivated viewers and provided a Finals Series which was considered the best in recent memory. The Penrith Panthers defeated the South Sydney Rabbitohs to win the Premiership at Suncorp Stadium. It was the first time Queensland had hosted the NRL Grand Final.

The NRL Telstra Premiership, including the Finals Series, was watched by a cumulative audience of 126.4 million, including linear and streaming.

NRLW

The NRL announced an expanded NRL Telstra **Women's Premiership Competition, with Parramatta Eels, Gold Coast Titans and Newcastle Knights** joining incumbent NRLW Clubs Brisbane Broncos, Sydney Roosters and St George Illawarra Dragons.

As part of the expanded competition, semi-finals will be played for the first time in the NRLW. Due to border and health restrictions, which prevented a portion of players from being able to participate, the 2021 NRL Telstra Women's Premiership was delayed until the beginning of 2022.

This means that 2022 will feature a year-long calendar of elite women's rugby league including two NRLW Premierships, State of Origin, the women's World Cup and State Leagues.

The decision to delay the 2021 NRLW competition until the 2022 New Year allows the best opportunity to ensure the six teams complete a safe and full season with minimal disruption to the lives of the playing group and support staff, while also ensuring all teams are able to play in front of their home supporter bases.

The rescheduled 2021 NRL Telstra Women's Premiership will now begin on 27 February 2022.















INDIGENOUS ROUND

In Round 12, the NRL's Indigenous Round continued the Pass Back. Move Forward theme, focusing on creating a space for learning and educating Australians on who are the traditional custodians of the land, our nation's history, the importance of greater equality and support for Indigenous communities and helping to build a better future as one. As part of the 2021 NRL Indigenous Round, the NRL drew attention to some important numbers to help educate non-Indigenous Australians about the challenges faced by many, but also what the rugby league community is doing to address them. These included:

Gap in the employment rate of Indigenous and non-Indigenous population (countering this, 95% of placed participants from the NRL School to Work will remain in employment).

25%

Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students completing high school (92% of participants in the NRL School to Work program completed Year 12).

All stadiums and venues hosting Indigenous Round matches featured an acknowledgement to the local First Nations People.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Beanie for Brain Cancer Round

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A record \$4.1 million was raised for the Mark Hughes Foundation through the 2021 NRL Beanie For Brain Cancer Round. More than 160,000 MHF Beanies sold during the Beanie for Brain Cancer campaign. Additionally, the newly formed McCloy Family Foundation pledged \$1 million towards the recently announced MHF research commitment to the University of Newcastle. Sportsbet donated \$73,000 after 73 tries were scored in Round 15. That commitment was on top of a \$50,000 donation from the purchase of Clive Churchill's first ever Kangaroos jersey that will sit in the NRL's Heroes & Legends Museum. The Big Three trek ran alongside Beanie for Brain Cancer Round, with 30 trekkers walking from NRL Headquarters in Sydney to McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle across three days to raise funds and awareness for the Mark Hughes Foundation.



Harvey Norman Women in League Round

The game recognised more than 500,000 women and girls involved at all levels of rugby league as part of the 15th Harvey Norman Women In League Round. The theme of this year's round was - Play Your Part – highlighting that everyone has an important role to play in recognising and accelerating opportunities for women within our sport and our community. Broadcasters partnered with the game to celebrate women involved in rugby league from elite players to volunteers at local clubs. The Commission has placed a priority on creating more opportunities for women in the game at all levels.



State of Origin

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For the first time in the game's history, the entire Ampol State of Origin series was played in Queensland, as a result of the COVID pandemic. Townsville's Queensland Country Bank Stadium hosted Game One after the fixture was shifted from Melbourne. It was the first ever Origin match to be played in Townsville and that match sold out in less than an hour.

Game Two was held at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium, as scheduled, while the third game of the series was shifted from Homebush to Newcastle before being relocated to the Gold Coast's Cbus Super Stadium, just 72 hours before the match. Remarkably, despite not being able to play on home soil, the NSW Blues won the first two matches of the series, 50-6 in Townsville and 26-0 in front of 52,272 in Brisbane.

Queensland earned some pride with a 20-18 Game Three win on the Gold Coast.

The series was watched on by a cumulative audience, including streaming, of 8.9 million, while the Wally Lewis Medal was claimed by Blues star Tom Trbojevic.





Women's Origin



Sunshine Coast Stadium hosted its second consecutive Ampol Women's State of Origin in June. In front of 7,183 people, Queensland won 8-6 in dramatic fashion.

Tazmin Gray was awarded the Nellie Doherty Medal for player of the match. The clash is notable for being the first time both sides were coached by women, Queensland led by Tahnee Norris and NSW by Kylie Hilder. It was also the first occasion all three match officials were women, referee Belinda Sharpe and touch judges Kailey Beattie and Karra-Lee Nolan.

The match was the fourth of the women's interstate series played under the State of Origin banner, and the second won by Queensland.



MILESTONES

Melbourne Storm achieved extraordinary feats in 2021, including equalling the premiership record for consecutive victories. The record of 19 consecutive wins, reached when they defeated Gold Coast Titans at Cbus Super Stadium in Round 23, was established by the Jack Gibson-coached Eastern Suburbs team of 1975.

The incredible milestones did not begin and end there; Storm winger Josh Addo-Carr became the first player in 71 years to score six tries in a game in the 50-0 defeat of South Sydney Rabbitohs at Stadium Australia in Round 9.

The Storm's five tries against the Sharks in Round 25 allowed the Club to break Parramatta's 2001 premiership record of 142 regular season tries. Meanwhile, the Storm finished the regular season with a points differential of 499 points, beating the previous premiership record of 442 points set by the Eastern Suburbs team of 1935.

Elsewhere, South Sydney's Benji Marshall broke Adam Blair's premiership record for most appearances by a New Zealandborn player when he took the field against Canberra in Round 8 at GIO Stadium, for his 332nd NRL game.

South Sydney halfback Adam Reynolds overtook Eric Simms as the greatest point scorer in the history of the Rabbitohs when he kicked his fourth goal against Parramatta at Cbus Super Stadium in Round 21. Simms' record of 1,841 points for the club had stood for 46 years.

Manly Warringah Sea Eagles winger Reuben Garrick had a record-breaking season. In Round 22, Garrick broke the club's record for most points in a season in the 56-10 defeat of Parramatta at Sunshine Coast Stadium. Garrick scored 28 points in the game to overtake the record of Matthew Ridge, who scored 257 points in the 1995 season.

Garrick also completed a unique double in the Sea Eagles' clash with Canterbury at Moreton Daily Stadium in Redcliffe when he became the first player in premiership history to score 20 tries and kick 100 goals in a season.

Most significantly, Garrick then broke the premiership record for most points scored in a regular season when the Sea Eagles defeated North Queensland at Queensland Country Bank Stadium in Round 25. The old record of 288 points was established by former Canterbury winger Hazem El Masri in 2004. Garrick went on to become the first player to score 300 points in a regular season, finishing the night on 304.



Storm's five tries against the Sharks in Round 25 allowed the Club to break Parramatta's 2001 premiership record of 142 regular season tries.



2021 RETIRING CLASS

The following players were recognised as the Official Retiring Class of 2021:

NAME	CLUB	NAME	CLUB
Boyd Cordner	Sydney Roosters	Cameron Smith	Melbourne Storm
Justin O'Neill	North Queensland Cowboys	Dale Copley	Sydney Roosters
Michael Morgan	North Queensland Cowboys	losia Soliola	Canberra Raiders
Jordan Kahu	Brisbane Broncos	Russell Packer	Wests Tigers
Alex Glenn	Brisbane Broncos	Blake Green	Newcastle Knights
Issac Luke	South Sydney Rabbitohs	Trent Merrin	St George Illawarra Dragons
Anthony Don	Gold Coast Titans	Roger Tuivasa-Sheck	Warriors

NAME	CLUB	
Josh Morris	Sydney Roosters	L
Brett Morris	Sydney Roosters	L
Jake Friend	Sydney Roosters	S
Sonny Bill Williams	Sydney Roosters	L
Honey Hireme-Smiler	St George Illawarra Dragons	
Blake Ferguson	Parramatta Eels	
Josh Dugan	Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks	

AME	CLUB
eeson Ah Mau	Warriors
orina Papali'i	Warriors
arina Clark	Warriors
avina O'Mealey	Sydney Roosters
ebecca Young	Sydney Roosters
eather Ballinger	Brisbane Broncos
eather Ballinger	Brisbane Broncos



THE DALLY M AWARD



Manly Warringah Sea Eagles fullback Tom Trbojevic capped a spectacular 2021 season by being crowned the 2021 Dally M Medal winner.

In a ceremony held in Brisbane for the first time ever, Trbojevic became the first Sea Eagles player to win the coveted award since Matt Orford won in 2008. The Sea Eagles star polled ahead of Penrith Panthers halfback Nathan Cleary, South Sydney Rabbitohs five-eighth Cody Walker, Manly Warringah Sea Eagles halfback Daly Cherry-Evans and Sydney Roosters fullback James Tedesco.

Melbourne Storm's remarkable season was celebrated with a number of landmark achievements – Craig Bellamy won Dally M Coach of the Year, while the 19-match winning streak – which equalled the efforts of the 1975 Roosters team – was named the Peter Frilingos Headline Moment, alongside Justin Olam (Centre of the Year) and Brandon Smith (Hooker of the Year).

AWARD	NAME	AWARD	NAME	
Dally M Male Player of the Year	Tom Trbojevic (Manly Warringah Sea Eagles)	Dally M Five-Eighth of the Year	Cody Walker (South Sydney Rabbitohs)	
Dally M Coach of the Year	Craig Bellamy (Melbourne Storm)	Dally M Halfback of the Year	Nathan Cleary (Penrith Panthers)	
Dally M Captain of the Year	James Tedesco (Sydney Roosters)	Dally M Hooker of the Year	Brandon Smith (Melbourne Storm)	
Dally M Rookie of the Year	Sam Walker (Sydney Roosters)	Dally M Fullback of the Year	Tom Trbojevic (Manly Warringah Sea Eagles)	
Dally M Prop of the Year Dally M Prop of the Year	Payne Haas (Brisbane Broncos) James Fisher-Harris	Top Points Scorer	Reuben Garrick (Manly Warringah Sea Eagles)	
	(Penrith Panthers)		Alex Johnston	
Dally M Second Rower of the Year	Viliame Kikau (Penrith Panthers)	Top Try Scorer (Ken Irvine Medal)	(South Sydney Rabbitohs)	
Dally M Second Rower of the Year	Isaiah Papali'i (Parramatta Eels)	Peter Frilingos Headline Moment	Melbourne Storm's 19-match winning streak	
Dally M Lock of the Year	Isaah Yeo (Penrith Panthers)	Provan-Summons Medal	Josh Morris (Sydney Roosters)	
Dally M Winger of the Year	Brian To'o (Penrith Panthers)	DrinkWise Try of the Year	Tom Trbojevic	
Dally M Winger of the Year		•	(Manly Warringah Sea Eagles)	
		YOUI Tackle of the Year	Xavier Coates (Brisbane Broncos)	
Dally M Centre of the Year	Matt Burton (Penrith Panthers)	VB Hardest Working Player of the Year	Isaiah Papali'i	
Dally M Centre of the Year	Justin Olam (Melbourne Storm)	or the rear	(Parramatta Eels)	

2021 ACADEMIC TEAM OF THE YEAR



Tarryn Aiken, Brisbane Broncos, 2021 Academic Female of the Year.

TOM TRBOJEVIC Manly Warringah Sea Eagles

Currently completing a Bachelor of Applied Finance with Bachelor of Economics, Macquarie University

JOE STIMSON Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs

Currently completing a Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Education, Southern Cross University

KYLE FLANAGAN Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs

Currently completing a Bachelor of Construction Management, Western Sydney University

PATRICK CARRIGAN Brisbane Broncos

Currently completing a Bachelor of Physiotherapy 3rd year, University of Queensland

MITCH REIN Gold Coast Titans

Currently completing a Bachelor of Business, Griffith University

AIDEN TOLMAN Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks

Currently completing a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education, Southern Cross University

ELLIOTT WHITEHEAD Canberra Raiders

Currently completing a Certificate IV Career Development, completed a Certificate IV Elite Athlete Wellbeing Management, Career Development Centre

SHAUN LANE Parramatta Eels

Currently completing a Graduate Diploma of Psychology, completed a Bachelor of Health Science, Sydney University

MITCH KENNY Penrith Panthers

Currently completing a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education, University of Technology, Sydney

LINDSAY COLLINS Sydney Roosters

Currently completing a Bachelor of Business (Property Economics)/Certificate III in Carpentry, Western Sydney University

DREW HUTCHISON Sydney Roosters

Currently completing a Bachelor of Education (Primary), completed Cert IV in Small Business, University of New England

BRYDIE PARKER Sydney Roosters

Currently completing a Bachelor of Exercise Science – Physiotherapy, Australian Catholic University

TARRYN AIKEN Brisbane Broncos

Currently completing Honours, completed Bachelor of Psychology, Griffith University

TOM TRBOJEVIC 2021 ACADEMIC MALE OF THE YEAR

TARRYN AIKEN 2021 ACADEMIC FEMALE OF THE YEAR

MATCH OFFICIALS

Ben Cummins officiated

Just like the players and staff members at Clubs, the NRL Match Officials were forced to relocate to south-east Queensland in July to allow the continuation of the 2021 NRL Telstra Premiership season.

Twenty-one full-time match officials were relocated and based in the Brisbane bubble, alongside five staff, many remaining until after the October 3 Grand Final.

The Match Officials operated with additional Queensland-based support staff and trained at Langlands Park, the home ground of Easts Tigers, while also adhering to biosecurity protocols throughout their time in south-east Queensland. Due to the relocation of the Premiership, there was a significant increase in the operation of the remote NRL Bunker.

Prior to the relocation of the Premiership in July, the remote Bunker was in operation on seven occasions for regional fixtures. An additional 26 matches were controlled by the mobile Bunker after the relocation, for a total of 33 matches across the entire season.

The 2021 season saw Ben Cummins become the most capped referee in the game's history, breaking the all-time record of 393 matches, held previously by Bill Harrigan, in May. Cummins then went on to officiate in his 400th match in July.

Gerard Sutton refereed his 7th grand final – and his fifth in a row – in the decider between Penrith Panthers and South Sydney Rabbitohs at Suncorp Stadium. Sutton also refereed all three State of Origin matches, bringing up his 22nd interstate fixture in the process. This broke Bill Harrigan's record of 21 fixtures.



MILESTONES

400 GAMES AS REFEREE

Wests Tigers v Warriors Suncorp Stadium, 30 Jul 2021

Matt Cecchin

Titans v Broncos Cbus Super Stadium, 19 Mar 2021

Gerard Sutton

Sea Eagles v Broncos Suncorp Stadium, 14 May 2021

GAMES

Grant Atkins

Knights v Broncos

GAMES AS

Kasey Badger

AAMI Park, 2 Apr 2021

Phil Henderson

Knights v Broncos Suncorp Stadium, 5 Aug 2021





Gerard Sutton refereeing his 7th grand final and his fifth in a row, between Penrith Panthers and South Sydney Rabbitohs at Suncorp Stadium.

NRL TOUCH JUDGE DEBUT

Wyatt Raymond

Cowboys v Titans Qld Country Bank Stadium, 28 Mar 2021

Kieren Irons

Bulldogs v Eels Stadium Australia, 1 May 2021

Tyson Brough

Bulldogs v Raiders Suncorp Stadium, 15 May 2021

RETIREMENTS

Matt Cecchin

Referee – 371 games Touch Judge - 166 games

Video Referee - 34 games

Grand Finals – 5 (3 as referee, 2 as touch judge) State of Origin - 5 (4 as referee, 1 as touch judge)

Henry Perenara

Referee – 205 games Touch Judge – 33 games Video Referee – 153 games

AMPOL STATE OF ORIGIN SERIES MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee – Gerard Sutton Touch Judges – Todd Smith & Phil Henderson Bunker Review Official – Ashley Klein

AMPOL WOMEN'S STATE OF ORIGIN MATCH OFFICIALS

Referee – Belinda Sharpe Touch Judges – Kailey Beattie & Karra-Lee Nolan Bunker Review Official – Grant Atkins

NRL TELSTRA PREMIERSHIP **GRAND FINAL MATCH OFFICIALS**

Touch Judges - David Munro and Todd Smith Bunker Review Official – Grant Atkins

VALE 2021





Rugby League lost two of its cherished Immortals, Bob Fulton and Norm Provan in 2021. Fulton, affectionately referred to as Bozo, was one of the original Immortals, and one of the game's most revered figures. He played 213 Premiership games for Manly Warringah Sea Eagles and 50 for Eastern Suburbs Roosters, coached the Sea Eagles in 305 games and the Roosters in 100, and also represented Australia in 35 Tests, coaching the national side on 40 occasions.

Provan played 256 Premiership matches for St George through the 1950s and 1960s, played in 10 of St George's 11 successive grand-final victories – the last four as their captain-coach - and represented Australia on 31 occasions. He was inducted as an Immortal in 2018. He is also one of the game's Gladiators, with his iconic image featured on the Provan-Summons trophy.





Peter Newell

Ernie Hills

Wal Hourn

John Whittaker

Ray Blacklock

Mick Fitzsimmons

Warren Simmons

Greg Growden

Jim Schroder

Keith Titmuss

Jack Stewart

Mick Falla

Ray Cupic

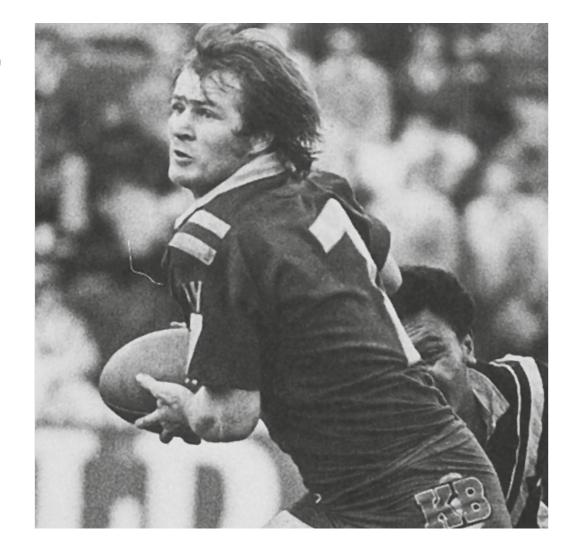
Gary Parcell[^]

Section One Competitions Report

The NRL also mourned the loss of one of the game's great characters Tom "Tommy" Raudonikis in 2021. Raudonikis played 201 Premiership Games for Western Suburbs Magpies and 37 for the Newtown Jets. He also played 29 Tests for the Kangaroos and 24 matches for NSW, captaining NSW in the inaugural State of Origin match. The Commission hosted a public memorial at the Sydney Cricket Ground.



Tom Raudonikis playing in the 1978 Trans-Tasman Test series.



Austin Hoyle	Barry 'Bunny' Reilly	Norm Provan
Mark O'Brien	Shane Senior	Ray McDermott
Dave Bolton	Barry 'Punchy' Nelson	Barry O'Connell
Masada Iosefa	Bob Fulton	Brian Surtees
Ken McCaffery	Dave Barsley	Don Regan
Paul Malone	Mick Dryden	Warren Kimberley
John Spencer	Harry Cameron	Dick McKelvey
Kevin Dann	Tim Pickup	Bal Numapo
Phil Charlton	Mike Bailey	Ross Warner
Billy Thompson	Robin Gourley	Col Weir
John Brennan	lan McKechnie	Kevin Hogan
Fred Jones	Dick Huddart	Keith Middleton [^]
Leo Nosworthy	Mal Connor	Clarrie Jeffreys
Tom Raudonikis	Matthew Wurth	Jack Danzey
Mick Wilson	Reg Sheargold	Laurie Fagan
Peter Dimond	Russ Devonshire	Joel Dark
Graham 'Buck' Rogers	Gerry Edser	John Fahey
		-

^{*} late 2019

[^] Australian internationals

Section Two Partnerships Report

PARTNERSHIPS REPORT

The 2021 NRL Telstra Premiership season heralded new revenue growth and game day innovations for our commercial partnerships.

Despite economic challenges associated with the pandemic, the NRL welcomed a new major partner in DoorDash who became the game's on demand delivery partner, along with securing naming rights for Touch Football Australia. The NRL also welcomed Coates Hire, Anaconda and Therabody as official partners.

A highlight of the 2021 season was the game's 20th anniversary of its relationship with Naming Rights Partner Telstra, one of the longest running commercial partnerships in Australian sport. The telecommunications and technology company now holds Naming Rights to both the Telstra NRL and NRLW premierships.

The game's partnership with Telstra reached a new level in 2021 with the creation of Telstra's Small Business Round. As part of the round, Telstra gave up their game day assets to eight different small businesses who had the opportunity to promote their brands on signage that would normally be used by Telstra. The winners of the small business competition received a call from NRL players Josh Mansour and Zac Lomax who informed them they had won LED signage and big screen commercials at the game along with broadcast integration. Telstra's campaign resulted in unprecedented exposure in broadcast and on our NRL Digital channels for the small business winners.

Major partners Sportsbet, Ampol, Carlton United Breweries, KFC, Diageo Australia, Youi and Harvey Norman continued their ongoing partnerships with the NRL in 2021.



Our Valued Partners

Broadcast

















Commercial





































































Section Two Partnerships Report



Sanders Stand during the Preliminary Finals.



Sportsbet also gave back to the community as part of the Try July campaign, donating \$265,000 to the Men of League Mose Masoe appeal. Sportsbet agreed to provide \$5000 per try over five weeks to any player who created a unique try celebration.

The NRL continued to work closely with partners on game day activations to enhance the fan experience at major events. Major partner KFC created "The Sanders Stand" during the Preliminary Finals. The Sanders Stand hosted staff and prize winners with KFC delivered to their seats.

Diageo Australia continued a successful Bundaberg Rum grandstand activation during Magic Round.

State of Origin naming rights partner Ampol created Little Origin, providing junior rugby league participants with the opportunity to play on the ground at the men's Ampol State of Origin. The Junior participants were given a stadium tour, their own jersey presentation, playing at half time, a League Stars skill session and \$5000 for their junior club.

The content generated 1.2 million in reach across NRL platforms as well as a live cross on the Today Show.



Bundaberg Rum grandstand activation during Magic Round.



The NRL's government partnerships were critical to the success of the 2021 Telstra Premiership season. The NRL acknowledges the NSW Government and Victorian Government for their assistance in agreeing to the relocation of Ampol State of Origin matches and the Telstra Premiership Grand Final Day to Queensland.

The NRL's relationship with the Queensland Government further strengthened with the relocation of the entire competition to Queensland and the state hosting the Grand Final for the first time in the game's history as well as the three State of Origins.

The NRL worked closely with the Queensland Government to finalise a set of biosecurity protocols which ensured the season could continue and the Queensland community remained safe.

The Australian Government continued its investment in rugby league with funding provided for the School to Work Program, State of Mind, VET Promotion Programs and various programs in the Pacific.

Section Three Fan Experience Report

DIGITAL



The strong momentum built by the NRL Digital Network – which is developed and run by the NRL in partnership with Telstra, NRL Clubs, QRL and NSWRL – continued through a dynamic 2021 season.

An average of 3.4 million users visited the NRL Digital Network every round during the 2021 season, representing a 17% increase on 2020 numbers. The Network also experienced an increase in casual and active weekly users across all platforms.

In a landmark year, NRL Account hit the major milestone of 2 million registered fans in 2021. By the end of the 2021 season, 2.3 million fans had registered for the customer account, providing fans with a tailored experience and benefits across the entire NRL Network.

The 2021 season saw NRL.com provide greater emphasis on the quality and volume of video content. Feedback provided by fans and commercial partners has been clear that short video content is increasingly popular on the network. As a result, video views on NRL.com, NRL app and YouTube grew 50% year on year. The website will continue to have a greater focus on short form video content to promote the game to our fans and complement our clubs and commercial partners in promoting the game.

With the COVID pandemic continuing, fans engaged more deeply and more often with the game over digital and social platforms. NRL's social media following reached 6.4 million, a 21% increase year-on-year. A stronger focus on engaging younger fans delivered significant growth on Instagram and TikTok.

Registrations for NRL Tipping and Fantasy grew 28% compared to 2020. The number of people playing has increased by 68% over the last two seasons. Users visited NRL Club digital products 22% more often than they did in 2020.

Coming into 2022, NRL's Fan Experience team has been reorganised into key functions across Digital, Content, Marketing and Events, with a renewed strategy to increase efficiency, focus and ultimately improve the fan experience.

These key functions will continue to work closely with the broader business, striving to deliver exceptional content, experiences and digital services for our fans, the game and its stakeholders.

The Year in Numbers

3.4m

AVERAGE WEEKLY USERS ON THE DIGITAL NETWORK 17%

INCREASE IN WEEKLY USERS YOY

2.3m

NRL ACCOUNTS

24%

GROWTH IN NRL ACCOUNTS YOY

50%

GROWTH IN VIDEO VIEWS ON NRL.COM, APP & YOUTUBE YOY 6.4m

TOTAL SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING

28%

INCREASE IN FANTASY & TIPPING REGISTRATIONS

22%

INCREASE IN FAN VISITS TO CLUB WEBSITES & APPS YOY 2.7m

AVERAGE WEEKLY
VIDEO VIEWS ON NRL.
COM, APP AND YOUTUBE

GAME DAY EXPERIENCE



The mid-year relocation of the competition to centralised venues in Queensland resulted in the NRL taking control of game day fan experience which is traditionally run by the clubs. Border restrictions limited the number of operational NRL staff at venues, which provided the NRL with the opportunity to be innovative in the way game day operations were delivered.

The NRL Fan experience was highlighted

by a number of history making major

events during the 2021 season which

saw the game's biggest moments

The first ever Grand Final week in Brisbane was highlighted by a two-day fan fest in King George Square which was renamed King Wally Square. The fan activations culminated in the appearance of both Grand Final teams on the Friday before the Grand Final.

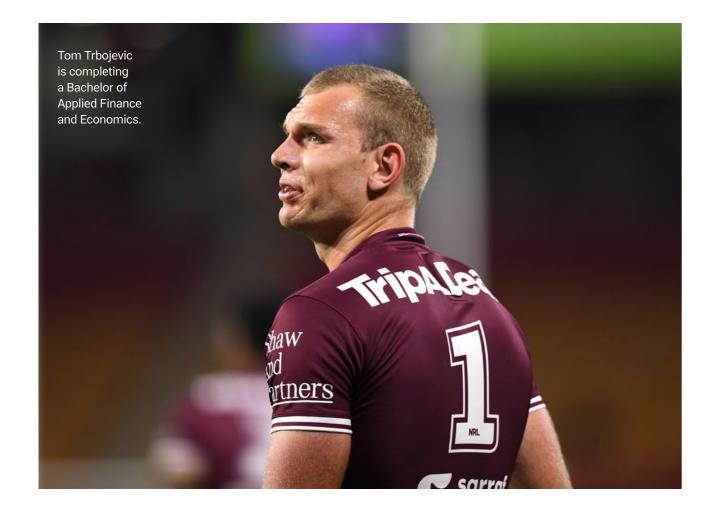
The NRL also secured approval to light up iconic Brisbane landmarks in the colours of the 16 Premiership Teams each evening of Grand Final Week.

Despite travel restrictions the NRL delivered a first class entertainment package for Grand Final Day, led by Kate Miller-Heidke, lan Moss and a 40-piece orchestra.



RISK, PERFORMANCE & INTEGRITY

A priority for the NRL is the performance and wellbeing of its people and managing risks associated with the game, to benefit all stakeholders. The Risk, Performance & Integrity Department incorporates the NRL's integrity, legal and risk functions as well as wellbeing and education, and the administration's People and Culture team. The Department's role is to manage risk for the ARLC and NRL and to enable and develop a high-performance culture across our people, including our elite athletes.



The 2021 season again presented significant challenges for players and officials. Many of the Club Wellbeing Managers relocated with the teams to Queensland to support the players, staff and their families while continuing to support all aspects of the Wellbeing and Education program.

While there were additional challenges associated with the relocation of the competition and restrictions around player movement, the NRL, clubs and players remained committed to enhancing education opportunities which will prepare the players for careers after their professional rugby league careers are complete.

About 550 players played NRL in 2021 and 409 courses were started or completed - this included 60 degree and three masters programs at university. A further 48 diplomas and 18 apprenticeships commenced or were completed. Despite COVID-19 limitations, 81 per cent of players remained career engaged.

Two of the three most popular education programs that current NRL players have been enrolled in during their careers were developed by past NRL players – Chris Lawrence at One Wellbeing and Jason Nightingale at Elite Athlete Business School.

In a first for the game, Manly Warringah Sea Eagles player Tom Trbojevic was the first player to win both the NRL Dally M Medal as well as the NRL Academic Male of the Year Award. Trbojevic is completing a Bachelor of Applied Finance and Economics. Sydney Roosters Brydie Parker (Physiotherapy) and Brisbane Broncos Tarryn Aiken (Psychology) were both included in the 2021 Academic Team of the Year, with Tarryn taking out the Academic Female of the Year Award.

Wellbeing staff continued to carry out work across all levels of the game, from grassroots to the elite level. Wellbeing staff presented over 400 educational workshops to over 6000 male and female players and staff across 210 rugby league representative teams across Australia and New Zealand.

This included topics such as being Career Wise, Proactive Wellbeing, Mental Health Awareness, Social Media and Personal Brand, Concussion Education, Respectful Relationships, Public Speaking and Media Training, as well as understanding the Game's Code of Conduct rules and the Anti-Doping Policy.

The NRL remains committed to upholding the integrity and reputation of the game and takes a strong stance against behaviour that does not comply with the NRL's rules.

NRL rules are administered by the NRL Integrity and Compliance Unit, a multidisciplinary team which is based in a secure area of Rugby League Central. The NRL continues to invest heavily in the unit's personnel, support and capabilities to ensure the NRL adopts world-leading practices in overseeing the integrity of the competition and its people.

The Integrity and Compliance Unit works closely with state and federal law enforcement agencies and regulators to share information to uphold the integrity of the sport.

The NRL's extensive network of Integrity and Product Fee Agreements with Wagering Operations continued to provide critical information sharing and risk management procedures.

In 2021 the Integrity & Compliance Unit had oversight for the creation and drafting of the Telstra Premiership's Biosecurity Protocols. The industry leading protocols ensured the game could continue safely for players, officials and the community. As a result of the protocols, and their enforcement, there were no COVID-19 cases in the competition.

NRL players also continue to be tested as part of Sport Integrity Australia's own program. The game's Illicit and Hazardous Drugs program, which was developed in conjunction with the Rugby League Players Association, continues. Part of that program includes education initiatives with the NRL's Wellbeing and Education team.





PARTICIPATION

Despite the challenges brought on by COVID-19, rugby league competitions continued across the country for much of 2021.

Victoria implemented a plan of recovery in 2021 following no football in 2020. The plan focussed on restoring clubs and club competitions, through active recruitment and retention programs, and targeted volunteer support.

Club and volunteer servicing saw NRL Victoria achieve record numbers participating in Sports Trainer and Coach education courses, and referee registration/membership reach record numbers.

To support the recovery of the game at grassroots, NRL Victoria partnered with Melbourne Storm to rename junior club competitions as the Storm Junior League, including a new logo.

NRL NT experienced another year of record growth, with more than 3000 registered club participants across the Northern Territory and competitions taking place in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Gove.

Despite the shadow of the COVID pandemic casting itself across community sport, NRL NT lost just one weekend of club rugby league from the scheduled season fixtures. The strength of the Darwin based NRL NT competition continued to grow with 2500 participants playing every weekend from Under 6s through to Senior Mens and Womens.

Rugby League in South Australia in 2021 was delivered with a community, connection and belonging focus. Despite challenges the metropolitan league forged ahead, seeing six clubs participating in the competition including senior men's, women's and junior competitions, while the Spring 9s competition took place in the latter part of 2021, showcasing both rugby league tackle and tag.

The competition included senior men, women, U17s boys, U15s boys, three U16s girls teams and junior rugby league tag. This event was held at a non-traditional rugby league venue to attract new participants and raise awareness of rugby league offerings in SA. Despite the challenges overall participation grew by 4.85%.

In a largely uninterrupted year in Western Australia, registrations grew 12% on 2020 with female participation up 35%.

To support this growth, a number of coach and education courses, updates and accreditation opportunities in Perth, Karratha, Hedland & Christmas/Cocos Islands were delivered. During the visits to Karratha and Hedland, a record numbers of participants took part in holiday clinics.

School Competitions

The NRL Game Development teams worked hard to ensure that the schoolboy and schoolgirl competition offerings were made available in a COVID-challenged 2021. This dedication ensured the Schoolboy Cup and schoolgirl competitions went ahead at a state level, providing thousands of participants the opportunity to participate.

The Schoolboy Cup, run in NSW, QLD and Victoria, made up of 32 schools, more than 800 players and supported by a dedicated group of teachers and support staff, showcased some of the best schoolboy talent from Melbourne to Cairns up the East Coast of Australia. In Queensland, St Brendan's college went down to a strong Palm Beach Currumbin. Whilst the NSW final series was not completed, the schools involved represented strongly in the early rounds, which also saw for the first time Victorian qualifying rounds.

The Schoolboy Cup continued to gain interest, with increased exposure through the partnership with News Corp, delivery of live streaming and game preview/reviews via editorial support.

The primary state-wide offerings in NSW and QLD for female rugby league went from strength to strength in 2021 – the Katrina Fanning Cup and Karyn Murphy Cup were extremely popular programs amongst schools across NSW, ACT and QLD.

Both Cups culminated in state finals in September following local, regional and zone carnivals. In Queensland, Keebra Park Sports High School took out the final against Kirwan State High School. Due to the pandemic, the finals in NSW did not proceed.



2021 NRL QLD Schoolboy Cup Final



League Stars

In 2021, with considerable disruptions to program delivery due to COVID-19 restrictions, 5485 participants registered for the program, with 70% of participants never having participated in rugby league before. 20% of program participants in 2021 were female.

Programs are delivered before or after school, predominantly on school or community grounds with the focus of having fun and finding unique strengths.

One major highlight in 2021 was the partnered Red Cross League Stars program - Wagga Wagga. Young refugees from Iraq and Burma were introduced to rugby league in Wagga Wagga through a six-week League Stars program supported by the Red Cross in March.

The 26 participants, aged 5-12 years old, had settled in Wagga Wagga between one and 18 months prior to the program commencement. The Red Cross supported NRL Game Development staff with bilingual staff to assist with communication and program delivery.

Sporting Schools

In 2021, the NRL delivered programs to 354 schools and a total of 30,648 students across metropolitan, regional and remote Australia.

In June 2021, the Sporting Schools program expanded to include a specific pilot program targeted to connect school participants with their local club and community sport. Rugby league was one of the initial participating sports to engage with Sport Australia for the pilot program.

Although many schools reverted to home learning, the NRL delivered 19 programs in schools with 522 participants registered under the club connect funding grants. 427 participants had never engaged with rugby league before.

The NRL partnered with Special Olympics Australia to help the game broaden its inclusive sports offerings while providing more children with opportunities to participate in rugby league programs.

Rugby League for All is an adapted version of the NRL League Stars program, catering for students with intellectual disabilities and autism. It has been designed by the NRL in partnership with Special Olympics Australia for delivery in special education environments with adapted activities to suit the needs of participating students.





NRL League Stars Clinic at the 2021 Womens National Championships.

COMMUNITY



In League In Harmony

The In League In Harmony program in 2021 included 286 workshops across NSW (109) and Victoria (177).

More than 1200 people participated in the program – 619 in NSW and 590 in Victoria.

The program in 2021 included a Victoria Harmony Youth Summit, in partnership with Melbourne Storm and the Victoria Government, to empower youth to be agents of change for a more cohesive society. Sixty young people between the ages of 12 and 25 participated.

Online Game Changer leadership workshops were also held, hosted by guest speakers including Paul Gallen, Clinton Toopi, Dr Gran Duthie and John Morris.

NRL Community Awards

Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks player Ronaldo Mulitalo was honoured as the game's Man of the Year, winning the 2021 Ken Stephen Medal.

Mulitalo was crowned the 33rd Ken Stephen Medallist at the NRL Telstra Premiership Grand Final at Suncorp Stadium, ahead of finalists Cody Walker (South Sydney Rabbitohs), Jamal Fogarty (Gold Coast Titans) and Ryan Matterson (Parramatta Eels).

Mulitalo helped deliver NRL's Voice Against Violence and League Bilong Laif programs in schools during his time in Papua New Guinea, while also focussing on supporting children with disabilities by participating in Sharks All Abilities School Program and the Skillz4me program.

His own childhood circumstances drove his interest to become an ambassador for Stepping Stone House charity, focusing on providing youth with a safe home and educational and employment opportunities.

The Veronica White Medal will be awarded in alignment with the NRL Telstra Women's Premiership season in early 2022.

Through the NRL Community Awards, some of the tireless workers, mentors, trailblazers, clubs and future leaders were additionally deservedly recognised for their achievements.

The 2021 award winners were as follows:

- » EISS Super Volunteer of the Year Theresa Tasaico (Riverwood Legion Junior Rugby League Football Club)
- Community Rugby League Club of the Year
 Proudly presented by Your Local Club
 Barcaldine Junior and Senior Rugby League Club
- » Young Person of the Year
 Halle Braybon (Pakenham Eels Junior Rugby League)
- » Teacher of the Year Sheree Payne (Kiama Public School)
- » Women in League Award Gillian Bann (Yarrabah Junior Rugby League Club).

For the first time, the judging process for all grassroots awards was chaired by an ARL Commissioner, highlighting the link between the community and elite echelons of the sport.

Peter Beattie AC oversaw the selection for the Volunteer of the Year and Teacher of the Year, Professor Megan Davis chaired the Community Club of the Year judging panel, Kate Jones headed up the Women in League Award and Dr Gary Weiss helped select the Young Person of the Year.



Mulitalo was crowned the 33rd Ken Stephen Medallist at the NRL Telstra Premiership Grand Final at Suncorp Stadium.





School to Work

The School to Work Program helped more than 1000 people in 2021.

Operating across Queensland, NSW, ACT and Victoria, the School to Work program ensured:

- » 434 participants successfully completed year 11
- » 417 participants successfully completed year 12
- » 284 participants successfully reached 26 weeks in their employment or education outcome.

The School to Work program's online Yarning Circles initiative became a place where participants could culturally connect with other students in the program and provide them with access to successful and positive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models. The Yarning Circles in 2021 included Rob Collins, Josh Addo-Carr, Shaylee Bent, Nicho Hynes, Larissa Behrendt and Alex Winwood.

State of Mind

More than 2000 people participated in the NRL's State of Mind program in 2021.

Across regional NSW locations including Dubbo, Tamworth, Bathurst and Orange, 693 grassroots participants and 1529 GAAME participants took part in sessions delivered by Clinton Toopi, Preston Campbell and Alan Tongue.

Based on feedback from the State of Mind program in 2021, 95 per cent of participants said their knowledge of signs and symptoms of mental illness had increased, while 96 per cent said the workshop had helped to challenge the negative stigma surrounding mental illness. Eighty-two State of Mind workshops were held in 2021.



Road to Regions

More than 20,000 people participated in the 2021 Road to Regions, across nine regions in NSW, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia.

For the first time, the Road to Regions program had a major sponsor – ClubsNSW partnered with the program under the 'Your local club' banner.

Twenty-three ambassadors and NRLW players were involved in the 2021 Road to Regions, including Mitch Aubusson, Terry Campese, Steve Menzies, Luke Lewis, Ethan Lowe, Kurt Gidley, Tiana Penitani, Kirra Dibb, Simaima Taufa, Tallisha Harden, Kezie Apps and Tamika Upton.



Pacific Outreach programs

In 2021 the NRL Pacific Program joined the Australian Government-funded Team Up program.

Team Up, comprising more than 30 partnerships across the Asia Pacific, worked towards achieving three outcomes;

- » Sport programs attracting and retaining women, girls and people with a disability, as well as men and boys
- » Sport organisations being safe, inclusive and accessible
- » Australia and Asia-Pacific partners using sport to strengthen relationships and build closer collaboration.

COVID-19 was a major disruptor to the year, however staff were able to quickly adapt and ensure important messaging was still reaching our target communities across the Pacific.

The NRL League For life program engaged more than 24,500 students across classrooms in PNG, Samoa and Tonga.

The NRL Fiji team were unable to gain access to schools so they conducted several small group 'after school' programs. These programs engaged 212 students.

The Voice Against Violence program continued to be delivered across the Pacific with 29 workshops conducted for 694 rugby league club participants. The program aligns with the overall goal of ensuring that rugby league provides a safe, welcoming and inclusive community space for Pacific Island women and girls, and people with a disability.

The Voice against Violence program delivery expanded into secondary schools, with the NRL Tonga team delivering respectful relationship messages to 2900 students.

Thanks to a partnership with the Australian Defence Force, the NRL was able to provide 354 volunteers accreditations in coaching, refereeing and sports trainers courses.

Voice Against Violence

The Voice Against Violence program continues its important role in the community in 2021.

Nineteen workshops involving 1150 participants were held across Western NSW, Riverina, South Burnett and Central Coast, with ambassadors Alan Tongue and Gavin Cooper.

NSW and Queensland Police partnered with the Voice Against Violence Program on the delivery of workshops.









Despite not being able to play on home soil, the NSW Blues won the first two matches of the series

NSWRL Report

The NSWRL endured another challenging season in 2021 as the globe continued to battle the COVID-19 pandemic but managed to overcome the hurdles placed before it to achieve remarkable success.

The key indicators for a successful season for the NSWRL always revolve around the performances of the Brydens Lawyers NSW Blues in the Ampol State of Origin arena, and participation numbers for community football, and it managed to deliver exceptional results in both these areas.

The ongoing uncertainty with COVID-19 forced all three Origin games to be played in Queensland for the first time in Origin history and NSW responded with a memorable series win. Game One was shifted away from the MCG to Townsville, which was the first time an Origin match had been played in North Queensland. NSW responded with a 50-6 win which was their biggest winning margin in Origin history.

Game Two in Brisbane saw the Blues forced to relocate to train at Kingscliff and their families asked to return to Sydney only days before the game. They handled that with a 26-0 win to wrap up the series and hold Queensland scoreless at their home for the first time ever.

The Blues went from playing the final game in Sydney, to Newcastle and finally the Gold Coast, and after losinga few key players to injury still only narrowly missed out on pulling off a rare clean sweep.

Grassroots football has always had an important role to play during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it helps bring the community back together, and it was embraced by participants across the state of NSW in 2021.

The number of total participants increased by five per cent from the previous pre-COVID-19 season of 2019; including the largest representation of male participants since 2015; while female players smashed through the 20,000 mark for the first time ever.

Breaking down the figures for further analysis was just as pleasing with increases being shown across key Rugby League heartland areas from both the Sydney metropolitan area and regional NSW, including Balmain, St George, Manly, North Sydney, Group 3 Junior Rugby League (JRL), Group 9 JRL, Group 10 JRL, Group 18 JRL and Western Riverina.

The NSWRL Major Competitions were unable to finish after the state was placed into an extended lockdown in June but they managed to complete half the season.

The Junior Representatives program, for both regional NSW and the Sydney metropolitan area, was not affected and was able to run their course. The Harvey Norman Tarsha Gale Cup, for Under 19s female players, was used as a selection guide for the NSW Under 19s Women's team which successfully defended their Shield.

The One State initiative, which is a is a strategic blueprint for Rugby League across NSW, saw several proposals being realised. The decision to create six new zones across the state was made to improve the Rugby League experience for all participants by offering more competition opportunities and further improving governance and administration. The Peter McDonald Premiership, which involves teams from Rugby League heartland in western NSW, was unveiled and will kick off in 2022. The Macarthur Conference Competition and the Hunter Junior Rugby League Association were formed which will both provide improved pathway options for all participants in their respective areas.

Section Five

Participation & Community



A Player Points Index System was unveiled, which is the first time a scheme rewarding player loyalty and junior development, and promoting talent equalisation, has been implemented statewide.

The NSWRL welcomed new partners in 2021 to reinforce its reputation as one of the top sporting organisations across Australia. The successful partnership with Transport for NSW was extended for another three years, after they assumed naming rights for NSW's premier competition, The Knock-On Effect NSW Cup. Global sportswear giant PUMA also came on board in 2021, with their first NSW jersey of a classic sky blue colour and navy chevron paying homage to the organisation's history.

The Country v City concept made a welcome return to the NSWRL representative calendar in 2021 after a four-year absence. The clash is steeped in history and returned to residency selection rules after being played under Origin selection rules since 1986. There were six games played over two days which truly reflected NSWRL's ethos of being inclusive and diverse. They included Physical Disability Rugby League, Wheelchair Rugby League, Under 16s, Under 18s, Men's Open Age and Women's Open Age. The weekend was a huge success and will remain a permanent fixture on the NSWRL calendar into the future.

As well as the surge in participation numbers for grassroots Rugby League, the NSWRL also invested heavily in community programs to further drive success for the organisation. Brydens Lawyers NSW Blues coach Brad Fittler continued his motorcycle rides around NSW to spread important messages about mental fitness for high school students as well as promote junior Rugby League registrations.

The Try League program, for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, broke new ground after using video conferencing services to deliver lessons.

The Changing Rooms program, which helps teenagers cope with life challenges off the field, reached 1000 young Rugby League players.

The NSWRL also linked with Indigenous community partners from the KARI Foundation, Deadly Choices, and Clontarf Academy to deliver key programs around the state, including an initiative encouraging health checks and healthy cooking and eating habits.

The NSWRL looks forward to the 2022 season, with several initiatives set to take shape, and remains confident of achieving further success in the future.

The NSWRL also announced in 2020 its One State Strategic Plan (Competitions) which is designed to bring the game in regional NSW and the Sydney metropolitan area closer together and set it up for more success into the future. The blueprint for the state comes after the NSWRL and the CRL came together as one entity at the end of 2019 and began looking at ways to administer the game more efficiently across the state to increase the recruitment and retention of all participants.

The restructure of the state into six zones, which are all approximately equal in size for participation numbers, will promote a competitive balance, reduce travel times for younger age groups, and will allow for more efficient and consistent governance structures.

The NSWRL has also decided to increase the age groups for the Harold Matthews Cup (Under 17s), Harvey Norman Tarsha Gale Cup and SG Ball Cup (Under 19s), and the Jersey Flegg Cup (Under 21s) in 2021.



The Country v City concept made a welcome return to the NSWRL representative calendar in 2021 after a four-year absence.







Sunshine Coast Stadium hosted its second consecutive Ampol Women's State of Origin in June. In front of 7,183 people, Queensland won 8-6 in dramatic fashion.

Queensland Rugby League Report

Rugby league surged ahead in 2021 with Queensland at the forefront of the game's revival following the tumultuous events of the previous year.

Community rugby league, statewide competitions and the elite National Rugby League and representative formats were again impacted by health restrictions put in place to safeguard participants and the public.

Lessons learnt from 2020 placed the QRL and its network of regions, leagues, clubs and volunteers in a strong position to not only help keep the game afloat, but also keep it thriving for generations to come.

The state's premier men's team, the Queensland Maroons, endured a challenging series against a formidable New South Wales side.

Coach Paul Green maintained a high standard of leadership in extremely difficult circumstances, as the Maroons lifted to win Game Three at CBUS Super Stadium.

It was a performance built on true grit, the same trait that set the foundations for a very committed Harvey Norman Queensland Maroons women's team in their State of Origin match on the Sunshine Coast.

The QRL is delighted to have increased its investment into the female game this year, and the league expects to see further growth with Queensland coach Tahnee Norris now having assumed a full-time role to strengthen pathways and development.

This investment included the QRL's commitment to seeing through equal Origin remuneration for all players who represent the Maroons. With the return of statewide competitions, fans were fortunate to witness a brilliant Intrust Super Cup grand final at Moreton Daily Stadium, where the Norths Devils beat a gallant Wynnum Manly Seagulls to claim their first premiership since 1998.

Likewise, the BHP Premiership final between the Burleigh Bears and Valleys Diehards thrilled fans watching from the ground and via the broadcast.

All clubs who competed in statewide competitions engaged with their own communities as well as fans in the regions through events such as Activate Queensland! Country Week.

Across Queensland, more than 62,000 players signed on to play club rugby league in 2021 – the QRL's highest level of community participation in six years.

Through the facilitation of the RISE program in conjunction with the NRL, more than 1600 aspiring male and female players were able to participate in regional player development programs for the first time.

These stories highlight the emphasis the QRL is placing on communities and people – key priorities for the game moving forward.

Section Five Participation & Community



HIGHLIGHTS





STATEWIDE COMPETITIONS

7264 fans generated an electric atmosphere at Moreton Daily Stadium on grand final day.

It capped off an excellent year across the statewide leagues, where **2300 players from 20 clubs and 78 teams** showcased their skills.

This group included **24 Intrust Super Cup** players who stepped up to make their National Rugby League debuts.

Activate Queensland! Country Week generated enormous goodwill and entertainment for regional fans. Host leagues and clubs reported **\$66,000** in net profit.

DIGITAL

QRL Digital headed the NRL Network for number of users (2,977,674) and sessions (6,201,663).

HARVEY NORMAN QUEENSLAND MAROONS

In a breakthrough for aspiring females, the QRL announced a landmark pay deal for elite Queensland females, who can now earn up to **\$15,000** – the same amount as the men's Origin match fee.



PATHWAYS & PERFORMANCE

QRL stepped up its commitment to support long-term player and coach development, with **1663 male and female players** (13-15 years) involved in the RISE program across 16 locations.

160 coaches completed the coach accreditation program to deliver the course.

COMMUNITY

QRL recorded its highest community participation level in six years, with **62,330 players** signing on to play club rugby league

STRATEGY & FRAMEWORK

Off the field, QRL staff worked diligently with stakeholders to deliver numerous strategic priorities.

Female participation grew by six per cent, and additional opportunities were provided to develop people by supporting females into leadership and governance roles.

In November, respected community leader Samantha Bliss was announced as a new independent director and chair of the QRL's participation committee.



Overall Result

The ARLC is pleased to announce a full year surplus of \$43.1m. This performance, as well as the work undertaken to strengthen the ARLC balance sheet, means the NRL is in a stronger position than before the pandemic. This strong performance is a result of effective cost management, building on the major restructure undertaken at the end of 2020, and a continued focus on revenue growth across all lines of business.

Revenue

Revenue for 2021 is \$575.1m, up \$155.4m (37%) on the previous year due to:

- » Increase in media rights revenue
- » Increase in major event game receipts with record crowds attending Magic Round, two Men's and Women's State of Origin Series being held and crowds attending Finals and the Grand Final
- » Growth in sponsorship revenue driven by uplift in renewals and additional partners being procured.

Expenditure

2021 NRL Operating Expenditure (excluding COVID-19 related expenses) is \$158.7m, up \$39.8m due to an increase in revenue servicing costs inline with growth in revenue in both sponsorship and major events as well as increased Broadcast Contra expense (non-cash), reflecting the terms of the revised Broadcast Agreements.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to be the greatest financial challenge Rugby League has ever faced. The total cost of the relocation of the game to Queensland and other COVID-19 costs (e.g. Club Covid Support Payments, NRLW Player Support Payments and biosecurity measures) cost the game nearly \$40m in direct expenses which on a comparison basis were partially offset by two State of Origins being held in Financial Year 2021.

Distributions

Overall, distributions to Clubs, Players and States are \$345.1m (up from \$309.6m in prior years) due to increased NRL and NRLW COVID-19 support payments, outperformance payments and provisions, increased royalty distributions, increased pathways grants to States, Affiliates and New Zealand and a significant increase in Game Development activities by the ARLC.





Titan fans watching Gold Coast Titans play Sydney Roosters at Queensland Country Bank Stadium.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The Controlling Body 2012–2021: Underlying operating performance

Profit & Loss (\$'000)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
TOTAL REVENUE	181,600	320,612	344,878	354,261	366,165	377,230	520,465	552,941	417,273	570,345
Event, Game and Sponsorship	(39,400)	(61,726)	(79,919)	(90,769)	(87,183)	(97,898)	(103,083)	(128,865)	(65,445)	(102,805)
Football	(9,100)	(9,597)	(13,034)	(16,089)	(19,427)	(20,063)	(21,845)	(25,042)	(19,358)	(18,953)
Football related COVID exceptional costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(11,376)	(27,892)
Community and Player Welfare	(11,500)	(14,474)	(14,907)	(16,726)	(16,860)	(16,350)	(16,010)	(17,179)	(6,428)	(7,271)
Integrity and Salary Cap	(450)	(2,240)	(2,516)	(2,595)	(3,221)	(3,776)	(3,864)	(3,375)	(3,331)	(3,110)
Administration	(13,373)	(15,550)	(16,995)	(18,951)	(19,390)	(17,714)	(18,559)	(20,342)	(12,229)	(14,016)
Insurance and Finance	(977)	(2,365)	(2,897)	(3,900)	(2,802)	(2,561)	(13,986)	(12,757)	(11,300)	(11,497)
Restructure Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(4,569)	(355)
FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION	106,800	214,660	214,611	205,231	217,281	218,868	343,118	345,381	283,236	384,446
Clubs and Players	(81,000)	(132,280)	(146,663)	(162,334)	(167,696)	(160,717)	(222,760)	(228,132)	(253,545)	(278,224)
States and Affiliates	(13,500)	(16,300)	(22,914)	(27,847)	(30,473)	(32,784)	(38,111)	(47,940)	(25,620)	(35,437)
Development	(21,700)	(20,739)	(23,192)	(27,516)	(29,276)	(32,850)	(35,125)	(40,433)	(29,253)	(27,935)
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(9,400)	45,341	21,842	(12,466)	(10,164)	(7,482)	47,122	28,876	(25,181)	42,850

In the above Profit and Loss table Depreciation, amortisation and interest is disclosed within the respective category it originates. This varies from the statutory accounts where these costs are disclosed separately on the face of the Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income. Included in 2020 Clubs and Players above is \$4m Covid exceptional payments to Clubs.

Balance Sheet (\$'000)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Assets	110,740	188,074	194,816	192,892	249,304	226,956	248,431	267,335	238,553	254,330
Total Liabilities	91,390	123,383	108,282	118,824	185,400	170,534	154,537	144,564	140,963	113,890
NET ASSETS	19,350	64,691	86,534	74,068	63,904	56,421	93,894	122,771	97,590	140,440

The Controlling Body and the Group (Consolidated)

Profit & Loss (\$'000)	:	2020	2021		
, ,	CONTROLLING BODY ¹	CONSOLIDATED ²	CONTROLLING BODY ¹	CONSOLIDATED ²	
TOTAL REVENUE	417,273	419,673	570,345	575,080	
Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. Contra)	(65,445)	(65,754)	(102,805)	(103,296)	
Football	(19,358)	(19,794)	(18,953)	(19,483)	
Football related COVID exceptional costs	(11,376)	(11,376)	(27,892)	(27,892)	
Community and Player Welfare	(6,428)	(6,483)	(7,271)	(7,301)	
Integrity and Salary Cap	(3,331)	(3,331)	(3,110)	(3,110)	
Administration	(12,229)	(12,246)	(14,016)	(14,008)	
Insurance and Finance	(11,300)	(11,300)	(11,497)	(11,513)	
Restructure Costs	(4,569)	(4,569)	(355)	(355)	
FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION	283,236	284,819	384,446	388,124	
Clubs and Players	(253,545)	(253,545)	(278,224)	(278,224)	
States and Affiliates	(25,620)	(25,078)	(35,437)	(34,847)	
Development	(29,253)	(30,939)	(27,935)	(31,995)	
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(25,181)	(24,742)	42,850	43,057	

In the above Profit and Loss table Depreciation, amortisation and interest are disclosed within the respective category to which they relate.

This varies from the statutory accounts where these costs are disclosed separately on the face of the Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income.

Balance Sheet (\$'000)		2020	2021		
	CONTROLLING BODY ¹	CONSOLIDATED ²	CONTROLLING BODY ¹	CONSOLIDATED ²	
Total Assets	238,553	242,325	254,330	264,524	
Total Liabilities	140,963	146,405	113,890	125,547	
NET ASSETS	97,590	95,920	140,440	138,977	

Notes

- 1. Controlling Body includes ARLC Ltd and NRL Ltd.
- 2. Consolidated Group accounts represent the Controlling Body and it's controlled entities being ARLC WA Ltd (acquired 8 June 2015), ARLC SA Ltd (acquired 30 June 2015), ARLC Vic Ltd (acquired 1 July 2015) and ARLC NT Ltd (acquired 6 July 2015).



DIRECTORS' REPORT

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 is also 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 AC

Mr Beattie is Deputy Chairman of the Medical Research Commercialisation Fund, Ambassador for Life Sciences Queensland, joint adjunct professor at the University of Queensland's Australian Institute for Bioengineering & Nanotechnology & Institute for Molecular Bioscience and former Chairman of GOLDOC. Mr Beattie is also a Director of the International Rugby League Board and Director of the Asia Pacific Rugby League Board. 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.

The Directors present their report for the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited ("ARLC" or "the Company") for the year ended 31 October 2021.

Tony McGrath

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

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 also a Director of the International Rugby League Board and Chair of the ARLC Innovation 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, Estia Health Limited, and Cromwell Property Group. Dr Weiss is a director of Thorney Opportunities Limited, Hearts & Minds Investments Limited, 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 Pro Vice Chancellor and the Balnaves Chair in Constitutional Law, UNSW. Professor Davis is an Acting Commissioner of the NSW Land and Environment Court and an expert member and Chair of the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People in Geneva. Professor Davis is a constitutional law professor specialising in constitutional design and constitution building and one of the nation's leading public constitutional lawyers. She is a co-recipient of the 2021 Sydney Peace Prize.

Kate Jones

Ms Jones has 20 years experience in senior government and leadership positions. Ms Jones served as a Minister in the Queensland Government in a range of portfolios including State Development, Education, Tourism, and Major Events. Ms Jones was also the Minister responsible for the successful delivery of the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast and secured new major events to Queensland including the NRL Magic Round and global sports conference, Sport Accord in 2019. Throughout 2020, Ms Jones was instrumental in working with many national sporting codes to ensure they could continue to operate safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms Jones now serves on a number of boards and works in leadership roles in both the tech and tourism industries.

COMPANY SECRETARY

Eleni North, General Counsel and Company Secretary. Ms North has been the Company Secretary of the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited and National Rugby League Limited since 13 August 2014. Ms North resigned from the NRL on 31 December 2021. She is replaced as Company Secretary by Daniel Dressler, NRL Legal Counsel.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY

The principal activity of the Company during the course of the financial year was 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 Australian Rugby League Commission 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 to promote and encourage sport, recreation and the general welfare of young people in the community.

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

REVIEW OF OPERATIONS AND FINANCIAL RESULTS

Revenue generated for the year was \$575,077,911 (2020: \$419,672,860). The Group's current year operating surplus was \$43,056,443 (2020: \$24,742,261 deficit).

DIVIDENDS

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

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AFTER THE YEAR END

In the interval between the end of the financial period and the date of this report, the ARLC announced a 5 year broadcast agreement, commencing 1 November 2022, with long standing broadcast partner Channel 9 on 21 December 2021. There have been no other items, transactions or events of a material and unusual nature likely, in the opinion of the Directors of the organisation, to affect significantly the operations of the organisation and the state of affairs in future financial years.

LIKELY DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE RESULTS

The Directors are not aware of any other particular changes in the operations of the Company which will materially affect the results in subsequent years.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The 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 Company paid an insurance premium of \$576,003 (2020: \$362,821) in respect of a contract insuring the Directors of the Company named earlier in this report and each executive officer, against liabilities and expenses arising as a result of work performed in their respective capacities, to the extent permitted by law, up to the policy limit.

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 Articles of Association state that each member is required to contribute a maximum of \$10 each towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the Company. At 31 October 2021, the number of members was 25 (2020: 24).

Section Seven Concise Financial Report 2021

BOARD MEETINGS

The number of Board Meetings held during the year and the number of meetings attended by each Director was as follows:

BOARD MEETINGS

DIRECTORS	ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND	ATTENDED
Peter V'landys AM	22	22
The Hon. Peter Beattie AC	22	22
Tony McGrath	22	22
Wayne Pearce OAM	22	21
Dr Gary Weiss AM	22	22
Professor Megan Davis	22	22
Kate Jones	21	21

REGISTERED OFFICE

The registered office of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited is located at:

Rugby League Central, Driver Avenue, Moore Park, NSW, Australia, 2021.

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Australian Rugby League Commission Limited is a public, not-forprofit company, limited by guarantee.

The domicile of the Company is Sydney, Australia.

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AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE COMMISSION LIMITED - CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT



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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 2021, I declare to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

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

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

Ernst & Young Pourg

James Higgins Partner

Sydney 7 February 2022

A member firm of Ernst 3 Young Global Limited Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Directors.

Peter V'landys Chairman

Tony McGrath

Director

Sydney 7 February 2022

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Year ended 31 October 2021

	NOTES	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
REVENUE			
Revenue	2	575,080	419,673
		575,080	419,673
EXPENSE			
Event, game and sponsorship		(75,050)	(45,462)
Media contra		(24,546)	(15,454)
Football		(47,260)	(31,028)
Community and player welfare		(7,300)	(6,481)
Administration, Integrity and Salary Cap		(15,940)	(14,184)
Clubs and Players		(278,224)	(253,545)
States, Affiliates and New Zealand Rugby League		(34,847)	(25,078)
Development		(31,948)	(30,897)
Depreciation and amortisation		(9,135)	(9,234)
Insurance and finance costs		(7,418)	(8,483)
Restructuring – redundancies		(355)	(4,569)
		(532,023)	(444,415)
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)		43,057	(24,742)
Income tax expense		-	-
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)		43,057	(24,742)
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD		-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE PERIOD ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE MEMBERS OF ARLC LIMITED		43,057	(24,742)

Discussion and analysis of the Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income

The accompanying notes form an integral part of this Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income. The Consolidated net surplus increased from a deficit of \$24.7m to a surplus of \$43.1m.

Consolidated revenue increased by \$155.4m to \$575.1m due to:

- » Increased media revenue year on year.
- » Growth in other key revenue streams such as sponsorship and wagering, major event game receipts and merchandising royalties.

Consolidated expenditure increased by \$87.6m to \$532.0m due to:

- » Increased expenditure in Event, game and sponsorship (which reflects the increase in servicing costs associated with increase sale) and increases in States, Affiliates distributions and Game Development due to less interruptions to planned community, participation and grassroot activities. This was partially offset by decreased expenditure in depreciation, finance and restructuring costs.
- » The ARLC incurring COVID-19 related Costs of \$32.2m (2020: \$15.4m) to manage the game through the COVID-19 Pandemic, the majority of which related to the relocation of the Competition to Queensland from Round 18 through to Grand Final.
- Increased distributions to Clubs and Players which reflects the terms of the funding agreements and Covid Support payments provided to Clubs and the terms of the revised 2020 – 2022 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Rugby League Players Association.

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL POSITION

Year ended 31 October 2021

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
CURRENT ASSETS		· ·
Cash and cash equivalents – Controlling Body	165,113	114,181
Cash and cash equivalents – Controlled Entities	6,523	10,478
Restricted Cash – RLPA Retirement Fund	-	16,669
Trade receivables	16,813	20,072
Prepayments and other receivables	34,229	32,742
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	222,678	194,142
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Intangibles	9,368	9,730
Right-of-use lease assets	14,840	10,064
Property, plant and equipment	15,602	16,487
Other receivables	2,036	11,902
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	41,846	48,183
TOTAL ASSETS	264,524	242,325
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade payables	8,349	27,079
Other payables	81,699	100,476
Lease liabilities	3,730	2,696
Provisions	5,112	4,055
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	98,890	134,306
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease liabilities	14,073	10,554
Provisions	12,584	1,545
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	26,657	12,099
TOTAL LIABILITIES	125,547	146,405
NET ASSETS	138,977	95,920
EQUITY		
Reserves	2,228	2,228
Retained surplus	136,749	93,692
TOTAL EQUITY	138,977	95,920

Discussion and analysis of the Statement of Consolidated Financial Position

Consolidated total assets increased by \$22.2m to \$264.5m due to:

» Increases in Controlling Body and Controlling Entities cash and cash equivalents of \$47.0m, partially offset by amortisation of FY18-22 grants paid in advance in FY16-17 to Clubs \$9m, a reduction in trade receivables of \$3.3m and payment of RLPA retirement account restricted cash of \$16.7m Consolidated total liabilities decreased by \$20.9m to \$125.5m due to:

» Decreases in trade payables (\$18.7m) from abnormally high 2020 levels due to 2020 Origin played in Nov'20, and media prepayment unwind in Deferred Revenue.

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CHANGES IN EQUITY

Year ended 31 October 2021

	RESERVES \$'000	RETAINED SURPLUS \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
AS AT 1 NOVEMBER 2020	2,228	93,692	95,920
Net surplus for the year	-	43,057	43,057
AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2021	2,228	136,749	138,977
AS AT 1 NOVEMBER 2019	2,228	118,434	120,662
Net deficit for the year	-	(24,742)	(24,742)
AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2020	2,228	93,692	95,920

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOWS

Year ended 31 October 2021

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from ordinary operations	575,907	422,757
Payment to suppliers and employees	(293,126)	(215,877)
Payments to Clubs	(243,704)	(239,174)
Lease payments (interest component)	(779)	(678)
Interest received	260	889
Interest paid	(5)	(20)
NET CASH FLOWS FROM/(USED IN) OPERATING ACTIVITIES	38,553	(32,103)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(718)	(789)
Payments for intangibles	(3,075)	(2,709)
NET CASH FLOWS FROM/(USED IN) INVESTING ACTIVITIES	(3,793)	(3,498)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Repayments of loans	-	4,316
Lease payments (principal component)	(4,452)	(3,082)
NET CASH FLOWS FROM/(USED IN) FINANCING ACTIVITIES	(4,452)	1,234
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE) IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	30,308	(34,367)
CASH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PERIOD	141,328	175,695
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	171,636	141,328

Discussion and analysis of the Statement of Consolidated Cash Flows

There was a net increase in cash holdings of the consolidated entity totalling \$30.3m due to:

- » +\$43.1m Profit and Loss surplus
- * +\$14.1m: Movement in accruals (non-cash) balance from Oct'20 to Oct'21, which includes the \$11.1m players outperformance payment provision
- » +\$9.4m: Depreciation and amortisation (non-cash)
- » +\$9m: Difference between Club grant cash paid and expense recognised due to advanced grant amortisation
- » -\$24.3m: Difference between media cash received and revenue recognised
- » -\$14.8: Players Retirement Fund 2018-20 paid in FY21
- » -\$2.9m: Digital capital expenditure
- » -\$1.9m: GST and superannuation payments
- » -\$1.4m: Other non-cash movements in surplus result

Section Seven Concise Financial Report 2021

NOTES TO THE CONCISE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Year ended 31 October 2021

1. Basis of Preparation of the Concise Financial Report

The requirements of AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports do not have mandatory applicability to Australian Rugby League Commission Limited. However, the Directors of the Company have prepared the concise financial report, in accordance with the presentation and disclosure requirements of AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports for distribution to the members. This financial report does not substitute nor is it intended to replace the mandatory requirements applicable to Australian Rugby League Commission Limited under the Corporations Act 2001.

The financial statements and specific disclosures required by AASB 1039 have been derived from the consolidated entity's full financial report for the financial year. Other information included in the concise financial report is consistent with the consolidated entity's full financial report. The concise financial report does not, and cannot be expected to, provide as full an understanding of the financial performance, financial position, and financing and investing activities of the consolidated entity as the full financial report. A full financial report is available to the members, upon request to the Company.

This concise financial report has been prepared using the historical cost convention. All amounts in the concise financial report are in Australian dollars.

Where necessary, comparative information has been reclassified to achieve consistency in disclosure with current financial year amounts. A full description of accounting policies adopted by the consolidated entity may be found in the consolidated entity's full financial report.

2. Revenue

	\$'000	\$'000
REVENUE		
Licensing	405,161	332,233
Operations and Events	158,978	67,165
OTHER INCOME		
Financing income	260	889
Digital Services income	3,417	2,844
JobKeeper	-	11,518
Sundry income	7,264	5,024
TOTAL OTHER INCOME	10,941	20,275
TOTAL REVENUE	575,080	419,673

3. Events Subsequent to Balance Sheet Date

In the interval between the end of the financial period and the date of this report, the ARLC announced a 5 year broadcast agreement, commencing 1 November 2022, with long standing broadcast partner Channel 9 on 21 December 2021. There have been no other items, transactions or events of a material and unusual nature likely, in the opinion of the Directors of the organisation, to affect significantly the operations of the organisation and the state of affairs in future financial years.

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AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE COMMISSION LIMITED - CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT

Directors' Declaration

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 entity has been prepared in accordance with AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports; and
- (b) there are reasonable grounds to believe that the consolidated entity will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

On behalf of the Board

(ith

Peter V'landy Chairman

Tony McGrath

Director

Sydney 7 February 2022

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Concise Financial Report 2021



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Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited

Report on the concise financial report

Opinion

We have audited the concise financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited, which comprises the consolidated statement of financial position as at 31 October 2021, the consolidated statement of comprehensive income, consolidated statement of changes in equity and consolidated statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and related notes, derived from the financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited and its subsidiaries (collectively the Group) for the year ended 31 October 2021. The concise financial report also includes discussion and analysis and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying concise financial report, including the discussion and analysis and directors declaration complies with Accounting Standard AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports.

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 Concise Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Company 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 concise 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.

Concise Financial Report

The concise financial report does not contain all the disclosures required by Australian Accounting Standards. Reading the concise financial report and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the financial report and the auditor's report thereon.

The Financial Report and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the financial report in our report dated 7 February 2022.

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Responsibilities of the Directors for the Concise Financial Report

The directors of the Company are responsible for the preparation of the concise financial report in accordance with Accounting Standard AASB 1039 *Concise Financial Reports*,, and for such internal controls as the directors determine are necessary to enable the preparation of the concise financial report.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Concise Financial Report

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the concise financial report complies, in all material respects, with AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports and whether the discussion and analysis complies with AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Auditing Standard ASA 810 Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements.

Ernet & Vous

James Higgin

Partner

Sydney 7 February 2022



National Rugby League Ltd

Rugby League Central Driver Avenue, Moore Park NSW 2021

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