



NATIONAL  
RUGBY  
LEAGUE  
ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2020



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**1st**

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**0**

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**49,155**

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**6%**

**SPORTING CODE  
IN AUSTRALIA  
TO RETURN FROM  
THE COVID PANDEMIC**

---

**POSITIVE  
COVID TESTS**

---

**WORLD RECORD  
CROWD DURING COVID  
AT GAME III OF AMPOL  
STATE OF ORIGIN**

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**INCREASE IN VIEWERSHIP  
ACROSS ALL SCREENS**

2020 Highlights

# Storm

Win the NRL Telstra Premiership.  
It was the second time they've won  
the Grand Final in the last five years.





2020 Highlights

# Broncos

Win NRL Telstra Women's Premiership.  
The Broncos made it a three-peat.





**\$2.55m**

RAISED FOR MARK HUGHES FOUNDATION DURING BEANIES FOR BRAIN CANCER ROUND

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**126**

MORE TRIES THAN LAST SEASON

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**223**

MORE MINUTES OF BALL IN PLAY THAN LAST YEAR

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**Adelaide**

BECAME THE SIXTH CITY TO HOST STATE OF ORIGIN

**64%**

INCREASE IN STREAMING  
ACROSS KAYO, NINE NOW,  
FOXTEL GO AND TELSTRA

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**98%**

RETENTION OF PARTNERS  
DURING 2020 SEASON

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**\$50m**

ANNUAL COST  
REDUCTION

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN PETER V'LANDYS AM

## **Rugby League faced financial catastrophe when the NRL Telstra Premiership season was suspended on 23 March because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

It was unquestionably the biggest challenge to ever face the game.

At the time, many experts suggested we would not play another game for the year. Had we not played again the National Rugby League (NRL) was facing a loss of about \$400 million.

I'm pleased to report that, despite the dire predictions of many, we completed 180 games. That included a 20-round Telstra Premiership, a full Telstra NRLW season and Ampol State of Origin and Harvey Norman Women's State of Origin series.

The season ended with a world record COVID crowd of 49,155 at Suncorp Stadium for the Origin decider.

I'm also pleased to confirm the Australian Rugby League Commission ensured all 16 Clubs came through the season financially secure. Our players were also paid 80% of their salary for the season, which was commensurate with the 20% less games played which affected broadcast revenue.

The NRL will record a deficit of \$24.7 million, significantly less than what we would have faced had the Commission not found a way for the game to return.

We returned because the game united. The Commission created a plan to return and the game backed the plan.

While people were talking about our season being over, I was emailing the daily infection rates to key stakeholders. When the competition was suspended the infection rate was 25.52%, it soon became clear from the daily figures that by the end of May the infection rate would be close to zero. I knew this because of the data trend on the reports that I was providing to key stakeholders.

That's why the Commission set the season return for 28 May. When that decision was made on 9 April, the infection rate was just 1.43%. The data showed we were on track for an infection rate close to zero when players were due to run onto the field for the resumption.

It was a carefully considered decision based purely on the data. Every decision we made in 2020 was based on the data, not emotion.

The greatest challenge the game then faced was convincing our broadcast partners that the season would not be stopped again. The Commission had to provide a plan which would give the broadcasters confidence we could complete the season and they would receive a return on their investment.

The Commission had formed Project Apollo, which was chaired by Wayne Pearce.

We established world leading protocols with a team led by Professor David Heslop who has experience in Chemical, Biological, Nuclear and Explosive medicine.

Giving consideration to his advice, the Commission developed and approved the protocols which assisted in the negotiations with the government and broadcasters for the game to resume on May 28 and complete the remaining matches.

And most importantly, do so safely.

Our greatest risk was the infection of a player. You can have the best biosecurity protocols in the world but without the players conscientiously adhering to them, they are worth nothing.

Our players were brilliant. The overwhelming majority strictly complied with the protocols to keep the game on the field. Often you take things for granted until you lose something. That was the case about rugby league for our players, once they lost the game they did everything they could to get it back.

It was because of their sacrifice that the season continued.



# Message from the Chairman

We created a bubble of 850 players and officials for the premiership season. I cannot thank the players and officials enough for their sacrifice.

The season could not have commenced without the support of the State and Federal governments providing relevant travel exemptions and exemptions to play. That support ensured our season resumed.

I want to thank the NSW Premier and Deputy Premier Gladys Berejiklian and John Barilaro for their support, along with Health Minister Brad Hazzard. I also thank NSW Police Commissioner Mick Fuller and Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant for taking on board the evidence we provided to restart the game.

The Commission thanks Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton for providing the relevant approvals to allow the New Zealand Warriors to enter Australia for the re-start of the season.

I also want to thank the Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk and Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young for providing our Clubs with exemptions to cross the Queensland border. And for allowing the game the opportunity to finish the season in front of a capacity crowd.

With every negative comes a positive.

The restructured season allowed the Commission the opportunity to consider new innovations for 2020.

During broadcast negotiations it became very clear there was a view that rugby league needed to become more entertaining. It had become robotic. The balance between attack and defence was not right.

In December 2019, at the Competition Committee meeting, I had originally raised the prospect of the 'six again' rule being implemented which didn't gain enough support to proceed.

During the season suspension, my fellow Commissioner Wayne Pearce suggested we implement the rule.

So we did.

The six again rule was designed to stop the wrestle and make the game more entertaining and free flowing. Fans and broadcasters had long told me the wrestle was the biggest blight on the game. So we did something about it.

There was significant opposition from some coaches and players and while we take on board their views, it's important the Commission makes decisions that will be supported by our customers, the fans. The players and coaches are already part of the game, our challenge is to grow the game, attract new fans and to keep existing fans paying money to watch our game.

These changes allow us to do that.

As part of the changes, we also went from two referees to one referee. That was another issue which had long been suggested but not implemented, COVID again presented with an opportunity for change.

I'm pleased to report the rule changes led to 112 more line breaks, 126 more tries and 223 more minutes of ball in play in 2020 than the previous season. A faster, less predictable form of rugby league.

Again, I want to thank the players and the Clubs for the spirit in which they adapted to the new rules. While there was opposition to some of the changes the players and coaches adapted to the changes and transformed the way they played.

The Commission will continue to remain agile and innovative to ensure rugby league remains entertaining for our fans.

Part of our changes were because of broadcast feedback.

I want to thank our broadcast partners Fox Sports, Nine Entertainment and Sky Sports who re-cut broadcast deals in record time. Without those deals there would not have been a season resumption in 2020.

In particular, Foxtel Chief Executive Patrick Delany for extending our deal to 2027. That long-term certainty from our biggest broadcast partner will allow the game to make long-term financial plans.

Nine Entertainment, under the guidance of Hugh Marks, re-committed to the existing deal until 2022 which ensured the season continued. As part of the agreement with Nine, we played State of Origin as a stand-alone series at the end of the year. We also played in Adelaide for the very first time.

This was another opportunity to try an innovation that had been suggested for many years but never been implemented.

I want to thank my fellow Commissioners for their support and dedication this season. I am merely the Captain of the Team. Each and every Commissioner brings unique skills which will help the game grow and prosper in the years ahead. As a Commission we have led the sporting world by acting decisively based on the data and the science.

In particular, I thank Wayne Pearce for Chairing the Project Apollo Committee.

In March, Amanda Laing resigned from the Commission. I thank her for her service.

And welcome Kate Jones to the Commission, who joins us after a successful career as a Minister in the Queensland Government. Kate has a passion for growing grassroots participation and her knowledge of major events as a former Tourism and Commonwealth Games Minister will be an asset to the Commission.

In May, rugby league lost one of our icons in Arthur Summons. Arthur was small in stature but a giant of our game. He and Norm Provan will forever be etched on our trophy. I send my deepest condolences to Arthur's family.

I thank all 16 Clubs and State Leagues for their ongoing support.

One of the reasons our game succeeded this year was because we were united. As a united body we lead the world and I thank the 16 Clubs and the states for working so closely with the Commission to keep the game going.

While I have thanked the playing group, it is important to single out the New Zealand Warriors who relocated to Australia so the season would continue. Their sacrifice hasn't only saved the game in 2020 but helped set the game up for future generations.

I also want to thank and congratulate our Premiers the Melbourne Storm who relocated to the Sunshine Coast so the season could continue.

And congratulate the Brisbane Broncos who won their third straight NRLW Premiership. Thank you to all our elite women who made significant sacrifices so there could be an NRLW season.

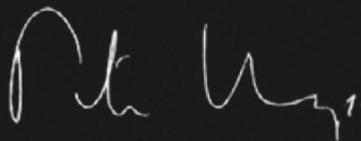
In March, Todd Greenberg resigned as Chief Executive of the NRL. The Commission thanks him for his service.

In September, the Commission appointed Andrew Abdo as Chief Executive Officer of the NRL. Andrew has done an outstanding job in the most difficult of circumstances, first as Interim Chief Executive before being formally appointed to the role. I thank him for his conscientious professionalism and loyalty. Andrew's work ethic and commercial acumen will be an asset to the game as he implements the Commission's strategy.

I also thank NRL management and staff for their work in the most challenging of seasons. 2020 will go down in history as the game's greatest challenge and triumph. From a catastrophic consequence the game emerged to lead the world.

I'm proud of our achievements this year and I look forward to conquering new challenges and watching the impact of new innovations in the 2021 season.

The 2020 season once again proved rugby league is the greatest game of all.



**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 Rugby League International Federation Limited 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 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 a Director 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 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.



**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 and Estia Health Limited, and a director of Cromwell Property Group, 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 served as a Minister in the Queensland Government for more than eight years in a range of portfolios including Minister for State Development, Education, Tourism and Major Events and Innovation and Climate Change. She also served as Minister for the Commonwealth Games in 2018. Ms Jones has a Masters in Environmental Law (ANU) and a Bachelor of Arts, Journalism Major (QUT).



**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 Chair of the Commission's Risk, Investment and Audit Committee.

# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO ANDREW ABDO

**Sport brings people together. Rugby league means so much to so many people. It is a game of strength, skill, stamina, but most importantly it is also about spirit.**

The spirit of rugby league enabled us to complete the most remarkable of seasons in 2020. Personally, it is the honour of my career to have been appointed as the CEO of the NRL as the game navigates a path through the most extraordinary challenges in our history.

The 2020 season can best be summed up by three words. Adversity. Innovation. Celebration.

A year where we defied the impossible.

A year where a pandemic brought the game to its knees before the Australian Rugby League Commission revived the season, faster than any other sport in Australia.

## 2020 – A New NRL

The 2020 season saw the creation of a new NRL. We need to be leaner, faster and more connected to our fans, players and partners. COVID-19 has acted like an accelerant for some external changes already taking place in the sport industry and the financial impact of the pandemic forced the game to reset priorities and cost bases beginning with a reorganisation of our business.

The plan for the NRL is to stabilise, renovate and then grow.

Stabilising began with Project Apollo and getting back on the field safely. The goal was to complete 180 games safely. We needed to negotiate with all our major partners, starting with our broadcast partners for revised deals under the circumstances. We needed to revise our arrangements with players, ensure the financial sustainability of our Clubs and to support our State Leagues and Community Rugby League.

In order to respond to the drop in revenue, it was important we led by example. We reorganised the NRL business, starting with a \$50 million annual reduction in expenditure. The restructure impacted the entire business, from the top down.

Part of the reorganisation of the business included the reduction in the number of departments and simplification of the business. Our design is based on the needs of our fans and our shareholders – the 16 Clubs and State Leagues.

Our seven new departments are: Brand, Media & Communications, Competitions, Fan Experience, Finance, Operations & IT, Participation & Community, Partnerships and Risk, Performance & Integrity.

Simplifying the business will ensure the NRL remains financially strong into the future and the game can provide adequate funding to its shareholders. It will also allow the NRL to rebuild funds for future strategic investments.

Another part of the stabilisation process included securing revenues. As a game we are very lucky to have strong and loyal partners. Our Naming Rights partner Telstra not only stood by us but expanded their commitment to our game by taking on the Naming Rights partnership for the NRLW.

We also welcomed Ampol back to rugby league as Naming Rights partner for the State of Origin series for four years.

All our top tier partners stood by the game including Sportsbet, KFC, Diageo Australia and Harvey Norman while we also welcomed Hisense as a new top tier partner.

Ampol State of Origin was played in Adelaide for the very first time, taking the number of cities that have hosted Origin to five. Origin is undoubtedly the most successful Australian sporting brand. We will continue to take one game in the series to either Melbourne, Perth or Adelaide each year.

We are proud to have completed our elite women's competition, the only football code in Australia to do so. Congratulations to the Brisbane Broncos women who made it a three-peat of premierships.



## Message from the CEO

### The Future

Over the coming years we will look to renovate and grow. To attract new fans and participants and ensure our existing fan base remains committed to our sport – whether that be watching, attending or playing.

The Commission began that process during the 2020 season with the creation of new rules which made the game more entertaining and free flowing. Under the guidance of the Commission, we will continue to renovate, to look at new changes not only to rules but to our products and the fan experience.

I look forward to working closely with the Commission to grow the game's footprint, including the consideration of expanding the competition size, expanding the international game and the creation of new products to engage with fans.

I look forward to implementing a new strategic approach from the Commission about the way we increase participation at a junior and grassroots level. This will be a priority in 2021.

Our plan to stabilise, renovate and grow is well underway and I'm pleased with the progress we have made.

### Thank You

What I am most proud of this year is the way in which the game has come together. There has been obstacle after obstacle, but each and every time we found a way over or around those obstacles because we worked together.

We showed this year that when we work together we can lead. We will build on that goodwill and strength of spirit to ensure the NRL remains at the forefront of sporting codes in the years ahead.

Thank you to our broadcasters Fox Sports, Nine and Sky Sports for their commitment to our game and support in renegotiating broadcast agreements so the 2020 season could continue.

Traditional television audiences are declining but I'm delighted to report our overall audience increased in 2020. Total viewership across all screens increased by 6 per cent during the regular season, driven by a 64 per cent increase in streaming across Kayo, Telstra, Foxtel Go and Nine Now.

Thank you to our playing group for the remarkable discipline they have shown throughout the season. All 850 players and staff who were part of the biosecurity bubble gave up significant liberties so the season could continue. We thank you for those sacrifices.



I would like to thank the Commission for their leadership and support throughout this season and the faith they have placed in me to represent the Commission as Chief Executive Officer of the NRL. The game is fortunate to have a strong, innovative and dynamic Commission continually focused on taking the game forward.

Our Chairman Peter V'landys AM has led from the front and I am excited and grateful for the opportunity to work with such an experienced and passionate Chairman.

Thank you to the Clubs and State Leagues for your support since taking over as Chief Executive Officer.

Thank you to the NRL management team for your dedication and determination during the most challenging of years, and all staff at the NRL for their resilience and adaptability in a tough environment. Many of our team have learnt new skills and taken on new responsibilities they would not have thought possible.

Thank you to our partners, for investing in our game, for your loyalty and unwavering commitment in navigating this challenging year.

Most importantly, thank you to our millions of volunteers, grassroots players, coaches, referees and our fans. You are rugby league. You are BBQs on a Saturday morning, you are the amazing crowd at a sold out State of Origin, you are the spirit of rugby league. You are what we fight for in everything we do to make our great sport the greatest it can be.

2020 has been the most challenging year in our history but in many ways it has been our most successful. We have proved with a common purpose and teamwork, we can lead and drive positive change.

I'm inspired by what the game means to people and what it has achieved this year and I look forward to the opportunities next year will bring.



**Andrew Abdo**  
ARLC CEO



# 01 COMPETITIONS REPORT





Section One  
Competitions Report



# SUCCESS OF THE 2020 SEASON

Ivan and Nathan Cleary at ANZ Stadium for the preliminary finals where minor premiers, the Penrith Panthers, defeated South Sydney Rabbitohs 20-16.

The 2020 NRL Telstra Premiership season was the most extraordinary in the game's history.

A competition that was suspended, reshaped, played under unprecedented exposure before ultimately crowning the Melbourne Storm and Brisbane Broncos as Premiers on Grand Finals Day.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the season to be suspended after Round 2 on 23 March. The NRL then created and implemented strict biosecurity protocols, based on the advice of health experts, which allowed the players to resume training and ultimately playing. That included relocating the New Zealand Warriors from Auckland to Tamworth and then ultimately the NSW Central Coast for the remainder of the season. The Melbourne Storm were also relocated to the Sunshine Coast after a second virus outbreak in Victoria.

On 28 May, the NRL became one of the first sports in the world to resume after the COVID-19 suspension with a revamped 20-round competition. On 18 November the 2020 season concluded with a world-record COVID crowd at the Ampol State of Origin decider won by the Queensland Maroons.

During the season suspension the ARLC introduced new rule changes designed to make the game faster, more entertaining and free flowing for fans. The changes included reverting from a two-person on-field referee model to one. A 'six again' rule, which saw six more tackles awarded rather than a penalty for standard infringements around the ruck, was introduced to ensure the game did not slow down with one referee.

**The rule changes delivered on the ARLC's vision to make the game faster, more entertaining and unpredictable. The 2020 season saw 223 more minutes of ball in play, 2453 more play the balls, 126 more tries, 112 more line breaks and 533 fewer penalties.**

The Commission highlighted its commitment to women's sport when the Telstra NRLW Premiership became the only women's football code to complete a full season with all four teams, including the Warriors, able to field competitive squads.

## Section One

# Competitions Report

# BIOSECURITY

# PROTOCOLS

The 2020 Telstra Premiership season was able to proceed without interruption from Round 3 because of the creation of a world-leading biosecurity bubble. An average 850 players, coaching staff and match officials were part of the 'Apollo Bubble' designed to ensure players remained free of COVID-19.

The integrity of the biosecurity protocols gave State governments the confidence to provide the NRL with exemptions to cross border closures on a 'Fly In, Fly Out' basis for game day.

Well before the competition resumed on 28 May, the ARLC and the NRL had to forge through research and data and carefully design a strategy which would ensure the safety of players, staff and the community, as well as the integrity of the competition.

Project Apollo was formed on 1 April, shortly after the NRL Telstra Premiership was shut down. Established by the ARLC, it was chaired by Commissioner Wayne Pearce.

With the guidance of biosecurity experts Professor David Heslop and Dr Cassy Workman the biosecurity protocols were created.

The strict biosecurity protocols were drawn up for a set number of players and staff – which over the course of the season and various competitions, numbered a total of 1300 – for both training and match days. Players undertook daily temperature checks and daily symptom checks through a specially designed app, households were screened, players were quarantined under certain circumstances, while teams flew to interstate venues on game days via chartered flights.

Players and staff that were part of the biosecurity bubble sacrificed significant daily liberties, which at times included only being allowed to go to training and their residence, to ensure the season could continue safely.

**2020 saw 100,000 health screens and temperature checks conducted and 550 COVID tests carried out, not a single positive case recorded.**

At venues, teams and selected broadcast and Club and NRL staff operated out of a 'Clean' Zone, carefully and strictly distinguished from the 'Venue' Zone, which included media, additional Club staff and ultimately, supporters and Members.

Version 1 of the Apollo Protocols, sent to Clubs in early April, numbered 34 pages, but by the time Queensland lifted the Ampol State of Origin shield on 18 November – and considering numerous updates based on government restrictions and advice, there were more than 20 versions.

The players' adherence to these protocols allowed the competition to resume and prosper; they were unable to undertake certain activities but still able to complete what began as an unlikely season but finished as an unforgettable one.



## Section One

# Competitions Report

## NRLW

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Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ARLC was committed to the elite women's competitions in 2020, which was highlighted by the successful NRL Telstra Women's Premiership.

Brisbane Broncos won its third NRLW consecutive Premiership with a 20-10 victory over Sydney Roosters in the Grand Final.

Like the men's Premiership, some of the key data in the women's competition trended in the right direction; average tries (6 per game) were up, as were average line breaks (9.4 per game) and average offloads (14.2). Penalties were down more than two per game on average.





THE NRL TELSTRA  
WOMEN'S PREMIERSHIP  
GRAND FINAL WAS  
THE LARGEST WOMEN'S  
DOMESTIC SPORTING  
MATCH TV AUDIENCE  
IN AUSTRALIA (710K),  
WHICH REPRESENTED  
A 14 PER CENT INCREASE  
ON 2019.

710<sup>K</sup>

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Club Nines

The NRL expanded the footprint of the game – as well as the Nines concept – in the NRL Nines Perth event, staged at Perth's HBF Park in February.

**Not only was the Nines concept taken to Perth for the first time, an NRLW Nines event was also born.**

In the men's tournament, watched on by 14,739 fans, North Queensland Cowboys defeated St George Illawarra 23-14 in the Grand Final. In the inaugural NRLW tournament, the Dragons emerged victorious, defeating Brisbane Broncos 28-4 in the decider.

### Women in League Round

**The game paid tribute to more than half a million females involved across all aspects and levels of the sport during the Harvey Norman Women in League Round.**

The 2020 Harvey Norman Women in League Round carried the theme 'From Strength to Strength', paying tribute to the growing number of women and girls making an invaluable contribution to rugby league.

The 14th Women in League Round was also an opportunity to acknowledge the growing strength and numbers of females in our game – whether that be in leadership positions at clubs, players, coaches and referees involved in matches, or volunteers keeping junior leagues going across the country.

Players paid tribute during this round to the special women in their lives who had supported them, inspired them and believed in them throughout their time in the game.



## Beanie for Brain Cancer Round

In an incredible display of unity during a year filled with uncertainty, Australians rallied behind the Mark Hughes Foundation to raise \$2.55 million across the 2020 Beanie for Brain Cancer Round.

**More than 135,000 MHF Beanie's were sold during the 2020 Beanie for Brain Cancer campaign.**



## Section One

# Competitions Report

## Ampol State of Origin

Origin's first ever post-Premiership series, as well as the first match in South Australia, produced a thrilling finish as Queensland's unheralded squad emerged victorious over the New South Wales Blues.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ampol State of Origin series was shifted to November. Despite that, a 50 per cent reduced capacity crowd of 25,218 watched Queensland stun the Blues 18-14 at Adelaide in Game One.

The Blues responded with a 34-10 win in Game Two in front of 36,212 people at ANZ Stadium in Sydney, setting up a decider at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium.

The Blues were heavily favoured in Game Three, yet the Maroons triumphed 20-14, in front of the biggest sporting crowd in the world (49,155) following the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The series was watched on by a cumulative audience of more than 7.5 million, while the Wally Lewis Medal was claimed by Maroons five-eighth Cameron Munster.





## Harvey Norman Women's Origin

Another first for the game was achieved with the first-ever women's State of Origin clash in Queensland – not to mention Queensland's first win since the women's interstate match became an Origin contest.

Sunshine Coast Stadium played host to a capacity crowd of 4833 under COVID restrictions as Queensland won 24-18 in dramatic fashion.

Tarryn Aiken was awarded the Nellie Doherty Medal, while an audience of more than 500,000 people watched the contest.

## Section One

### Competitions Report

# MILESTONES

Two of the game's best coaches reached significant milestones in 2020; Canberra Raiders' Ricky Stuart and Manly Warringah Sea Eagles' Des Hasler both reached the 400-game feat.

Stuart became the eighth coach to reach the 400 mark when his team played Wests Tigers at Campbelltown Stadium in Round Five, while Hasler became the ninth coach to achieve the milestone in the Sea Eagles' clash with the Warriors at Lottoland in Round 13.

Sydney Roosters utility Mitchell Aubusson became the most capped player in the Club's history when he took the field at the Sydney Cricket Ground against Cronulla in Round 19. Aubusson surpassed the record of Anthony Minichiello, set in 2014, when he played his 303rd game.

Warriors second-rower Adam Blair became the most capped New Zealand-born player in premierships history when he played the 312th game of his career in his team's clash with the Newcastle Knights in Round One. Blair surpassed former Canberra and Warriors legend Ruben Wiki to set the new mark.

Canberra Raiders centre Jarrod Croker became the first player under the age of 30 to score 2000 points at premierships level when he kicked his second goal against the Gold Coast Titans at GIO Stadium in Round One. Croker was 29 years and 184 days old when he reached the mark, which was previously held by Jason Taylor. Croker became the seventh player to score 2000 premierships points.

Penrith Panthers achieved a Club record nine consecutive wins when they defeated the Warriors 18-12 at Central Coast Stadium in Round 14. The Panthers' winning streak went on to total 17 matches.

Melbourne Storm Captain Cameron Smith continued to reach major milestones in 2020. Melbourne's victory over Canberra at GIO Stadium in Round Nine brought up the 300th win of Smith's NRL career. Smith is one of only eight players in premierships history who have won over 200 games and became the first to notch the remarkable milestone of 300 wins. Smith has achieved a career winning percentage of 71.4.

Smith also became the oldest Grand Final winner in the history of the premierships when he steered the Storm to the title at the age of 37 years and 130 days, surpassing the previous record of St George captain-coach Ken Kearney, who was 36 years and 123 days in 1960.





## THE 300 CLUB

Two players, both representing Sydney Roosters, joined the exclusive 300 Club in 2020.

Utility Mitchell Aubusson became the 40th player to appear in 300 premiership games when the Roosters clashed with St George Illawarra at WIN Stadium in Round 13. Aubusson became only the third Roosters player to reach the 300-game milestone following Anthony Minichiello (302) and Luke Ricketson (301).

Aubusson retired at the end of 2020, along with fellow 300-Club members Darius Boyd, Adam Blair and Gavin Cooper.



Centre Josh Morris achieved the feat in Round 17, becoming the 41st member when the Roosters met Canberra at GIO Stadium.



Section One  
Competitions Report

2020  
RETIRING CLASS

The following players – including for the first time female rugby league stars – were recognised as the Official Retiring Class of 2020:

NAME	CLUB
Darius Boyd	Brisbane Broncos
Jayson Bukuya	Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks
Matt Gillett	Brisbane Broncos
Cameron King	Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks
Tim Glasby	Newcastle Knights
David Gower	Parramatta Eels
Sam McKendry	Penrith Panthers

NAME	CLUB
Tim Grant	Penrith Panthers
Chris Lawrence	Wests Tigers
Ethan Lowe	South Sydney Rabbitohs
Joel Thompson	Manly Warringah Sea Eagles
Jamie Buhner	Newcastle Knights
Mitchell Aubusson	Sydney Roosters
Adam Blair	Warriors



NAME	CLUB
James Graham	St George Illawarra Dragons
Ben Matulino	Wests Tigers
Shannon Boyd	Gold Coast Titans
Aidan Guerra	Newcastle Knights
Gavin Cooper	North Queensland Cowboys
Scott Bolton	North Queensland Cowboys
Gerard Beale	Warriors

NAME	CLUB
Ruan Sims	Sydney Roosters
Lorina Papali'i	Warriors
Sarina Clark	Warriors
Lavina O'Mealey	Sydney Roosters
Rebecca Young	Sydney Roosters
Heather Ballinger	Brisbane Broncos



## Section One

### Competitions Report

# THE DALLY M AWARD

Canberra Raiders five-eighth Jack Wighton capped a stunning season by winning his first Dally M Medal, and becoming just the third Raiders player to win the prestigious award.

Due to the restrictions prompted by COVID-19, the ceremony was held in three separate studios at Fox Sports, Artarmon, and featured state-of-the-art graphics by the Fox Sports broadcast. The ceremony featured technology used by Disney to present a live virtual event – it was the first time such technology had been used in Australia.

In a remarkable finish going down to the final round, Wighton topped polling over Parramatta Eels fullback Clint Gutherson and Penrith Panthers halfback Nathan Cleary.

Brisbane Broncos Captain Ali Briggshaw was honoured with the Dally M Female Player of the Year award.

The 2020 Dally M Awards for the first time featured a full 13-man team as its Team of the Year.

The Warriors, the Club which moved to NSW in order for the NRL Competition to resume, were honoured with the Provan-Summons Medal – the Spirit of the Game award. Roger Tuivasa-Sheck was awarded Captain of the Year.



AWARD	NAME
<b>Dally M Male Player of the Year</b>	Jack Wighton (Canberra Raiders)
<b>Dally M Female Player of the Year</b>	Ali Brigginsshaw (Brisbane Broncos)
<b>Dally M Coach of the Year</b>	Ivan Cleary (Penrith Panthers)
<b>Dally M Captain of the Year</b>	Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (Warriors)
<b>Dally M Rookie of the Year</b>	Harry Grant (West's Tigers)
<b>Dally M Props of the Year</b>	Josh Papalii (Canberra Raiders) James Fisher-Harris (Penrith Panthers)
<b>Dally M Second Rowers of the Year</b>	Viliame Kikau (Penrith Panthers) Tohu Harris (Warriors)
<b>Dally M Lock of the Year</b>	Isaah Yeo (Penrith Panthers)
<b>Dally M Wingers of the Year</b>	David Nofoaluma (West's Tigers) Josh Addo-Carr (Melbourne Storm)
<b>Dally M Centres of the Year</b>	Stephen Crichton (Penrith Panthers) Kotoni Staggs (Brisbane Broncos)

AWARD	NAME
<b>Dally M Five-Eighth of the Year</b>	Jack Wighton (Canberra Raiders)
<b>Dally M Halfback of the Year</b>	Nathan Cleary (Penrith Panthers)
<b>Dally M Hooker of the Year</b>	Cameron Smith (Melbourne Storm)
<b>Dally M Fullback of the Year</b>	Clint Gutherson (Parramatta Eels)
<b>Top Points Scorer</b>	Adam Reynolds (South Sydney Rabbitohs)
<b>Top Try Scorer (Ken Irvine Medal)</b>	Alex Johnston (South Sydney Rabbitohs)
<b>Peter Frilingos Headline Moment</b>	Project Apollo
<b>Provan-Summons Medal</b>	Warriors
<b>Try of the Year</b>	Kotoni Staggs (Brisbane Broncos)
<b>Tackle of the Year</b>	Josh Papalii (Canberra Raiders)
<b>Telstra Moments of the Year</b>	Josh Addo-Carr/ Cody Ramsey
<b>NRLW Rookie of the Year</b>	Kennedy Cherrington (Sydney Roosters)
<b>NRLW Try of the Year</b>	Madison Bartlett (Warriors)
<b>NRLW Tackle of the Year</b>	Hannah Southwell (Sydney Roosters)

## Section One

### Competitions Report

# ACADEMIC TEAM

# OF THE YEAR

#### **2020 Academic Male of the Year – Anthony Don**

#### **2020 Academic Female of the Year – Kirra Dib**

#### **Rhys Kennedy – Brisbane Broncos**

Completed Bachelor of Exercise Science and Cert III in Fitness, University of Wollongong

#### **Connor Tracey – Cronulla Sutherland Sharks**

Completed a Bachelor of Accounting and Financial Services, currently completing a Post Grad Cert in Chartered Financial Analyst, CFA Institute

#### **Anthony Don – Gold Coast Titans**

Completed a Masters of Business Administration 2020 & Completed a Bachelor of Education 2011, University of New England

#### **Christian Welch – Melbourne Storm**

Completed a Bachelor of Commerce and currently completing a Masters of Business, University of New South Wales

#### **Jayden Brailey – Newcastle Knights**

Currently completing a Bachelor of Exercise Sports Science, Australian Catholic University

#### **Jake Granville – North Queensland Cowboys**

Currently completing a Carpentry Apprenticeship and Diploma of Business Management & Hospitality

#### **Reed Mahoney – Parramatta Eels**

Completed Cert IV in Business, Education Support & III & IV Fitness and Diploma in Business, currently completing a Bachelor Sport Business, Australian College of Physical Education

#### **Adam Clune – St George Illawarra Dragons**

Completed a Bachelor of Laws-Bachelor of Commerce (Finance) with distinction, University of Wollongong

#### **Euan Aitken – St George Illawarra Dragons**

Completed a Cert IV in Fitness, currently completing a Bachelor of Exercise Science and Completed a Cert IV in New Small Business, University of Wollongong

#### **Nat Butcher – Sydney Roosters**

Completed Diploma in Business & Cert IV in Small Business Management, currently completing a Bachelor of Business Administration, Australian Catholic University

#### **Matt Ikuvalu – Sydney Roosters**

Completed Certificate III in Fitness and Cert IV in Community & Recreation, currently completing a Bachelor of Teaching (Honours), University of Newcastle

#### **Alex Twal – Wests Tigers**

Completed a Bachelor of Commerce (2020) & Cert III in Fitness, Australian Catholic University

#### **Kirra Dibb – Warriors**

Currently completing a Bachelor of Applied Science – Exercise Physiology, University of Sydney



# MATCH OFFICIALS

The NRL's group of 22 full-time elite match officials excelled in 2020 even after substantial changes forced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NRL moved back to one on-field referee, from two, following the suspension of the Premiership. The move was ultimately deemed successful, as was the 'six again' rule – another substantial rule change which brought about a more exciting brand of Rugby League.

Gerard Sutton refereed his 6th Grand Final, in the decider between Penrith Panthers and Melbourne Storm, as well as all three Ampol State of Origin matches (the decider was Sutton's 19th consecutive Origin match). Todd Smith officiated in his first Grand Final and State of Origin as touch judge in 2020. Belinda Sharpe refereed her first NRL Telstra Women's Premiership Grand Final.

Like the players and club staff, the NRL match officials operated out of a biosecurity bubble in 2020, and should be congratulated on their significant contribution to the success of the season.

## Milestones

### 300 Games

Ashley Klein

### 200 Games

Henry Perenara

### 100 Games

David Munro

### Retirements

Gavin Badger

Referee – 354 Games

Touch Judge – 57 Games

Video Referee – 10 Games

Timothy Alouani-Roby

Referee – 22 Games

Touch Judge – 93 Games

### NRL Telstra Premiership Grand Final Match Officials

Gerard Sutton

Chris Butler and Todd Smith

Steve Chiddy

### NRL Telstra Women's Premiership Grand Final Match Officials

Belinda Sharpe

Liam Kennedy and Drew Oultram

Jared Maxwell



## VALE 2020

### Rugby League's heart was broken following the passing of one half of the Provan-Summons Trophy, former Western Suburbs halfback Arthur Summons.

One of the game's most iconic figures, a Gladiator and a member of the NRL Hall of Fame as well as a Kangaroos representative, Summons died in May.

Summons' passing was commemorated during a moving tribute before the Grand Final between the Melbourne Storm and Penrith Panthers.

Noel Kelly, another member of the NRL Hall of Fame, a gentleman and a character off the field but a tough and uncompromising front-rower on it, passed away in June.



Neil Ryan*	Adam Maher	Tom Searle	Peter Newell
Tom Cocking*	Don 'Bandy' Adams^	Barry Cross	John Whittaker
Doug Ricketson*	Robert Orchard	Bill Ramsey	Ernie Hills
Frank Foster*	Doug Page	Peter Burnicle	Ray Blacklock
Frank Mulcare	Frank Myler	Don Regan	Wal Hourn
Ted Curran	Bill McCarthy	Warren Kimberley	Mick Fitzsimmons
Brian James^	Paul Carroll	Dick McKelvey	Warren Simmons
Manfred Moore	Tony Branson^	Bal Numapo	Greg Growden
Paul Fisher	Harry Slaughter	Ross Warner	Jim Schroder
Mark Harris^	Mitch Cronin	Col Weir	Keith Titmuss
Grant Goldman	Joe Goicoechea	Kevin Hogan	Jack Stewart
John (Jack) Hardman	Noel Bissett	Keith Middleton^	Mick Falla
Glen Graham	Tony Coll	Clarrie Jeffreys	Gary Parcell^
John Perry	Rick Muru	Jack Danzey	Ray Cupic
Greg Hawick^	Arthur Summons^	Laurie Fagan	
Ian Sommer	Bob Dimond^	Joel Dark	
Don Furner^	Noel Kelly^	John Fahey	

\* late 2019

^ Australian internationals

# 02 PARTNERSHIPS REPORT





# PARTNERSHIPS REPORT

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the strength of the NRL's commercial and government partnerships.

Despite significant challenges in the global economy, all of the game's major commercial partners continued their support of rugby league during the pandemic in 2020.

Naming Rights partner Telstra not only continued its long association with the NRL, which now spans two decades, but expanded the relationship by securing the Naming Rights partnership of the NRL Telstra Women's Premiership.

Telstra now holds Naming Rights to both the Men's and Women's Premierships. The 2021 season will mark Telstra's 20th year as Naming Rights Partner of the NRL Telstra Premiership. It remains one of the longest and most enduring partnerships in Australian sport.

The 2020 season saw the return of one of Australia's most iconic brands, Ampol, to rugby league. Ampol secured naming rights to the State of Origin series, including the Women's State of Origin from 2021.

Ampol began transitioning back into the retail market in 2020 and Ampol State of Origin will provide the perfect platform to assist Ampol to raise its national brand awareness.

Hisense Australia became an Official Partner of the NRL Telstra Premiership, Ampol State of Origin and Naming Rights partner of Thursday Night Football in 2020.

The NRL was also pleased to welcome Cadbury and Rexona as new partners in 2020.

Major partners including Sportsbet, Carlton United Breweries, KFC, Diageo Australia, Youi and Harvey Norman continued their support for rugby league throughout the 2020 season.



# OUR VALUED PARTNERS

## Broadcast



## Commercial



## Section Two

### Partnerships Report

A partnerships innovation in 2020 was to light up the goal posts at the NRL Nines tournament, the NRL Telstra Premiership men's and women's Grand Finals and throughout the Ampol State of Origin series in 2020. The activation was supported by KFC and saw the goal posts light up when tries were scored, goals kicked and decisions reviewed by the KFC Bunker.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the NRL reached an agreement for Holden to cease as Naming Rights partner of State of Origin given the automotive company was leaving the Australian market. The NRL thanks Holden for their partnership and support over the years.

As part of the reorganisation of the NRL business the Commercial team merged with the Government team to form a Partnerships team focussed on growing and servicing the commercial and government partnerships in rugby league.

Aligning the two teams under one department provides stronger continuity to grow the game's most important partnerships.

The game's partnerships with Federal and State Governments strengthened during the 2020 season.

The Partnerships team worked closely with governments to secure relevant approvals and exemptions to ensure the 2020 NRL Telstra Premiership could resume. Without government support the season would not have proceeded.

Firstly, the Australian Government and Department of Home Affairs provided approval for the New Zealand Warriors to enter Australia and the NSW Government provided approval for the squad to quarantine in Tamworth for two weeks.

The NSW, Queensland, ACT and Victorian Governments also provided approvals under the public health orders to allow the NRL Telstra Premiership to resume from the season suspension. The Queensland Government also provided border exemptions to allow teams to fly in and out of Queensland while the border was closed.



The Partnerships team acknowledges and thanks the Australian, Queensland, NSW and ACT Governments for their support in ensuring the 2020 season resumed and completed 180 matches. Government partnerships were essential to the season continuing.

The NRL's partnership with the NSW Government and Destination NSW continued in 2020 with the support of the NRL Telstra Premiership and NRL Telstra Women's Premiership Grand Finals.

Ampol State of Origin was played in Adelaide for the very first time in 2020. The NRL acknowledges its partnership with the South Australian Government and South Australian Tourism Commission for hosting the match and making the game a reality.

Earlier in the year Tourism Western Australia supported the NRL Nines being played in Perth at HBF Park for the first time.

In 2020, the Australian Government continued their financial commitment to programs which grow rugby league, enhance social cohesion and assist students with furthering their studies.

The Australian Government provided funding for the School to Work Program, State of Mind, VET Promotion Program, Move it Aus, Battlefields to Footy Fields and various programs in the Pacific.

The Queensland and NSW Governments also provided funding towards State of Mind.

The NSW and Victorian Governments continued support of the In League In Harmony program.

The NSW Government also provided pilot funding for the 'Six Again' program which was delivered at Frank Baxter Juvenile Detention Facility throughout the year.

**The NRL acknowledges and thanks all commercial and government partners for their support of rugby league during the 2020 season.**



# 03 FAN EXPERIENCE REPORT



## Section Three

### Fan Experience Report

The NRL created a Fan Experience Department in 2020 which combined the Digital, Marketing, Consumer, Major Events and Broadcast teams.

The department has a clear focus on entertaining and engaging the NRL's +7 million fans in increasingly direct and personalised ways, enhancing their experience and their investment in the game.

Throughout 2020 these teams found dynamic and innovative ways to connect with fans during the COVID-19 lockdown and when the season resumed with game day presentation under no crowds and then with restricted crowds.





THE YEAR  
IN NUMBERS

**3.1m**

AVERAGE WEEKLY USERS  
ON THE DIGITAL NETWORK

**13%**

INCREASE IN  
WEEKLY USERS

---

**1.83m**

FANS WITH A REGISTERED  
NRL ACCOUNT

**34%**

GROWTH YOY  
IN ACCOUNTS

---

**5.1m**

WHOLE OF GAME SOCIAL  
MEDIA FOOTPRINT

**15%**

INCREASE IN FANTASY  
REGISTRATIONS

# DIGITAL

The strong foundations built by the NRL Digital Network – which is developed and run by the NRL in partnership with Telstra, NRL Clubs, QRL and NSWRL – were put into gear in 2020 with Fans using the network as a point of call for information during the season suspension and entertainment when the season resumed.

**The NRL Digital Network averaged 3.1 million weekly users in the 2020 season, an increase of 13 per cent on 2019.**

A massive 1.83 million fans have registered to NRL Account, enabling a tailored experience and benefits across the NRL Network. The fan identity platform saw 39 per cent growth this year. Fan engagement with NRL Tipping and NRL Fantasy increased substantially in 2020 with tipping registrations increasing by 34 per cent on 2019 and Fantasy registrations increasing by 15.4 per cent.

A notable change to the viewing habits of fans during the 2020 season meant a significant uplift in the number of fans watching multiple games per round via the NRL App. The game's partnership with naming rights sponsor Telstra continued to deepen and Telstra Live Pass streams saw double-digit growth year on year.

Fan engagement with the NRLW continued to grow during the 2020 season with page views across the NRLW draw, ladder and statistics on the NRL Digital Network increasing by 34 per cent on 2019. The game's dedicated women's social media channels averaged 25 per cent audience growth across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

The whole of game social media footprint increased to 5.1 million, growth of four per cent since the end of 2019. There was a significant increase in youth focused social channels including Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok.

NRL's Digital capability played a significant role in assisting the game's Apollo biosecurity protocols. The NRL Check Up mobile app was developed and launched in under 2 weeks to allow players to report their daily movements to ensure compliance with the protocols.

Collaboration with NRL media partners meant more exceptional content delivered to fans, including a Fan Poll delivered with News mastheads to check the pulse of the punters on on-field and off-field rugby league issues.

In 2021, NRL Digital will work more closely with NRL Marketing, Consumer, Hospitality and Events as part of the new Fan Experience team – enabling innovation, consistency and efficient delivery of experiences across all the game's touchpoints with fans.

This work has begun, with the re-launch of NRL Shop in October 2020 featuring deeper integration to the NRL marketing ecosystem and NRL Account.

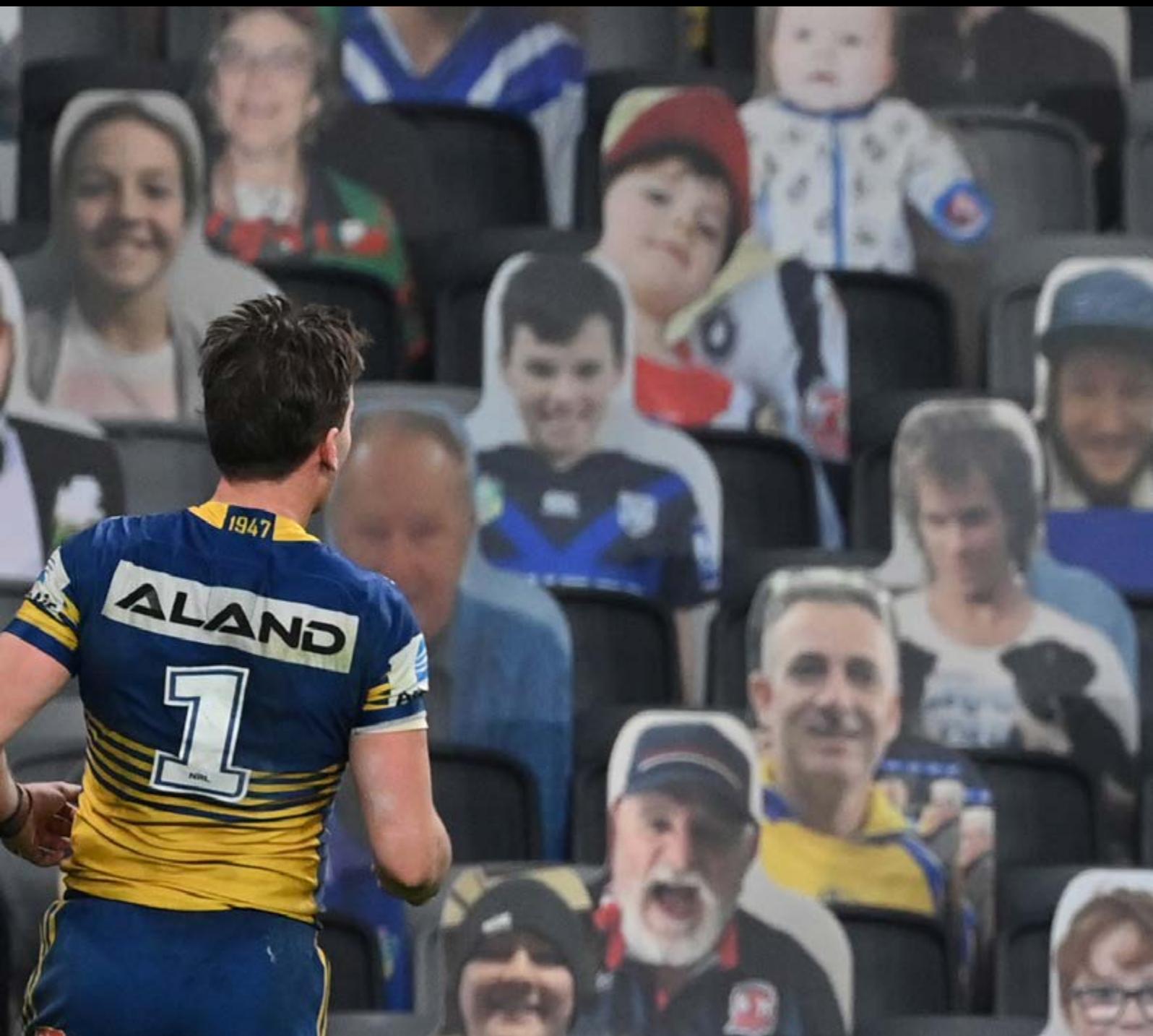
2021 will also see the NRL Digital's in-house content creation and production capability be set-up to more efficiently service the content needs of the broader game.

## GAME DAY EXPERIENCE

Season 2020 was a year of innovation for game day presentation.

When the season resumed in empty venues the NRL worked with a local Sydney business to create 'Fan In The Stand' which provided our fans with the opportunity to have cardboard cutouts of themselves in the stadium. It provided our fans a chance to be at the venue despite stadium closures. All stadiums had cardboard cut-outs during the period stadiums were closed to the public.

The NRL also worked closely with broadcasters to enhance the viewing experience for fans at home while stadiums were empty.



Artificial noise was created to make games sound like they were being played in front of full venues. The NRL acknowledges the world-leading innovations of our broadcasters. A number of foreign leagues sought advice from our broadcasters to replicate the innovation.

Despite biosecurity protocol restrictions the NRL produced on-field pre-game entertainment for Telstra Grand Finals Day, headlined by ARIA Award-winning artist Amy Shark. She was joined by INXS members Andrew Farriss and Kirk Pengilly to lead the entertainment package.

**The Game Day fan experience was highlighted by a world-record COVID crowd at Suncorp Stadium for the Ampol State of Origin decider – 49,155 fans attended the match.**



**04  
RISK,  
PERFORMANCE  
& INTEGRITY**



## Section Four

### Risk, Performance & Integrity

# RISK, PERFORMANCE & INTEGRITY

The NRL is focussed on the performance and wellbeing of its people and managing risks associated with the game for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The Risk, Performance & Integrity Department incorporates the NRL's integrity, legal and risk functions as well as wellbeing and education, and the people and culture. This new group was created as part of the reorganisation of the business in October 2020.

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.

## Player Wellbeing & Education

The game continued to enhance education pathways to prepare its players for life after rugby league in 2020.

A mandatory policy that all players aged 20 or younger must complete at least eight hours of education or work a week to be eligible for selection was reintroduced. The rule is aimed to change the perceptions players have around study and its influence on their on-field performance.

The NRL is pleased to report that of the 550 NRL contracted players, 93 have completed or are currently completing a university degree while seven players are completing a Masters Degree – across 32 different universities in Australia.

A further 106 players are currently completing or have completed a trade qualification, 66 of those are in carpentry and 22 are in building and construction. Of the current or recently retired NRL players, 160 were also provided with Education Grants provided by the RLPA throughout the year.

2020 presented significant challenges for players and officials who sacrificed liberties to enter the game's biosecurity bubble so the NRL season could continue.

The NRL's Wellbeing and Education team worked closely with all 16 Clubs to monitor the wellbeing of players in the bubble, particularly those who live alone. Each NRL Club had an experienced Wellbeing Manager within the bubble that allowed the players and staff with direct access to support.

During the 2020 season the NRL conducted a Player Wellbeing Survey to monitor player views on the support they were receiving. Players were asked to rank the wellbeing and education support provided by their Club and staff from 1 to 5. The average score across the 16 Clubs was a very strong 4.22 out of 5.



## Integrity

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.

2020 saw a significant increase in reports to the Integrity and Compliance Unit as a result of the NRL's strict biosecurity protocol regime. Personnel investigated alleged breaches of protocols to ensure no infection risk to the playing group or the wider community as a result of breaching protocols. The Integrity and Compliance Unit uncovered a small number of breaches which led to player and official sanctions which were announced during the 2020 season. Overall, compliance to the protocols was very strong. The NRL thanks the general public for their assistance during this period.

The NRL continues to conduct a comprehensive Sport Integrity Australia approved anti-doping program which is aimed at eradicating the use of performance enhancing substances. 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.

# 05 PARTICIPATION & COMMUNITY





## PARTICIPATION & COMMUNITY



The 2020 season saw the creation of a new Participation and Community team. The department is the game's investment in the long-term future of rugby league.

**The focus is on identifying and recruiting players at the grassroots participation level to play rugby league and connecting with the community through the game's programs.**

Creating a participant creates a fan, while the game's community programs build stronger connections between rugby league and the community. Combining the two important parts together is an investment in growing the game at a grassroots level and better connecting with people and communities.

Investing further to grow participation is a key priority of the ARLC in the years ahead. The Commission is carrying out significant work to aid the growth of grassroots participation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# PARTICIPATION

The 2020 Community Rugby League season was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions on community sport.

**Pleasingly, through the efforts of countless volunteers across Australia, local league competitions were able to commence across Australia with the exception of Victoria.**

Many hours were spent by tireless club volunteers in planning and implementing COVID Safety plans and recruiting additional volunteers to manage the increased requirements of hosting local matches.

Volunteer accreditation and training courses were redesigned to comply with social distancing requirements, and with a greater emphasis on online learning, allowed over 17,000 volunteers to complete or update their training, enabling local competitions to commence.

The NRL MySideline online registration and competition management system was launched at the commencement of the 2020 season, enabling a significantly improved participant and volunteer registration experience. The system was purpose built for rugby league Clubs and will continue to evolve over the coming years.

Like many other rugby league activities, our school programs and events were redesigned to ensure a COVID Safe environment, enabling thousands of school students the opportunity to participate in rugby league competitions, events and clinics nationally.

## Player Development Framework

Implementation of the Player Development Framework has continued in 2020 with Queensland and the Affiliated States adopting the changes.

Development of the Framework has been guided by a significant amount of evidence-based research and is designed to present rugby league as a more attractive option for families along with the goal of ensuring the positive experience within the game creates a lifelong passion for the sport.

Research indicated that 25 percent of Junior Players who leave the sport, do so because of an over-competitive environment and the adult behaviours that accompany the pursuit of a premiership in the junior ages. It was also identified that a more gradual introduction to tackling across the younger years will assist in the recruitment of new players to Junior Clubs and enhance the ability of the game to engage with a broader market

As part of the changes adopted, children will be introduced to the sport through Rugby League Tag in Under 6s, while tackling in the Under 7s is delayed until later in the season after completion of the TackleReady program, which is designed to provide kids with confidence and competence in all tackle situations. In a move to allow kids to enjoy the sport without the pressures and adult impacts associated with premiership competitions, competition points and Grand Finals do not commence until Under 13s.

**The NRL expects the slower introduction to tackling as part of the Framework will reduce barriers to new participants joining the sport and create a more enjoyable environment for young players.**

## Section Five

### Participation & Community



## League Stars

The NRL's introductory rugby league program **League Stars** – which was launched in 2019 – continued successfully in 2020, in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions.

The program focuses on introducing boys and girls aged five to 12 to rugby league skills through fun, developmentally appropriate non-contact activities and games.

Numbers remained strong in regions where the program could continue.

## Schoolboy Cup

The 45-year tradition of the NRL Schoolboy Cup continued in 2020 despite COVID-19 interruptions. Like the Telstra Premiership, the Schoolboy Cup was suspended before resuming. COVID restrictions meant the competition proceeded as a knockout competition between New South Wales schools and with a separate competition conducted in Queensland. No national final was conducted due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Patrician Brothers College, Blacktown defeated Westfield Sports High School 22-16 in the NSW Final, while Kirwan State High School defeated Palm Beach Currumbin State High School 24-20 in QLD.

**2020 was a breakout year for the competition with games live streamed via The Daily Telegraph website. The NRL thanks The Daily Telegraph for their support of the Schoolboy Cup.**

The NRL expects the competition to return to normal in 2021.



## COMMUNITY

A focus of our community programs is creating opportunities for young people to live positive, respectful and healthy lives. Despite COVID restrictions, the NRL continued to connect and unite our communities via our suite of programs designed to inspire social cohesion, mental wellbeing and respect across Australia and the Pacific.



The NRL connected with over 900 young people online and face to face, via our In League In Harmony program designed to promote community social cohesion.

The NRL continued to use its voice to stand with our mental health expert partners to deliver important messages amid the significant impact the coronavirus outbreak had on the mental health of our communities.

**A highlight of the year was transforming the on-field State of Origin logo in Game II of the Ampol State of Origin series to 'State of Mind' to promote the game's mental health program.**



Section Five  
Participation & Community



## Bega Trial Game

The NRL, with the support of both Clubs, relocated a trial match between the Parramatta Eels and the Penrith Panthers on 29 February to the Sapphire Coast town of Bega, which had been ravaged by bushfires.

**The match was relocated to encourage people to visit and stay in the town. The match sold out and an estimated \$4.7 million was injected into the local economy.**

The NRL's broadcast partners Fox Sports, Channel 9 and Telstra partnered to deliver a national broadcast for the game to promote the region as a tourist destination to the rest of Australia.

Both Clubs held community activations to meet locals and also assisted with clean-up operations.

## Road To Regions

**The NRL, with the support of our 16 Clubs, expanded the annual Road to Regions program in 2020 to assist communities impacted by drought and bushfires.**

Clubs committed their playing squads to provide assistance and lift spirits in bushfire-affected communities across New South Wales and Victoria while groups of players visited drought-affected areas in Western Queensland.

The expansion of the Road to Regions program was part of rugby league's whole of game response to the bushfire crisis.



NRL players visit Cootamundra & Harden in the Riverina spreading Respect message

## Section Five

### Participation & Community

## Kayo NRL Community Awards

The Kayo Community Awards took on added importance in 2020 given the impact of bushfires, drought and COVID-19.

The Lithgow Bears Rugby League Football Club were named the game's Grassroots Club of the Year after becoming one of the saviours of the region during the bushfires. The club donated their dressing rooms for the use of showers for those who lost their homes while the club's grounds became a makeshift refuge area for residents, pets and wildlife impacted by the fires.

Joseph Chidiac was named Volunteer of the Year. Mr Chidiac is a board member of Wheelchair Rugby League, and has devoted 25 years to the game, in particular creating and growing Wheelchair Rugby League competitions. He was a driving force in establishing Wheelchair Rugby League competitions initially in New South Wales followed by Queensland and now the Northern Territory.

NRL player Connor Watson was awarded the 2020 Ken Stephen Medal for his contribution to the Cultural Choice Association (CCA) 'Boots for Brighter Futures' initiative which ran during this year's Indigenous Round. Connor is committed to raising awareness and supporting the prevention of youth suicide among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and its related causes in Australia.

NRLW star Georgia Hale was awarded the Veronica White Medal for dedicating herself to helping children, rural communities, the intellectually disabled and a wide range of charities.

Both awards were presented to the players on-field before the kick-off to the 2020 NRL Telstra Premiership Grand Final.





## All-Stars

The Indigenous All-Stars was a highlight of the 2020 season. A crowd of 23,599 attended Cbus Super Stadium on the Gold Coast for the Indigenous vs Māori All-Stars. The Māori men defeated the All-Stars 30-16 while the Indigenous women defeated the Māori team 10-4.

The event attracted year on year viewership growth in both games. The men's game recorded a viewership increase of 22 per cent while the women's game increased by 47 per cent. Overall 633,481 viewers watched the men's game.

Attendance also increased in 2020 with the 23,599 at the match, a 26 per cent increase on 2019.

Players took a stance against bullying during the week. Nine-year-old bullying victim Quaden Bayles led the All-Stars team onto the field for the start of the game, attracting international media attention.

The week also included cultural immersion activities and community activations across the Gold Coast.

Section Five  
Participation & Community



## Indigenous Round

The Indigenous Round grew into a larger event in 2020. The theme, 'Pass Back. Move Forward.' was in recognition that as a nation we need to understand our past to be able to move forward as one.

**The NRL actively encouraged fans to understand the local area they currently reside in or where they were born, learning who are the traditional owners of the land.**

All 16 Clubs wore an Indigenous-designed jersey and welcome to country was delivered at each game.

Stadiums actively promoted that the land on which they are built is the home of traditional owner groups. The NRL thanks its media partners who actively used Indigenous Round branding in their products to promote the importance.

## School to Work

The School to Work program received a contract extension during 2020 that will see the program remain in place until June 2023. An additional 1000 students will benefit from the program across these three years.

**In 2020, 419 Indigenous students involved in the School to Work program completed their HSC and 244 students achieved a 26-week outcome at either a university or in employment.**

The School to Work team introduced Yarning Circles with prominent Indigenous community members during COVID-19 to keep participants engaged. This included current and former NRL players Preston Campbell and Joel Thompson, The Hon. Linda Burney MP, AFL legend Eddie Betts and actor Rob Collins.

## State of Mind

**The NRL delivered 116 workshops to more than 2000 participants, with 29 workshops delivered online during the pandemic.**

A highlight of the year was transforming the on-field State of Origin logo in Game II of the Ampol State of Origin series to 'State of Mind' to promote the mental health program to over two million television viewers.

This year saw the new State of Mind program 'Get in the GAAME' created for young people aged 13 to 17 years old. The program is designed to increase mental health literacy, reduce the stigma around mental illness, start positive conversations and enable connections across communities.

Due to COVID-19 the 'Get in the GAAME' workshop was redesigned to be delivered online to clubs and a digital resource was created to support learning.

The State of Mind program continued to play a big role in the NRL Harvey Norman All-Stars event and delivered the State of Mind program to all four of the Indigenous and Māori All-Stars teams, team staff and the Youth Summit participants. Through the support of the Federal Government the program continued to be delivered to Indigenous communities across the country.



## Section Five

### Participation & Community

#### In League In Harmony

The social cohesion program continued to be delivered across New South Wales and Victoria, with the ongoing support of the Victorian and NSW Government.

Despite the pandemic, the program reached 954 young people through the seven-week program mixed with online and face-to-face delivery, uniting young people and inspiring leaders of tomorrow.

**A total of 551 participants took part face to face while 403 completed the program online**



#### Voice Against Violence

**The NRL Voice Against Violence program continued to deliver the important messages across our communities seeing 1179 participants across Australia, PNG, Fiji and Tonga.**

The NRL, across Australia and Pacific Nations, took part in the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The NRL renewed its commitment to preventing violence against women, signing a joint Our Watch Leadership statement, with other sporting codes, pledging to use its collective influence to progress gender equality.

2020 saw the delivery of the VAV program to nine NRL Clubs (prior to the COVID bubble).

COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS IN WORKSHOPS
Australia	609
PNG	154
Fiji	367
Tonga	49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1179</b>



## Pacific Outreach programs

Despite the pandemic, the NRL Pacific Outreach programs reached over 44,000 participants across PNG, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga in 2020.

The Voice Against Violence program continued to be delivered across the Pacific with 30 workshops conducted with 570 participants. This program is core to our gender equality work and aligns with our overall goal to ensure that rugby league provides a safe, welcoming and inclusive community space for Pacific Island women and girls, and people with a disability.

In a year with few international events, a major highlight before the closure of international borders occurred in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea when the PNGRFL played host to a pre-season match between the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs and the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks. This match was the centrepiece of a visit which also included community outreach and cultural activities over four days. The match drew a crowd of 10,213 and was streamed almost 42,000 times across NRL digital platforms. The event was supported by the Australian Government through the PacificAus Sports program.

# STATE LEAGUE REPORTS

## NSWRL Report

The NSWRL, like other sports and the wider community, faced challenging times in the 2020 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic but worked hard to ensure community football and some of its major competitions could return by the middle of the year.

The season started strongly in February with the Junior Representative season kicking off for UNE SG Ball Cup, Harvey Norman Tarsha Gale Cup and UNE Harold Matthews Cup in the Sydney metropolitan area and the Laurie Daley Cup and Andrew Johns Cup in regional NSW. There was also one round played for Canterbury Cup NSW, Harvey Norman NSW Women's Premiership and Jersey Flegg Cup before all competitions had to be suspended and/or cancelled in March because of COVID-19.

The NSWRL worked closely with the NSW State Government on COVID-19 Return to Play safety protocols for when restrictions across the state were lifted and competitions could resume. The NSW State Government announced in June that community football and senior competitions could resume training from 1 July with competitions to resume from 18 July. The NSWRL was thrilled to see the response from community clubs who had to submit COVID-19 safety plans with 84,875 participants registering to play for the shortened season. The breakdown included 68,852 male and 16,053 female players across all age groups (Under 6s to Open Age) with the majority of Grand Finals played on the weekend of 26-27 September.

The NSWRL was just as pleased to announce the return of some of its major competitions including the Presidents Cup, the Harvey Norman NSW Women's Premiership and the Sydney Shield from 18 July. The Presidents Cup was a unique competition which took part in place of the Ron Massey Cup and involved teams from regional NSW and the Sydney metropolitan area. The NSWRL held its Grand Final Day at Bankwest Stadium on 27 September with all three deciders being closely fought. Maitland Pickers beat Glebe-Burwood Wolves 17-16 to take out

the Presidents Cup, Central Coast Roosters downed North Sydney Bears 16-10 to win the Harvey Norman NSW Women's Premiership, while Cronulla-Caringbah Sharks staged a stunning second half comeback to beat Ryde-Eastwood Hawks 32-30 in the Sydney Shield. The success of the Presidents Cup competition will see it retained as a knockout finals tournament in 2021.

The NSWRL was also able to resume its successful Try League program in 2020, which introduces the game of rugby league to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. There were eight programs attended by almost 200 children in locations including Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Glenwood, The Ponds, Revesby, Parramatta and Minchinbury. It was the first time that programs had been held at Coffs Harbour and Lismore while the clinic at Parramatta attracted a record of 58 participants.

Other community initiatives or events included Brydens Lawyers NSW Blues coach Brad Fittler visiting areas in regional NSW to deliver important road safety messages for Transport for NSW's The Knock-On Effect campaign, or on mental fitness. The NSWRL also came up with a range of measures worth more than \$500,000 to assist communities which had been affected by the bushfires including providing free football boots for children aged 12 and under and funding insurance premiums.

The move to shift the Ampol State of Origin series and Harvey Norman NSW Women's Origin to the end of the NRL season in November led to a different approach from the coaching staffs. Brydens Lawyers NSW Blues coach Brad Fittler started naming his extended 27-man squad following the conclusion of the NRL season and added to it every week as further teams were eliminated from the NRL's Finals Series. The squad went into a biosecurity bubble at the Pullman Magenta Shores at the Central Coast on 19 October to begin preparations for Game One in Adelaide on 4 November. NSW took an early lead but were unable to hold off a fast-finishing Queensland to lose Game One 18-14. The Blues regrouped for Game Two in Sydney on 11 November and turned in a dominant performance to win the match 34-10 and lock the series up at 1-all. Early in the first half of Game Three in Brisbane NSW suffered a setback when captain James Tedesco left the field concussed. They trailed early before fighting back in the second half but it wasn't enough and they lost the match 24-18 to surrender the Shield for the first time in two years.



The Harvey Norman Women's Origin match was played at the Sunshine Coast for the first time since the interstate series was rebranded as Origin in 2018. The Harvey Norman NSW Women's team was also placed in a biosecurity bubble and based themselves on the Sunshine Coast from 30 October to prepare for the match on 13 November. The team trailed Queensland for most of the match before staging a stirring second half fightback to go down 24-18 and hand the Shield over for the first time in two years.

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.

Section Five  
Participation & Community



1980 - 2020

FOG#182



**AMPOL**

**STATE OF ORIGIN**

1994  
Won by NSW  
Game 1 QLD vs NSW 12  
Game 2 NSW vs QLD 14  
Game 3 NSW vs QLD 12

1995  
Won by QLD  
Game 1 QLD vs NSW 10  
Game 2 NSW vs QLD 10  
Game 3 QLD vs NSW 10

1996  
Won by NSW  
Game 1 NSW vs QLD 14  
Game 2 NSW vs QLD 14  
Game 3 NSW vs QLD 14

1997

1998

1999



## Queensland Rugby League Report

### Stunning on-field performances from Queensland's leading male and female teams typified the state's fighting spirit in 2020.

Like many sporting organisations, the Queensland Rugby League was confronted with enormous challenges throughout the year.

At one point, all community rugby league, statewide competitions and representative matches were postponed as the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the nation.

All was not lost though, and through strong leadership from both the Board and Senior Leadership Team, the QRL mapped a way out – not just for this year, but the future as well.

Fast track to November, and with the National Rugby League leading the way with the return of the game at elite level, Queensland fans were rejoicing one of the greatest State of Origin series wins of all time.

In a series that drew comparisons with the little-known Maroons of 1995, master coach Wayne Bennett guided a young Queensland team to a memorable 2-1 series victory over the Blues.

The victory, secured in front of nearly 50,000 Queensland fans at Suncorp Stadium, came just days after the Harvey Norman Queensland Maroons had beaten NSW to claim the women's Origin on the Sunshine Coast.

These jubilant scenes were matched right across the state during the spring months as many junior and senior community rugby league teams celebrated their grand finals.

This was a fitting reward for the QRL, its regions, leagues and Clubs, who worked collaboratively with the Queensland Government to develop thorough Return to Play guidelines that set the benchmark across other sports and industries.

The foresight of the QRL decision makers was instrumental to this success, as staff across all departments remained in their roles despite the uncertainty.

With a focus on its people, their wellbeing and communication, the QRL raised the bar throughout the crisis.

The time spent without football was used wisely, as QRL teams broke into smaller working groups to plan for the future.

Collectively, the organisation made a decision to come out better on the other side and that is exactly how it transpired, with the QRL now in a strong position financially.

A snapshot of other 2020 highlights and achievements include:

- » Growth of Maroons Shop after it was moved in-house (orders increased by 59 per cent).
- » Unveiling of new QRL branding following a collaborative approach across all offices and regions.
- » Addition of new partner Ice Break and the strengthening of relationships between existing partners, who all stuck solid, including Auswide Bank, BHP, Intrust Super, Queensland Government, XXXX and Hastings Deering.
- » Launch of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) as well as the Diversity and Inclusion Framework.
- » Digital growth and innovation, such as the successful Facebook live Q&A sessions with volunteers throughout the Return to Play process.
- » Launch of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), Female Strategy, and Diversity and Inclusion Framework.

## NRL ACROSS AUSTRALIA



### The depth of the COVID-19 pandemic in Victoria meant no play was possible in the 2020 season.

During the extended period of restrictions the focus of activity was to support the local rugby league community clubs through their challenges and maintain the engagement of volunteers to ensure that all clubs are sustainable for 2021. The Victorian Government was outstanding in its support for community sport with funding, advocacy and other resource support, for which this opportunity was maximised by NRL Victoria for community clubs.

Despite the lockdown restrictions, facility projects across the state progressed. This included the State Centre project, with final designs being completed which will allow construction to commence early 2021. The facility will be completed late 2022 and will include a show pitch, three community access competition pitches, a pavilion and car parking. The facility will house administration and high-performance programs for both NRL Victoria and Touch Football Victoria. Throughout 2020, other community facility developments have been fast-tracked by the State Government which will see new facilities for community clubs or upgraded facilities in 2021 and beyond to the value of over \$25m across 20 per cent of rugby league clubs in Victoria.



### The Rugby League season in 2020 cast many challenges for the NRLSA Team; having to contend with the impacts of COVID-19 on community football, game development, and the rescheduling of State of Origin.

After the 2019 success of the ISC Spring 9s in 2019 and the planned introduction of two new metropolitan clubs; M.E.C Murray Bridge Swans and South Adelaide Bulldogs, there was a great deal of work undertaken to ensure that the COVID-19 impacts did not lead to any club's demise. Despite challenging times the metropolitan league forged ahead, seeing six clubs participating in the competition including senior men's, women's and junior competitions. Participation grew by 8 per cent.

The Limestone Coast competition was severely impacted during 2020. Due to restrictions cross-border friends from Victoria were unable to enter the competition. The league adapted and played a shortened competition for South Australian-based teams; participation in the Limestone grew 4 per cent in 2020 with the addition of rugby league tag. The League Stars program was also introduced for the first time, resulting in over 100 participants joining the program.

State of Origin was a great segue into the ISC Spring 9s being played in front of a COVID-capacity crowd of 27,000 at the iconic Adelaide oval. The second annual ISC Spring 9s was a great success. It saw the introduction of juniors in tackle and tag formats of the game. The highlight being the introduction of Under 16s girls, Under 16s boys and mixed rugby league tag.

NRLSA was happy to report an overall participation growth of 7 per cent in 2020 across the metropolitan and Limestone coast club competitions.



## NRL NT was fortunate in being one of the first Rugby League competitions to commence in 2020.

Competitions were able to be conducted as close to a normal season as possible in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs with participation remaining strong across the Northern Territory recording a smaller than expected reduction of only 9 per cent in registered participants.

The NRL announced the appointment of Steve Shervill, Channel Nine Darwin General Manager, as the new ARLC NT Chair. A passionate rugby league supporter, Steve will be a tremendous asset for the sport in the Northern Territory over the coming years.

Despite a challenging year, there were many highlights for the game including:

- » Darwin Brothers winning their first A grade NRL NT Quitline premiership since 2014 against defending premiers Litchfield Bears.
- » The Darwin Brothers club achieving the double with the 'Sistaz' women's team proving too strong against Palmerston Raiders in the women's Grand Final.
- » Wests Dragons defeating the Vikings in the Central Australia Rugby Football League Grand Final.
- » The Inaugural 'Deadly Cup' carnival involving NT Indigenous All-Stars vs Territory All-Stars teams competing across multiple age groups held in conjunction with NAIDOC Week celebrating Indigenous culture.
- » The NRL NT season-ending NT City vs NT Country carnival to recognise 2020 season achievements and showcase Northern Territory rugby league talent.
- » The remote town of Nhulunbuy on the Gove Peninsula hosting the Macquarie Sports Clinic attracting over 100 children from regional and remote areas.



## NRL WA was able to safely manage and deliver a delayed, but very successful season in both junior and senior football.

The Grand Final of the senior 'Smarter than Smoking' Premiership saw one of the most dramatic, high-quality games in the code's 71-year history in WA, with the Joondalup Giants winning their first flag in 20 years when they defeated a courageous Rockingham Sharks. Played in front of a capacity sold out crowd, the clash went into double extra time before a field goal to Gus Marshall sealed the match after 106 minutes of play.

The All Flags Signs and Banners Women's Grand Final was won by the Ellenbrook Rabbitohs.

One of the real highlights of the year was the ongoing partnership between NRL WA and NITV which saw the weekly 'Cash Converters Match of the Round' not only streamed live each weekend, but also replayed nationally on Tuesday evenings through NITV's free-to-air SBS channel as well as its Foxtel subscription platform, providing valuable state-wide and coast-to-coast promotion.

NRL WA also staged an outstanding Junior Grand Final Day at the newly refurbished Willagee Bears home ground which saw five different clubs win titles across six age groups spanning Under 12s to Under 16s, plus Girls League Tag.

When COVID protocols lifted the NRL WA GDO Team were able to resume all major development programs including League Stars, High School competitions, Sporting Schools activations, Gala Days and the PDF.

NRL WA also entered into an alliance with the City of Kwinana which has provided an excellent facility to accommodate our new Training and Education Centre at Thomas Oval, Medina.

NRL WA acknowledges and thanks the West Australian Government for its guidance and support through the pandemic and also our loyal commercial partners who stood by us during a very confronting and challenging year.

Despite all the disruption caused by the pandemic, NRL WA posted only a 4.6 per cent decrease in registration numbers.

Section Five  
Participation & Community



## Touch Football Australia

### The 2020 year began with excitement and promise for NRL Touch Football.

The momentum of the National Rugby League/Touch Football Australia partnership was continuing to advance through the built-for-purpose, brand-new registration and competition management system, MySideline, for both touch football and rugby league.

NRL Clubs continued to demonstrate their support for Touch, with the Rabbitohs, Bulldogs, Sea Eagles, Titans, Broncos, Cowboys and Warriors all committing to field both men's and women's teams in the third season of the NRL Touch Premiership.

However, before it could get going the Premiership, as well as many other plans for Touch throughout the year, including the Open Trans-Tasman Test Series, the State of Origin in Coffs Harbour, and of course community touch football competitions all around the country were put on hold as COVID-19 hit our communities.

While in shutdown, the organisation's focus shifted to protecting the long-term viability of the business, maintaining high levels of engagement with our people and, alongside Mater Health, the safe reboot of community sport through return to play protocols.

Once restrictions began to ease, community touch football competitions returned around the country. As summer touch football registrations opened in the last quarter of 2020, people flooded back to touch, with many competitions across Australia reaching record team numbers.

Despite the impacts of COVID-19 on both elite and grassroots touch football, TFA managed to achieve many accomplishments in 2020, including:

- » 6 per cent growth in junior participation.
- » Facebook reach grew by 107 per cent while Instagram grew by 252 per cent.
- » The launch of the sport's 8th Edition Rules aligning the rules to the way the modern game is played.
- » The Australian Emus youth teams took a clean sweep in the Youth Trans-Tasman Test Series against New Zealand, on home soil in Newcastle in January. The live stream of the tournament was watched by 325,683 viewers.
- » 119 teams took part in the 24th edition of the National Touch League, in Coffs Harbour in March. For the first time in history, TFA incorporated an All-Abilities division into the national championships, making it a truly inclusive event.
- » TFA alongside seven other national sporting organisations and Pride in Sport launched the Transgender and Gender Diverse Guidelines to support transgender and gender diverse people to participate in touch football competitions.
- » The National Youth Championships on the Sunshine Coast in September was the first major event to hit the touch football schedule with 50 teams taking part. A week later the world's biggest touch football event, the Queensland All-Schools made a successful return.



# 06 FINANCIAL RESULTS 2020



## Section Six

### Financial Results 2020

# FINANCIAL RESULTS 2020

## Overview

2020 was a challenging year for the ARLC, Clubs and State Leagues. When the season was suspended in March, the financial outcome could have been catastrophic for the entire financial system of the game. Through a dedication to get back on the field first and a strong focus on cost reduction and reorganisation, the ARLC has managed to limit the reduction in equity and cash, whilst maintaining distributions to members.

The COVID-19 pandemic was the greatest financial challenge rugby league has ever faced. During 2020, ARLC revenue reduced by \$136m (25 per cent) on the previous year. The reduction was due to a range of revenue streams being affected directly by the pandemic.

Despite the challenges, the ARLC will begin the 2021 season with limited damage to the balance sheet. This has been a result of the largest cost reduction program the game has ever undertaken and a focus on revenue retention with key partners.

Despite an unprecedented increase in player travel arrangements and competition expenses to meet government exemptions that kept the Premiership going and one-off restructuring costs, the ARLC was able to reduce operating expenses before distributions to members by 32 per cent and improve the cost to income ratio from 34 per cent to 28 per cent.

## Overall Result

The NRL recorded a full year deficit of \$24.7m. The deficit excludes the event and operation contribution from the 2020 Ampol State of Origin series which was played in the 2021 financial year.

This performance is significantly ahead of where the game estimated it would be when the season was suspended in March and represents a strong financial performance in challenging times.

## Revenue

**Licensing revenue:** The temporary cessation of the Telstra Premiership due to COVID-19 resulted in the renegotiation of the broadcast deals with our major partners.

**Operation and events revenue:** The main impact of COVID-19 was a significant reduction in Gate Receipts and Hospitality due to reduced allowed stadium capacities for major events, the cancellation of Magic Round, and the deferral of the State of Origin series to November (in FY21).

## Expenditure

Operating Expenditure for 2020 is \$142.8m, down \$66.1m (32 per cent) on the previous year due to a focused cost reduction program on operating expenditure, reduction in Commission and Executive salaries for part of the year, reduction in workforce, reduction in servicing costs due to reductions in revenue.

Included in the expenditure incurred in 2020 are non-recurring or extraordinary costs related to: COVID-19 Competition costs (including medical experts, relocation of Warriors and Storm and Club game day protocols and expenditure) and restructure costs.

## Distributions

Distributions for 2020 are \$301.6m, down \$16m (5 per cent) on the previous year because of reductions in State and Player distributions due to reduced State based competitions and the revised CBA resulting in players agreeing to a 20 per cent reduction in contracted payments. Increases in Club distributions and margin were agreed to ensure 16 sustainable Clubs post COVID through the provision of increased funding and relief packages.



Section Six  
Financial Results 2020

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## The Controlling Body 2012–2020: Underlying operating performance

### Profit & Loss (\$'000)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>181,600</b>	<b>320,612</b>	<b>344,878</b>	<b>354,261</b>	<b>366,165</b>	<b>377,320</b>	<b>520,465</b>	<b>552,941</b>	<b>417,273</b>
Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. Contra)	(39,400)	(61,726)	(79,919)	(90,769)	(87,183)	(97,898)	(103,083)	(128,865)	(65,445)
Football	(9,100)	(9,597)	(13,034)	(16,089)	(19,427)	(20,063)	(21,845)	(25,042)	(19,358)
Football related COVID exceptional costs	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(11,376)
Community and Player Welfare	(11,500)	(14,474)	(14,907)	(16,726)	(16,860)	(16,350)	(16,010)	(17,179)	(12,548)
Integrity and Salary Cap	(450)	(2,240)	(2,516)	(2,595)	(3,221)	(3,776)	(3,864)	(3,375)	(3,331)
Administration	(13,373)	(15,550)	(16,995)	(18,951)	(19,390)	(17,714)	(18,559)	(20,342)	(12,229)
Insurance and Finance	(977)	(2,365)	(2,897)	(3,900)	(2,802)	(2,561)	(13,986)	(12,757)	(13,100)
Restructure Costs	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(4,569)
<b>FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION</b>	<b>106,800</b>	<b>214,660</b>	<b>214,611</b>	<b>205,231</b>	<b>217,281</b>	<b>218,868</b>	<b>343,118</b>	<b>345,381</b>	<b>275,317</b>
Clubs and Players	(81,000)	(132,280)	(146,663)	(162,334)	(167,696)	(160,717)	(222,760)	(228,132)	(245,625)
States and Affiliates	(13,500)	(16,300)	(22,914)	(27,847)	(30,473)	(32,784)	(38,111)	(47,940)	(25,620)
Development	(21,700)	(20,739)	(23,192)	(27,516)	(29,276)	(32,850)	(35,125)	(40,433)	(29,253)
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>(9,400)</b>	<b>45,341</b>	<b>21,842</b>	<b>(12,466)</b>	<b>(10,164)</b>	<b>(7,482)</b>	<b>47,122</b>	<b>28,876</b>	<b>(25,181)</b>

#### Note

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
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>110,740</b>	<b>188,074</b>	<b>194,816</b>	<b>192,892</b>	<b>249,304</b>	<b>226,956</b>	<b>248,431</b>	<b>267,335</b>	<b>238,553</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>91,390</b>	<b>123,383</b>	<b>108,282</b>	<b>118,824</b>	<b>185,400</b>	<b>170,534</b>	<b>154,537</b>	<b>144,564</b>	<b>140,963</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>19,350</b>	<b>64,691</b>	<b>86,534</b>	<b>74,068</b>	<b>63,904</b>	<b>56,421</b>	<b>93,894</b>	<b>122,771</b>	<b>97,590</b>

## The Controlling Body and the Group (Consolidated)

### Profit & Loss (\$'000)

	2019		2020	
	CONTROLLING BODY <sup>1</sup>	CONSOLIDATED <sup>2</sup>	CONTROLLING BODY <sup>1</sup>	CONSOLIDATED <sup>2</sup>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>552,491</b>	<b>555,914</b>	<b>417,273</b>	<b>419,673</b>
Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. Contra)	(128,865)	(103,731)	(49,991)	(50,300)
Football	(25,042)	(25,737)	(19,358)	(19,794)
Football related COVID exceptional costs	–	–	(11,376)	(11,376)
Community and Player Welfare	(17,179)	(17,220)	(12,548)	(12,603)
Integrity and Salary Cap	(3,375)	(3,375)	(3,331)	(3,331)
Administration	(20,342)	(20,358)	(12,229)	(12,246)
Insurance and Finance	(12,757)	(12,757)	(13,100)	(13,100)
Restructure Costs	–	–	(4,569)	(4,569)
<b>FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION</b>	<b>345,381</b>	<b>347,055</b>	<b>275,317</b>	<b>276,900</b>
Clubs and Players	(228,132)	(228,132)	(245,625)	(245,625)
States and Affiliates	(47,940)	(46,640)	(25,620)	(25,078)
Development	(40,433)	(43,300)	(29,253)	(30,939)
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>28,876</b>	<b>28,983</b>	<b>(25,181)</b>	<b>(24,742)</b>

#### Note

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. Included in Clubs and Players above is \$4m COVID exceptional payments to Clubs.

### Balance Sheet (\$'000)

	2019		2020	
	CONTROLLING BODY <sup>1</sup>	CONSOLIDATED <sup>2</sup>	CONTROLLING BODY <sup>1</sup>	CONSOLIDATED <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>267,335</b>	<b>271,833</b>	<b>238,553</b>	<b>242,325</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>144,564</b>	<b>151,171</b>	<b>140,963</b>	<b>146,405</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>122,771</b>	<b>120,662</b>	<b>97,590</b>	<b>95,920</b>

#### Notes

1. Controlling Body includes ARLC Ltd and NRL Ltd.

2. Consolidated Group accounts represent the Controlling Body and its 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).

# 07 CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT 2020





# DIRECTORS' REPORT

The Directors present their report for the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited ('ARLC' or 'the Company') for the year ended 31 October 2020.

## 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 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 a Director 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.

### 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.

### 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 and Estia Health Limited, and a director of Cromwell Property Group, 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 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.

### Amanda Laing (retired 10 March 2020)

Ms Laing is an experienced media executive, working previously as Group General Counsel and Managing Director of Nine Entertainment Co. Ms Laing is a former board member of Australian News Channel (Sky News), Stan and Pedestrian Group. She is currently on the board of Sports Australia and is Chief Commercial Officer of Foxtel.

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## 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.

## 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 of and participation in Rugby League.

## Review of Operations and Financial Results

Revenue generated for the year was \$419,672,860 (2019: \$555,914,757). The Group's current year operating deficit was \$24,742,261 (2019: \$28,982,716 surplus).

## Dividends

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

## Significant Events after the year end

In January 2021, the NRL and the Rugby League Players Association ('RLPA') agreed a revised CBA, equivalent to a 6 per cent reduction in the salary cap for 2021 and 2022. In finalising the revised CBA, it was agreed that accrued contributions to the RLPA Retirement Fund, held as restricted cash on the Statement of Consolidated Financial Position at balance date will be paid to the RLPA within 30 days of finalisation of the revised CBA, which was signed on 19 January 2021. In the interval between the end of the financial period and the date of this report, 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 \$326,821 (2019: \$276,347) 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 2020, the number of members was 24 (2019: 25).

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## Board Meetings

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

DIRECTORS	BOARD MEETINGS	
	ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND	ATTENDED
Peter V'landys AM	21	21
The Hon. Peter Beattie AC	21	21
Tony McGrath	21	20
Wayne Pearce OAM	21	21
Dr Gary Weiss AM	21	21
Professor Megan Davis	21	21
Amanda Laing (retired 10 March 2020)	3	0

## 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-for-profit company, limited by guarantee.

The domicile of the Company is Sydney, Australia.

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**

In relation to our audit of the concise financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission for the financial year ended 31 October 2020, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of any applicable code of professional conduct.

Ernst & Young

James Higgins  
Partner  
Sydney  
18 February 2021

A member firm of Ernst & 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  
18 February 2021

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# STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Year ended 31 October 2020

	NOTES	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Revenue	2	419,673	555,915
		<b>419,673</b>	<b>555,915</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>			
Event, game and sponsorship		(45,462)	(99,840)
Media contra		(15,454)	(25,681)
Football		(31,028)	(25,580)
Community and player welfare		(12,601)	(17,219)
Administration, Integrity and Salary Cap		(14,184)	(22,217)
Clubs and Players		(245,625)	(228,132)
States, Affiliates and New Zealand Rugby League		(25,078)	(46,640)
Development		(30,897)	(43,253)
Depreciation and amortisation		(9,234)	(5,613)
Insurance and finance costs		(10,283)	(12,757)
Restructuring – redundancies		(4,569)	–
		<b>(444,415)</b>	<b>(526,932)</b>
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>		<b>(24,742)</b>	<b>28,983</b>
Income tax expense		–	–
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>		<b>(24,742)</b>	<b>28,983</b>
<b>OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD</b>		<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE PERIOD    ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE MEMBERS OF ARLC LIMITED</b>		<b>(24,742)</b>	<b>28,983</b>

## 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 decreased by \$53.7m to a deficit of \$24.7m.

Consolidated revenue down by \$136.2m to \$419.7m due to:

- » Consolidated media revenue decrease aligned to the renegotiated media rights agreement.
- » State of Origin series being deferred to 2021 financial year.
- » Decreased game receipts, government grants, sponsorship, merchandising royalties and various other income streams income streams.

Consolidated expenditure decreased by \$82.5m to \$444.4m due to:

- » Decreased expenditure in Event, game and sponsorship, States, Affiliates and New Zealand Rugby League distributions, Game Development, and Media contra, partially offset by increased Clubs expenditure.
- » Within Football costs are non-recurring costs of \$11.4m in connection with measures required to run the NRL Game during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to this, included within the Clubs expense line in the Income Statement are non-recurring costs including Club charter flights totalling \$4.0m. Recurring Football costs excluding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are \$19.7m (FY19: \$25.6m).

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 Concise Financial Report 2020

# STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL POSITION

Year ended 31 October 2020

	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents – Controlling Body	125,985	160,986
Cash and cash equivalents – Controlled Entities	4,674	4,160
Restricted Cash – RLPA Retirement Fund	16,669	10,549
Restricted Cash – Distressed Club Fund	–	6,000
Trade receivables	20,072	11,924
Prepayments and other receivables	26,742	31,078
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>194,142</b>	<b>224,697</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Intangibles	9,730	11,434
Right-of-use lease assets	10,064	–
Property, plant and equipment	16,487	17,702
Other receivables	11,902	18,000
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>48,183</b>	<b>47,136</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>242,325</b>	<b>271,833</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade payables	27,079	32,611
Other payables	100,476	105,055
Lease liabilities	2,696	–
Provisions	4,055	5,935
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>134,306</b>	<b>143,601</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Other payables	0	6,000
Lease liabilities	10,554	–
Provisions	1,545	1,570
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>12,099</b>	<b>7,570</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>146,405</b>	<b>151,171</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>95,920</b>	<b>120,662</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Reserves	2,228	2,228
Retained surplus	93,692	118,434
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>95,920</b>	<b>120,662</b>

## Discussion and analysis of the Statement of Consolidated Financial Position

Consolidated total assets decreased by \$29.5m to \$242.3m due to:

- » Decreases in Controlling Body cash and cash equivalents of \$35.0m, prepayments & other receivables \$4.3m, intangibles \$1.7m and non-current receivables \$6.1m (due primarily to amortisation of advanced grants for 15 Clubs paid in 2016-17).
- » Partially offset by increases in trade receivables \$8.1m and right-of-use lease assets \$10.1m, the latter due to the adoption of AASB16 and the subsequent capitalisation of leases.

Consolidated total liabilities decreased by \$4.8m to \$146.4m due to:

- » Decreases in trade payables (\$5.5m) from abnormally high 2019 levels due to major events and media prepayment unwind in Deferred Revenue (\$1.5m), mostly offset by recognition of lease liabilities due to the adoption of AASB16.

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

## STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CHANGES IN EQUITY

Year ended 31 October 2020

	RESERVES \$'000	RETAINED SURPLUS \$'000	TOTAL \$'000
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	<b>2,228</b>	<b>93,692</b>	<b>95,920</b>
AS AT 1 NOVEMBER 2018	2,228	89,451	91,679
Net surplus for the year	–	28,983	28,983
AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2019	<b>2,228</b>	<b>118,434</b>	<b>120,662</b>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of this Statement of Consolidated Changes in Equity

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# STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOWS

Year ended 31 October 2020

	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Receipts from ordinary operations	422,757	570,574
Payment to suppliers and employees	(215,877)	(307,656)
Payments to Clubs	(239,174)	(214,464)
Lease payments (interest component)	(678)	–
Interest received	889	1,378
Interest paid	(20)	(89)
<b>NET CASH FLOWS FROM/(USED IN) OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>(32,103)</b>	<b>49,743</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(789)	(963)
Payments for intangibles	(2,709)	(4,742)
<b>NET CASH FLOWS FROM/(USED IN) INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>(3,498)</b>	<b>(5,705)</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Repayments of loans	4,316	–
Lease payments (principal component)	(3,082)	–
<b>NET CASH FLOWS FROM/(USED IN) FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>1,234</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>NET INCREASE/(DECREASE) IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS</b>	<b>(34,367)</b>	<b>44,038</b>
<b>CASH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PERIOD</b>	<b>181,695</b>	<b>137,657</b>
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE PERIOD</b>	<b>147,328</b>	<b>181,695</b>

## Discussion and analysis of the Statement of Consolidated Cash Flows

There was a net decrease in cash holdings of the consolidated entity totalling \$34.4m due to:

- » -\$24.7m: Profit and Loss deficit
- » -\$5.8m: Difference between media cash received and revenue recognised
- » +\$9m: Difference between Club grant cash paid and expense recognised due to advanced grant amortisation
- » +\$6.1: Players Retirement Fund 2020 accrual (non-cash)
- » -\$3.5m: Digital capital expenditure
- » -\$6.6m: GST and superannuation payments
- » -\$8.9m: Lower working capital position (largely through increase in trade receivables and reduction in trade payables).

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



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### Concise Financial Report 2020

# NOTES TO THE CONCISE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Year ended 31 October 2020

## 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

	2020 \$'000	2019 \$'000
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Licensing	332,233	403,381
Operations and Events	67,165	136,283
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>		
Financing income	889	1,378
Digital Services income	2,844	4,468
JobKeeper	11,518	–
Sundry income	5,024	10,405
<b>TOTAL OTHER INCOME</b>	<b>20,275</b>	<b>16,251</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>419,673</b>	<b>555,915</b>

### 3. Events Subsequent to Balance Sheet Date

In January 2021, the NRL and the Rugby League Players Association ('RLPA') agreed a revised CBA, equivalent to a 6 per cent reduction in the salary cap for 2021 and 2022. In finalising the revised CBA, it was agreed that accrued contributions to the RLPA Retirement Fund, held as restricted cash on the Statement of Consolidated Financial Position at balance date will be paid to the RLPA within 30 days of finalisation of the revised CBA, which was signed on 19 January 2021.

In the interval between the end of the financial period and the date of this report, 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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### Concise Financial Report 2020

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



Peter V'landys  
Chairman



Tony McGrath  
Director

Sydney  
18 February 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 2020, 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 2020. 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 8 February 2021.

## Section Seven

### Concise Financial Report 2020



#### 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*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ernst &amp; Young'.

Ernst & Young

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James Higgins'.

James Higgins  
Partner  
Sydney  
18 February 2021





**National Rugby League Ltd**

Rugby League Central  
Driver Avenue, Moore Park  
NSW 2021

**NRL.COM**