



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

2016 HIGHLIGHTS



RECORD RATINGS AND 4 OF THE TOP 5 RATED TV PROGRAMS

Rugby League watched by more Australians than ever before

NEW SKY NZ PARTNERSHIP

takes total media rights value for 2018-2022 to \$1.9b along with Nine, Fox Sports and Telstra partnerships

55% GROWTH

in sponsorship revenue year-on-year

327,000 NRL CLUB AND STATE MEMBERS

More than ever before

BALL IN PLAY TIME INCREASED

by 97 minutes over the season

\$220M RECORD DISTRIBUTION

to Clubs, States and Game Development

3.6M ATTENDANCE

at elite Rugby League games

GLOBAL GOVERNING BODY OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER

at the Beyond Sport Awards for our School to Work program

INTRODUCED WORLD-LEADING TECHNOLOGY

with the The NRL Bunker

MORE AUSTRALIANS FOLLOW THE NRL

on Facebook than any other sporting code or team

\$1.85B COMMITTED

by NSW, QLD and Federal Governments for new and refurbished stadia in Sydney and Townsville

HISTORIC PERTH TEST MATCH

watched by a sellout crowd

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

JOHN GRANT

I think it's fair to say that 2016 had its 'ups and downs' for the Australian Rugby League Commission and the game more broadly.

While almost all aspects of the football side of the business improved, the off-field player and Club issues and the conflict between the governing body and the NRL Clubs and State Leagues over funding and governance is something I would like to think we can minimise in the future.

On the field, the NRL Telstra Premiership was again shown to be one of the closest, most exciting and most entertaining competitions in the world. We should all be proud to be a part of this great game. Congratulations to the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks, our 2016 Premiers. In 2016:

- » Television audiences rose by 14 per cent, equating to more than 14 million additional viewings
- » NRL premiership attendances increased one per cent over the prior year, a very solid result given the transfer of a Friday night fixture to Thursday
- » NRL Club and State memberships were up 11 per cent and for the first time, every NRL Club recorded more than 10,000 members
- » 25 per cent increase in Official NRL app audience from 2015
- » While we clearly have more work to do to optimise adjudication of our game across refereeing, The NRL Bunker, match review and judiciary, the objectives we had to arrest the declining trends in number of tries and line breaks, ball in play and video decision times were achieved and added to the closeness and speed of games across the season.

State of Origin remained at the pinnacle of global sporting competitions. Together with the Grand Final, the three-game series constituted four of the five most watched programs on television in 2016.

Away from the elite competition, participation in all areas of the game other than registered male contact numbers grew strongly. This area, which is the feeder to our elite male competitions declined two per cent, a trend that started three years ago. Through the State Leagues, this must be a key focus in the years ahead.

With the inspirational Jillaroos now firmly on the same stage as the Kangaroos, women's participation remains the fastest growing area of our game.

It is also pleasing to note that almost ten per cent of grassroots players hail from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

The Commission remains focused on world-class facilities for our game.

In June, Rugby League Central Queensland was officially opened as the home of Rugby League in the Sunshine State. This state-of-the-art facility houses NRL, Queensland Rugby League, Queensland Touch Football, Men of League and 2017 Rugby League World Cup staff and is a central hub for growth of the game throughout Queensland.

Construction of a Centre of Excellence is underway in New South Wales. It will be home to the NSW Blues, together with members of the NRL, Men of League and other stakeholders.

Recently the NRL, QRL and Queensland Government have committed to a new Footy Facilities Fund from 2017 to help deliver local Rugby League infrastructure projects to promote participation growth.

It was also pleasing to announce a minimum of \$3 million facilities funding for Rugby League outside Queensland and New South Wales. This funding will support a range of grassroots projects, ultimately ensuring the game spreads its presence to more places and on more levels than ever before.

I was delighted to be a guest in Samoa in October last year and witness strong performances by the next generation of Australian Country Rugby League players. The Commission is determined to see more games, more opportunities and more visits by NRL Clubs to regional and rural parts of Australia and the Pacific where Rugby League is a lifeblood to so many.

Finally, when we appointed Mal Meninga as Kangaroos coach, we set him a broader goal to drive long-term excellence in the Australian men's, women's and elite junior teams.

He has met our expectations by guiding Australia to a successful Four Nations tournament and back to number one world ranking. He is also creating a new culture in the national team which will hold us in good stead for the future.

We now turn our attention to preparing the Kangaroos and Jillaroos to achieve the ultimate goal of dual Rugby League World Cup titles when Australia and New Zealand host the 2017 Rugby League World Cup in October – December this year.

Off the field, in March the Commission announced a new Chief Executive in Todd Greenberg. Todd is an experienced operator within Rugby League and sport in general and his strong leadership will be critical in the years ahead.

Together with the Commission, Todd and his Executive team have a strong and inclusive plan for the future of our game simply expressed as 'more people watching more people playing'. They will work with the game's full range of stakeholders to deliver this promise in 2017 and beyond.

In 2017 the Commission's immediate priorities are to:

- » Implement the funding model and governance improvements agreed with the NRL Clubs and State Leagues
- » Capitalise on the opportunity we have through the new agreement with Telstra to significantly advance our game's digital presence
- » Accelerate growth in commercial revenues
- » Working with the State Leagues, grow the game from the base up through well-structured and well-administered participation options and competition pathways
- » Working with our Clubs, provide an exceptional experience for members and fans at games and through the broadcast.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Ian Elliot, who stood down from the Commission in 2016 after four years as Commissioner. In August 2016 we welcomed Dr Gary Weiss as a new Commissioner. Gary brings an impressive mix of business and sporting experience to the Commission. I would also like to thank Jeremy Sutcliffe and Graeme Samuel who will retire from the board prior to the 2017 Annual General Meeting after five years and three and a half years respectively. The support they have given to the Commission and to the NRL management team and the significant contribution they have made particularly in terms of the outcomes we have achieved in broadcast, funding and stadia leave a substantial long term legacy for the game.

Finally, thank you to our fans and our broadcast and commercial partners for your continued support of our game. Rugby League remains in fantastic shape across all levels because of you.

John Grant
ARLC Chairman



THE ARL COMMISSION

The ARLC is the single controlling body and administrator of the game and its responsibilities 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.

Board Committees

Risk, Investment and Audit Committee (RIAC)

The key responsibilities of RIAC include:

- » Oversight and review of risk management systems and controls;
- » Monitoring legal and regulatory compliance;
- » Oversight and monitoring of investment strategy;
- » Review of financial statements;
- » Monitoring and reviewing internal audit systems and controls; and
- » Monitoring and reviewing the independence, objectivity and effectiveness of external auditors.

Committee members: Graeme Samuel (Chair), Jeremy Sutcliffe, John Grant, Tony McGrath, Geoff Knuckey (external appointment).

People, Workplace Culture and Remuneration Committee (PWCRC)

The key responsibilities of PWCRC include:

- » Overseeing the organisation's policies and strategies relating to people, including workplace health and safety, diversity and inclusion;

- » Monitoring and reviewing the organisation's talent, remuneration, performance and reward framework; and
- » CEO and executive management succession planning, including making recommendations to the Commission regarding recruitment and selection.

Committee members: Chris Sarra (Chair), Cathy Harris, John Grant.

Nominations Committee

The key responsibilities of the Nominations Committee include:

- » Monitoring and reviewing Commission competencies, performance and skills; and
- » Commission succession planning and advising the Board on the recruitment of new Commissioners.

Committee members: Cathy Harris (Chair), Wayne Pearce, Jeremy Sutcliffe, John Grant.

In addition, John Grant and Wayne Pearce are members of the NRL Competition Committee.



Tony McGrath

Mr McGrath is a former partner at KPMG and is the co-founder and Co-Chairman of McGrathNicol. Mr McGrath is a Director of QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited and the National Foundation for Medical Research.

Wayne Pearce OAM

Mr Pearce is a former Kangaroos Captain and Coach of the New South Wales State of Origin side. Mr Pearce is a business consultant and Director of Wayne Pearce Advantage.

Graeme Samuel AC

Mr Samuel is a business consultant with extensive government and private sector roles. Mr Samuel chairs the Risk, Investment and Audit Committee.

John Grant

Chairman
Mr Grant is a former Kangaroo and Queensland State player and an experienced businessman and advisor to State and Federal Governments and multi-national IT companies. He was a founder and for 19 years until December 2015, Managing Director of Australian listed IT company, Data#3 Limited.

Catherine Harris AO PSM

Ms Harris is the Chairperson of Harris Farm Markets, and a Director of the Sport Australia Hall of Fame, The Australian Ballet, Tyro Payments Ltd and a Governor of The University of Notre Dame. Ms Harris is chair of the Nominations Committee.

Professor Chris Sarra

Professor Sarra is a Professor at the University of Canberra and founding Chairman of the Stronger Smarter Institute. Professor Sarra chairs the People, Workplace Culture and Remuneration Committee.

Jeremy Sutcliffe

Mr Sutcliffe is Chairman of CSR Limited, a Director of Amcor Limited, a Director of Orora Limited and former Managing Director and CEO of SimsMetal Management Limited. He is also an Advisory Director to Veolia Environmental Australia Limited.

Dr Gary Weiss

Dr Weiss is Chairman of Ridley Corporation and Estia Health Ltd and is Executive Director of Ariadne Australia. Dr Weiss is a former board member of the Westfield Group, Tower Australia, ClearView Wealth and Tyndall Australia.



CEO REPORT

TODD GREENBERG – YEAR IN REVIEW

2016 was a big year...a year which has left our game stronger than at any other time in its 100-year history. But, like any enterprise the size of Rugby League, we still face some significant challenges.

When I was appointed as CEO in March, I made it clear I had two primary goals – more people watching the game and more people playing the game.

More People Watching

We have had great success in 2016 in driving more people to watch Rugby League, whether live at the ground, on television or on digital platforms.

Average attendances defied all predictions by rising in a year when we played matches on both Thursday and Monday nights. That's a great result and a credit to our Clubs and players.

The increase can be partly attributed to the surge in Club memberships during the year.

A total of 327,000 fans signed up as members of their Clubs and States – an increase of 33,000 on the previous 12 months.

For the first time, every Club in the Telstra Premiership exceeded 10,000 members. And we think there is potential for memberships to grow substantially in the coming years.

That's important when you recognise that members are more likely to attend games, buy merchandise, watch the game on TV and encourage their friends to go to matches with them.

Our television audiences exceeded all expectations, which is a credit to our broadcast partners at Channel Nine and Fox Sports.

The total audience for Premiership and Finals matches on free to air and subscription television grew by 14 per cent.

The new television deal, which delivers all eight games to pay television in addition to the three prime time games on free to air television, means more people are watching Rugby League than ever before.

With the support of our naming rights sponsor and digital partner, Telstra, the NRL Digital Network delivered more content to more people in 2016.

And if attendances, television and digital audiences are growing, then our social media following is soaring.

Our social media networks attracted an extra 445,000 followers in 2016. No longer do people want to just watch a game. They want to chat online to their friends and followers, they want instant updates on statistics and watch games while they are on the move.

MORE PEOPLE WATCHING & MORE PEOPLE PLAYING

So we have driven more viewers through every channel. These results only happen when you are delivering a quality product. Thanks goes to our players and Clubs for their efforts throughout the year.

We continue to have one of the closest competitions in Australian sport.

A record 16 games were decided in extra time and more than 30 per cent of games were decided by a converted try or less. That means fans are glued to their seats and screens right up to the final whistle.

On that note, we congratulate the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks on winning their first Telstra Premiership in another thrilling Grand Final.

We've had eight different Grand Final teams in the last four years – another indication of how even our competition is. And the last three Grand Finals have all had fairy-tale finishes. The Rabbitohs won their first Premiership in 43 years while the Cowboys and Sharks took out their first titles.

The representative season was just as successful.

Queensland again took out the State of Origin series with a team which will undoubtedly go down in the history books as one of the greatest ever.

But their victory was hard-fought. In the end, with Queensland winning two games to one, there were just eight points between the two teams over the three-game series.

The Kangaroos won their first match with new coach Mal Meninga at the helm for the ANZAC test in Newcastle.

After winning the end of season Perth Test against New Zealand and then going on to take the Four Nations tournament in England, the Kangaroos regained their number one world ranking.

Mal has already injected so much pride into the Kangaroo jumper and he has a great combination of seasoned and young stars in the mix for the World Cup team in 2017.

Our NRL rule changes have had a positive impact on the game.

The reduction in interchanges and introduction of the shot clock resulted in a more entertaining game with more line breaks – with the ball in play for longer. So the fans are getting more football.

As with all new technology, The NRL Bunker was always going to have its challenges in its first year as the game debated where and how often it should be used to assist our match officials. As the season progressed, feedback was taken on board which resulted in some functional changes which were in place for what was a great Finals Series.

Whilst the bunker has had its challenges, it's instructive to recall that the two-referees system took several years to attain a high level of proficiency. Post season, an extensive review on the bunker's parameters and functioning was conducted with the findings to be implemented in season 2017.

Technology in professional sport is here to stay and we are committed to ensuring the bunker is used to best effect.

More People Playing

Enticing more people to play the game is more challenging.

We have achieved a six per cent increase in total participation, which includes both schools' Rugby League formal activities and registered junior club players. While female registered participation climbs, male registered participation has declined by two per cent.

The truth is we are competing against more entertainment and leisure options than ever before. We have to confront the challenge of enticing young people to commit to a sport like Rugby League and its demands.

We recognise that we have to take action to make our game more attractive at all levels.

So we are starting at grassroots – girls and boys as young as six – with a new form of the game which focuses on fun rather than results.

From there, we will have clear pathways through the junior ranks right up to the elite levels.

Our reduced interchanges at the elite level and rule changes in the modified form of the junior game are aimed at rewarding speed and endurance to ensure there is a place for smaller players in the game.

And our partnership with Touch Football Australia is exposing another form of our game to tens of thousands of male and female participants.

It is one of the reasons that the women's game is the fastest growing area of Rugby League.

So the structures are in place and the focus, in partnership with our Clubs and States, is now on converting those people trying one form of the game into registered participants.

Working Together

We are in good shape on the field as we head into 2017. It is off the field where we need to develop the teamwork which serves us so well in the rest of our operations.

There is so much passion in Rugby League. Not just from the fans but the Clubs, the junior leagues, the Origin teams, the Kangaroos and the fast growing women's game.

So it is understandable that all stakeholders have their own priorities and views on how we make Rugby League even better.

But we will only achieve those outcomes if we work together to promote the good things in Rugby League.

We have such a great product we should talk it up at every opportunity.

Because I am sure of one thing – the fans simply love Rugby League.

I spent a lot of time, especially during the Finals Series, holding fan forums across the country to make sure I was able to receive direct feedback on the game from the people who matter most.

Their message is simple – they cannot get enough of the game and they will travel unbelievable distances to see their teams play.

Sure they have complaints. They hate it when referees make mistakes, they want to see their teams play at times which suit them best and they want cheaper ticket prices and improved food and beverage offerings.

But there is no way they won't be at the ground to cheer on their team week after week – because they genuinely love Rugby League.

It's that passion and love of the game that we all need to embrace if our game is to become even greater. 2017 is the perfect platform for all of us.

Todd Greenberg
NRL CEO



SECTION

01

PLAYING
OUR GAME



NRL TELSTRA PREMIERSHIP

The Telstra Premiership remains one of the closest, most exciting sporting competitions globally with 34 per cent of matches decided by six points or less and a record number of golden point games of any season in history.

There have been seven different Premiers in the last seven years. It's a hard-fought accomplishment to win the Premiership but even making the Grand Final is tough – no team has featured in more than two Grand Finals in the same timeframe.

Innovations in 2016, such as The NRL Bunker, shot clock and a reduction in the number of player interchanges from ten to eight, contributed to ball in play time increasing by 97 minutes over the season and a saving of more than 11 hours in game stoppages for NRL members and fans.

For the first time in history, each Australian state and territory with an NRL team was represented in the top four – Storm (Victoria), Sharks (New South Wales), Raiders (Australian Capital Territory) and Cowboys (Queensland).

The new rule providing for extra time for Finals matches was tested in its first year during another epic Queensland derby in week two of the Finals. It took a Michael Morgan try in extra time to see the Cowboys progress to the Preliminary Finals over arch-rivals the Broncos.

The top two sides in 2016 – the Storm, as minor premiers and the Sharks – played in the Telstra Premiership Grand Final in front of a crowd of more than 83,000 fans at ANZ Stadium in Sydney.

The final outcome remained up in the air until the last play before the Sharks made history happen by holding on to secure their maiden NRL Premiership.



FOOTBALL

DOWNER AUCKLAND NINES

Season 2016 was once again welcomed in by the fast, fun and free-flowing entertainment that is the NRL Auckland Nines.

In February, thousands of passionate Rugby League fans made the journey to Auckland's Eden Park to witness two days of action from the best male and female players in the game.

The Parramatta Eels defeated the New Zealand Warriors 22-4 in the 2016 Final but their title was subsequently rescinded as a consequence of the NRL's investigation into salary cap breaches.

WORLD CLUB SERIES

For the second consecutive year, three teams each from the NRL and Super League took part in the World Club Series over three days in February, hosted in the United Kingdom.

The three Australian sides – the Roosters, Broncos and Cowboys – defeated their English counterparts, with the North Queensland Cowboys cementing their place as the number one club team in the world with a dominant 38-4 victory over the Leeds Rhinos.

HARVEY NORMAN RUGBY LEAGUE ALL STARS

For the first time, the Indigenous All Stars team faced off against a team boasting some of the biggest names from all over the globe in the World All Stars.

The stadium erupted for the war cry, led by Indigenous Captain Greg Inglis and performed by the playing group, with the dance showing the importance Rugby League places on respecting and valuing Indigenous culture within Australia.

From kick-off at Suncorp Stadium and in front of more than 37,000 fans, it was a dominant performance from World All Stars Englishmen James Graham and Tom Burgess. They helped to guide the World team to a hard-fought 12-8 win over the Indigenous All Stars.

The Women's and Indigenous Women's All Stars clash was played earlier in the day, taken out by the Women's All Stars 24-4.

In 2017, the Harvey Norman All Stars moved to Newcastle to ensure that the messages and benefits of the All Stars week is available to even more Indigenous and non-Indigenous fans of Rugby League.





HOLDEN STATE OF ORIGIN

There was a new page in the Origin history book in 2016.

The Mal Meninga chapter closed and Queensland legend Kevin Walters took charge of his home state for the first time with a weight of expectation.

Meanwhile, Laurie Daley was confident a new batch of Blues could regain the title that had so quickly vanished the previous year.

The series got off to a grinding start at ANZ Stadium in Sydney, with a Johnathan Thurston penalty goal proving to be the only difference, as Queensland won yet another State of Origin cliffhanger.

The Maroons headed home to Suncorp Stadium and in front of more than 52,000 fans, clinched their tenth Series victory in 11 years with a pulsating 26-16 victory over the Blues.

Staring down the barrel at the first series whitewash in six years, the new look Blues delivered a late try in Game III to centre Michael Jennings to snatch a dramatic last-minute 18-14 victory, sending retiring skipper Paul Gallen out a winner in his final 500 game.



THE AUSTRALIAN KANGAROOS

There was more to 2016 than just winning for the Kangaroos.

Backed by the ARL Commission, Mal Meninga set about redefining the values behind just what it means to pull on the Kangaroos jersey and represent your country.

It was a fresh approach that delivered immediate results for the side. They went unbeaten in all matches in 2016, winning the Four Nations tournament in the process as well as regaining the number one Test ranking ahead of the much anticipated Rugby League World Cup 2017.

The strategy also saw 12 players make their Australian debuts, as the coach looks to secure the long term success of the Kangaroos.

“It’s good to see those younger boys coming through and really cherishing the jersey and really standing up for the international game.”

Johnathan Thurston



CAMERON SMITH
CELEBRATES WIN
AT SELLOUT TEST
MATCH IN PERTH



HARVEY NORMAN JILLAROOS

Women's Rugby League continues to be the fastest growing part of the game with a genuine pathway being created for females in our game.

In 2016, female registered participation in club Rugby League rose by 22 per cent, with continued growth of school competitions, events and overall participation.

The Harvey Norman Jillaroos team continued to demand attention as leaders and role models for the next generation of women coming through, despite being on the wrong end of results against their Kiwi counterparts at the Downer Auckland Nines and ANZAC Test Match.

The team continues to attract great crowds and television audiences as well as growing corporate support. They will undoubtedly play a starring role in the Women's Rugby League World Cup in 2017 to be played on home soil.

HIGHLIGHTS

- » Females comprised 15 per cent of all 2016 NRL Ambassadors
- » Two female referees officiated in the same NRL round for the first time
- » Two current Jillaroos employed full-time as NRL Game Development Officers
- » Dally M Female Player of the Year awarded for the second time, won by Kezie Apps
- » Participation in two prime-time events in the Downer Auckland Nines and ANZAC Test Match
- » NSW won the Interstate Challenge for the first time in 18 years.

RECORD JILLAROOS TV AUDIENCE
BROADCAST NATIONALLY FOR
THE FIRST TIME WITH MORE
THAN 300,000 VIEWERS

↑ 22%

FEMALE REGISTERED PARTICIPATION IN CLUB RUGBY LEAGUE ROSE BY 22 PER CENT IN 2016



SPECIAL EVENTS

ANZAC DAY

The NRL has a longstanding connection with the Australian Armed Services.

The NRL, Clubs, sponsors and fans honoured past and present servicemen and servicewomen during Round 8 – ANZAC Round – as the code paused to remember and thank those who have served in military service both here and abroad.

The NRL continued its partnership with the Returned Services League (RSL) as it commemorated its 100th anniversary this year, alongside the Australian and New Zealand Defence Forces.

Of the two matches played on ANZAC Day in 2016, St George Illawarra withstood a valiant Sydney Roosters comeback in a thriller 20-18 at Allianz Stadium, while the Storm put on an attacking masterclass to demolish the Warriors 42-0 in front of 21,233 fans at AAMI Park.

“It’s a special day for Australia and New Zealand first and foremost, but given its importance to both countries, to have the opportunity and the privilege to play the game that we love playing on such a special day is an honour.”

Cameron Smith
Melbourne Storm, Queensland and Australian Kangaroos Captain

INDIGENOUS ROUND

The game paid tribute to the many Indigenous players and communities that play a vital and significant role within the Rugby League community during Round 10 with the Indigenous Round.

The NRL partnered with RECOGNISE for the third year in a row, providing a united voice to the movement to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples in the Australian Constitution and ensure there is no place for racial discrimination.

The round also saw Indigenous superstars including Johnathan Thurston, Greg Inglis and Sam Thaiday lending their voices and support in a new promotion calling for more to be done to include and recognise all Indigenous peoples within our communities.

“It makes me incredibly proud. To have your handprint and your totem – that specific acknowledgment of your people and where you come from – on a jersey that you’ll run out in is indescribable.”

Greg Inglis
South Sydney Rabbitohs

MEN OF LEAGUE HERITAGE ROUND

The NRL recognised the many people who, through The Men of League Foundation, have dedicated their time and resources to helping those who have fallen on hard times.

The Men of League Foundation continues to assist thousands of players, coaches, referees, officials, administrators and importantly their families through difficult times.

In 2016, the Men of League Round provided an opportunity for the game and fans to recognise the efforts of the Men of League volunteers, welfare officers and staff. It also raised much needed awareness and funds for The Foundation to deliver invaluable services and support to those in the Rugby League community.

“Rugby League provides so much joy for so many Australians and I am encouraged by the enormous will to support and remember our past and present servicemen and servicewomen as part of the NRL ANZAC Round.”

Glenn Kolomeitz
RSL NSW CEO





WOMEN IN LEAGUE

The NRL celebrated a decade of the Harvey Norman Women in League Round as female participation in all forms of Rugby League continues to be the fastest growing category in the game.

The brainchild of Harvey Norman CEO Katie Page ten years ago, the Women in League Round continues to grow and shine a light on the vital role women have and continue to play across all facets of Rugby League.

Ms Page was among a cast of women, past and present, recognised during the round for their unwavering support of women in Rugby League and continued dedication to realising equality for females working in and playing all forms of Rugby League.

“If I think back to 2007 when we started Harvey Norman Women in League, we have achieved so much, however at the same time we can see now what is possible and how the game must remain focused. We must ensure we support the next generation of women – mothers, administrators and female players coming up through the ranks.”

Katie Page
Harvey Norman CEO

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

2006

In 2006, plans for the official launch of Women in League Round were confirmed for forthcoming year

2007

Introduction of Women in League Round

2008

The Women in League Round was extended to include a series of dinners to thank female volunteers in Queensland & New South Wales

2009

The Women in League dinners were extended to regional areas across Australia

2011

Inaugural Women in League leadership conference held

2012

Introduction of the Women in League Leadership regional forums

2015

Establishment of a Women in League subcommittee, women’s mentoring program, advocacy events, Harvey Norman’s Jillaroo sponsorship and the award of the inaugural Dally M Female Player of the Year

2016

Ten year celebration of Women in League concept

“The Harvey Norman Women in League Round is one of many occasions throughout the year where women are at the forefront of our game and, without doubt, help to shape our sport for the better.”

Todd Greenberg
NRL CEO

OUR PLAYERS

The NRL strengthened its relationship with the Rugby League Players Association (RLPA) in 2016, ensuring the players' representatives were consulted and are a key part of major announcements, agreements and events throughout the year.

In keeping with a commitment to the RLPA, the NRL announced a 39 per cent drop in five-day turnarounds from 31 in 2016 to just 19 in the upcoming 2017 season.

North Queensland Cowboys Lock Jason Taumalolo was voted by his peers as The Players' Champion for 2016, with Dene Halatau taking out the prestigious Dennis Tutty Award for his dedication and commitment to championing the rights of his fellow players.

The players are and will always be at the heart of our great game. They are seen as leaders, and the expectation of fans and other game stakeholders is that they will perform as such, both on and off the field.

PLAYER WELLBEING AND EDUCATION

The NRL's Wellbeing and Education programs have been developed in association with the RLPA to assist players in building their identity, skills and potential in society.

The game remains committed to providing opportunities and assistance for players to ensure they can become the best possible person they can be, irrespective of whether they are at the beginning or end of their careers.



THERE ARE NOW A TOTAL OF **47** WELLBEING AND EDUCATION STAFF EMPLOYED ACROSS THE NRL, **25 PER CENT** OF WHOM ARE FORMER NRL PLAYERS.

PLAYER WELLBEING AND EDUCATION CONT...

CharacterWise

The importance of ensuring the game's players make sound choices on and off the field, saw the NRL Wellbeing and Education team deliver more programs in 2016 than ever before.

Participants from all around Australia and New Zealand are engaged in programs teaching leadership, culture, respectful relationships and social responsibility.

A highlight was the NRL's joint initiative with the Australian Institute of Sport to host the 'Now I Best I Next' summit in Sydney in June. The summit was a united approach to emphasise the readiness by Australian sport to collectively highlight the importance of athlete wellbeing.

The NRL also made history and continued to take a stand when it comes to respect and inclusiveness for all when it became the first sporting code to include its own float in the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade under the tagline 'GAYME ON - Pride In League'.

CareerWise

The CareerWise program was developed to help our potential and current professional players develop a vocation away from the footy field.

More than 800 NRL and NYC contracted players were involved in work, school or further education programs in 2016.

The NRL and NYC Academic Teams of the Year included the likes of new Australian Kangaroo Jake Trbojevic, NSW Origin players Josh Jackson and James Tedesco, Panthers rookie Nathan Cleary and New Zealand International Adam Blair.

Program highlights:

- » 85 per cent of NRL and NYC players are currently engaged in further education or workplace training
- » 21 per cent of NRL and NYC players enrolled in a university degree at the start of the 2016 season
- » 18 academic institutions delivered the NRL's Graduates of League program. The completion rate of all players attempting university courses continues to be high – with 85 per cent of all subjects attempted being passed
- » 16 of the 36 players to play in this year's U20s QLD or NSW State of Origin teams were studying at university with the balance doing apprenticeships, trades or undertaking vocational experience
- » \$600,000 in education grants provided by the RLPA to over 400 players
- » NRL Clubs have provided their players with an additional \$2.4 million in educational incentives to engage in vocational pursuits away from football.


HealthWise

The NRL takes very seriously its responsibility for the health and wellbeing of all its players – from their football careers and studies through to their physical and mental wellbeing.

The game is there to assist its players to handle the very real stresses and strains of elite competition.

Each Club continues to employ two qualified staff members whose job it is to look after the wellbeing and development of the players in their charge.

The game maintains relationships with past players throughout their life and runs specific programs to support them, alongside foundations including The Men of League Foundation.



“The RLPA wholeheartedly supports players to invest in their education and themselves. It is vitally important players are provided with the right environment to ensure they develop personally and professionally during their careers and we encourage players to plan for life after football.”

Clint Newton
RLPA General Manager of Player Relations

TOUCH FOOTBALL

The partnership between Rugby League and Touch Football Australia continues to provide a pathway and connection for everyone in our game.

There are currently more than 694,000 people playing organised touch football competitions with a new target of reaching one million participants by 2020.

Highlighting the importance of ensuring an equitable pathway, Touch Football Australia boasts a 43 per cent female participation rate across all age segments.

Australia completed its first ever clean sweep against New Zealand, going undefeated in the nine Test matches contested in Auckland in May.

The Touch Football partnership grew in 2016 with highlights including:

- » Brent Tate appointed as ARLC's nominee director on the Touch Football Australia Board
- » Overall participation growth in seven of the eight Australian states and territories
- » Local partnerships developed across the NRL and Touch Football Community through historic agreements with Clubs including the Titans, Storm, Sharks, Cowboys and Eels.

MORE THAN 694,000 PARTICIPANTS

MATCH OFFICIALS

In the 2016 season, 20 referees officiated in 201 NRL Telstra Premiership matches.

NRL General Manager of Officiating, Tony Archer, continued his weekly interviews on NRL.com, analysing and clarifying many of the most talked about calls from the previous round. Throughout the season, the most topical bunker decisions were often explained by Tony during live crosses to the bunker post-match on Channel Nine and Fox Sports. This delivered transparency improvements for our viewers.

For the first time, two female match officials officiated in the same NRL round when Kasey Badger and Belinda Sleeman took to the field during Round 8.

Last year the NRL introduced the first centralised decision review facility in Australian sport, where the live in-game decision review process took place – The NRL Bunker.

The bunker was introduced to improve the accuracy, consistency, efficiency and transparency of live in-game decision making. In conjunction with a reduction in interchanges and the introduction of the scrum clock and dropout clock, it contributed to improved game continuity, reduced game stoppages and delivered a better spectacle for fans.

The NRL also took to social media for the first time to immediately explain bunker decisions. Text explanations of bunker decisions were distributed via the @NRLBunker Twitter account live in-game, accompanied in some instances by edited vision to give fans new insights into the referees' decision making.

The Bunker In numbers:

- » **9** – The number of review officials in 2016 compared to 22 in 2015
- » **13** – The number of seconds saved per decision in 2016
- » **48** – Less video referee referrals compared to 2015

Referee Milestones & Awards:

Jared Maxwell – 250 games
Matt Cecchin – 250 games and Grand Final Referee
Ashley Klein – 200 games
Chris James – 150 games
Henry Perenara – 100 games
Gavin Reynolds – 100 games
Ben Cummins – Col Pearce Medal, Grand Final Referee and Four Nations Final Referee



MILESTONES

Inductee to the '300 club'

Cooper Cronk became the 25th player to reach the career milestone of 300 first grade games (and only the 11th to do so for a single Club) when he took the field at AAMI Park against Canberra in the second Preliminary Final.

Cronk joined teammate Cameron Smith in this elite group and it was the first time in the history of the Premiership that two 300-gamers had appeared in the same team.

Cronk also equalled the record Grand Final appearances by a halfback at six (Bob Bugden 1956-61).

Players who have played 300 or more games for a single Club include: Darren Lockyer, Corey Parker, Cameron Smith, Cliff Lyons, Nathan Hindmarsh, Andrew Ettingshausen, Jason Croker, Hazem El Masri, Anthony Minichiello, Luke Ricketson and Cooper Cronk.

NRL Player Milestones

In the 2016 Grand Final, Cameron Smith broke his previous record for most premiership points by a hooker in a season – his record tally now stands at 194 points from two tries, 92 goals and two field goals.

Canterbury centre Josh Morris brought up a century of NRL tries when he crossed against Manly at Brookvale Oval in Round 1. On reaching the milestone, Morris and twin Brett created history as the only brothers to have both scored 100 first grade tries.

Gold Coast prop Ryan James broke the all-time record for most tries in a season by a prop forward. He scored a try in his team's elimination final loss to Brisbane to eclipse the record of 11 tries by former St George Test prop Jack Holland (1950) and former South Sydney front-rower Harry Eden (1975).

NRL Coach Milestones

Ricky Stuart reached the milestone of 300 games as NRL coach when the Raiders met Cronulla at GIO Stadium in Round 7. He became only the fifth coach to achieve the double of 200 first grade games as a player and 300 as coach.

Melbourne's Craig Bellamy became the ninth coach to reach the milestone of 350 games when the Storm clashed with the Gold Coast at Cbus Super Stadium in Round 9.

Brisbane Broncos coach Wayne Bennett reached the remarkable milestone of 750 games as top grade coach when the Broncos played Canterbury at ANZ Stadium in Round 16.

Canterbury's Des Hasler became only the 10th coach in the history of the game to notch up his 200th win as first grade coach when the Bulldogs downed Manly at ANZ Stadium in Round 23.

State of Origin

Cameron Smith became the most capped player in the 109-year history of interstate Rugby League when he played his 39th game for the Maroons. Smith overtook Mal Meninga, whose tally of 38 games for Queensland includes 32 State of Origins and six traditional interstate matches (1979-81). Smith made his State of Origin debut in Game III of the 2003 series and has missed only one game since (Game I, 2010, due to injury).

Paul Gallen broke Danny Buderus' record for most games as captain of the New South Wales State of Origin team when he led the Blues in Game III. Gallen's record from 16 games finished at seven wins and nine losses.



2016 DALLY M AWARD WINNERS



In 2016, Cooper Cronk was named the joint winner of Dally M Player of the Year alongside North Queensland Cowboys forward Jason Taumalolo. It was the second time Cronk had taken out the top honour after his first in 2013, and was only the second time in Dally M history that resulted in a tie. Cronk was also crowned Dally M Halfback of the Year earning the honours for the fifth time in his career.

FULLBACK OF THE YEAR:
JAMES TEDESCO

WINGER OF THE YEAR:
JOSH MANSOUR

CENTRE OF THE YEAR:
JOSEPH LEILUA

FIVE-EIGHTH OF THE YEAR:
JAMES MALONEY

HALFBACK OF THE YEAR:
COOPER CRONK

LOCK OF THE YEAR:
JASON TAUMALOLO

SECOND-ROWER OF THE YEAR:
MATT GILLETT

PROP OF THE YEAR:
JESSE BROMWICH

HOOKER OF THE YEAR:
CAMERON SMITH

CAPTAIN OF THE YEAR:
JARROD CROKER

COACH OF THE YEAR:
RICKY STUART

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR:
ASH TAYLOR

PROVAN SUMMONS MEDAL:
JARROD CROKER

KEN STEPHEN MEDAL:
JOEL THOMPSON

PETER FRILINGOS HEADLINE MOMENT:
ANTHONY MILFORD
'Golden Point GF Revenge'

HOLDEN CUP PLAYER OF THE YEAR:
JAYDEN BRAILEY

REP PLAYER OF THE YEAR:
CAMERON SMITH














FEMALE DALLY M:
KEZIE APPS

DALLY M:
**COOPER CRONK &
JASON TAUMALOLO**



2016 RETIRING CLASS

The following players were recognised as the Official Retiring Class of 2016:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | Broncos
Corey Parker
Jack Reed |  | Panthers
Jamie Soward |
|  | Bulldogs
Sam Perrett
Antonio Kaufusi |  | Raiders
Glen Buttriss |
|  | Dragons
Ben Creagh
George Rose |  | Sharks
Michael Ennis |
|  | Eels
Anthony Watmough |  | Rabbitohs
Joel Reddy |
|  | Sea Eagles
Jamie Lyon
Tim Moltzen |  | Tigers
Dene Halatau |
|  | Knights
James McManus
Jeremy Smith
Kade Snowden
Todd Lowrie |  | Titans
Nathan Friend
Luke Douglas |
| | |  | Warriors
Thomas Leuluai
Ali Lautiti
Ben Henry |

Players who subsequently retire are captured in future years. The fraternity of players that make up the NRL official Retiring Class are duly recognised for their long service to the premiership – 100 plus first grade matches, with consideration also to representation at a state and/or international level.

2016 VALE

DUD BEATTIE 27 April 1934 – 19 April 2016

Renowned as one of the toughest forwards Australia has produced, Beattie played all his Club football for Ipswich for more than a decade from 1952. The highly respected scrummager represented Queensland on 19 occasions and played 12 Tests for Australia between 1959 and 1962 in the 'all Ipswich front row' that included Noel Kelly and Gary Parcell. The trio played together on the 1959-60 Kangaroo Tour and at the 1960 World Cup.

Following his retirement he served the game as a long-serving Queensland and Australian selector and was on the selection panel that chose the first ever Queensland State of Origin squad in 1980. In 2009, he was made a Men of League Honouree alongside his 1960 Australian front row partners, Kelly and Parcell. He died on the Sunshine Coast, eight days shy of his 82nd birthday.

ROBERT CULKIN 11 July 1916 – 3 September 2016

Born during the First World War, Culkin moved to Sydney in 1944 from Wellington, in country NSW, where he trialed with South Sydney but was persuaded by friends to take up refereeing instead.

Up until his passing at 100 years young, Culkin was the oldest grade referee, the oldest member of the New South Wales Referees Association as well as the oldest member of the Men of League Foundation.

BRIAN FITZSIMMONS 28 September 1941 – 22 June 2016

Brian Fitzsimmons had a distinguished career in Queensland as a lightning fast striker for the ball in the days when scrums were contested. The warrior-like hooker battled 22 times for Queensland between 1965 and 1971 and represented Australia on nine occasions, including the 1968 World Cup.

His contribution to the game continued long into retirement through club coaching in Townsville and as part of the steering committee which did the groundwork for the admission of the North Queensland Cowboys into the NRL in 1995. He was named hooker in the North Queensland Team of the Century in 2008.

GREG PIERCE 4 March 1950 – 24 June 2016

Pierce played 210 matches for Cronulla between 1969 and 1980, including the brutal 1973 Grand Final against Manly and led the Sharks to their 1979 Amco Cup win. Following the 1973 Grand Final, he made the first of two Kangaroo tours, and went on to play 24 matches for his country. In 1978 he became the first Cronulla player to captain Australia. He coached the club in 1981-82 and in 2005 was named as a Sharks Immortal. He bravely fought cancer for over a decade before passing away on the Central Coast in June, aged 66.

KEN THORNETT 27 November 1937 – 15 August 2016

A superb attacking fullback, Ken Thornett played 130 matches for Parramatta between 1962 and 1971, and was captain-coach of the Club in 1965-66. He represented Australia in 22 matches in 1963-64, including 12 Tests and was named as one of the 100 Greatest Players of the Century in 2008. Thornett was inducted as a Legend of the Parramatta Club in 2002 and had the western grandstand of Parramatta Stadium named in his honour. He died in Sydney on August 15, aged 78.

BRIAN JOHNSON 26 June 1956 – 12 January 2016

Johnson joined the Dragons in 1979 and scored in the Club's 17-13 Grand Final victory over Canterbury. The 1980 Dally M Fullback of the Year scored 56 tries from 161 first-grade games during a seven-year career with St George. Johnson switched to Eastern Suburbs in 1986 before linking with English club Warrington as a player and coach. The Dapto native, aged 59, passed away after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease.

RON SADDLER 14 March 1942 – 12 May 2016

A proud Wiradjuri man and centre renowned for his tough defence, Saddler played for Eastern Suburbs from 1963-71 and for Australia in 1967-68. Saddler was among the first Indigenous players to captain NSW in 1967. Upon his retirement, he captain-coached Murwillumbah Brothers for a number of years in the 1970s. He resided in the Murwillumbah area until his death in May 2016.

REBECCA WILSON 22 December 1961 – 7 October 2016

Rebecca Wilson was one of Australia's foremost female sports journalists who had a long history in Rugby League. Wilson was a columnist with *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph*, as well as a regular on radio and television sports programs. She privately fought a battle with cancer over a number of years before she passed away in Sydney, aged 54.

RON MASSEY 17 October 1929 – 19 September 2016

The legendary Ron Massey was right-hand man to the great Jack Gibson at Eastern Suburbs and Parramatta and a close confidante of Wayne Bennett for 30 years. Known for having one of the sharpest football minds, Massey travelled with Gibson to the US to study techniques and trends in American football, and pioneered video analysis of Rugby League in the 1970s.

He served on Video Review panels for both the ARL and the NRL, was Cronulla Sharks CEO in 1990-91 and was in the coach's box alongside Wayne Bennett for St George Illawarra's 2010 Grand Final win over the Sydney Roosters.



SECTION

02

DELIVERING
OUR GAME

NRL CLUBS

The NRL Clubs are the key stakeholders in the game and were instrumental in making the 2016 season such a success.

But by any measure, it was the year of the Shark!

The Cronulla-Sutherland team celebrated its 50th season in the competition by winning its maiden Premiership and delivering the game its third consecutive fairy-tale finish to a season.

The Melbourne Storm, who have an outstanding finals record over the last decade, went within a whisker of taking out the Premiership and continue to be one of the most consistent Premiership performers.

The Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles and Parramatta Eels also acknowledged their 70th year in the competition.

The importance of strong and sustainable growth for all Clubs remains a focus for the NRL as the game continues to engage more people and partners than ever across a variety of platforms – games, events, grassroots, media and digital.

MEMBERSHIPS

It was another record-breaking year for membership across the game in 2016.

For the first time in the game's history, there were more than 10,000 members for each of the 16 NRL Clubs.

Membership grew by 11 per cent to 327,392 loyal and passionate registered members.

The Brisbane Broncos matched their strong on-field performances by delivering a new membership record of more than 36,000 members – up 27 per cent on the previous year.

The Clubs recording the biggest increases in memberships were the Warriors (67 per cent), Tigers (59 per cent), Raiders (52 per cent), Cowboys (37 per cent) and Sharks (35 per cent).

Fan Relationship Management Centre

For the first time in 2016, all 16 NRL Clubs had two centralised NRL employed representatives working with them from the Fan Relationship Management Centre (FRMC). Their job is to help drive more members for the Clubs through proactive communication with existing and potential members and improving the experience for members.



















In its second full year of operation, the FRMC continued to deliver strong results, signing up more than 20,000 members.

Improvements in structure and processes will drive continued growth in memberships generated by the FRMC in 2017.

NRL Business Academy

Membership numbers and career opportunities within the NRL grew once again courtesy of the NRL Business Academy.

Now in its second year, the program saw 31 students from six universities across Australia and New Zealand take part, with more than 70 per cent of the group securing employment following their internship.

MEMBERS		2015	2016	% CHANGE
	Broncos	28,556	36,203	27%
	Bulldogs	18,240	20,703	14%
	Cowboys	14,330	19,676	37%
	Dragons	18,117	17,932	(1%)
	Eels	22,824	23,779	4%
	Knights	14,021	12,110	(14%)
	Panthers	19,884	20,195	2%
	Rabbitohs	35,311	32,813	(7%)
	Raiders	10,025	15,239	52%
	Roosters	16,682	14,458	(13%)
	Sea Eagles	12,265	13,351	9%
	Sharks	10,610	14,325	35%
	Storm	14,788	17,518	18%
	Titans	11,508	10,278	(11%)
	Warriors	10,962	18,350	67%
	Wests Tigers	9,342	14,879	59%
 	NSWRL & QRL	26,741	25,583	(4%)
	Total	294,206	327,392	11%

↑ 33,186

INCREASE ON CLUB AND STATE MEMBERSHIPS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS



COMMERCIAL PARTNERSHIPS AND MAJOR EVENTS

The world of sports partnerships is evolving. Corporate partners want tangible returns for their investment. In 2016 the game invested in a restructured commercial and marketing team to deliver better outcomes for fans, partners and government. The restructure resulted in positive commercial outcomes with strong growth in commercial revenue and margin.

Our marketing campaign themed 'History Happens', went live at the beginning of 2016 across multiple media and social platforms, with a call to fans via social media to submit their footage of history-making moments experienced live at matches.

Fan vision and images were brought to life in the narrative and advertising, with the campaign having a positive impact on memberships, TV audiences and match attendances this season.

A focus on delivering the highest quality and most engaging experience for members, partners and fans at the most affordable prices helped the game deliver a 12 per cent increase in non-broadcast revenue, up \$15 million annually, including a 55 per cent growth in sponsorship revenue.

2016 also saw a renewed commitment to develop a stronger whole-of-game commercial program that integrates game-wide assets across the ARLC, States and Clubs.

Regular Club and State commercial workshops were held to identify best practice and develop commercial opportunities for investors.

For the second consecutive season, the NRL successfully partnered with Clubs throughout the Telstra NRL Premiership Finals Series to deliver an average crowd of more than 34,000 per game, as well as an increase in revenue and hospitality earnings across the four Australian states and territories where Finals Series matches were played.

In corporate partnerships, our focus is on not only creating great exposure for our partner brands but authentically connecting our five million passionate fans with our partners' products and services.

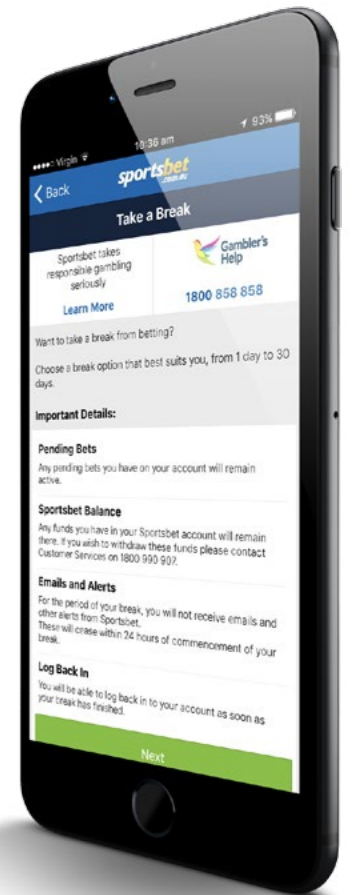
The game remains fortunate to have the support of many of the nation's leading brands, including our Premiership naming rights partner Telstra.

In 2016, we focused on finding innovative ways to bring our partner brands to life. We also celebrated our 18-year relationship with Telstra by delivering over 100 hours of media exposure for Telstra, and through the Telstra Thanks program created over 30,000 live Premiership experiences for Telstra customers.

This year we concluded a landmark deal with our wagering partner Sportsbet. This deal has many non-financial benefits for the game including the creation of an innovative responsible gambling program.

Holden, our naming rights partner for State of Origin and the Under 20s competition, activated one of the most successful grassroots campaigns in the game's history through their Junior State of Origin campaign.

This drove a net promoter score increase of 13 points for females between the ages of 35 and 54.



COMMERCIAL PARTNERSHIPS AND MAJOR EVENTS CONT...

During Origin, the CUB VB Sheds entertained over 15,000 fans as part of an activation outside the stadium. CUB and SAB Miller, for the first time worldwide, allowed a brand to alter their colours with VB turning Blue in support of their relationship with the NSWRL.

Harvey Norman is another example of a long-term partnership that has grown significantly over time. The partnership extends well beyond traditional assets, for example their sponsorship of the Jillaroos includes personal mentoring of players by CEO Katie Page.

Harvey Norman's investment in the game includes the Premiership, All Stars week, Jillaroos and the Women in League program.

In 2016 we also welcomed Diageo as a major naming rights partner for Bundaberg Super Saturday and official spirit of the Premiership and State of Origin series.

Our focus in 2017 is to continue to develop new ways of creating value for not only our corporate partners but also for our fans, through better live experiences and brand activations as well as connecting partner products and benefits with our loyal fans and dedicated members.

MAJOR EVENTS

Highlights from the 2016 major event season included:

- » A near capacity Test Match in Newcastle in May and a sold-out Test Match in Perth
- » Announcement of further premium events planned for Western Australia including a State of Origin match in 2019 and other Premiership games
- » One of the most successful Finals Series in history with stadiums at 90+ per cent capacity across the nine games, played in four Australian states and territories and an average crowd of over 34,000 across the series
- » The Finals Series also achieved an average audience of 1.7 million viewers per game and a 38 per cent increase in digital and social media engagement
- » A Grand Final record merchandise sale with ANZ Stadium covered in a sea of blue Cronulla supporters
- » A new position for the Dally M awards on Wednesday night of Grand Final week that also included a memorable fan day on Thursday at the Sydney Opera House forecourt.



SUPPORTING CLUBS, STATES & AFFILIATES

The NRL continues to have dedicated resources in its Club and State Services team who work closely with all Clubs and States to improve their financial sustainability. This dedicated team provides a variety of tools including business planning, benchmarking and governance support.

The NRL competition requires 16 viable NRL Clubs. In line with the NRL's strategic objective to strengthen Clubs so they are sustainable and resourced to perform and grow; four Clubs are in receipt of loans in 2016.

A full review of the recoverability of the loan portfolio was undertaken in 2016.

CLUBS

Across the portfolio of Club loans, an impairment charge of \$7.52m was taken in 2016 (\$8.6m in 2015). Notwithstanding the impairment, no Club loans were forgiven and accordingly all remain payable in full according to their terms.

Clubs, States and Affiliates Loan & Investment Portfolio as at 31 October 2016				
	Clubs	States	Affiliates	Total
NO. OF LOANS	4	0	0	4
Value of Loans & Investments (\$m)				
Total Loans	32.4	0.0	0.0	32.4
Gross Drawn Loans	28.2	0.0	0.0	28.2
Loan Impairment	(16.0)	0.0	0.0	(16.0)
Loan Write-down	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Drawn Loans	12.2	0.0	0.0	12.2
Undrawn Loans	4.2	0.0	0.0	4.2

Note: For simplicity of presentation, Wests Tigers and Balmain Tigers are noted as one Club in the above table

Key terms

Term:

At call to six years

Security:

Unsecured (intercompany) and secured

Interest:

Arm's length/market-based

Loan recipients at 31 October 2016

Clubs: St George Illawarra Dragons, Wests Tigers, Balmain Tigers, Gold Coast Titans and Newcastle Knights

Note:

Additional to the loans are other loans to NRL Clubs of \$1.5m per Club which have been issued as at 31 October 2016. These have been reflected separately in Other Receivables (Non-Current) in the Financial Statements.

NSW COUNTRY RUGBY LEAGUE



NSW Country Rugby League oversaw another increase in participation in 2016, with more than 55,000 players taking the field each weekend from almost 500 clubs across regional New South Wales.

But it was the Women's game once again which showed the greatest surge in popularity; with more than 7000 players taking part in tackle and tag competitions in all groups across the state.

Women's participation has grown an astonishing 139 per cent over the last four years, with 50 per cent of all nationally registered female Rugby League players now participating in Country Rugby League competitions.

This season also saw the introduction of Ladies League Tag into the Senior Country Championships for the first time.

Further highlights for 2016 included a sold-out Country v City fixture at Tamworth's Scully Park Regional Sporting Complex, an extended U16s and 18s Representative program and successful tours of Perth and Samoa for our Country Representative teams.

Additional highpoints of 2016 included:

- » Country Firsts and U16 Representative Teams featuring in the historic Samoa v Fiji Test Match at Apia Park
- » The Gunning Roos taking out 2016 Telstra National Grassroots Club of the Year
- » A successful CRL Pathways and Development Camp featuring over 350 players, coaches and trainers at the Sydney Academy of Sport in Narrabeen
- » Bega Roosters Kezie Apps winning Dally M Female Player of the Year.





In 2016, the NSWRL enjoyed a successful year on and off the field as the organisation celebrated milestones, broke records and achieved great success.

Significant steps were taken to achieve long-term growth and success for the organisation. NSW Minister for Sport, the Hon. Stuart Ayres, joined NSW VB Blues coach Laurie Daley and NSW Rugby League Chairman Dr George Peponis OAM to turn the first sod on the \$20 million Centre of Excellence in August.

The construction of the facility, to be completed at the end of 2017 at Sydney Olympic Park, will be a game-changer, nursing NSWRL's next generation of talent.

The Centre of Excellence will feature the highest quality facilities to ensure the longevity and future success of Rugby League in NSW.

Despite falling short in the State of Origin Series, NSW VB Blues coach Laurie Daley blooded eight debutants and NSW won the Under 16s, 18s and 20s State of Origin contests.

The NSWRL continues to strengthen its commitment to the growth and development of the women's game, with NSW winning the Interstate Women's Challenge over Queensland for the first time in 18 years.



The NSWRL is in a strong and exciting position moving into the future, as illustrated by the following highlights in 2016:

- » The next generation of NSW Blues players claimed all three pieces of silverware, winning the Under 16s, 18s and 20s State of Origins, highlighting the success of the NSWRL Pathways Program
- » NSWRL teams won the National Junior Representative titles, with the Penrith Panthers (SG Ball) winning the U18s crown and Parramatta Eels (Harold Matthews) undefeated in claiming the U16s championship
- » The NSWRL Hogs For The Homeless program raised almost \$150,000 for Father Chris Riley's Youth Off The Streets organisation
- » More than 650 guests attended the prestigious Brad Fittler Medal, won by NSW VB Blues second-rower Josh Jackson, the first Canterbury Bulldogs representative to claim the honour
- » More than 2300 Junior League participants across the state signed NSWRL's 'Respect' Pledge, while all players and coaches shook the hand of the referee as part of a game-wide initiative aimed at stamping out unacceptable behaviour during Respect Round in June

- » NSWRL launched the 2016 season with the announcement of Intrust Super as the major new naming rights sponsor of the state's premier competition, the Intrust Super Premiership NSW
- » The 2016 NSWRL season was again another fantastic spectacle, with Mounties creating history in becoming the first Club since St George in 1985 to reach all three NSWRL senior grade Grand Finals – Intrust Super Premiership NSW, Ron Massey Cup and Sydney Shield
- » The Illawarra Cutters celebrated their first Intrust Super Premiership NSW title on a memorable day in which NSWRL said goodbye to one of Rugby League's most iconic venues, Parramatta's Pirtek Stadium. The Cutters went on to win the National Intrust Super Cup over QLD titleholders, Burleigh Bears
- » More than 600 women and teenage boys and girls took part in one of Australia's biggest multicultural Rugby League carnivals, the Harmony Cup, one of many community football tournaments held by NSWRL, along with the Cabramatta Nines, Immortals Challenge and the All Schools Carnival
- » New alternative formats of Rugby League – Weight and age (W8s), Mates (M8s) and Friday Night 9s – were introduced in the off-season as part of the NSWRL's pilot program, trialling modified fun, family-friendly formats of the game. From juniors to seniors, these three programs saw five competitions run across Sydney as part of an exciting new concept to attract more people to our game.

Competitions

- » Almost 39,000 players registered to take part in the NSWRL's 11 Junior League competitions in 2016, which included a 35 per cent growth in female participation
- » More than 3250 games were managed by the NSWRL, with assistance and support provided for a further 2000 games
- » Importantly, more than 3200 children from more than 200 schools in Western Sydney attended Australia's biggest junior Rugby League carnival, the All Schools event at St Marys.





QLD RUGBY LEAGUE



A new era for Rugby League in Queensland began when the XXXX Maroons won their first series with new Coach Kevin Walters at the helm in June.

The Maroons' series-clinching win against the Blues at Suncorp Stadium was followed by the official opening of the new Queensland headquarters.

Rugby League Central Queensland is now home to nearly 100 QRL, NRL, Men of League, Touch Football and 2017 Rugby League World Cup staff.

Other significant off-field developments this year included the growth of the QRL's Digital department, which recorded some astonishing numbers as fans engaged with the game in record numbers.

Wellbeing and Education went to a whole new level as well, thanks to the game's strong relationship with the State Government.

Grassroots clubs and their local communities will be the major beneficiaries after the government committed close to \$1 million in funding for the NRL's State of Mind program in Queensland.

The program aims to reduce the stigma around mental ill health and increase mental health literacy across grassroots Rugby League clubs.

In addition the NRL, QRL and Queensland Government have committed to a new Footy Facilities Fund from 2017 to help deliver local rugby league infrastructure projects to promote participation growth.

On the field, the State continued its renowned production line with three Queensland Academy of Sport Emerging players – Corey Oates, Justin O'Neill and Gavin Cooper – all making their Origin debuts under Walters.

Second tier Rugby League went from strength to strength with the 2016 Intrust Super Cup culminating in the Grand Final played in front of nearly 7000 fans at Suncorp Stadium in September.

More than 148,000 television viewers watched all the live action as the Burleigh Bears clinched their first premiership since 2004.

Earlier in the year, the Bears travelled to Charleville in the south-west of Queensland as part of the Intrust Super Cup's 'Get in the Game' Country Week Round.

Six games in total were played in regional areas in a major boost for the sport in the bush.

Participation numbers across the State remained steady, with 60,794 players signing up to play in QRL competitions.



Key numbers in 2016:

- » 60,794: The number of registered players in QRL Competitions. Registered female participation grew by nearly 13 per cent between 2015 and 2016
- » 48,000: Kilometres recorded in the QRL motorhome which supports the outback Rugby League community
- » \$90,000: Total revenue raised by the local clubs and leagues who hosted Intrust Super Cup Country Week matches
- » 148,652: The number of television viewers (combined metro and regional audience) who watched the Intrust Super Cup Grand Final between the Burleigh Bears and Redcliffe Dolphins
- » 497: the number of games in Queensland's Intrust Super Cup collectively played by 17 players involved in the Melbourne Storm's NRL Grand Final squad
- » \$1 million: State Government funding driving the NRL's State of Mind program for grassroots clubs in Queensland
- » 72: The combined number of years Major Partners XXXX, Suncorp, Canterbury, Intrust Super and Star Entertainment Group have been backing the QRL and Maroons
- » 37,066,780: online video plays recorded by the QRL Digital team.

NRL ACROSS AUSTRALIA – AFFILIATED STATES

Support and interest for Rugby League across the country continued to grow in 2016 with more than 52,000 people attending an NRL match outside the traditional East Coast strongholds.

Total participation from the Affiliated States remained steady, while a record number of more than 68,000 school children participated in NRL programs delivered by Game Development Officers.

To support this growth in interest, the NRL announced a new National Footy Facilities Fund of \$3 million to support continued growth and participation of Rugby League at all levels.

The fund aims to improve the quality, availability and standard of local leagues and facilities across all state and territories, and will see a total of \$3 million seeded into the fund to be delivered over the next six years.

South Australia

The NRL South Australia restructure allowed for a new competition to be formed in Adelaide, which includes four new clubs and saw player numbers reach approximately 1000. South Australia played host to the Combined Affiliated States Carnival in June and Kiowa Goodman from Mount Gambier was awarded the Women in League Achievement Award for her outstanding and significant contribution to growing the game in the region.

Northern Territory

There were a total of 2400 players registered in the local competitions which stretch from Darwin to Katherine and as far as Gove to Alice Springs.

The Northern Territory hosted another two successful matches between the Parramatta Eels and Gold Coast Titans, including a pre-season trial in Alice Springs in front of more than 2400 fans which ended in a draw.

Rugby League in Tennant Creek was revived with the Brumbies travelling more than 500km to play Alice Springs for the Desert Cup. Furthermore, Darwin will host a quarter-final match as part of the Rugby League World Cup in 2017.

Victoria

A record 3745 registered players from 200 teams across Melbourne and Regional Victoria saw Rugby League in Victoria grow by eight per cent in 2016. Two new clubs were established in the metropolitan competition, while the regional competitions continued to flourish. Victoria won the Under 18s competition at the Affiliated States Championships for the second consecutive year, with the Opens team also taking out top spot.

Tasmania

Tasmania continues to be supported by NRL Victoria, with an Operations Manager responsible for delivering both Rugby League and Touch Football to juniors through schools-based programs in Hobart.

Western Australia

Western Australia delivered another impressive year for the game with two NRL Telstra Premiership fixtures, a sold out October Test Match and the announcement of both a Rugby League World Cup double header in 2017 and a State of Origin match in 2019 to be held in Perth.

It resulted in an increased level of interest in the game commercially as well as growth in television ratings, despite a slight downturn in participation figures, with more than 3300 players registered to play Rugby League.

The Perth metropolitan competition continued to be the standout State competition, while the NRLWA Men's team took out their seventh consecutive Combined Affiliated States title in South Australia.

The NRL also appointed a new Game Development Officer to the Bunbury region to continue the growth of the game at the junior, schools and grassroots level.

Footy Facilities Fund

- » Increasing participation opportunities
- » Improving the sustainability and safety of local, grassroots Rugby League competitions through facilities that help strengthen existing clubs or grow new clubs
- » Promoting the game throughout local communities
- » Providing improved access and facilities for all, irrespective of age, gender and ability.





SECTION

03

DEVELOPING
OUR GAME

INTEGRITY & GOVERNANCE

Nothing is more important than the integrity of our game, both on and off the field.

2016 saw significant increases in funding devoted to the NRL Integrity & Compliance Unit and our integrity programs. The Integrity Unit is charged with ensuring compliance with all aspects of the NRL Rules, from the Code of Conduct and Player behaviour to anti-doping regulation and the NRL Salary Cap.

BROADER AND STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

Through its work in 2016, NRL Integrity has broadened and strengthened its relationships with State and Federal Police as well as other enforcement and regulatory bodies. This work has included liaising with NSW Police in an ongoing investigation into alleged match-fixing in the NRL Competition. The integrity of our game is fundamental. In upholding the game's integrity, the NRL has made clear that any person found to have engaged in match-fixing can expect a life ban.

The NRL has also strengthened its relationships with sports wagering operators through its network of Integrity Agreements. These Agreements facilitate the sharing of information on wagering activity in the interests of identifying integrity risks.

PLAYER BEHAVIOUR & ILLICIT DRUGS

2016 saw some player behaviour incidents that damaged the image of the game. However the NRL Rules helped ensure that where incidents occurred they were dealt with appropriately by the Player's Club or, in certain cases, the NRL directly. The year also saw improvements in Club compliance on integrity matters, including reporting and handling of incidents.

The NRL has maintained its commitment to educating players on the dangers of illicit and hazardous drugs through the game's welfare-focused drug testing policy, which completed its second year as an NRL administered program.

SALARY CAP

The NRL Salary Cap operates to ensure that playing talent is more evenly spread across the 16 NRL Clubs. It remains one of the key factors behind why the NRL Telstra Premiership remains so close and competitive each year.

In 2016 the Salary Cap Auditor and NRL Integrity conducted one of the largest investigations in the NRL's history into a Club's salary cap compliance.

The investigation into the Parramatta Eels Club ultimately uncovered a history of salary cap cheating extending over several years.

As a result, the Club incurred sanctions including a \$1 million fine and the stripping of all competition points accrued to Round 12 of the 2016 Season. The Club was also stripped of its 2016 Auckland Nines title and five Club Officials had their registrations with the NRL cancelled. Following imposition of the sanctions the NRL worked with the Club to recommend governance structures that would help return the Club to strength.



NRL SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL CONTENT

Our fans viewed and shared more Rugby League content in 2016 than ever before.

The NRL continues to enhance its thriving digital and social media footprint with more Australians following the game on Facebook than any other global sporting code or team.

- » Our fan base is strong – a cumulative audience of 11 million people follow the game on social media through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat across NRL, Clubs and State Leagues
 - NRL saw a 29 per cent growth across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
 - NRL Facebook now has more than 1.32 million fans
 - Instagram alone had a 61 per cent year -on-year growth increase
- » We're at the forefront of innovation – the first sport in the world to launch a 'bot' on the globally popular Facebook Messenger platform, during the Holden State of Origin series, beating the likes of the NBA in the process
- » Real-Time engagement – The NRL launched a first-of-its-kind real-time auction of previously unattainable Holden State of Origin game-used items. Fans were given the chance to purchase, via social media, players jerseys, shorts, headgear, socks and boots as well as corner posts / pads and even the game ball, live as the game unfolded with all proceeds going to NRL Mental Health charities

» We're connecting through vision – more than 170 million video views across NRL's official channels in 2016.

Social media continues to be one of the key drivers of memberships, attendances and connections with fans.

This was never more evident than when the NRL partnered with Snapchat during the 2016 NRL Finals to produce exclusive content within the Snapchat app with fans submitting their perspective of our game into officially curated 'live stories'.

2016 also saw the launch of the NRL Rookie, the NRL's first realityTV show. The show's ten episodes aired across the Nine Network with an average audience of more than 450,000 people per episode.

After ten gruelling weeks of extreme challenges, hard training and some great football, the NRL Rookie culminated with Lou Goodwin of West Wyalong signing an NRL contract with the Canberra Raiders for the 2017 season.

In 2016, the NRL relaunched the home of grassroots Rugby League, PlayNRL.com

The new site, optimised for mobile viewing, offers players, coaches, volunteers, trainers and referees more advanced and easy-to-deliver resources available than any other sport in the country.

There are more than 150 coaching activities in video and written format, 50 pre-built training sessions across all age groups that even feature some of the game's biggest stars.

NRL DIGITAL MEDIA / TELSTRA PARTNERSHIP

The NRL and Telstra continued its strong and successful partnership in 2016, with the NRL Digital Media team providing the content, resource, expertise, innovation and day-to-day management for NRL Digital.

The continued growth of Rugby League online was serviced via the suite of NRL Digital assets and apps from NRL.com, NRL Clubs, State bodies as well as the popular NRL Tipping and NRL Fantasy games.

Content was key in 2016 and the NRL Digital Network delivered more content to more people than ever before.

A plan to deliver tailor-made and snackable content specifically for fans to consume on the go resulted in another record breaking year in digital. The Official NRL App from Telstra saw a 25 per cent increase in audience, a 57 per cent increase in visits and a 60 per cent increase in engagement, with the number of people watching live games on their mobile or tablets more than doubling year-on-year. In fact, more than 100 million minutes of live video was streamed in 2016 for the first time.

NRL Digital continued to innovate with Telstra, this time alongside Samsung Australia with Virtual Reality on Australia's biggest sporting stage, Holden State of Origin.

Former Origin players Matt King and Petero Civoniceva experienced the game in 360-degree Virtual Reality, from the perspective of current players and coaches with the NRL pioneering bringing this level of technology to fans to put them in places they've never been before.





SECTION

04

OUR COMMUNITY

THE NRL COMMUNITY

Community is not just part of our game – it is our game.

It's our community that binds us together and underpins everything we set out to achieve, both on and off the field.

The vision is to lead and inspire people to be the best they possibly can be by providing pathways and opportunities to live positive and respectful lives.

The NRL's community programs have enormous reach, spanning communities across Australia as well as into New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

In 2016, our work in the community impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, showing the significant reach and ability of the game to give back to the people and communities that make our game so great.

The year culminated in a host of Rugby League volunteers, from Thursday Island to Mount Gambier, being celebrated at the 10th annual NRL Community Awards, acknowledging some of the game's many unassuming heroes and their tireless community work.



RACISM. IT STOPS WITH ME



MEETING ONE OF OUR NRL COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Meet George "Terry" Abednego – the 2016 NRL Community 'Volunteer of the Year' Award winner.

When it comes to Rugby League in the Torres Strait, there is one man that is the backbone, the heart and the soul. Terry is the driving force, working tirelessly to create opportunities for the people of Thursday Island and the outer Islands to participate in the game of Rugby League.

Terry is the President of the Zenadh Kes Rugby League, which is a five team competition based on Thursday Island.

The competition consists of players from all over the islands of the Torres Strait such as Badu, Mobiag and Iama. Dinghies full of league players can be seen arriving on the beach starting from Friday evening through to Saturday mornings in readiness for the games.

Whether it's setting up the field, cooking the BBQ, securing sponsorship for the Club or mentoring other coaches, Terry can and does do it all. He is an inspiring leader for the area and committed to all forms of the game whether it be for juniors, women or seniors.

In 2016 Terry was recognised for his incredible contribution to the game and named the national NRL Community 'Volunteer of the Year'.

NRL HEALTH

The NRL is a powerful voice for physical and mental health and wellbeing, promoting the benefits of sport and exercise to help people feel healthy, positive and connected.

Mental illness doesn't pick a side, so the engagement of the game's elite playing group has been key in addressing stigma and shifting behaviour.

Known as State of Mind Ambassadors, these men and women have a close personal connection to mental wellbeing, and are committed to encouraging our communities to improve their own mental health literacy and seek help no matter how big or small the problem may be.

The NRL's State of Mind program aims to reduce the stigma around mental illness by creating positive discussion and connections in our communities, and encouraging people to seek help. In 2016 the program was expanded to include a grassroots program. The results of this initiative have been outstanding:

72%
less perceived stigma

59%
improved knowledge of effective social support

98%
are now more likely to seek professional help

“There's nothing shameful about speaking about issues or problems that you're going through. People are there to help you and support you in any way you need.”

Joel Thompson

Ken Stephen Medal winner and State of Mind Ambassador



NRL LEARN

The NRL runs a range of programs aimed at improving education, enhancing employment opportunities, opening new pathways and providing life skills for both children and adults alike.

The programs promote the importance of study, education and working hard to achieve goals. This is important as people go from the classroom to the locker room.

NRL Learn programs and partners include:

- » Rugby League Reads
- » Dream Believe Achieve
- » School to Work (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet)
- » NRL Values program
- » NRL Learning Centre

250,000
school children educated on the importance of wellbeing during Community Carnival

NRL RESPECT

The NRL are champions for developing self-respect and social responsibility to encourage inclusion within our communities.

Our highly successful suite of programs – including In League In Harmony and Tackle Bullying – encourage everyone in the game to speak up against bullying, violence, racism and any other form of discrimination.

350 HOURS
of face-to-face delivery of our In League In Harmony program

In 2016, the NRL stepped up its 'Voice Against Violence' program with additional resources in a continued and united resolve to stand up, speak out and take action against domestic violence.

The message is simple – violence in any form is unacceptable, especially against women and children.

The expanded Voice Against Violence initiative saw the introduction of an awareness campaign that featured Australian Kangaroos Coach Mal Meninga, a new website, and a grassroots program designed to educate 16-18 year olds in Clubs regarding respectful relationships.

The NRL remains committed to utilising its powerful voice and reach to stand by our expert partners, the Full Stop Foundation, Our Watch and White Ribbon, to take action to prevent violence against women and children.

“Sporting clubs and organisations bring together large numbers of people and are a ready-made environment to promote women's participation and opportunities to eliminate gender-based discrimination, disrespect for women and violence-supportive attitudes. It is pleasing that this is what the NRL is doing and the code should be commended for providing ongoing awareness towards ending discrimination and violence against women.”

Mary Barry

Our Watch CEO

INDIGENOUS STRATEGY

Rugby League is a fundamental part of the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities.

Whether it is participating in regular competitions as a player, referee, coach, volunteer or a spectator, being involved in Indigenous carnivals that take place or attending the wonderful All Stars game, the passion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples towards Rugby League is unrivalled.

The Game's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was further enhanced in 2016 with the establishment of the Indigenous Strategy Team. With the development of the Game's Indigenous Engagement Strategy in 2016 and the ongoing implementation of our third Reconciliation Action Plan, our dedication to providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both on and off the field continues to grow from strength to strength.

On the field we once again witnessed the amazing success of the Harvey Norman All Stars and the commitment of Clubs and players during the Indigenous Round.

On the field, the game saw 13 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players make their NRL debut. Additionally, a record 42 per cent of players who started the Round 13 clash between the South Sydney Rabbitohs and Gold Coast Titans were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players, a feat unmatched in Australian sport.

Off the field we are committed to increasing Indigenous employment across the game and continue to roll out cultural awareness training across our staff network. The organisation continued to strategically engage and invest in the services provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses throughout 2016.

The NRL School to Work program has given young Indigenous students the confidence to aspire to achieve more in their lives.

The program supports and mentors young Indigenous students to stay at school, encourages them to achieve their goals, and assists them in transitioning into further education and employment.

With the support of our Clubs, the program has been supporting Indigenous youth since 2011 and has witnessed more than 650 students participate in the program.

The successful transition rate from school-based studies to employment is 98 per cent – greater than the national average of 62 per cent for similar education and employment outcome programs. During 2016 and heading into 2017, the program was extended to support an additional 500 participants right across the country.

In addition, construction of NRL Cowboys House – an accommodation solution for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men from remote Queensland attending secondary school in Townsville – was completed in 2016. Accommodating 50 students, the House will provide educational, employment and training opportunities in a culturally appropriate, safe and engaging residential environment. Funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments, the House is managed by the Cowboys Community Foundation and supported by the NRL.

The success of the NRL's School to Work program was acknowledged on the international stage in 2016 with the NRL winning the Global Governing Body of the Year at the Beyond Sport Awards in London.



2016 AMBASSADORS

Based in many locations across Australia and New Zealand, our NRL Ambassadors assist in the delivery of Community and Wellbeing and Education programs as well as working across major events, sponsorship and the Premiership season.

The NRL Ambassador program consists of former Rugby League players who are passionate about using their profile to create a positive difference in the game.

Forty former Rugby League stars were appointed as ambassadors in 2016, with 15 new ambassadors to the team, including six female ambassadors, our first Kiwi Fern and six Indigenous ambassadors. Our ambassadors include:

Adam MacDougall
 Alan Tongue
 Anthony Minichiello
 Alex McKinnon
 Ben Ross
 Ben Smith
 Brent Tate
 Brett Kimmorley
 Bronson Harrison
 Dallas Johnson
 Dan Hunt
 Danny Buderus
 Darren Lockyer
 David Simmons
 George Rose
 Georgia Hale
 Jason King
 Jerome Ropati
 Joe Galuvao
 John Skandalis

Josh Perry
 Justin Hodges
 Luke Bailey
 Mario Fenech
 Matt Cooper
 Matt King
 Matthew Bowen
 Nathan Hindmarsh
 Nathan Merritt
 Petero Cioniceva
 Renae Kunst
 Roy Asotasi
 Ruan Sims
 Samantha Hammond
 Shaun Timmins
 Stephanie Hancock
 Tallisha Harden
 Tom Learoyd-Lahrs
 Wendell Sailor



RUGBY LEAGUE IN THE PACIFIC

It was another big year for Rugby League in the Pacific in 2016, both on and off the field.

Our community programs, with support from governments, our commercial partners Digicel and GE, throughout Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji helped deliver the game to more people in the Pacific than ever before.

The highlight this year was the historic Test match Samoa hosted against Fiji in Apia on 8 October to celebrate 30 years of Rugby League in Samoa. It was the country's first official Test match on home soil.

Fiji spoiled the party on the day, overturning an 18 point deficit after 20 minutes to steal a wonderful 20-18 win in front of a packed Apia crowd.

PACIFIC OUTREACH PROGRAM

The NRL's Pacific Outreach Program is a partnership between the Australian Government (through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), the Australian Rugby League Commission and the Governments of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

The program is much more than the game of Rugby League. The power of the NRL is used to engage communities on important issues such as social inclusion, health, governance and education.

The NRL's Pacific Outreach Program aims are to:

1. Improve student engagement with education in and out of the classroom via communication of positive social messages;
2. Increase opportunities for empowerment of females of all ages; and
3. Improve organisational and management capacity of Rugby League in the Pacific.

Numbers from the Pacific

- » 150,000 Rugby League experiences
- » 40,000 students have participated in the League for Life Program in schools
- » 50 staff employed by the NRL across the Pacific; 40 per cent of leadership positions are held by women.

MEN OF LEAGUE

The NRL continued its strong support for The Men of League Foundation in 2016, highlighted by the Men of League Round in Round 20 of the NRL Telstra Premiership season.

The Men of League Foundation supports the men, women and children of the Rugby League community who are in necessitous circumstances, be they volunteers, official, referees, long-retired players at all levels and their dependent families.

In 2016, The Men of League Foundation, in partnership with the Australian Kangaroos, announced the Captains' Captain – an award to recognise an Australian Kangaroos Captain for both his service to Australia and his leadership, excellence and longevity as a player and citizen.

After more than 3600 votes were cast by the Rugby League public, the final result was unveiled at The Men of League Foundation Gala Dinner, with Darren Lockyer named as the Captains' Captain.

The Men of League Foundation has distributed over \$4,500,000 in benevolent support to those from the Rugby League family in need since its formation in 2002. Support is given to those from all levels of the game who have suffered an injury or illness and are in financial hardship, from grassroots canteen staff through to former players. There is so much for which The Foundation can be proud. Whether it be a wheelchair, medical bills, transport, a hospital visit, flowers or a bowl of fruit, The Foundation has made a difference to the lives of so many.

“Rugby League is blessed to have such generous fans who never give up on their team and never hesitate to lend a hand when those around them are doing it tough.”

Peter Collins
Men of League CEO



CARING FOR THE
MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN
OF THE RUGBY LEAGUE COMMUNITY





SECTION

05

LOOKING
FORWARD TO 2017

ON THE FIELD

PATHWAYS

A restructure of Rugby League competitions in New South Wales and Queensland will form part of a new pathway for aspiring elite NRL players from 2018. The competition structure is based upon a decentralised model which expands the base for junior talent development whilst realigning the talent development and competition structures nationally.

The new model sees the cessation of the National Youth Competition which will be replaced by local Under 20s competitions which are aligned to revamped and expanded Intrust Super Cup competitions in both New South Wales and Queensland. This provides a clearer pathway for elite junior players and enables them to stay at home longer, whilst also seeing the game expand regionally throughout Australia and into neighbouring Pacific Nations via the state-based Intrust Super Cup competitions.

PARTICIPATION REVIEW

The NRL is currently undertaking a detailed review of the current participation and engagement model to drive participation growth in the game in the future.

The review includes a detailed product and delivery model assessment of current Rugby League participation offerings as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of the current Rugby League pathway. The review will inform the development of an optimal participation model.

The findings and recommendations from the review are scheduled to be presented to the ARLC in the first half of 2017.



“The new model will help to expand the game both in Australia and overseas and it provides a more appropriate development pathway for our young players.”

Mal Meninga
Australian Kangaroos Coach



OFF THE FIELD

STADIA

NRL fans secured the most significant commitment ever to state-of-the-art stadium facilities in the game's history under the \$1.6 billion package approved by the New South Wales Government in April. The proposed investment in rectangular facilities was a landmark result for Rugby League in New South Wales and will see three world-class Rugby League stadia in Sydney in the coming years.

The package, announced by the New South Wales Government, includes:

- » A new 30,000 seat stadium in Parramatta, expected to be completed during 2019
- » The transformation of ANZ Stadium into a 70,000 seat rectangular stadium, bringing fans closer to the action
- » Upgrades to Allianz Stadium
- » \$40 million towards new Centres of Excellence for NRL Clubs in New South Wales

Alongside the landmark New South Wales Government deal, a new 25,000 seat stadium will be delivered in Townsville by 2020. A commitment of \$140 million dollars from the Queensland Government, \$100 million from the Federal Government and \$10 million from the game will give North Queensland sports fans the facilities they deserve.

CLUB FUNDING

Funding for 2017 for NRL Clubs and States has been agreed in line with the existing broadcast cycle and CBA. On 20 December 2016, the ARLC entered into a Deed of Agreement that extends the current NRL Club licence agreement to 31 October 2023 and restructures the Club participation fee.

CBA

The RLPA and the NRL have entered into formal discussions regarding a new Collective Bargaining Agreement with the players. Both parties have committed to working together to get the best outcome for the game and for the players.

INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS

Following on from the record-breaking domestic media rights deal, SKY New Zealand renewed its media rights agreements for Australia v New Zealand Rugby League International Test matches and the NRL Premiership until the 2022 season.

The next phase in ensuring the best Rugby League competition in the world continues to grow is to take it to television screens and mobile devices across the globe. With Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea hosting the Rugby League World Cup, 2017 is the opportune time to finalise a new international broadcast rights agreement.



SECTION

06

FINANCIALS



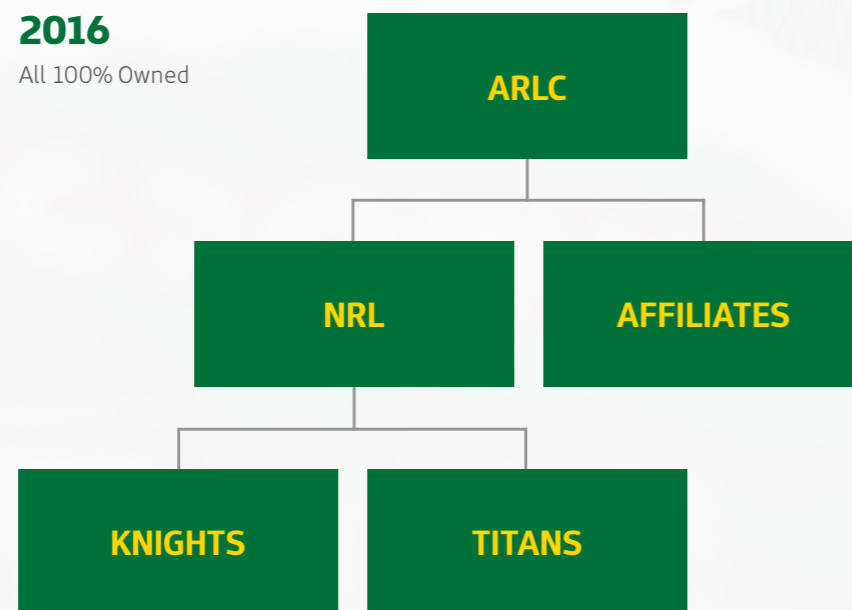
FINANCIAL RESULTS 2016

OVERVIEW

The following table reflects the change in corporate structure between 2015 and 2016 and illustrates what is consolidated into the statutory financial statements. The financial commentary separates the ARLC and NRL entities ("Controlling Body") and the subsidiary entities ("controlled entities") so a like for like comparison of financial results can be made.

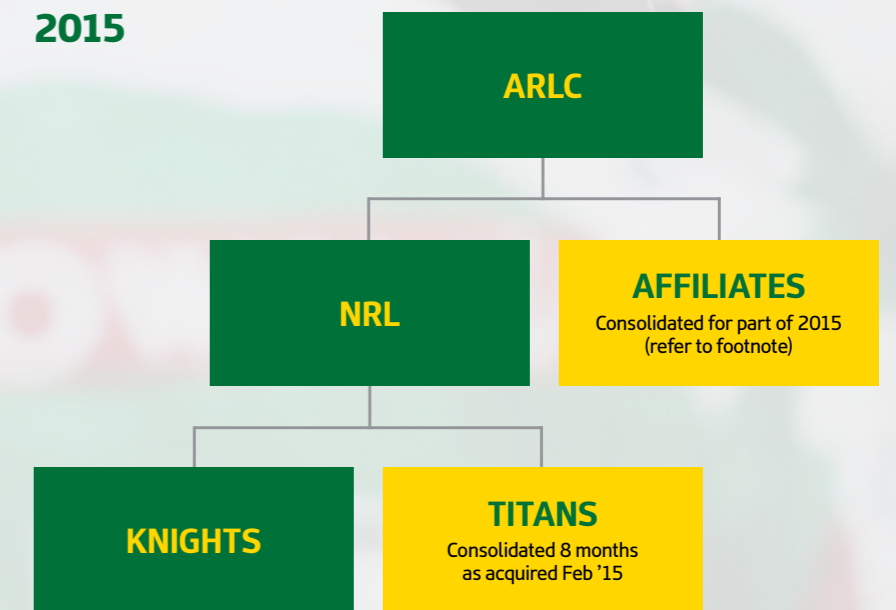
2016

All 100% Owned



Affiliates comprise of ARLC WA Ltd, ARLC SA Ltd, ARLC VIC Ltd, ARLC NT Ltd and NRL Foundation Ltd

2015



Affiliates comprise of ARLC WA Ltd (acquired 8 June 2015), ARLC SA Ltd (acquired 30 June 2015), ARLC VIC Ltd (acquired 1 July 2015) ARLC NT Ltd (acquired 6 July 2015) and NRL Foundation Ltd (incorporated 16 February 2015)

FINANCIAL RESULTS 2016

The following financial commentary relates to the underlying operations and results of the Controlling Body before consolidation.

Revenue

Total revenue year-on-year grew from \$334.0m to \$350.5m, or 5%.

- » Broadcast revenue: 2016 results reflect the fourth year of the 2013-2017 broadcast deal. As broadcast revenue is recognised on a straight line basis across the period, 2016 revenue of \$206.3m is largely in line with prior years (2015: \$204.7m)
- » Non-broadcast revenue: Revenue increased by \$14.9m (12%) in 2016 to \$144.2m. The increase was primarily due to a 55% increase in sponsorship revenues. New sponsorship agreements and product fees were offset by the effect of lower than expected revenues from some major events, in particular the third State of Origin match in Sydney.

Expenditure

- » Event, Game and Sponsorship expenditure: Steady at \$72.1m (2015: \$71.7m). Notably, Sponsorship margin increased from 73% to 79%, and the major events margin grew from 34% to 37%
- » Football: Increase of 21% driven primarily by the investment in technology associated with The NRL Bunker

- » Community and Player Welfare: While some government funding was reduced during the year, there was increased investment in this area resulting in no material change in expenditure year-on-year
- » Integrity and Salary Cap: The increase of \$0.6m to \$3.2m reflects the additional costs associated with the Parramatta Salary Cap breach along with increased capability and drug testing.

Distributions

In line with the ARLC's strategic priority to strengthen the financial sustainability of the game, total funds available for distribution increased in 2016 by \$11.2m (5%) to \$217.4m. Distributions totalling \$220.0m reflected a \$5.7m uplift on 2015. Financial reserves were used to fund the difference.

- » Clubs: Distributions to Clubs had an overall increase of \$2.2m (excludes Advances to NRL Clubs)
- » States: Distributions to States increased by \$1.8m. Excluding the one-off expenses in 2015 relating to merchandise royalty write-offs and affiliated States restructure, the distributions have increased \$3.9m year-on-year (15%), primarily due to an uplift in NSW and QLD State League funding
- » Development: Distributions increased by \$1.7m from 2015, to \$29.4m with the majority of the increase allocated to football facilities.

Controlling Body Result

The underlying operating deficit for the Controlling Body is \$2.6m (2015: deficit of \$8.1m).

Sustainability Fund

Due to ongoing market volatility and timing of cash payments under the 2012 broadcast agreements, financial assets previously held in the Sustainability Fund have been converted to cash. As a result there are no longer Financial Assets disclosed on the balance sheet, and the reserves appear as increased cash holdings.

Consolidated Result

The consolidated result includes the Controlling Body and its Controlled Entities.

Total consolidated revenue (excluding contra) disclosed in the Financial Statements is \$375.7m (2015: \$353.8m) and total funds available for distribution is \$195.8m (2015: \$186.4m). Total distributions on a consolidated basis totalled \$204.4m (2015: \$205.0m) with an overall deficit of \$8.6m (2015: deficit of \$18.7m).

Controlled Entity deficits total \$4.3m (2015: deficits of \$10.6m) along with the impairment charge of \$1.7m (2015: \$nil) representing the difference between the underlying operating deficit of \$2.6m (2015: deficit of \$8.1m) and the consolidated deficit of \$8.6m (2015: deficit of \$18.7m).

KEY FINANCIAL INDICATORS (Controlling Body)

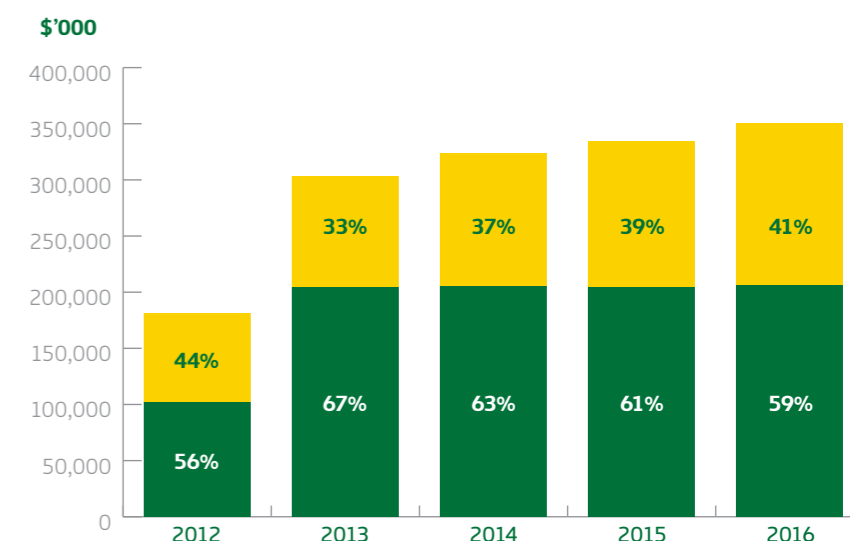
Revenue

Non-Broadcast Revenue

↑ 12%

on 2015 to \$144m

- Non-Broadcast Revenue
- Broadcast Revenue (excl. contra)

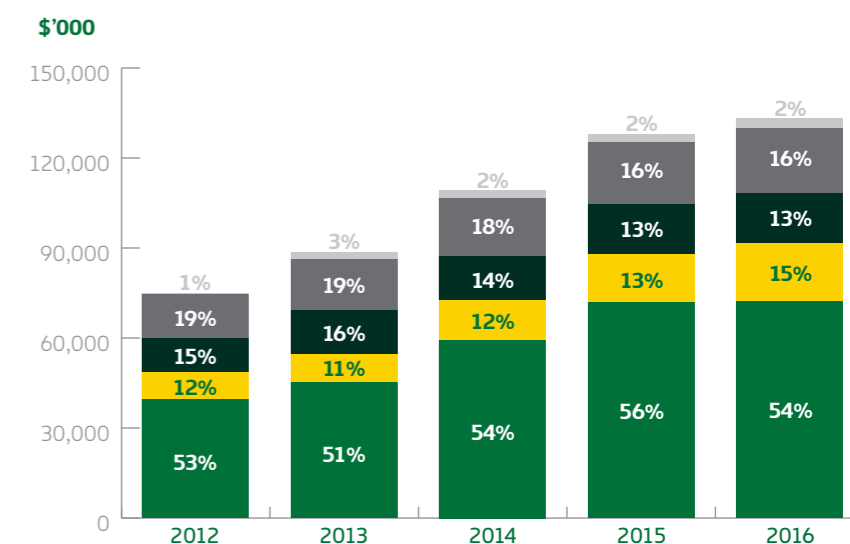


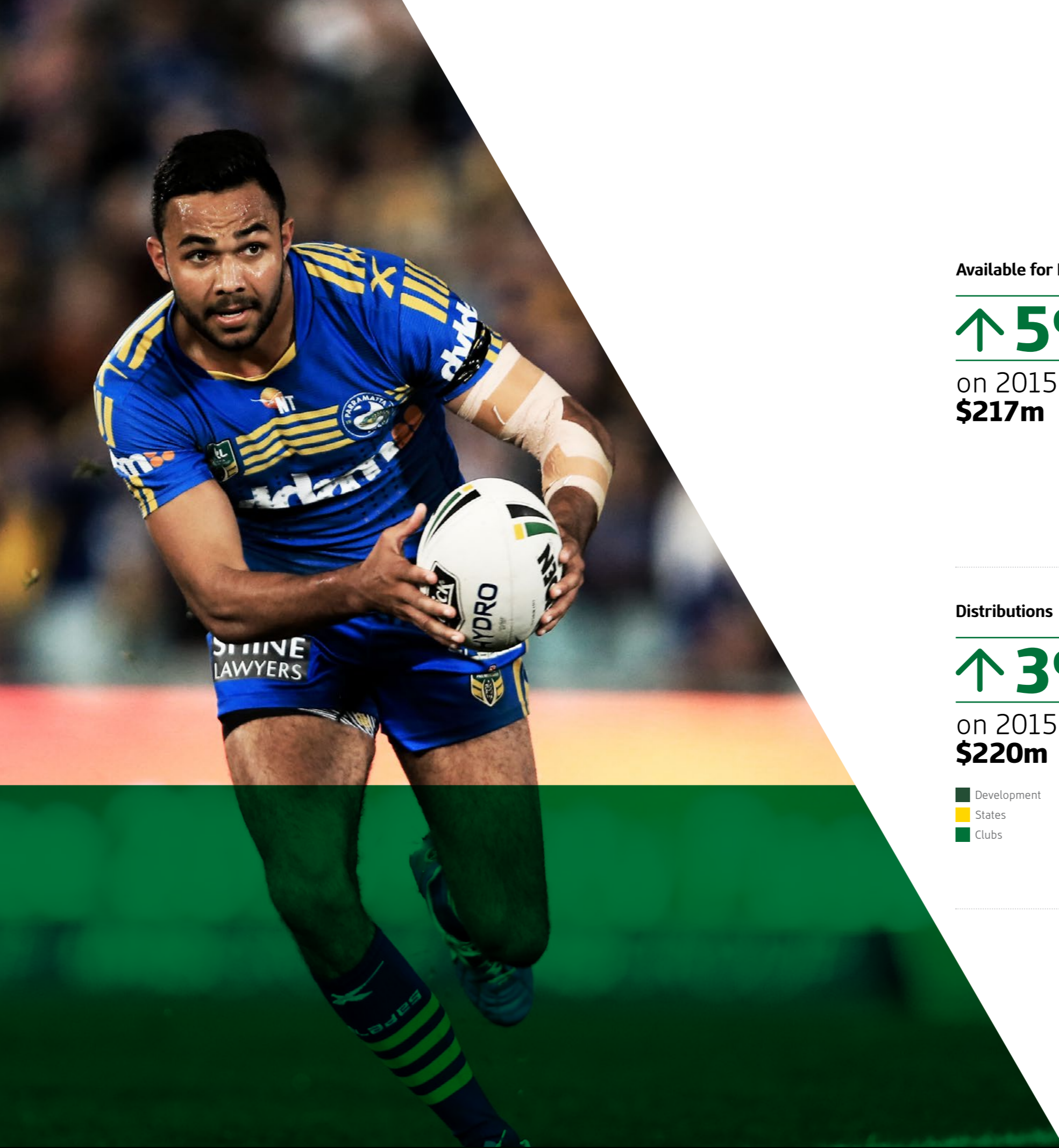
Expenditure

↑ 4%

on 2015 to \$133m

- Integrity and Salary Cap
- Administration
- Community and Player Welfare
- Football
- Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. contra)

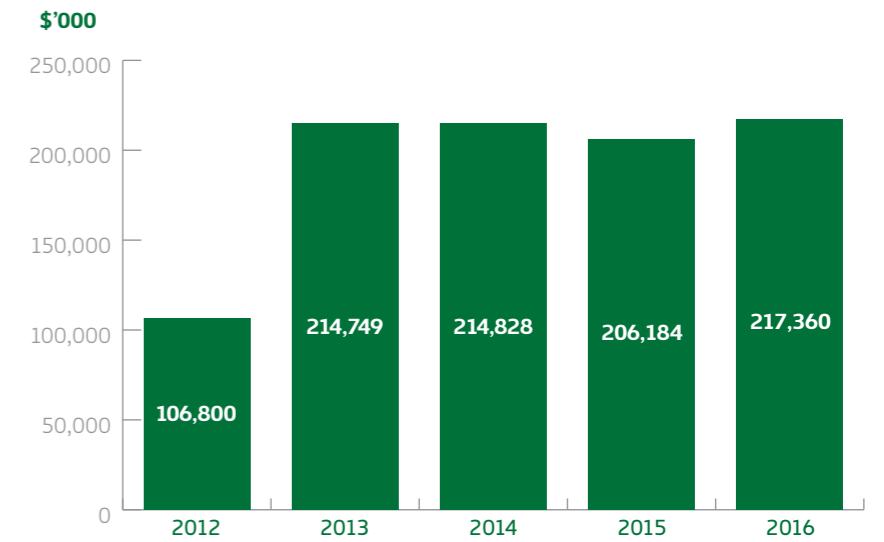




Available for Distribution

↑ 5%

on 2015 to
\$217m

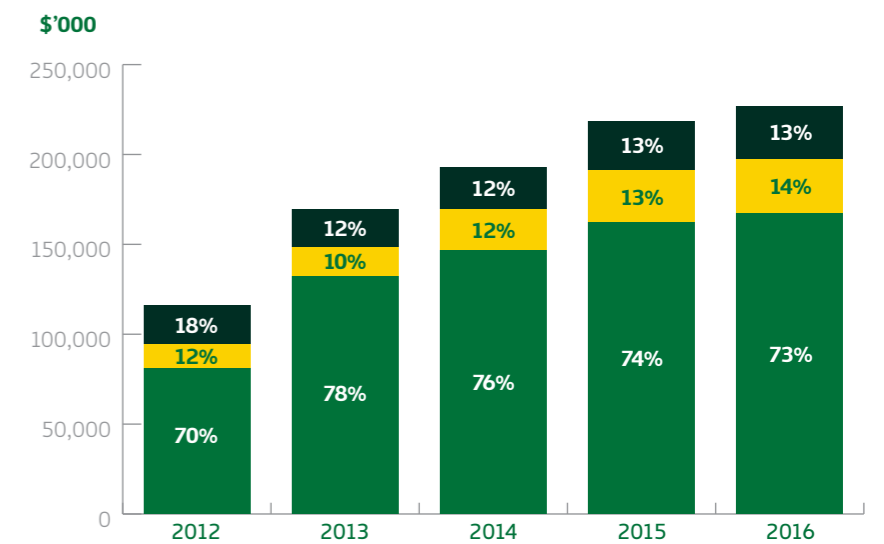


Distributions

↑ 3%

on 2015 to
\$220m

- Development
- States
- Clubs



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

THE CONTROLLING BODY 2012-2016: Underlying operating performance

PROFIT & LOSS (\$'000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015-16 \$	2015-16 %
Broadcast Revenue (excl. contra)	101,600	204,345	205,000	204,735	206,345	1,610	1%
Non-Broadcast Revenue	80,000	99,030	119,024	129,270	144,160	14,890	12%
Total Revenue	181,600	303,375	324,024	334,005	350,505	16,500	5%
Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. contra)	(39,400)	(45,121)	(59,345)	(71,728)	(72,085)	(357)	(0%)
Football	(9,100)	(9,600)	(13,035)	(16,089)	(19,428)	(3,339)	(21%)
Community and Player Welfare	(11,500)	(14,478)	(14,907)	(16,727)	(16,860)	(133)	(1%)
Integrity and Salary Cap	(450)	(2,240)	(2,516)	(2,595)	(3,221)	(626)	(24%)
Administration	(14,350)	(17,187)	(19,393)	(20,682)	(21,551)	(869)	(4%)
Funds Available for Distribution	106,800	214,749	214,828	206,184	217,360	11,176	5%
Clubs ¹	(81,000)	(132,300)	(146,663)	(157,965)	(160,177)	(2,212)	(1%) ²
States & Affiliates	(13,500)	(16,300)	(22,914)	(28,667)	(30,473)	(1,806)	(6%)
Development	(21,700)	(20,808)	(23,410)	(27,650)	(29,354)	(1,704)	(6%)
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(9,400)	45,341	21,841	(8,098)	(2,644)	5,454	67%

BALANCE SHEET (\$'000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Assets	110,740	188,074	194,816	197,261	261,193
Total Liabilities	91,390	123,383	108,282	118,824	185,400
Net Assets	19,350	64,691	86,534	78,437	75,793

Notes

1. The Profit & Loss of the Controlling Body relates to underlying operating performance and therefore excludes impairment of Club loans of \$7.52m (2015: \$8.43m).
2. Excludes Advances to NRL Clubs. With this included, Club distributions in 2016 would be \$184,777, an increase of 17% year-on-year.



THE CONTROLLING BODY AND THE GROUP (CONSOLIDATED)

- » Strong revenue growth
- » Increased distributions
- » Improved financial result

PROFIT & LOSS (\$'000) ¹	2015		2016	
	Controlling Body ²	Consolidated ³	Controlling Body ²	Consolidated ³
Broadcast Revenue (excl. contra)	204,735	204,691	206,345	206,345
Non-Broadcast Revenue	129,270	149,151	144,160	169,364
Total Revenue	334,005	353,842	350,505	375,709
Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. contra)	(71,728)	(80,769)	(72,085)	(83,775)
Football	(16,089)	(42,601)	(19,428)	(47,355)
Community and Player Welfare	(16,727)	(12,302)	(16,860)	(17,087)
Integrity and Salary Cap	(2,595)	(2,595)	(3,221)	(3,221)
Administration ⁴	(20,682)	(29,191)	(21,551)	(28,510)
Funds Available for Distribution	206,184	186,384	217,360	195,761
Clubs ⁵	(157,965)	(148,086)	(160,177)	(143,835)
States & Affiliates	(28,667)	(28,511)	(30,473)	(29,603)
Development	(27,650)	(28,442)	(29,354)	(30,972)
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(8,098)	(18,655)	(2,644)	(8,649)

BALANCE SHEET (\$'000)	2015		2016	
	Total Assets	197,261	194,299	261,193
Total Liabilities	118,824	128,030	185,400	194,082
Net Assets	78,437	66,269	75,793	57,620

Notes

- In the above Profit & 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.
- Controlling Body includes ARLC Ltd and NRL Ltd.
- Consolidated represents the Controlling Body and its Controlled Entities Knights Rugby League Pty Ltd (acquired 30 June 2014), Titans Rugby League Pty Ltd (acquired 24 February 2015), 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) and NRL Foundation Ltd (incorporated 16 February 2015).
- Included within Administration in the 2015 Consolidated result is a one-off write down of goodwill of \$1,754,000 (2014: \$nil). This is disclosed separately on the face of the Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income in the statutory financial statements.
- The Profit & Loss of the Controlling Body relates to underlying operating performance and therefore excludes impairment of Club loans of \$7.52m (2015: \$8.43m).

CLUBS AND STATES (CONTROLLING BODY)

- » Increased payments and benefits to Clubs and States

CLUBS & STATES FUNDING (\$'000) ¹	2016		
	Base	Other	Total
Payments to Clubs	131,040	18,311	149,351
Benefits to Clubs			
Club Travel	-	4,642	4,642
Club Fans & Members Initiatives	-	4,289	4,289
Club Services	-	1,895	1,895
Total Payments and Benefits to Clubs	131,040	29,137	160,177
Payments to States	21,497	7,759	29,256
Benefits to States	-	1,217	1,217
Total Payments and Benefits to States	21,497	8,976	30,473

CLUBS & STATES FUNDING (\$'000) ¹	2015		
	Base	Other	Total
Payments to Clubs	125,920	21,659	147,579
Benefits to Clubs			
Club Travel	-	5,330	5,330
Club Fans & Members Initiatives	-	2,961	2,961
Club Services	-	2,095	2,095
Total Payments and Benefits to Clubs	125,920	32,045	157,965
Payments to States	19,120	8,217	27,337
Benefits to States	-	1,330	1,330
Total Payments and Benefits to States	19,120	9,547	28,667

Notes

- This table agrees to the underlying operating performance Profit & Loss and therefore does not include any impairment charges taken with respect to NRL Club loans.

GAME STATISTICS

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
FINANCIAL STATISTICS					
Event, Game & Sponsorship/ Non-Broadcast Revenue	49%	46%	50%	55%	50%
Broadcast/Total Revenue	56%	67%	63%	61%	59%
Event, Game & Sponsorship/Total Revenue	22%	15%	18%	21%	21%
Administration/Total Revenue	8%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Clubs/Total Revenue	45%	44%	45%	47%	46%
Distributions/Total Revenue	64%	56%	60%	64%	63%
ATTENDANCE STATISTICS					
NRL Season Attendance	3,151,660	3,060,421	3,053,880	2,894,944	2,921,005
NRL Season Average Attendance	16,415	15,940	15,906	15,078	15,293
NRL Final Series Attendance	333,352	284,717	322,666	353,087	306,431
NRL Final Series Average Attendance	37,039	31,635	35,852	39,232	34,048
MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS¹					
Total No. of Club Members	204,772	228,384	267,862	294,206	327,392
Average No. of Members per Club	12,798	14,274	14,881	16,345	18,188

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
PARTICIPATION					
Touch Football Participants	-	-	624,166	672,818	694,427
Male Registered Rugby League Participants	161,724	163,995	162,276	157,767	154,385
Other Rugby League Participants ²	374,798	391,271	533,443	567,573	617,838
Total Number of Participants ³	536,522	555,266	1,319,885	1,398,158	1,466,650
RATINGS – AUDIENCE					
Premiership Cumulative FTA	81,512,558	77,942,958	74,392,093	71,443,664	63,320,929
Premiership Cumulative STV ⁴	30,012,596	28,018,192	25,742,817	26,460,220	48,740,775
Premiership Cumulative Total	111,525,154	105,961,150	100,134,910	97,903,884	112,061,704
Premiership Avg FTA	994,056	926,259	918,421	882,021	781,740
Premiership Avg STV ⁴	252,207	233,485	214,523	220,502	243,704
State of Origin Avg	3,979,199	3,984,312	3,882,122	3,647,662	3,536,180
Grand Final	3,941,309	3,325,225	3,965,113	3,710,218	3,787,157

Notes

1. Periods prior to 2014 do not include NSWRL and QRL members.
2. Other Rugby League Participants includes female and school Rugby League participants.
3. Increase in 2014 participation numbers is a result of the strategic partnership signed in 2014 between TFA and NRL; and a re-class of some Game Development Officer delivered programs from "engagement" programs to "participation" programs.
4. 2016 represents an average of 8 games per round (incl. simulcast). Pre 2016 is an average of 5 games per round.





SECTION

07

CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT

Australian Rugby League Commission Limited

DIRECTORS' REPORT

The Directors present their report for the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited (“ARLC” or “the Company”) for the year ended 31 October 2016.

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.

John Grant (Chairman)

Mr Grant is a former Kangaroo and Queensland State player and an experienced businessman and advisor to State and Federal Governments and multi-national IT companies. He was a founder and for 19 years until December 2015, Managing Director of Australian listed IT company, Data#3 Limited.

Catherine Harris AO PSM

Ms Harris is the Chairperson of Harris Farm Markets, and a Director of the Sport Australia Hall of Fame, The Australian Ballet, Tyro Payments Ltd and a Governor of The University of Notre Dame. Ms Harris is chair of the Nominations Committee.

Professor Chris Sarra

Professor Sarra is a Professor at the University of Canberra and founding Chairman of the Stronger Smarter Institute. Professor Sarra chairs the People, Workplace Culture and Remuneration Committee.

Ian Elliot (Resigned 23 June 2016)

Mr Elliot is a former CEO and Chairman of George Patterson Advertising and a former director of Salmat Limited and Hills Limited. He is currently a director of McMillan Shakespeare Group Limited and Chairman of The Dry July Foundation.

Jeremy Sutcliffe

Mr Sutcliffe is Chairman of CSR Limited, a Director of Amcor Limited, a Director of Orora Limited and former Managing Director and CEO of SimsMetal Management Limited. He is also an Advisory Director to Veolia Environmental Australia Limited.

Wayne Pearce OAM

Mr Pearce is a former Kangaroos Captain and Coach of the New South Wales State of Origin side. Mr Pearce is a business consultant and Director of Wayne Pearce Advantage.

Graeme Samuel AC

Mr Samuel is a business consultant with extensive government and private sector roles. Mr Samuel chairs the Risk, Investment and Audit Committee.

Tony McGrath

Mr McGrath is a former partner at KPMG and is the co-founder and Co-Chairman of McGrathNicol. Mr McGrath is a director of QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited and the National Foundation for Medical Research.

Dr Gary Weiss (Appointed 30 August 2016)

Dr Weiss is Chairman of Ridley Corporation and Estia Health Limited, and is Executive Director of Ariadne Australia. Dr Weiss is a former board member of the Westfield Group, Tower Australia, ClearView Wealth and Tyndall Australia.

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 and participation in Rugby League.

REVIEW OF OPERATIONS AND FINANCIAL RESULTS

Revenue generated for the year was \$391,368,205 (2015: \$374,142,025). The Group’s current year operating deficit was \$8,649,092 (2015: operating deficit \$18,655,006).

DIVIDENDS

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

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AFTER THE YEAR END

On 20 December 2016, the ARLC entered into a Deed of Arrangement that extends the current NRL Club licence agreement to 31 October 2023 and contracts the ARLC to provide maximum participation funding of \$1,182,400,000 in total, to all Clubs participating in the NRL competition from the 2017 financial year through to the end of the 2022 financial year.

There has not arisen in the interval between the end of the financial period and the date of this report any other item, transaction or event 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 \$163,798 (2015: \$145,499) 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 2016, the number of members was 26 (2015: 26).

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
John Grant (Chairman)	11	11
Catherine Harris AO PSM	11	11
Professor Chris Sarra	11	10
Ian Elliot (Resigned 23 June 2016)	6	6
Jeremy Sutcliffe	11	9
Wayne Pearce OAM	11	10
Graeme Samuel AC	11	9
Tony McGrath	11	10
Dr Gary Weiss (Appointed 30 August 2016)	3	3

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.



Ernst & Young
200 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
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Fax: +61 2 9248 5959
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Auditor's Independence Declaration to the Directors of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited

As lead auditor for the audit of the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited for the financial year ended 31 October 2016, I declare to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the *Corporations Act 2001* in relation to the audit; and
- no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

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

Ernst & Young

Christopher George
Partner

Sydney
31 January 2017

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.

John Grant
Chairman

Graeme Samuel
Director

Sydney
31 January 2017

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER	2016 (\$'000)	2015 (\$'000)
REVENUE		
Broadcast	222,004	224,991
Other (note 2)	169,364	149,151
	391,368	374,142
EXPENSE		
Event, Game and Sponsorship	(99,097)	(101,095)
Football	(47,033)	(37,924)
Community and Player Welfare	(17,075)	(16,778)
Administration	(30,297)	(28,704)
Clubs	(143,835)	(148,086)
States	(29,603)	(28,511)
Development	(30,809)	(27,945)
Depreciation and Amortisation	(2,250)	(1,944)
Finance Costs	(18)	(56)
Goodwill impairment	-	(1,754)
	(400,017)	(392,797)
DEFICIT	(8,649)	(18,655)
Income tax expense	-	-
NET DEFICIT	(8,649)	(18,655)
Other comprehensive income for the period	-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE LOSS FOR THE PERIOD ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE MEMBERS OF ARLC LIMITED	(8,649)	(18,655)

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Consolidated net deficit improved by \$10.0m to \$8.6m.

CONSOLIDATED REVENUE UP BY \$17.2M TO \$391.4M DUE TO:

Consolidated Other revenue up by \$20.2m primarily made up of the following:

- » An increase in consolidated Sponsorship totalling \$18.2m
- » An increase in consolidated Product fees totalling \$4.7m
- » An increase in consolidated Other revenue totalling \$3.6m
- » Offset by a decrease in consolidated Game receipts of \$4.8m.

Offset by reduction in Broadcast Revenue of \$3.0m largely due to reduction on contra usage.

CONSOLIDATED EXPENDITURE INCREASED BY \$7.2M TO \$400.0M. THE MAIN REASONS FOR THIS WERE:

- » An increase in consolidated Football of \$9.1m
- » An increase in consolidated States & Development of \$4.0m
- » Offset by a decrease in consolidated Clubs of \$4.3m largely a result of clubs being part of the group for a full financial year as compared to part of the financial year in the prior year.

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

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL POSITION

YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER	2016 (\$'000)	2015 (\$'000)
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	134,312	44,387
Trade receivables	19,245	16,253
Financial assets	-	52,220
Prepayments and other receivables	50,436	37,141
Inventory	85	305
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	204,078	150,306
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Intangibles	1,173	1,134
Property, plant and equipment	21,437	20,172
Other receivables	25,014	22,688
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	47,624	43,994
TOTAL ASSETS	251,702	194,300
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade payables	14,952	11,423
Other payables	161,013	98,080
Provisions	4,811	4,843
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	180,776	114,346
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Other payables	12,078	12,778
Provisions	1,228	907
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	13,306	13,685
TOTAL LIABILITIES	194,082	128,031
NET ASSETS	57,620	66,269
EQUITY		
Reserves	2,228	2,228
Retained surplus	55,392	64,041
TOTAL EQUITY	57,620	66,269

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL POSITION

Consolidated total assets increased by \$57.4m to \$251.7m. The movement in total assets principally comprised:

- » An increase in consolidated cash and cash equivalents of \$89.9m
- » An increase in prepayments and other receivables of \$13.3m
- » Offset by a reduction in financial assets of \$52.2m (old Sustainability Fund).

CONSOLIDATED TOTAL LIABILITIES INCREASED BY \$66.1M TO \$194.1M. THE MOVEMENT IN TOTAL LIABILITIES PRINCIPALLY COMPRISED:

- » An increase in consolidated other payables of \$62.9m (This is a result of the receipt of a \$50m cash advance payment in relation to the broadcast rights agreement for the period 2018-22)
- » An increase in consolidated trade payables of \$3.6m.

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

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOWS

YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER	2016 (\$'000)	2015 (\$'000)
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Receipts from ordinary operations	447,734	393,360
Payments to suppliers and employees	(263,130)	(257,122)
Payments to Clubs	(144,083)	(141,280)
Interest received	3,001	3,306
NET CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	43,522	(1,736)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Payments for property plant and equipment	(3,332)	(1,754)
Payments for intangibles	(550)	(485)
Issue of loans	(4,342)	(3,977)
Investment in financial instruments	-	(14,009)
Conversion of short term investments to cash	54,627	-
NET CASH FLOWS FROM/(USED IN) INVESTING ACTIVITIES	46,403	(20,225)
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE) IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	89,925	(21,961)
CASH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PERIOD	44,387	66,348
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	134,312	44,387

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOWS

There was a net increase in cash holdings of the consolidated entity, during the year, totalling \$89.9m.

THE MAJOR REASONS FOR THE INCREASE IN CASH DURING THE YEAR WERE:

- » The receipt of a \$50.0m advance payment in relation to the 2018-2022 broadcast rights
- » Redemption of financial instruments \$54.6m
- » Partly offset by the issue of new Advances to NRL Clubs by the Group (\$21.0m).

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

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CHANGES IN EQUITY

	Reserves (\$'000)	Retained Surplus (\$'000)	Total (\$'000)
As at 1 November 2015	2,228	64,041	66,269
Net deficit for the year	-	(8,649)	(8,649)
As at 31 October 2016	2,228	55,392	57,620

	Reserves (\$'000)	Retained Surplus (\$'000)	Total (\$'000)
As at 1 November 2014	2,228	82,696	84,924
Net deficit for the year	-	(18,655)	(18,655)
As at 31 October 2015	2,228	64,041	66,269

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

NOTES TO THE CONCISE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Year ended 31 October 2016

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

YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER	2016 (\$'000)	2015 (\$'000)
REVENUE		
Broadcast Revenue	222,004	224,991
OTHER INCOME		
Game Receipts	52,319	57,077
Sponsorship	54,256	36,105
Merchandise Royalties	14,718	15,327
Government Payments & Incentives	11,049	11,449
Product Fees	15,500	10,844
Digital Revenue	4,960	4,983
Financing Income	3,001	3,306
Sundry Income	13,561	10,060
TOTAL OTHER INCOME	169,364	149,151
TOTAL REVENUE	391,368	374,142

3. EVENTS SUBSEQUENT TO BALANCE SHEET DATE

On 20 December 2016, the ARLC entered into a Deed of Arrangement that extends the current NRL Club licence agreement to 31 October 2023 and contracts the ARLC to provide maximum participation funding of \$1,182,400,000 in total, to all Clubs participating in the NRL competition from the 2017 financial year through to the end of the 2022 financial year.

There has not arisen in the interval between the end of the financial period and the date of this report any other item, transaction or event 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.

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



John Grant
Chairman



Graeme Samuel
Director

Sydney
31 January 2017



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

Report on the concise financial report

We have audited the accompanying concise financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited which comprises the statement of consolidated financial position as at 31 October 2016, the statement of consolidated comprehensive income, the statement of consolidated changes in equity and the statement of consolidated cash flows for the year then ended and related notes, derived from the audited financial report of Australian Rugby League Limited for the year ended 31 October 2016. The concise financial report also includes discussion and analysis and the directors' declaration. The concise financial report does not contain all the disclosures required by the Australian Accounting Standards.

Directors' responsibility for the concise financial report

The Directors 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 responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the concise financial report based on our audit procedures which were conducted in accordance with ASA 810 *Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements*. We have conducted an independent audit, in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, of the financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited for the year ended 31 October 2016. We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the financial report in our report dated 31 January 2017. The Australian Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report for the year is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the concise financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the concise financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal controls relevant to the entity's preparation of the concise financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal controls. Our procedures included testing that the information in the concise financial report is derived from, and is consistent with, the financial report for the year, and examination on a test basis, of audit evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures which were not directly derived from the financial report for the year. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the concise financial report complies with AASB 1039 *Concise Financial Reports* and whether the discussion and analysis complies with the requirements laid down in AASB 1039 *Concise Financial Reports*. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

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Independence

In conducting our audit, we have met the independence requirements of the Australian professional accounting bodies.

Opinion

In our opinion, the concise financial report (including the discussion and analysis and the directors' declaration) of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited for the year ended 31 October 2016 complies with Accounting Standard AASB 1039 *Concise Financial Reports*.

Ernst & Young

Christopher George
Partner

Sydney
31 January 2017

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MESSAGE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) congratulates our National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) on their achievements this year.

In particular, we congratulate all of our athletes who represented Australia in the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games. You did so with great distinction. The country is proud of your commitment and dedication, and the manner in which you conducted yourself throughout the campaigns.

In the aftermath of the Games, the Board of the ASC has re-committed to the core principles of Australia's Winning Edge, the ASC's ten year plan for high performance sport introduced in 2012. The four key principles are: high aspirations for achievement; evidence-based funding decisions; sports owning their own high performance programs; and a strong emphasis on improved leadership and governance.

We are confident these principles serve the long term interests of sporting sector.

We will also use the experience of the last four years to seek to improve implementation of Winning Edge in ways that will benefit the sector.

The ASC is equally committed to increasing community participation in sport, particularly amongst our children and youth. We have been pleased this year to see our flagship participation program Sporting Schools reach over 4,300 schools in partnership with NSOs.

Innovations by the ASC this year included the release of our Integrity Guidelines for Directors and Leaders of Sporting Organisations, which provides directors with comprehensive and practical guidance for the first time on anti-doping, sport science and medicine, illicit drugs, match-fixing, child protection and member protection – vital issues for maintaining trust and respect in the sporting sector.

We also staged our inaugural Athlete and Coaches Forum, giving Australia's elite athletes and coaches the opportunity to share their experiences and enhance their leadership capabilities.

And we were delighted to see fruits of our efforts to improve female opportunity in sports, with improved elite and participation opportunities in women's sport, better media exposure, some outstanding new commercial deals, and an increase in female representation at NSO board level from 27 per cent to a 39 per cent across the top 23 NSOs.

Looking ahead, ASC priorities include:

- » Further institutional and governance reform in sport, with an emphasis on increased national integration and alignment
- » Increased funding for sport, including new non-government sources of funding
- » Further embedding sport in schools' educational programs
- » Improved national coordination of sports infrastructure spending, and
- » Improved use of data and technology in sports.

Reforms like this are often hard to achieve but have profound long term benefits. The evermore competitive environment in world sport on display in Rio highlights the critical importance of further reform if Australia is to maintain its proud reputation and traditions as a sporting nation.

It is appropriate to use this opportunity to recognise and thank the efforts of the ASC's outgoing CEO Simon Hollingsworth, who has led the Commission very capably and with considerable effect for the past five years.

The ASC thanks all of our sector partners for your effort and contribution to Australian sport. We look forward to continued success and progress together.

John Wylie AM
Chair, Australian Sports Commission



OUR PARTNERS





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