Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League

by

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STUDENT DECLARATION FORM

Type of Award: Professional Doctorate

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Abstract

As a result of the changing political landscape within Rugby League in Australia, and the change in position and importance of the New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL) within that landscape, the NSWRL Board wished to determine the current state of the game within New South Wales. The Board wished to plot a course in order to grow the game for both the elite level and participation within the state.

This thesis addresses the overarching aim of attempting to move the NSWRL forwards as an organisation, identifying areas of weakness and development for the organisation and its members. The purpose of this was to create a culture and environment for participation throughout grass roots Rugby League that would allow talent to develop and their love of the game to flourish in a safe, challenging and appropriate environment.

For the purpose of this thesis, 'grass roots' is defined as covering all areas of participation from Junior League football through to the Elite Level of New South Wales Cup. Specifically, the thesis aimed to address four objectives: -

1. To identify best practice and theory according to the literature, identifying and assessing any issues with current practice within NSWRL
2. Determine the current status and conditions of grass roots Rugby League within Australia in general and NSWRL in particular.
3. Propose and pilot specific, applied initiatives to address the issues identified.
4. Determine appropriate measures to assess the success of those initiatives.

The objectives are addressed through a series of studies conducted within Australian Rugby League in general and New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL) specifically. Accordingly, Chapter 2 revealed both the need for an organisational health check of NSWRL through a comparison of the current situation of the sport of Rugby League and the overall sporting landscape throughout Australia, as well as comparing current sporting systems and policies within NSWRL with successful systems and policies in other countries. Chapter 3 provided empirical evidence of the need for refinement and improvement of the player development pathway within NSWRL. The limitations of the current performance pathway were recognised in Chapter 4 and reasons behind those limitations were investigated through a mixed methods approach. Possible solutions for some of those limitations were proposed in Chapter 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 5 documents the implementation of alternate formats of the game that are designed to improve the retention and recruitment of participants to the game, with participants tracked to their end point in order to determine the success of the formats. Chapter 6 outlines the processes associated with developing an environment monitoring tool for both Junior League clubs and the Elite through a two-step process of design and implementation. Chapter 7 implements a Respect campaign designed to improve participant and spectator behaviour through the implementation of sporting policy. The thesis concludes with Chapter 8 and a summary of the investigation and the related initiatives.

This study is novel in its attempt to adapt sporting policies, structures and measurement tools designed to deliver international sporting success and apply them to sport at a local and State level of organisation. It has identified a number of cross-sport applications or uses, including the

importance of making evidence based decisions, developing alternate formats of the game that address previously identified issues rather than just scaling down an adult version of the game, and the advantages of a single administrative pathway alongside that of the participation and talent development pathways.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The basis for the following thesis is the work of De Bosscher et al and the attempt to both identify pillars of delivery within national sporting organisations that can lead to sporting success, and potential methods of measuring and comparing performance in each of these pillars. Each of those sporting pillars has a number of key performance indicators which can be measured and quantified in order to compare delivery across organisations and countries. While the work of De Bosscher attempts to quantify international sporting success, this thesis will utilise the academic basis contained within those studies to address the talent development pathway within New South Wales Rugby League.

By targeting the talent pathway, and the environments associated with it, it is hoped that these academic theories can be utilised to address a number of goals. Firstly to produce a means of measurement and evaluation within grassroots Australian Rugby League that will allow for an even level of competition across each environment, with each district having the necessary resources to be able to compete at an appropriate level. Secondly to increase the confidence of the participant that the environment provided for him to participate is an appropriate one and therefore see a resultant increase in participation across the state. It is hoped that by integrating these sporting pillars and key performance indicators within our delivery and policies, we can truly implement a bio-psycho-social approach within our pathway environments. The bio will be addressed through potential new formats of the games played, the psycho through investigating the motiviation of the participants and the social through policy implementation to affect player, coach and spectator behaviour.

I have been involved in performance and the development of players since I was 18 years old and signed as a professional Rugby League player, finally retiring at the age of 31 in 2004, having been fortunate enough to represent my country at both Rugby League and Rugby Union. In the intervening period since then, I have held roles with London Irish RUFC as the Assistant Academy Manager and Defence Coach for the first team, with the Rugby Football League (RFL) as the Head of Elite Player Development and now as Head of Football for the New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL). Over the course of those roles, I have witnessed first-hand some of the effects of culture on performance, in my opinion both as a subject of good and bad practice and as a deliverer of both. This was beneficial in providing background experience when assessing the current culture and delivery within the NSWRL performance pathway and provided background information when comparing current delivery with other environments and sports.

I have been employed in my current role as NSWRL Head of Football for almost 5 years and have found it both challenging and rewarding. The role forms part of the Executive team for NSWRL and holds responsibility for the strategic direction of football within NSW, reporting to the Chief Executive Officer and the NSWRL Board. The scope of the role covers several aspects, including: -

1. Performance aspects through the coordination of the State of Origin programme for both male and female players,
2. Recruitment of performance staff and management of their delivery on the programmes,
3. Referee development and the implementation of a referee development pathway in order to provide sufficient high-quality referees to service both

the NSWRL Major Competitions and ultimately the National Rugby League (NRL) competition itself,

4. Player development for our Origin Pathways programmes, again both male and female, at U16, U18 and U20 level;
5. Competition Management and Operations through the delivery of nine major competitions, five of them semi-professional and 4 of them pathways competitions, covering all operational and administration aspects associated with that delivery and,
6. The participation of over 40,000 Junior League participants in more than 300 clubs across 11 Junior League districts throughout the NSWRL region.

Delivering the scope of this role requires interaction with NSWRL Board, NRL Executive team, other States (Queensland Rugby League and other Affiliated States throughout Australia) as well as Board level reporting for the NSWRL. It currently involves the management of 26 staff, but this figure will rise to approximately 90 as the result of a number of initiatives described later in this document.

My interest in this area of investigation arose as a result of the situation and circumstances that I found at NSWRL when I arrived. The organisation had just undergone a period of reform with both a new constitution and Board installed within the previous 12 months. The organisation had been the traditional governing body of the game in Australia since 1908, only relinquishing this after a damaging and contentious period in the mid 1990s. There were a large number of long-term employees with little accountability for their roles and no systems and processes that existed outside of the employee's perceptions. There was little pressure or

requirement for them to deliver anything tangible outside of selecting a State of Origin team on a yearly basis or meet any targets since the organisation itself had very few of them. There was a "this is what we've always done" attitude, almost to the extent of being deliberately obstructive of new initiatives, despite the fact that times had moved on, the demands of the game had evolved and the position and role of the organisation had changed.

More positively, however, the NSWRL Board recognised the evolution of the demands of the game and recruited a new Executive team in order to reposition the organisation and better fulfill the needs of its member clubs, one of which was the newly created Head of Football role that I currently fulfill. This role was charged with reviewing the current state of football within NSWRL and charting a course in order to grow the game both professionally and for participation in the state.

The NSWRL Board's request, combined with my previous experience as a player, coach and developer has given me a particular interest in the environment required to develop talent and change culture and how those environments can be integrated into a pathway from grassroots to elite level. This Doctorate documents the journey with the overarching aim of attempting to move the NSWRL forwards, identifying areas of weakness or development and creating an environment and culture throughout the state that welcomes participants and places them in the appropriate environments to allow their talent to develop and their love of the game to grow at all levels. It includes information from chronological studies, interventions and presentations that were developed as a result of the initial board request to review football in NSWRL and the following initiatives and refinements that were developed as a result.

1.1 Purpose of the Thesis

To meet the overarching aim outlined above, the thesis progresses through the following objectives:

1. Identify best theory and practice according to the literature, identifying and assessing any issues with current practice within NSWRL.
2. Determine the current status and condition of grassroots Rugby League within Australia in general and the NSWRL region in particular.
3. Propose and pilot specific, applied initiatives to address the issues identified when comparing current delivery with best practice.
4. Determine appropriate measures to assess the success of those initiatives and determine their impact on the identified issues.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises of eight chapters, five of which contain empirical research studies. Each chapter addresses a thesis objective in a methodical manner. Accordingly, Chapter 2 addresses Objective 1 and identifies the need for an organisational and league 'health check' by comparing (i) the current situation of the sport to the overall sporting landscape within Australia, (ii) the political situation within NSWRL with successful systems and sporting policies from other sports and nations. Specifically, comparing delivery practice within NSWRL with contemporary research findings which goes some way to meeting the needs of the first objective by identifying a best practice model that could be implemented across all levels of the game within NSWRL. It also outlines potential methods of monitoring and assessment of performance that are explored in further detail in later chapters in order to address Objective 4.

In order to address the second objective, Chapter 3 provides empirical data that allows for an analysis of the current player development pathway within Australia and NSW. This includes context on the history of the game within Australia and an examination of the NSWRL Performance Pathway as it stood in 2016. The examination involves clarification of each environment, the operational rules and requirements at each level, as well as the political implications involved when determining the governing bodies responsible for delivery at each level and how they interact. Information such as population sizes, player payments and relevant graduation rates are considered when considering recommendations for changes to the pathway and identifying further areas of study.

Chapter 4 recognises the limitations in the current player pathway and empirically investigates the reasons for them. Specifically, this involves a mixed methods approach to the investigation, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to determine the needs of the participants and the possible reasons behind falling participation rates within the pathway. An online questionnaire is utilised to provide quantitative data on current culture within the pathway environments and possible reasons for falling participation. Focus groups were then used to provide background reasoning and further detail on the issues identified and also to discuss possible solutions to those issues, drawing on participant and parent experience both from within Rugby League and also across other sports. This completes the work required to fulfill the second objective and begins the process of meeting the needs of Objective 3 by proposing potential initiatives to address those issues.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 address the third and fourth objectives of the study by investigating the initiatives proposed in previous chapters in order to determine their impact. Chapter 5 specifically relates to the proposed alternative formats of the game,

designed based on the results of the investigation in Chapter 4. Specifically, these included a weight and age restricted format, and a more recreational, less formal format of the game, designed to increase both retention of current participants and recruitment of new participants. Potential changes focused on a multi-disciplinary approach rather than scaling down an adult version of the game, as highlighted by previous research (e.g., Capranica & Millard-Stafford, 2011). The study concludes with an analysis of satisfaction levels for participants in the pilot programmes and the identification of some refinements to the formats for the second phase of delivery. Participants in the second phase of delivery were tracked from their starting point (current Junior League participant or new to the game) to their end point (whether they did or did not register for the Junior League competition in the following season) in order to determine the success of the programme.

Chapter 6 investigates the development and utilisation of a monitoring tool to assess the environment at Elite and Junior League level clubs within NSWRL. The chapter discusses a two-step process, first to identify and justify the factors (pillars) responsible for developing an environment within a club with the ability to deliver sustained success on the player pathway; second, to implement the monitoring tool at the appropriate level and collect and analyse the results. The chapter also briefly discusses potential refinements for both monitoring tools, based on the results of the study and feedback provided by clubs in both formal and informal communications.

Chapter 7 discusses the potential impact of policy change on the on field and off field behaviour of participants in the game. This includes not only the players but also team official, coaches and parents. While it is difficult to ascertain whether policy implementation has any direct effect on participant behaviour or creates cultural change, this chapter discusses possible methods of assessment by evaluating

both the number and severity of on and off field offences over the course of the policy implementation. It also discusses the limitations of this approach, both in the operational delivery and the accuracy of the data collected.

Finally, the thesis concludes in Chapter 8 with a summary of the investigation and initiatives along with their findings is presented. It also reflects on my personal experience and development throughout the course of the thesis, as well as potential implications for the future, both personally and professionally for the NSWRL.

Chapter 2: Need for a League/Organisation Health Check

2.1 Context/Current Situation

This chapter focusses on addressing objective 1 of the thesis by attempting to identify current best theory and practice in the literature, as well as practical based delivery. It will identify and assess any issues with the current practice within the NSWRL.

Recently, the National Rugby League (NRL) and New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL) have consistently failed to combine the Australian Sports Commission's two objectives of building mass participation and elite sports success. This failure can be evidenced by the falling rate of participation within the NSWRL and NRL for the past 5 years and the growth of interest in the elite level of the game, evidenced by a $1.8 Billion TV deal signed by the NRL in 2017. Elliott (2004, p. 7), when talking about Australian Athletics stated that, "the sport projects an image of elitism that undermines its ability to attract a significant number of grassroots participants to its ranks" and provides further "concerns about the lack of inclusiveness within the sport" (p. 4). These are both accusations which could be levelled at the NRL and state organisations and have been repeatedly evidenced throughout the participation survey carried out by NSWRL in 2015, available in Appendix 1 and discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 4.

Earlier, Phillips (2000) examined the effectiveness of Athletics Australia to govern the sport, finding that three common themes emerged from five previous reviews on the status of athletics in Australia. Specifically, these were:

1. Jurisdictional divisions – especially between the federal, National Sporting Organisations (NSO) and state organisations.
2. The strength of emphasis on elite levels of the sport.

3. The organisational capacity of Athletics Australia to manage the many and various sectoral interests involved in the sport.

Despite Phillips' study being conducted almost two decades ago, there are still parallels with the current situation of the Australian Rugby League Commission (ARLC)/NRL in all three points raised. Concerning the relationship between the NRL and state organisations, the lines of responsibility and ownership are extremely unclear. Strictly speaking, the ARLC is the independent body tasked with the running of 'the game' and the NRL are the body tasked with running the 16-team professional arm of the game. In reality, however, the NRL is the 'catch all' term used to describe any activity carried out by the ARLC, including game development and player recruitment. Finally, the state bodies are responsible for retention and participation of junior players, competition delivery and development and performance programmes at all levels of the game. This can lead to friction between the two bodies and a lack of clarity for member clubs when attempting to recruit new players for their competitions.

Addressing the second point, the focus on elite levels of the sport sees the majority of investment from the ARLC into the 16 NRL teams. For example, the last two TV deals signed by the ARLC have seen the increase in funds invested firstly to the NRL clubs in order to make them financially stable and, secondly, to the players (and indirectly to the clubs) through salary cap increases in order to raise player payments. Moreover, for the last 8 years there has been $0 invested directly into grass roots junior league organisations within NSWRL boundaries, the hope being that the NRL clubs will take care of development within their regions and ensure a strong participation base. Clearly placing the money at the top has not resulted in any of it trickling down to the base.

In terms of its interactions with the State Sporting Organisations (SSO's) such as the NSWRL, the NRL is conditioned to act as the 'big hand of Government'. Stewart et al. (2004) identified that the government sets "performance guidelines and operational parameters in return for ongoing funding and support" (p. 70). In this way, the power remains, and always will remain, largely concentrated at the centre (i.e., the NRL).

Hoye (2003) identified two reasons why centralised power will persist.

1. Continued funding of NSO's is dependent on the government's (or the NRL's) need to demonstrate funding is 'well utilised'.
2. Government needs to ensure that NSO's are well placed to support its sport policy initiatives in the area of elite and mass participation sport.

Unfortunately, the NRL is more focused on demonstrating that any funding provided to the NSWRL is well utilised than it is on ensuring that the NSWRL is well placed to deliver initiatives in the areas of mass participation and elite sport. It is perhaps for this reason that the NSWRL Junior Leagues saw a decrease in male participation of almost 8% in the 2015 season. While this was offset by an increase in female participation, it resulted in an overall decrease in numbers from 44,000 participants in 2014 to 42,000 in 2015.This is despite the fact that NSW won the State of Origin series, the premier sporting competition in Australia, for the first time in 8 years, in 2014.

In 2003, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) acknowledged the need to redress the imbalance between elite-level and grass roots sport. The NSWRL has acknowledged the need to redress that imbalance and determined that the first step to elite sporting success is through improving and monitoring the environment for mass participation across the development pathway.

2.2 Successful Systems – The Foundation Pillars

2.2.1 What do we need to monitor? What does a good system look like?

De Bosscher, De Knop, van Bottenburg, Shibli and Bingham (2009) examined the relationships between elite systems (i.e., inputs and throughputs) and their success in international Olympic competition. The foundation for this work being a previous study by de Bosscher (2007) that focussed on two areas, in an attempt to improve the construct and content validity of their findings. One area focussed on international tennis coaches from 22 nations in order to determine what the key success drivers may be from an elite perspective in a single-participation sport. In contrast, the second area focussed on 114 Flemish elite athletes, in addition to a greater number of coaches ($N = 99$) in order to approach the development of the key pillars from a 'consumer' or athlete perspective.

De Bosscher et al. (2009) utilised the relationships between elite systems to identify nine 'pillars' in elite sporting systems that could be developed into measurable concepts, by providing a score for each pillar (Table 2.1). Each of these nine pillars are underpinned by more than 100 critical success factors, developed in a comparative study of success within six different nations (Belgium, Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and United Kingdom) and validated through feedback from the elite athletes and coaches from each of the countries involved. In this way, the authors hoped to identify the meso-level (policies) factors that influenced International sporting success rather than the macro (population, economy) or micro (individual athlete and their close environment) level factors identified in previous research.

Table 2.1. *De Bosscher et al.'s Pillars of Sporting Success and the Identification of Possible Key Drivers of Success.*

Pillar	Driver	Influence
1	Financial Support	Possible driver of success
2	Organisation and structure of policies	
3	Foundation and Participation	
4	Talent ID and Development Systems	
5	Athletic and Post career support	Possible driver of success
6	Training Facilities	Possible driver of success
7	Coaching provision and Coach Development	Possible driver of success
8	(Inter)national competition	
9	Scientific research	

The results were not universal across all countries examined, but findings suggested that some of the pillars could be identified as key drivers for success (indicated in Table 2.1 column 3), possibly due to prioritisation in the most successful nations. As a result, these authors developed the SPLISS model (Sporting Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success). Bressers and Hoogerwerf (1991) argue that many sporting policies fail because they are based on the wrong assumptions or theories. The SPLISS model does not differentiate each pillar by importance in sporting success, or whether they are directly responsible for it. Green (2005, p. 236) states that "effective systems for training and motivating and supporting athletes are better predictors of success than are any measures intended to identify talent", and De Bosscher, Shilbury, Theeboom, van Hoecke, and De Knop (2011) also agreed that an investment in a blend of pillars may increase the chances of developing more elite level athletes. The SPLISS model is not intended to be deterministic, rather it aims to "identify pivotal issues and to generate crucial questions in a benchmark study of elite sports" (De Bosscher, De Knop, van Bottenburg & Shibli, 2006, p.209). In short, the SPLISS model attempts to move

beyond descriptive data and transform qualitative and quantitative data into a scoring system for international success. The question is, whether these pillars can be utilised and adapted to measure the success of national or state development systems to produce sporting success at each level of the mass participation and talent pathway?

2.2.2 Measurement Models

The measurement of competitiveness is very common in the economic sector but relatively new in the sporting world. While focused on business rather than sport, Porter (1990, p. 9), in his study of strategic management and international economics as a foundation for national economic competitiveness, stated that "instead of seeking to explain competitiveness at a national level, we must *first* [emphasis added] understand the determinants of productivity". Therefore, what models are available to us in measuring the nine pillars of success and their effectiveness in delivering sporting success? Any evaluation of the effectiveness of elite sport policies and their delivery needs to be broader than just a goal-driven approach. However, any assumption of a relationship between sporting policy and a desired effect or outcome is very difficult to measure and ultimately prove. Even the SPLISS model (De Bosscher et al., 2009) alone cannot measure the effectiveness of an organisation. Following the suggestions of Chelladurai (2001), the SPLISS model may best be integrated with an assessment of organisational effectiveness in order to provide a multidisciplinary approach to measuring the effectiveness of National Sporting Organisations.

In this regard, effectiveness can be measured either directly or indirectly. Bressers and Hoogerwerf (1991) stated that the effectiveness of sporting policy can be measured directly through the achievement and measurement of attained and defined goals, or indirectly through policy processes and their presumed effects. Notably, it is

difficult to evaluate effectiveness within non-profit sporting organisations. Importantly, Shilbury and Moore (2006) believe any assessment framework needs to capture the multiple dimensions of organisational life. However, this is problematic in itself since, as Chelladurai and Haggerty (1991) state, multidimensionality is the cause of conceptual ambiguities and measurement difficulties. Both Evan (1976) and Bayle and Robinson (2007) believed that at the heart of a multidimensional assessment approach is the belief that organisations should be evaluated along a number of different dimensions. Evan included resource acquisition, productivity and the smooth functioning of internal processes among the dimensions investigated in a business setting, with Bayle and Robinson proposing a framework that seeks to determine the relationship between the strategy, management and operational performance of a sporting governing body. Evan identified four systematic processes that can be used as a multidimensional evaluation of effectiveness. Cameron (1986) then produced a multidimensional model to reconcile the processes previously identified by Evan into a valid system of measurement. The list below shows the relationship between the systematic processes identified by Evan and measurement models by Cameron.

1. Inputs – Systematic Resource Model
2. Throughput – Internal Process Model
3. Output – Goals Model
4. Feedback – Multiple Constituency Model

Each of these points are examined in turn to provide more detail on what they may offer.

2.2.2.1 Systematic resource model. This model, developed by Frisby (1986), focusses on the 'inputs' of an organisation. Here, effectiveness is defined using the earlier terms of Yuchtman and Seashore (1967, p. 898) as "the ability of the organisation, in either absolute or relative terms, to exploit its environment in the acquisition of scarce and valued resources". In the world of sport, resources are very keenly sought after (e.g., player supply, facilities, funding etc.). All organisations, sporting clubs or districts must compete for access to these resources. The most effective organisations are the ones that source the necessary resources to implement their policies, akin to the most effective teams being the ones who have the necessary resources to provide success.

In practice, Frisby (1986) when analysing the National Sporting Governing Bodies of Olympic sports reported that the national teams of countries with larger operating budgets had higher World rankings and showed less fluctuation in that ranking. This was reinforced by Giannoulakis, Papadimitrou and Alexandris (2017) who found that a reduction in government funding due to austerity measures led to a decline in elite performance of Olympic sports that was evidenced by a reduced medal count. Salary cap restraints in the NRL means that it is not always the case that the club with the most money wins; however, they do achieve more consistent success over a sustained period. For instance, the Brisbane Broncos are considered to be among the wealthiest of NRL clubs and have played in finals football 19 times throughout their 23 year existence. In comparison, the Gold Coast Titans, formed in 1999 only an hour south of Brisbane and entered the NRL competition in 2005, have consistently been in the bottom ranked clubs in terms of financial investment and have only appeared in the finals series twice.

Similarly, De Bosscher et al. (2006) found that population size (Cornett & Stager, 2015) and wealth of a nation are the most important macro factors to determining sporting success, explaining up to 50% of sporting success. Hence, can the most effective sporting organisations be categorised as the ones who have access to the largest number of players in their development area? Crucially, despite governments spending vast sums of money in an attempt to compete against other countries, "there is a lack of data to explain how nations can sustain their competitive position amidst increasing competition and how the effectiveness and efficiency of the elite sports investment can be achieved" (De Bosscher et al., 2009, p. 114). Most pertinently, perhaps, at a local level relevant to this thesis' aim of addressing even competition within the Junior Leagues, Cornett and Stager (2015) also found that the number of participants within a region was a significant predictor of success. In short, money might not be *everything*, especially when looking more broadly at earlier participation levels which feed into the elite context (Cornett & Stager, 2015).

2.2.2.2 Internal process model. Developed by Steers (1977), the internal process model focusses on the throughputs that link the inputs of an organisation to its outputs. Chelladurai (2001) stated that "if the internal processes are internally logical, consistent and without friction then it can be assumed that the organisation is effective." The internal process model includes measurements such as:

- The evaluation of the processes of an athletic programme,
- The general policies and procedures of an organisation,
- The satisfaction levels expressed by both coaches and athletes with the policies and procedures of the organisation,
- The lack of, or presence of, conflict within the organisation.

One weakness of this model is that organisations can become too internally focussed, satisfied with the fact that they have policies and procedures rather than whether they are effective in delivering the desired output. However, according to Bernard and Busse (2004) a focus on appropriate strategy and more efficient internal policies and procedures is one way that organisations can reduce their necessity for a large population pool to select from or reliance on financial wealth. Whether this approach can be applied within the NSWRL junior leagues and professional clubs in order to overcome the population differences, lack of participants and wealth distributed between them will be a key factor. The present thesis will utilise the internal process model to develop an assessment tool in order to maximise the effectiveness by determining the quality and consistency of their processes and policies. It will also attempt to determine if internal processes can be used to offset the effects of access to lower playing population numbers.

2.2.2.3 "Goals" model. Using an output model of assessment, Price (1972) defined effectiveness as the "degree to which an organisation has achieved its goals", whereby all goals are easily identifiable and measurable. This is perhaps a simplistic approach to measurement, one that is easy to carry out in the sporting world since it provides numerous measurable goals – win/loss record, final ranking, times and distance, for instance, are all measurements which are the essence of elite sport. In the context of this thesis, however, it is important to know what outputs are realistic for increased participation rates *and* elite success.

2.2.2.4 Multiple constituency model. Under this model of assessment, Papadimitriou and Taylor (2000) defined effectiveness according to an organisation's ability to satisfy key strategic constituencies in their environment. The constituencies

can be either internal or external; however, this leads to issues of competing interests within the constituents of an organisation, sporting club or region, as identified by Connolly, Conlon and Deutsch (1980). For a company, this may be characterised by shareholders demanding a return on their investment while the company wishes to reinvest and maintain long-term financial stability. In a sporting organisation, the balance between satisfying fan demand for success with player recruitment, governing body regulation, media interest and the financial viability of the club are all issues which need to be assessed and balanced. Chelladurai (2001) suggests that one way to overcome this is to adopt a prime beneficiary approach and identify whose benefit is the primary reason for the organisation's existence.

2.3 Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, there are number of key messages to be taken from this chapter. The extent to which Rugby League in Australia is acting inclusively *or* simply interested in the elite end (as reflected in part by the stark differences in recent investment decisions) has raised doubt over whether increased participation can be achieved, or if the present decline in participation rates can be stopped. Jurisdictional divisions are perceived to not be helping this situation, which impacts on both strategic and operational aspects of delivering a joined-up pathway and any problem-solving that may be required. Moreover, responsibility and power all seem to be with the NRL but there is little to no management across the various sectors within the industry. In short, the structure and management of the sport is in need of close examination and reform to ensure a sustainable future.

Therefore, this chapter fulfilled my first objective of determining how improvement in the environment can be achieved and monitored to provide success for our Junior Leagues and development pathway. This will no doubt require further

exploration involving a qualitative and quantitative investigation of the current environment, focussing on the reasons why participants drop out in an attempt to determine what improvements or refinements to the environment would entice them to stay. Indeed, this work will follow later on in the thesis.

As suggested by Bressers and Hoogewerf (1991), the effectiveness of a sporting organisation can be measured directly through the achievement of attained and defined goals, or indirectly through policy processes and their presumed effects. To reflect this statement, the development of a direct measurement tool will utilise an integrated approach incorporating the internal process, goals and systematic measurement model into an assessment tool targeted at both the elite and participation levels of the game. In this way, it is hoped that I will be able to define the characteristics of an optimal environment and culture and be able to compare these characteristics across not only clubs at all levels, but Junior Leagues and competitions. In doing so, I will measure the effectiveness indirectly through monitoring the implementation of policies based on the results of quantitative and qualitative research. If the ultimate goal of the organisation is to increase participation then implementation of good, well researched, clear and consistent sporting policies should reflect in this outcome.

Moving forward, the next chapter aims to address the second objective of the thesis and determine the current status and condition of grass roots Rugby League by providing specific details about challenges being faced along the pathway and potential solutions that were submitted to the NSWRL Board. To substantiate these views, context is provided in the form of an overview on current developmental theory.

Chapter 3: Scoping the Status Quo

3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second objective of the thesis by providing context on the current status and condition of the game within Australia in general and NSWRL in particular.

To assist in providing greater context in this chapter, I have included my Board Report of 2015 (Appendix 2) which offers an overview of the challenges facing us in NSWRL. As the report shows, we face a number of challenges relating to both participation and performance. Even though Australian RL continues to dominate the World Game (albeit that the number of nations involved is limited), participation rates are disappointingly low, year on year. Accordingly, this Chapter highlights some of the issues we are currently facing followed by some possible solutions which were submitted, together with some context on where they align with current development theory.

3.2 Background and Historical Context

Rugby League in Australia began in August 1907 with the foundation of the New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL) in order to administrate a competition between nine foundation clubs within Sydney. As the population of New South Wales grew, the professional game expanded into country areas of the state, along with growing dissatisfaction with the Sydney based administration. This culminated in a breakaway faction and, ultimately, the formation of the Country Rugby League (CRL) in 1934. This resulted in a situation where amateur and professional Rugby League was administered through two separate governing bodies within the same Australian State; a situation which was not shared in Queensland where the QRL were responsible for the whole game.

The NSWRL administered competition, renamed the Winfield Cup, grew to become the leading Rugby League competition within Australia, eventually admitting the Brisbane Broncos and the Gold Coast Seagulls (two teams from Queensland) into the competition in 1988. The competition that year also saw a team enter from the Hunter Valley region, the Newcastle Knights, ending an 81-year exile for a CRL-based team in the competition. While the Winfield Cup competition incorporated teams from across State borders, all junior Rugby League starting at an age of 6 years to second tier competition of all ages, was played within the historical boundaries of the NSWRL, CRL and QRL.

Inevitably this led to tensions in the governance and administration of the game, particularly with the Winfield Cup teams growing in financial power and demanding more input regarding the distribution of funds and negotiation of sponsorship rights. The creation of the Australian Rugby League (ARL), sitting above both the NSWRL and QRL, was supposed to alleviate some of those concerns. In reality, however, the ARL was really the NSWRL by another guise. This led to a break away competition in 1995 called Super League, which ran at the same time as the NSWRL-controlled Winfield Cup for a period for 2 years. Rowe (1997) offers an alternative explanation for the formation of a rival competition. He describes the formation of Super League as the result of the arrival of pay-TV within Australia and a struggle between the two largest media moguls in Australia- Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer. In this there are parallels with Kerry Packer's fight to break the monopoly of World Cricket and establish his 'Cricket in Pyjamas' form of World Series Cricket as described by Haigh (2007). The truth lies somewhere in the middle of the two view points, but there can be little doubt that the huge amounts of money

generated by the media war led to both sides becoming more entrenched in wanting their slice of the pie.

Peace was restored in 1998 with the ARL and Super League coming together to form the National Rugby League, a body designed to administer a professional game that now included teams from Sydney, Brisbane, Townsville, Auckland and Melbourne. Unfortunately, and once again however, the formation of this body did not address the issues at state level where again, all Rugby League up to the NRL competition is controlled and administered by the state organisations (NSWRL, CRL and QRL).

In a final attempt to address this issue, the Australian Rugby League Commission was formed in 2012. The aim was to create a single, overarching governing body for the game within Australia. The 16 teams who currently compete in the NRL competition, the NSWRL and the QRL created an 18 strong membership panel, who vote on the structure and personnel included in the Commission. An important factor in this structure is the repositioning of the CRL to be officially recognised for what it always was; that is, a member of the NSWRL, not an official governing body in its own right. Unfortunately, politics does not always mean that policy is put into practice, and the CRL, while acknowledging that it is a member of the NSWRL, still acts, and is treated by the ARLC, as a separate entity.

3.3 The NSWRL Performance Pathway in 2016

As briefly described above, the top tier of Rugby League within Australia is the NRL, a 16 team competition which includes teams from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand. The overall structure is shown in Figure 3.1.

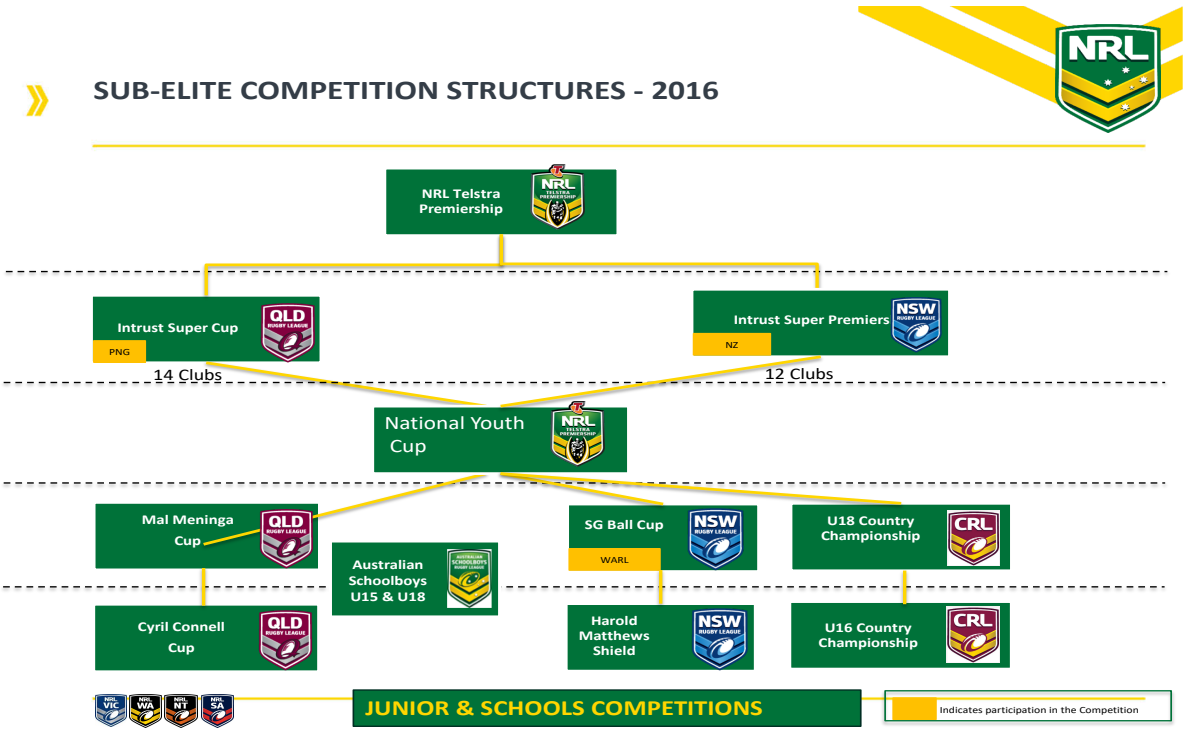

Figure 3.1. The NRL Development Pathway in 2016.

Most of the 15 Australian-based NRL teams do not have reserve grade teams, preferring to form affiliations with teams in the 2nd tier of competition within New South Wales (the Intrust Super Premiership New South Wales) and Queensland (the Intrust Super Cup). The NRL teams who do have enough players to form a reserve grade, enter teams in the NSW Cup rather than any NRL controlled competition.

Competitions below the 2nd and 3rd tier within NSWRL are run along Junior League District boundaries. These boundaries are over 100 years old and reflect the borders of the foundation teams and areas within Sydney. There are 11 Sydney based Junior Leagues, each with an affiliation to a historical or existing NRL team. Participation rates in Junior League competitions (ages 6–18 years; see Table 3.1) have been on a downward trend for a considerable time. Some of this can be attributed to stricter athlete registration and reporting policies with the argument being

that the current figure now reflects an accurate picture of current participation levels when compared to the over reporting of recent times.

Table 3.1. *2015 vs. 2016 Participation Rates within NSWRL. (NRL Statistics Report 2016)*

NSWRL 2015 (EOY) vs 2016 (YTD) completed registrations by Junior League

	Season					
	Number of Records		YOY Diff		YOY %	
League - Standard Name	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
Balmain DRL	1,902	1,806		-96		95%
Canberra DRL - Juniors	3,626	3,482		-144		96%
Canterbury-Bankstown DRL	3,956	3,681		-275		93%
Cronulla-Sutherland DRL	3,452	3,471		19		101%
Eastern Suburbs DRL	659	697		38		106%
Manly DRL	2,414	2,438		24		101%
NSW Student DRL	401	408		7		102%
North Sydney DRL	893					
Parramatta DRL - Convents	540	402		-138		74%
Parramatta DRL - District	5,717	5,400		-317		94%
Penrith DRL	8,553	8,093		-460		95%
South Sydney DRL	2,998	3,168		170		106%
St George DRL	1,316	1,320		4		100%
Western Suburbs DRL	3,313					

The development pathways within New South Wales are controlled by the NSWRL and its member clubs and include the following key structures.

3.3.1 Under 16

Harold Matthews Competition:

Teams select a squad of 25 players for an U16 competition, although several U15 athletes will be included in those squads. The competition is run over 9 weeks with a 4 week final series and 17 teams enter each year. Trials for selection begin in September, the competition runs from February to May and players return to their Junior Leagues to complete the rest of the season, usually until late August.

The 17 teams will be made up of Sydney Metropolitan based teams, all branded badged and run by NRL teams, who predominantly select from athletes within their Junior League District but can and do recruit from other Districts and the CRL; a number of 'Academy' teams who are all affiliated with a Sydney Metropolitan based side, usually those with a larger playing population and who want to maintain control of their athletes in order to prevent them playing for another team; and a number of Country based NRL teams such as Canberra, Illawarra and Newcastle. These CRL based teams have no involvement with any of the CRL administration or competition structures. Athletes are contracted to each of the clubs and can receive payment, either in the form of levies to the school representative teams, remuneration for schooling, medical insurance or straight contract payments.

State of Origin

The pinnacle of the U16 pathway is representing the state in the annual State of Origin contest. This is a single game, played as the curtain raiser to the first game of the Senior Men's State of Origin series. Talent is identified from both the Harold Matts and Country Championship competitions with a City versus Country game played the week following the Grand Final of each of the U16 competitions. In recent years, selection has been dominated by City (NSWRL) players.

Following the City versus Country trial game, a squad of 20 athletes are selected to go into training camp prior to the game. Athletes assemble on the Friday night prior to a Wednesday evening game where they undergo a period of short-term representative preparation, focusing on tactics and team play rather than any individual skill development. Following the game, the squad is dismissed back to their clubs with no game review provided to athletes or formal feedback process to their clubs and coaches.

3.3.2 U18

SG Ball Competition (Under 18):

Teams select a squad of 25 athletes with 17 teams entered. The make-up of this competition includes a team from Western Australia, as well as the traditional 11 Junior League based teams, academies of sport and Country based NRL teams. The competition has the same format as the Harold Matthews; 9 weeks of competition and 4 weeks of final series, culminating in a grand final in May. Those athletes who have a professional NRL contract will move on to compete in the National Youth Competition; an U20 competition played over 26 weeks to mirror the NRL competition. Those who do not receive a professional playing competition will hopefully return to play for their Junior League clubs, although many do not and are lost to the game. This competition is administered and governed by the NSWRL with the CRL running their 10 team U18 Country Championship programme alongside it. The two competitions and development programmes are run independently with the CRL appearing to accept that the most talented athletes at this age group will be appearing in the SG Ball competition and therefore progressing further up the pathway to represent the State.

State of Origin

The pinnacle of the U18 pathway is representing NSW against Queensland in the annual State of Origin contest. This is a single game, played as the curtain raiser to the second game of the Senior Men's State of Origin series. Talent is identified from both the SG Ball competition with a squad of 20 athletes selected to participate in a training camp prior to the game. Athletes assemble on the Friday night prior to a Wednesday evening game where they undergo a period of short-term representative preparation, focusing on tactics and team play rather than any individual skill

development. Following the game, the squad is dismissed back to their clubs with no game review provided to athletes or formal feedback process to their clubs and coaches.

2nd Tier Football

Under the development system of 2016, the pathway beyond the age of 18 years becomes unclear, with the perception of the athlete sometimes differing from the reality of development. This is in large part due to the branding of the respective competitions and the responsibility for delivering them being assigned to different governing bodies. While all coaches and recruitment managers associated with NRL clubs are aware that the pathway for an athlete through to NRL level progresses from U18 to the U20 National Youth Competition (NYC) to the State Cup competitions and then NRL, in the minds of both players and agents, this is not the case.

As such, players have come to believe that the State Cup competitions are 3rd tier football with the NYC being classed as 2nd tier. As stated previously, NRL Coaches have fought against this perception, and the quality of football played at NYC and State Cup level would reinforce the fact that State Cup is 2nd tier. However, the closeness of the NYC programmes to the NRL competition has had the effect of inflating the importance of the competition and its place in the pathway.

3.3.3 National Youth Competition (Under 20)

Created in 2008 by the NRL to replace the state-based Jersey Flegg competition, the NYC runs parallel with the senior NRL competition, usually as curtain raisers to the NRL game. The 16 teams are aligned with NRL clubs, play a 26 round international competition with a finals series to finish. Competing clubs include a team from New Zealand and wear the same kit, train at the same venues and have

the same support staff as their senior counterparts. The season runs from March until September and is administered and governed by the NRL/ARLC.

It is a requirement that all athletes are in full time employment or education for the duration of their contract or they are not allowed to compete. Training times are strictly controlled by the NRL to prevent study or work being disrupted. This leads to a number of early morning sessions and night time sessions every week, with work and study scheduled in between.

3.3.4 State Cup (2nd Tier)

Within NSW this is a 12-team competition with all teams either affiliated to an NRL club or run by an NRL club. Affiliations are very loose with no formal agreement on what that entails, no minimum standards of delivery or responsibility for development of athletes along the pathway. The affiliation is predominantly based on the provision of players from the NRL squad to the NSW Cup team. By doing this, the NRL team can guarantee that their fringe players and those returning from injury have an appropriate level of competition to play in. The NSW Cup team benefits from this by having a better quality of player in its squad and from not having to pay these players to play for them. Typically, an NRL club would provide between 1–8 players for the match day squad of an NSW Cup team.

Eight of the 12 teams are from within the City of Sydney boundaries, a further three teams come from within the Metropolitan Sydney boundaries (even though they are officially Country Rugby League areas, Wyong, Illawarra and Newcastle are all within a 90 minute drive of the centre of Sydney) and a team from New Zealand. This leaves a massive playing population underrepresented at this level of football. This competition is administered and governed by the NSWRL alone.

3.4 Current Issues with the Pathway in NSWRL

3.4.1 Under 16

Currently, there are no financial limits on the size of player contracts with, according to a 2015 NRL study (Appendix 3) of player contracts over $3 million dollars invested nationally in player payments to U16 and U18 players. A breakdown of payments by age is shown below:

- Total spend on players 16 years old and under- $450k
- Total spend on players 17 and 18 years old - $3 million.

It is unclear what the ratio of payments is across each of the states but, given the size of the NSWRL competition and number of NSW based NRL teams, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of these payments would sit with players on the NSWRL Performance Pathway.

These competitions are administered and governed by the NSWRL, with no input from the CRL in either administration or teams taking part. The CRL run a Country Championship programme at this age group, parallel to the Harold Matthews Cup that all NRL clubs use as an opportunity to identify talent and recruit players for their SG Ball (U18) teams in the following 12 months. This leads to a player drain from Country Areas, lack of quality competition for those players remaining and a decline in the participation rate.

This drain can be illustrated by the fact that in 2011, of 471 total athletes registered to play in the NRL, 31% (146 athletes) of those are players of Country Rugby League origin. Only 28% (131 athletes) of NRL participants originated within the Sydney metropolitan area (2011 NRL participation figures). However, as Figure 3.2 shows, 55% of those CRL origin athletes actually took part in the Harold Matts or

SG Ball competition.

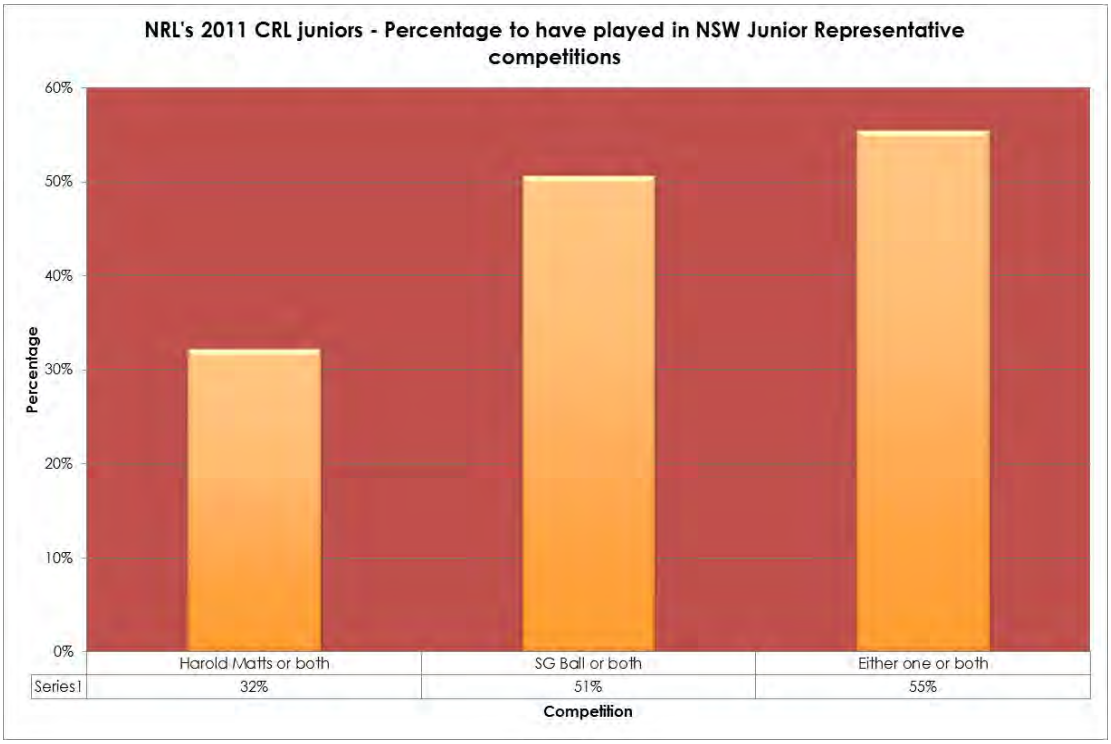

Figure 3.2. CRL Juniors in NSWRL competitions (NRL Participation Report, 2011).

3.4.2 Under 18

Little to no effort is made by NRL clubs to scout talent from the Country Championship at this age group, or from the NSWRL to identify potential participants in the NSW U18 Origin team. Figure 3.3 reinforces this apparent disinterest in the Country Championship. Figure 3.3 shows that of the 131 NRL players of Country origin, only 18% (23 athletes) were recruited directly from the Country Championship without playing in either of the NSWRL development competitions.

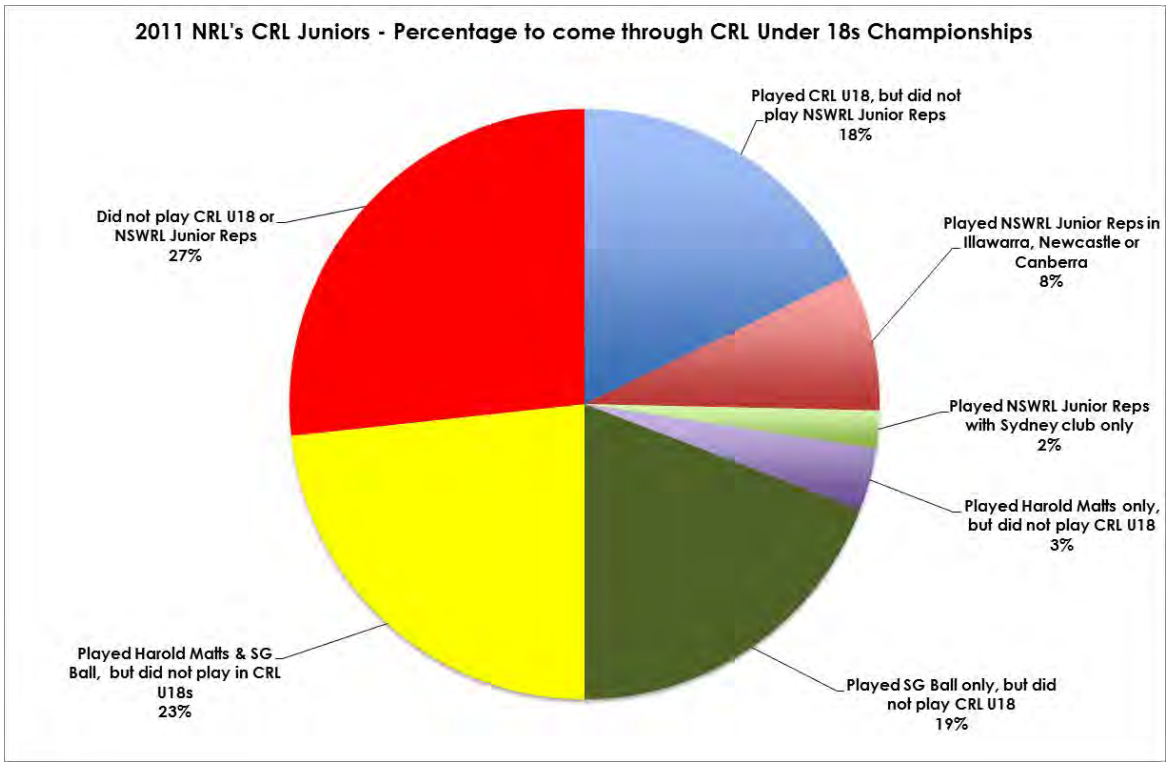

Figure 3.3. Development environments for CRL players in the NRL

Development structures as described above, with separation between the NSWRL and CRL programmes, are demonstrably detrimental to both organisations but in particular the Country Rugby League and its athletes. Questions must be asked about the quality of delivery within CRL regions and why athletes feel they must leave Country areas and move to Sydney to be successful rather than remain where they are. Do they believe that the quality of the Harold Matts and SG Ball Competitions is that much higher than the Country championships? Are NSWRL clubs simply lazy in both their talent identification and development processes and prefer to have all their athletes under their direct control and in close proximity?

Again, statistics provided by the NRL 2011 Participation report (see Figure 3.4) would suggest that the Harold Matts and SG Ball competitions are particularly successful at developing talent for the NRL competition.

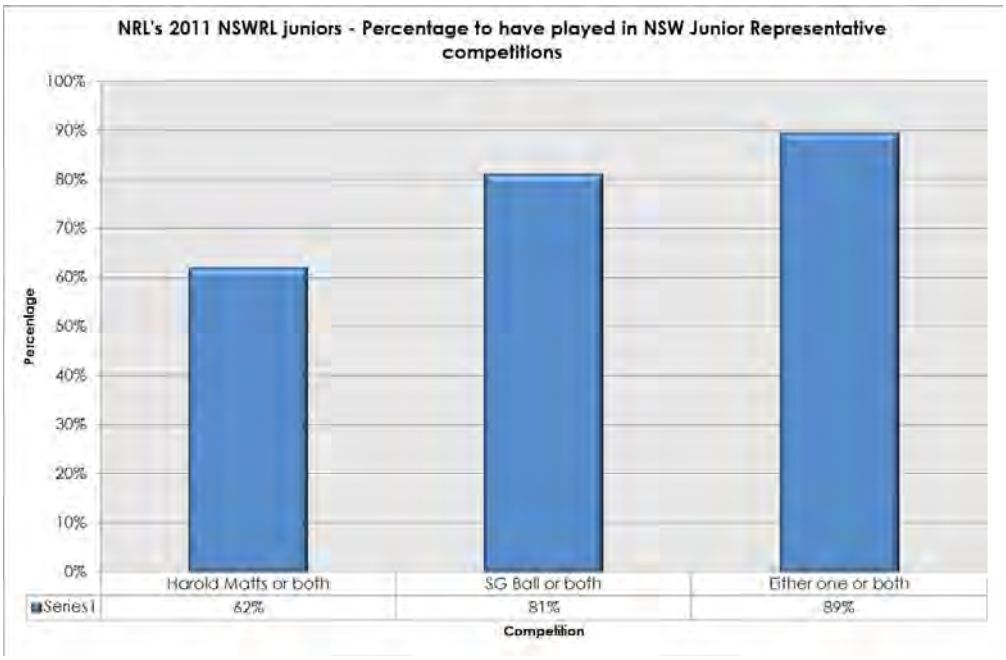

Figure 3.4. Competition pathway for NSWRL players in the NRL (NRL Participation Figures, 2011)

Results such as these would suggest that our competitions and development programmes, such as they are, are in danger of becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams and Philippaerts, (2008) suggest that figures such as those above demonstrate that our development programmes are "likely to exclude many, especially late maturing, promising children from development programmes", with those athletes selected young and early remaining in the programme to the exclusion of others. Rogol, Cumming & Malina (2018) agrees that the significance of individual differences in biological maturation are well documented and that success in sports such as American Football and Baseball are linked to early maturation. Peterson (2003) would argue that in the search for talent at younger ages, we are in

fact identifying size and age in our participants rather than the potential qualities that enable success into and during adulthood. This would agree with the work done on talent selection and deselection within Rugby League by Till et al (2013) who found that the current talent selection policies do not control for maturation of participants or relative age effect. In other words, the big kids get picked early and stay in the program.

3.4.3 National Youth Cup (Under 20s competition)

The costs associated with the NYC, both operational costs and player contracts, have spiralled exponentially over recent seasons. Confusion has also grown regarding its positioning within the pathway, both for spectators, players and agents. The progression for an athlete should be from the NYC, through to the State Cup and hopefully onwards to the NRL. Only 23% of NYC players (Appendix 3) eventually graduate to play in the NRL, with the majority of those playing in the State Cup prior to making their NRL debut. However, the misconception that the NYC is the stepping stone to the NRL rather than the State Cup has slowly grown from within the playing ranks, the players' agents and the athlete's parents.

Notably, this misconception has given rise to increased player salaries within the NYC competition, the belief that a player graduating from the NYC competition should automatically become one of the full-time NRL playing squad and the commensurate salary that comes with that. The 2016 spend on contracting players aged 19 and 20 years in the NYC competition is $12.5 million. This has pushed player identification and recruitment to a lower age, with the importance of identifying athletes for the Harold Matthews competition and recruiting them into a club's pathway early increasing. Again, the subsequent effect is to increase player salaries at younger ages and increase the cost for clubs who now have to pay athletes based on

potential rather than performance. The success rate of this approach, as well as the sustainability of the spiralling costs associated with it, means clubs are now questioning the appropriateness of the NYC competition and the pathway underneath it.

3.4.4 Intrust Super Premiership State Cup

While the State Cups serve a valuable purpose, the teams involved are not located in areas that are reflective of the population demographic of NSW. Almost 40,000 participants play Rugby League within the boundaries of the NSWRL, with a further 55,000 taking part within the CRL areas within NSW, yet traditionally, athletes from Country areas have always had to travel to the City (Sydney) to progress and play in the premier competition in Australia.

This has not altered now that there is another level of competition installed above the NSW Cup by means of the NRL. In order to achieve this, any athlete in NSW will have to join a pathway that is predominantly Sydney based, with eight of the NSW Cup teams based in Sydney, one in NZ and only three in what could be considered, at best, Metropolitan areas rather than Country. While teams based in Wyong, Newcastle and Illawarra can lay claim to covering some major playing populations of the Country League, other traditional strongholds such as the Wagga/Riverina area, Bathurst/Orange/Dubbo region, Minaro and Southern Highlands have absolutely no representation at any level of the pathway, let alone at State level.

3.4.5 Development Programmes

Table 3.2. *Graduation Rate of Junior Participants to the NRL. (Source NRL Stats)*

	Harold Matts Competition				S.G. Ball Competition			
	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Total number of participants	340	387	408	418	340	442	452	445
Number who have played NRL	16	27	23	19	52	49	53	41
Percentage played NRL	**4.7%**	**6.9%**	**5.6%**	**4.5%**	**15.3%**	**11.1%**	**11.7%**	**9.2%**
Average Graduation Rate		**5.4%**				**11.8%**		
Average number of NRL games/participant	22	49	42	32	35	53	49	44

While the talent pathway is considered to start with eligibility for the Harold Matthews Competition at the age of 14 (an athlete must turn 15 in the year of the competition. In effect, a 14-year-old who has his 15th birthday on 31st December 2016 can compete in the same competition as a 16 year old that turns 17 on 1st December 2017), the competition for recruitment of athletes starts at younger age groups than this. All clubs run 'Development Squad' programmes, usually for the Under 13 and Under 14 age groups, along similar selection trial systems as those already highlighted for the Harold Matthews and SG Ball Competitions. The programme consists of technical and tactical development and team preparation, with a number of games arranged throughout the year in order to provide talent confirmation opportunities. All clubs are aware that Rugby League is a late specialisation sport and, as evidenced by table 3.2, that they have a poor conversion rate of younger, pathway athletes graduating to the NRL. While an issue, it is not one that is specific to Rugby League. Gullich (2014) found that the mean annual turnover of German football youth academy squads was 24.5% and 41% for the German National Youth teams. This was further reinforced by the probability of any athlete still being involved in the programme after three years was less than 50%. They are also aware that early talent

selection can be a cause of drop out yet persist with their traditional methods of talent selection and outdated models of delivery in the form of development squads at younger and younger ages with no specific criteria for selection or individual development plan once a player has been selected. The low conversion rate can arguably be attributed to the poor talent identification and development process at most clubs.

Further compounding the poor practice of clubs on the pathway and a lack of engagement with the participants, are the falling participation levels for Rugby League throughout NSW and Queensland. While this is a common phenomenon within team sports, not just in Australia but worldwide, the issue is compounded by the density of NRL clubs within Sydney. From current conversion rates through the pathway and the number of pathway environments as displayed in Figure 3.1 we know that a minimum playing pool of roughly 3,000 juniors between the ages of 6-18 years are required to provide an NRL club at the top of the pathway with the 2–3 new contracts per year that it requires.

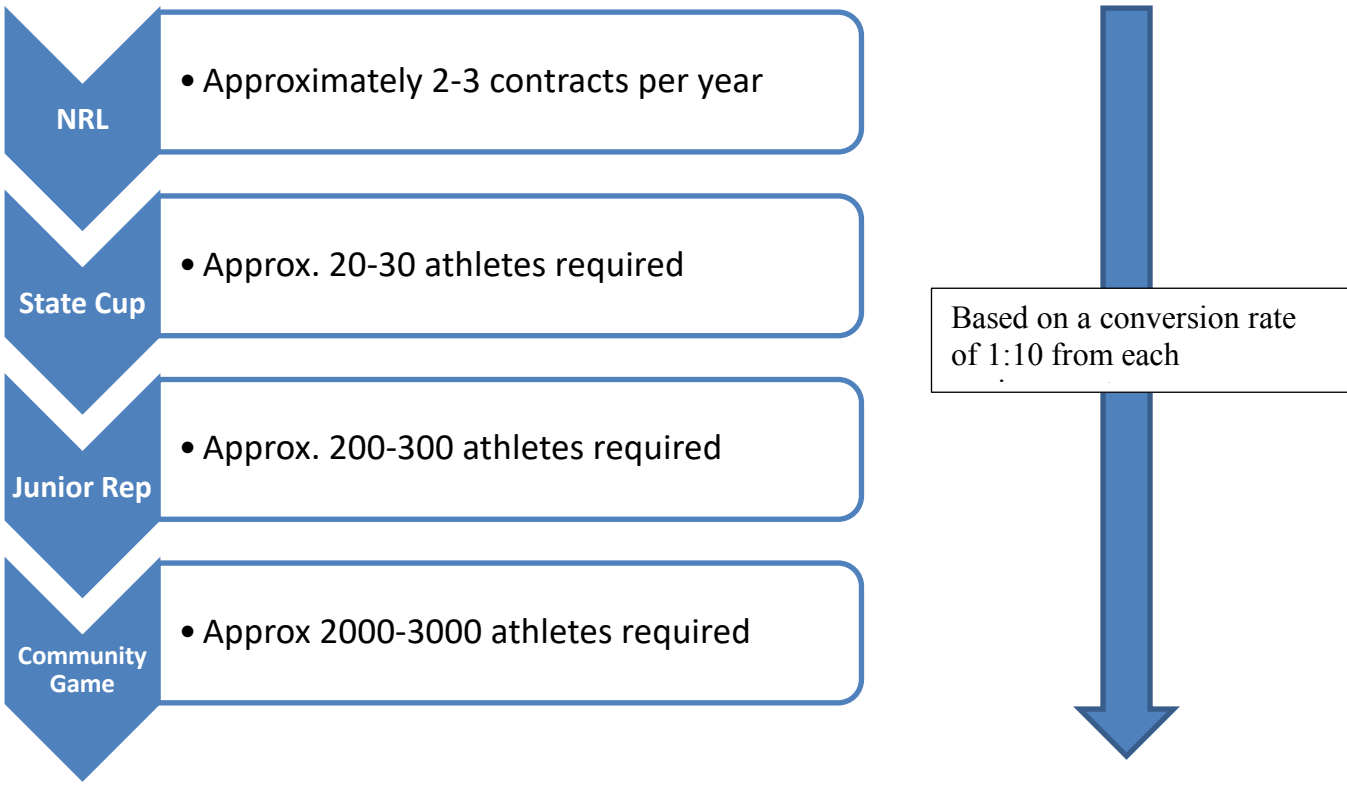

Figure 3.5. Contract requirements and participant requirements

Based on these numbers, it would appear that there are insufficient player numbers in five of the current eleven Junior Districts to service the pathway and the NRL Pathways Review document does little to address this issue. Again, responsibility for this will fall on the individual states.

To a certain extent this fall in player numbers could be alleviated through high quality talent development programmes within the professional clubs and districts. However, as we have previously seen, current programmes are based around exclusivity and competition-based talent identification programmes rather than inclusive, player and coach development programmes. There is a certain amount of insularity within the Australian Rugby League development model, the practitioners believing that their talent identification and development systems are the best in the world and best practice for other sports. This begs the question of whether you can

definitively state that the current method is the best when other methods have not been considered or delivered. Martindale, Collins and Daubney (2005) believe that most programs focus on the early identification of talent in the hope that they are the most likely participants to progress into top performers when they become adults. In order to affect change in the pathway and an increase in participation numbers, an evidence-based education process regarding the quality of the current talent development environments in the NRL and best practice delivery will need to take place. Recognition that this "best practice" and environment may alter at different stages of development (Von Rossum, 2001) and a focus on the development of coaches with the ability to develop talent will be the key to affecting any meaningful change. Again, the responsibility for integrating this approach into the development pathway will fall to the individual states rather than the NRL.

Increased costs and the lack of return on investment in the development pathway have been the major catalysts for a whole of game pathway review, tasked with examining the player development pathways within both NSW and Queensland. The review is being conducted by the NRL, with the main focus to reduce costs (both operational competition costs and player contract costs) for the NRL clubs by eliminating the NYC competition in its current format. The current proposal from the pathway review actually eliminates any form of Under 20s competition within NSW, creating disconnect in the pathway from U18 level to Senior, Open Age Rugby and eliminating a clear progression from the bottom to the top of the pathway.

Unfortunately, it does not appear that this disconnect will be addressed by the NRL in their review and it will become the responsibility of individual states to develop a pathway to engage players in all environments.

3.5 The Proposed Pathway for 2017

To reduce operational costs, the NRL proposed a version of the pathway which eliminated the U20 level of competition (Appendix 3) as a meaningful development step, placing in the same level of competition as a local Junior League competition. This is shown in Figure 3.6.

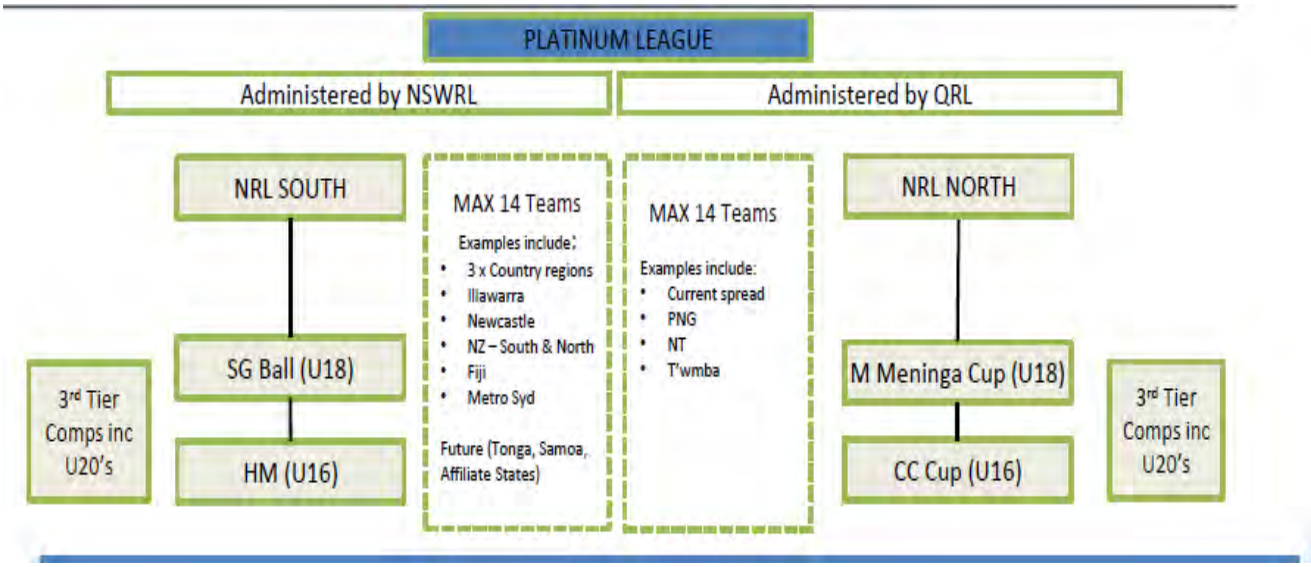

Figure 3.6. NRL Proposed pathway solution.

While this version had the effect of repositioning the competition and reducing its perceived importance to players and agents alike, it also meant that the step up in competition from SG Ball to Senior Men's competition was greatly increased.

There were several issues with the proposal. Firstly, that the focus seemed to be completely on reducing costs through the removal of a stage in the development programme, with no thought as to a replacement structure or on how to reform current practice to something more developmentally appropriate and athlete inclusive. The project was also conducted in isolation from other departments within the NRL and, therefore, received no input from either Coach Development or Game Development, consequently making no mention of reform of development programmes, coaching practice or talent development environments.

The State Cup was renamed the 'Platinum League' which, considering the previously discussed political issues and constitutional agreements, was seen by the board of the NSWRL as an attempt to put the control of the competition under the NRL rather than the NSWRL. The proposed composition of sides involved in the 'Platinum League', would necessitate the removal of teams with over 100 years of history in the competition, all member clubs of the NSWRL, and replace them with expansion teams from New Zealand, Fiji and within three CRL regions, along with current country participants in Wyong, Newcastle and Wollongong. It was the board's opinion that a competition with that make up of teams would alter it from an 'intra state' competition, and therefore the responsibility of the NSWRL, to an 'inter state' competition and therefore the NRL's responsibility, according to the constitutional reform of 2012.

The proposed model for expansion had similarities to the make-up and competition model for the Queensland State Cup. As can be seen from Table 3.3 and 3.4, the population demographics of NSW are significantly different to that of Queensland. Queensland is a state with a smaller central city (Brisbane has a population of approximately 2.5 million compared to Sydney's 8 million) but with a number of larger country populations and economies that outstrips those of NSW. There was very little evidence given that the proposed locations for expansion of the Platinum League within NSW would have either the financial viability, or the playing strength to provide competitive entries.

As can be seen from the financial information in Table 3.5, most NSW Cup clubs are operating at a significant loss, reliant on the investment of related Leagues Clubs to operate. The charter of Leagues Clubs mandates that they must reinvest revenue into community and local sport, a practice that seems to be inherent within

Australian Sports. A number of the current NSW Cup clubs, such as Mount Pritchard and Wentworthville, have the backing of a chain of Leagues Clubs, such that they have significantly more financial funds than most NRL clubs. This network of Leagues clubs and their financial backing is not available in the NSW Country areas, where smaller populations and reduced disposable income have knock on effects to the finance available.

Table 3.3 *Regional Demographics of Proposed NSW Competition Expansion Areas.* (*Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015*).

CRL Location	**Closest NRL team**	**Population**	**Ave. Weekly Wage**
	553 Km (Sydney)		
Albury	326km	45, 627	$1,120
	(Melbourne)		
Bathurst	200km	41682	$866
Tamworth	405km	47,595	$644
Dubbo	400km	36,089	$1,052
Wagga Wagga	245km (Canberra)	54,670	$978
Mudgee	270km	9,830	$1,023
Newcastle	0km	425,895	$1,750
Wollongong	65km	286,587	$1,086

Table 3.4. *Regional Demographics of Current Queensland Cup Regional Entrants* (*Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015*)

QLD Cup location	Closest NRL team	Population	Ave. Weekly Wage
Wynnum-Manly	0km (Brisbane)	2,143,121	$1,588
Ipswich Jets	39km	180,000	$837
Tweed Heads	34km	90,254	$746
Northern Pride (Cairns)	347km	156,654	$1,057
Sunshine Coast	150km	282,822	$1,010

Table 3.5. *Financial Audit of NSW Cup Entrants, 2015.*

NSW Cup clubs financial audit- High Level Information 2015	
Average Total Income (including grants)	$347,000
Average Leagues Club investment	$439,000
Average Game Day Revenue (season)	$9,314
Average Player Payments	$356,375
Average Total Expenditure	$700,228
Average Profit/Loss	**−$353,316**

In Table 3.3, Newcastle and Wollongong are currently play in the State Cup and have the two largest populations within NSW outside of Sydney. All other proposed location for expansion within NSW have smaller populations than those in Queensland and similar or lower average weekly wages. The Queensland Cup entries that are included in Table 3.4 all have significant financial problems and have required increased funding in order to complete the most recent season despite having

larger population bases with similar weekly wages. There is little evidence to show that country NSW locations will be any more successful in becoming financially viable and sustainable entries into the competition than those of the Queensland Cup.

As stated previously, calculations regarding the graduation rate of athletes through each of the talent pathway environments mean that each NRL club requires a minimum playing base of 3,000 participants in order to maintain an independent player development pathway. These numbers may be adjusted slightly for country areas according to Hoekman, Breedveld and Kraaykamp (2014) who found that rural areas of Holland had higher rates of weekly participation than urban areas. This may suggest that a larger percentage of the country population is willing to take part in weekly sport participation than urban populations. A strong participation base is vitally important for any expansion area since, as experience has shown us with the introduction of the Ron Massey Cup and Sydney Shield competitions in Sydney, and the related precipitous drop off in clubs competing in the local A Grade (Open Age), any competition that is 'parachuted' in can have drastic consequences on the existing ones. This would almost certainly be the case with the proposed expansion areas of the NSW Cup, as can be seen in Table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6. *Comparison of Number of Teams in QRL and NSW Regional (Country)* (*NRL Participation Figures*, *2016*)

QRL Region	Participation Rates	CRL Region	Participation Rates
Cairns	3837 (11 Team A Grade)	Tamworth (Group 4)	1905 (5 Team A Grade)
Mackay	3130 (8 Team A Grade)	Dubbo (Group 11)	2536 (9 Team A Grade)
Townsville	4040 (7 Team A Grade)	Wagga Wagga (Group 9)	2985 (11 Team A Grade)
Sunshine Coast	4659 (6 Team A Grade)	Mudgee (Group 10)	2798 (9 Team A Grade)

None of the proposed venues for competition expansion within NSW currently have sufficient playing base to support the implementation of a development pathway and, with the exception of Wagga Wagga in Group 9, who are able to field an 11 team A Grade competition, none of the other regions are currently running open age competitions with sufficient teams or participation figures that are strong enough to support the formation of another team above them. This may be mitigated slightly if participants from a number of smaller country areas are willing to travel significant distance in order to participate. Ruseski, Humphreys, Hallman & Breuer (2011) in a study based in Germany found that travel distance was positively related to participation, provided that there were sufficient high-quality sports facilities were available to use. This is not always the case in country NSW areas.

The final, and possibly most important, issue with the proposed pathway was the fact that the changes only sought to address the symptoms rather than the cause. Any issues regarding the importance of the U20s, for instance, the perceived lack of

success at developing players and the over importance of that environment, can be traced back to development squads at U13 and U14 age groups and the competition structures of the Harold Matthews Cup (U16) and SG Ball Cup (U18). As highlighted previously, these competition structures and development programmes had become self-fulfilling prophecies, driving the age of recruitment and talent identification younger and younger. For a late specialisation sport such as Rugby League, this was counterintuitive and an issue that needed to be addressed in the review and related proposals. For this reason, the NSWRL proposed the following pathway reform in Figure 3.7 (full document provided in Appendix 4):

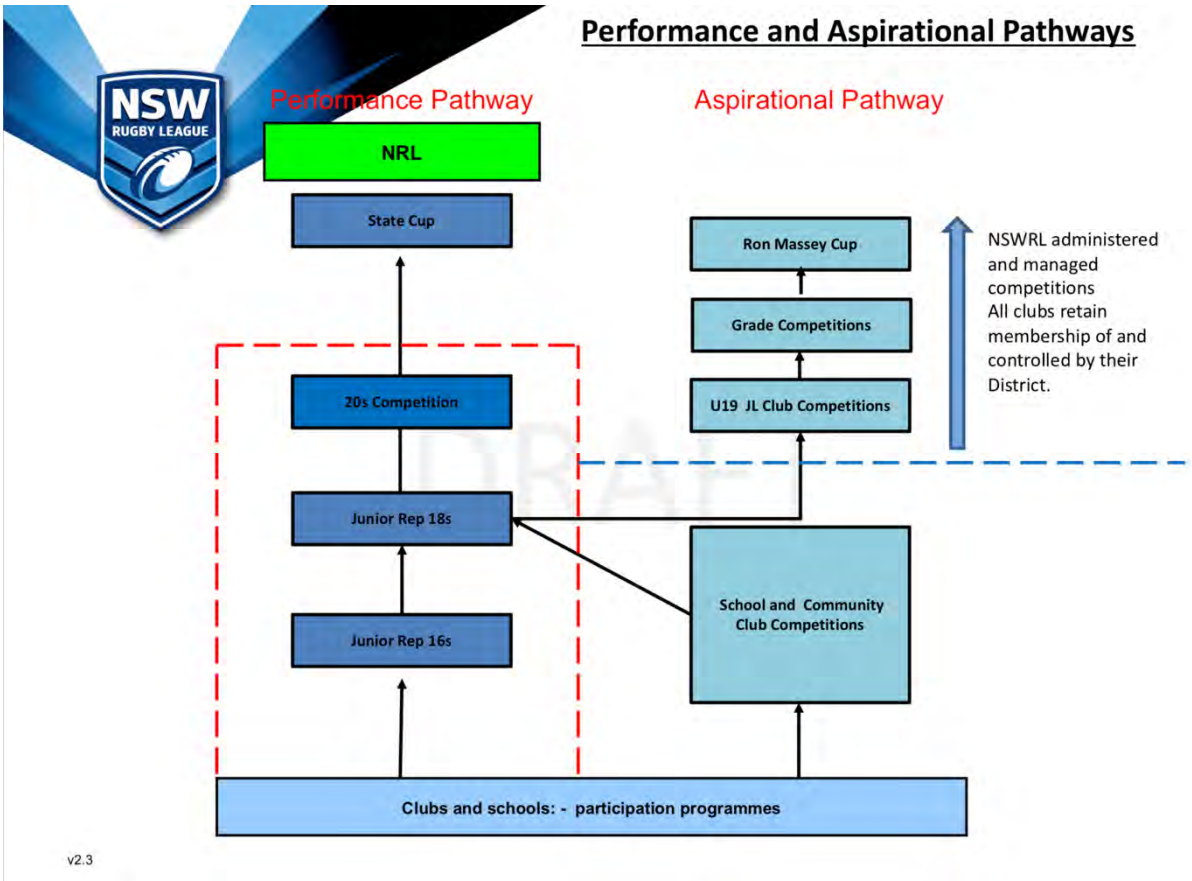

Figure 3.7. NSWRL Proposed pathway solution.

While accepting that expansion of the NSW State Cup would proceed and lobbying for agreed entry criteria for this to happen, the focus of this proposal was on

the creation of Regional Academies, in a partnership between the NRL/NSWRL and each of the NRL clubs.

For the first time, this would create eight individual Academies throughout Sydney based on playing population and sustainability rather than geographical boundaries that were over 100 years old. The basis for the locations and size of these regions is outlined in Table 3.6 below.

The previously stated conversion rates from Harold Matts (5.4%) and SG Ball (11.8%) allowed us to extrapolate that data to determine that a minimum playing base of 3,000 athletes in each region would be required to sustain a pathway. Accepting that there may be a number of athletes who would appear in more than one environment, we compared this assumption with current participation numbers within NSWRL Junior Leagues (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.7 *Participation Figures for NSWRL Junior League Districts.*

District	2015 Participation Figures
Balmain	1,902
Canterbury	**3,956**
Cronulla	**3,452**
Manly	2,414
Parramatta	**5,717**
North Sydney	893
Penrith	**8,553**
South Sydney	2,998
St. George	1,316
Western Suburbs	**3,313**
Canberra	3,626

Accordingly, the proposal was to create the following development regions in which to operate Academies:

1. Canterbury
2. Cronulla
3. Parramatta
4. Penrith
5. South Sydney
6. North Shore (Manly/North Sydney
7. Central Sydney (Balmain/St. George)
8. Western Sydney

The creation of the Academies would be the first step in defining the NRL Talent Pathway, beginning to set some minimum standards around delivery and define what a good Talent Development environment should look like, along with its associated coach development environment. Currently, each club enters teams into the Harold Matts (HM) and SG Ball (SGB) competitions with no further control of delivery or expectations form parents, athletes or governing body on what sort of programme is delivered, how it is delivered, when or where it is delivered. An overarching framework such as the one described would allow for standardisation of delivery and the ability to link programme delivery, participation growth and coach development into agreed funding levels for clubs.

Alongside this framework was the proposal to reform the associated competition structures at younger age groups. Development squad games at U13 and U14 age groups would only be permitted to take place in a carnival format during the

school holidays at the end of term 2 and term 3 of the school year. The Harold Matts competition would transform from a 9 week competition with finals, into two carnivals, again played at the end of term 2 and term 3 with Districts allowed to enter more than one team if they wished. This would expose more athletes to a higher level of competition and coaching and focus on running a more inclusive development programme for all athletes in that age group rather than selecting the best (or biggest) 25 to compete as is current practice.

The SG Ball competition would remain unchanged in its format and would lead in to a newly created NSW U20s competition, to replace the old National Youth Cup. This would see both competitions (SGB and 20s) start at the same time with 9 weeks of competition. When the SGB competition moved into the Finals Series, the U20s would take a 4 week 'development' break, allowing the athletes to work on identified areas of weakness in their game, before restarting the competition following the completion of the SGB finals series. Accordingly, the better SGB Ball athletes who may benefit from a higher level of competition, could take part in the following 9 weeks of the 20s competition in order to assist their development where appropriate. The final pathway and competition structure proposed by the NRL, following consultation from all stakeholders, for all football below NRL level is displayed in Figure 3.8 below.

3.6 2018 and Beyond

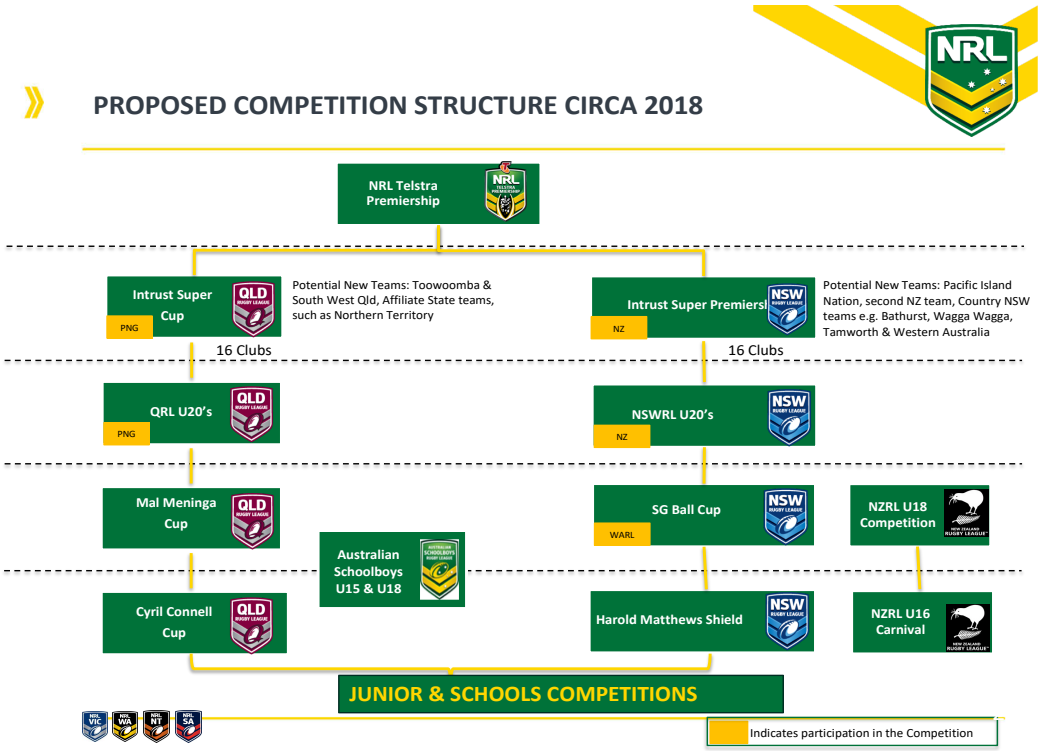

Figure 3.8 Proposed Competition Structures for 2018.

3.6.1 Under 16

While Queensland were successful in reducing the Cyril Connel Cup from a 9-week competition to a stand-alone carnival of football played over a single weekend, the NSWRL clubs would not agree to this proposal. This despite the wealth of evidence regarding return of investment, conversion rate and poor talent identification and development levels that they were presented with. The NSWRL model will not progress with a 17 team, 9-week competition followed by a Finals series, as in previous years. This will be replicated in the CRL with a 10 team Country Championship, with the aim that these two programmes can be merged at some point in the future.

Owing to the reformatting of the Queensland Cyril Connel competition, Queensland will no longer be able to select a State of Origin team in the required time frame. Accordingly, there will be no Representative football at the U16 age group.

3.6.2 Under 18

As in previous years, both Queensland and NSWRL will play a 9-week competition with a final series at the end, from which the two respective State of Origin teams will be selected. NSWRL will continue to run their Origin development squads in a season long development programme. It is hoped that the introduction of the Country Championship at this age group will reduce the number of athletes leaving the country in order to enter the talent pathway and allow them to be developed in Country areas. Once again, it is hoped that the Country Championship and the SG Ball competition can be merged in order to become a single competition.

3.6.3 Under 20s

Two state competitions at U20 level will be implemented from 2018 onwards. The NSWRL competition will consist of 12 teams, each of them linked with a State Cup team. The competition is proposed to last for 20 weeks, commencing at the same time as the U18s competition, taking a 'development' break after 10 weeks of competition before playing the final 10 rounds and finals series after that break. The thought is that the better U18 year olds, who may require further development, can then play in the second block of games where appropriate.

3.6.4 State Cup

The current entries into the QRL and NSWRL State Cup competitions will be maintained, with the aim of expanding the competitions to a maximum of 16 clubs in both States. The NSWRL board have agreed that any expansion will take place throughout regional NSWRL prior to accepting entries from international teams such as Fiji, and a major criterion for entry is that a team must have a full development pathway from U14 through to NSW Cup level as well as an accredited affiliation agreement with an NRL club (where appropriate). This will change the emphasis for

all clubs from a single stand-alone entry into the state cup to a focus on the development pathway and strong player base.

In order to strengthen the emphasis on the development pathway for state cup clubs and, to ensure that the initial pathway review aim of reduced costs and increased return on investment are met, a number of frameworks will also be developed to fit alongside the competition structure.

Firstly, a player contract framework is currently being negotiated between the State Bodies, NRL and the Rugby League Players Association. Current proposals include:

- No player can sign a professional playing contract until the age of 18;
- For under 18's a $0 registration must be signed in order to take part in the Junior Rep competitions (Matts and Ball), this can include benefits up to the value of $7,500 in areas such as health insurance, school fees and living away from home allowance. This will eliminate the $3,450,000 in player payments currently paid to U18 year olds.
- The State U20s competition will have a salary cap attached to the competition that will limit the overall spend on the squad without capping individual player contracts directly. Given the 2016 spend on 19- and 20-year olds of $12 million, even with an increased number of teams due to having two state competitions; the proposed cap of $300,000 will greatly reduce player costs. It will also serve the second aim of the pathways review which was to reposition the U20s competition as a 3rd tier competition, through limiting the contract size and emphasising the progression through the pathway to State Cup and then NRL

- Due to the vast differences in funding levels of State Cup clubs, the proposal does not include a cap for State Cup teams. As discussed previously, some clubs receive the backing of major finance generating Leagues clubs, others are stand-alone entities. To determine a figure that would be fair to all and also keep a competitive balance in the competition would be extremely difficult to do and harder to regulate.

Alongside this contracting model will be a player and coach development framework, linked to the club funding structure.

In the past, each club who entered the State Cup competition has received two streams of funding from the NSWRL:

1. Pathways Funding of $100,000, paid in two equal instalments throughout the year,
2. Discretionary Funding: A total of $450,000 to be shared between clubs based on applications to improve governance and facilities at each club.

This funding has discontinued following the 2017 season with a new funding model for the 2018 season, based around mandatory criteria and minimum standards of delivery. Mandatory Criteria and Minimum Standards of delivery will be based on a combination of the work by De Bosscher et al. (2009) who examined the relationships between elite systems (inputs and throughputs) and their success in international competition to develop the SPLISS (Sporting Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success) model; the work of MacNamara, Button and Collins (2010) and the role of psychological characteristics, or PCDE's (psychological characteristics for determining excellence) in facilitating elite performance; and Martindale et al. (2010) and their work on the talent development environment and it's measurement.

To reflect these bodies of work, 9 categories have been identified as being essential for a successful entry into the competition (Figure 3.9).

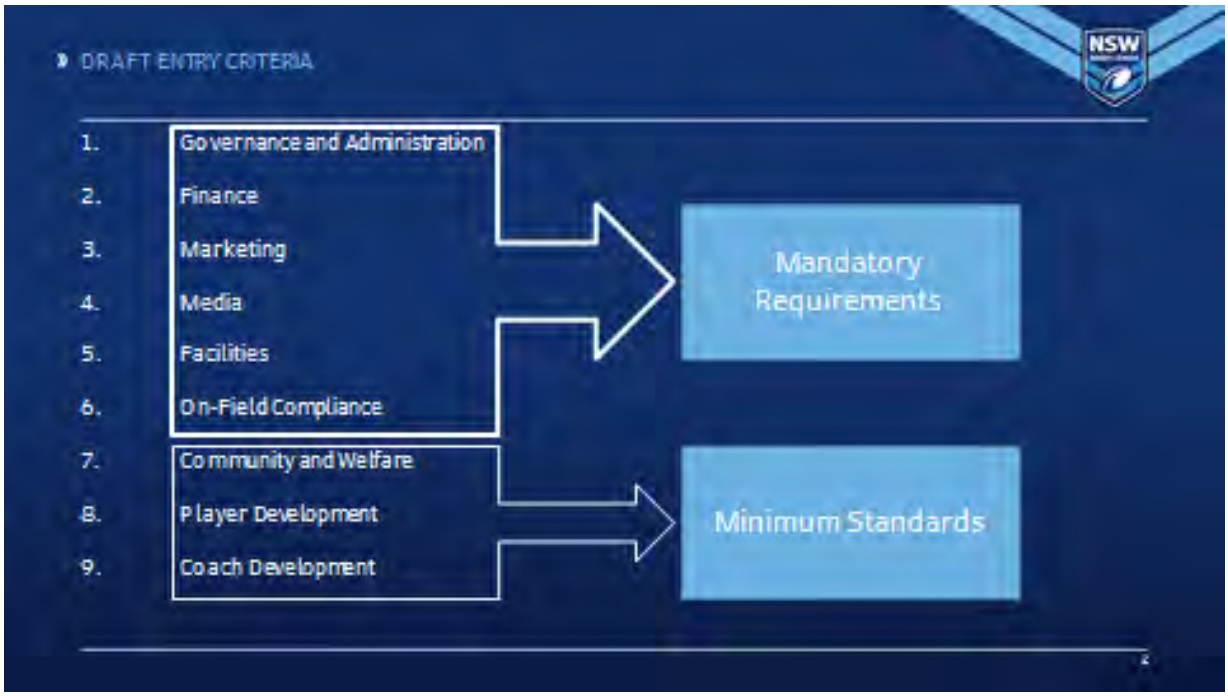

Figure 3.9. Assessment Criteria for entry into the ISP State Cup in 2018

The first 6 criteria, encompassing the governance and administration of the pathway, finance, marketing, media, facilities and on field compliance, are mandatory requirements in order to be considered for participation. Following entry, the final categories of community and welfare, player development and coach development criteria will all be used to determine the minimum standards of delivery across the pathway

There will be a fixed amount of funding for meeting mandatory requirements, with a further amount to be determined dependent on meeting the minimum standards of delivery.

3.7 Summary and Conclusion

There are a number of key points to reinforce from this chapter as they will inform the work done in following chapters. Firstly, this chapter dealt with the background and detail of the current development pathway in Australia, thus providing some of the rationale behind the problems faced. The current pathway follows the standard model of talent development (SMTD) (cf. Bailey & Collins, 2013), with representative opportunities at each stage of the pathway, further narrowing selection. This model, and its implementation throughout Australia, brings with it a number of issues that can be broadly categorised into 4 areas.

3.7.1 Financial Costs

The current model and its associated contracting structures effectively reward potential rather than performance. The outlay of approximately $3.5million on players U18, and a further $12.5million on players aged between 18-20, is only rewarded by a graduation rate to the NRL of 5.4% for 16-year olds, 11.8% for 18-year olds and 23% for 20 year olds. When player payments are combined with the operational costs of a National U20s competition it is clear that the outlay for clubs is massive with little to show for it by way of player progression. For a late specialisation sport to reward early selection like this seems to make very little sense.

3.7.2 Player Drain

Player drain occurs at a number of stages along the pathway and affecting different areas of the landscape of Rugby League within New South Wales. The initial player drain is from the local Junior Leagues within Sydney who have their potentially talented players identified and recruited to join development squads at the age of 12 and 13 years, who are then selected into the Junior Representative programs

as they get older. Anecdotal evidence is that this early selection disenfranchises the players who are not selected and leads to an increase in player drop out in the Junior League game. Weiss and Williams (2004) have emphasised the importance of qualitative research when investigating how physical and psychosocial factors interact to influence participation and drop out. This will be a focus of investigation in chapter 4 in order to determine if this is the case.

The second area of player drain is from Country areas where players are recruited to take part in the Harold Matts and S.G. Ball competitions within Sydney. These players are lost to their Junior Leagues and clubs as they tend to stay in Sydney for the duration of the season. As displayed previously, the population of country towns within NSW is not sufficient to withstand the loss of a number of talented players and this affects the participation rate within country areas. While not a specific aim of this study, one of the purposes of pathway reform was to focus on improving training and coaching within Country areas. It was hoped that this would allow those athletes to stay at home for longer, develop in their own towns and leagues and allowing NRL clubs to make talent identification decisions at later ages.

3.7.3 Pathway Performance

Pathway Clarity, specifically the positioning of the U20s (NYC) environment and it's place in the performance pathway. All coaches involved in the NRL are clear (and the data proves) that the stepping stone to the NRL is the 2nd tier State Cup competition. However, the profile and structure of the NYC competition, along with its close affiliation with the NRL competition, makes players, agents and parents feel that the NYC is that feeder competition. Any involvement in the State Cup is seen as a demotion rather than the development opportunity that it is.

The self-fulfilling nature of the pathway provides a veneer of success to the clubs involved, but something that masks the true underlying issues. While the aforementioned statistic shows that 89% of athletes involved in the NRL took part in the HM or SGB competitions is impressive, how many other potential athletes were deselected at an early age due to development programs that selected early and excluded late developers.? While this is difficult to prove, one would suggest that a graduation rate of 5.4% might be an indicator that the return on investment is not appropriate at this level and that investment should be directed to later age groups and alternative means of developing athletes.

3.7.4 Proposed Pathway Reforms.

The following chapters will explore in more detail the proposed pathway reforms and provide the evidence and rationale behind some of the suggested changes. Essentially, these reforms break down into two areas. First, the work of Cornett and Stager (2015) found that the population size and the wealth of a nation are macro factors in a nation developing sporting success. As can be seen from Table 3.6, playing populations of the Junior Leagues, and therefore the catchment areas for NRL clubs within Sydney, differ wildly in size. A major part of the pathway reforms was to rationalise these Junior Leagues and provide each NRL club with access to the minimum population size required to develop the players required each you to replenish their squad, given current graduation rates. This can be done through the realignment of current boundaries in order to expand territory, or through alterations to the formats of the game and club environments in order to promote increased recruitment of new players and retention of current ones.

Second, the development of education and assessment tools in order to affect change within the Junior League clubs and competitions and the Performance

pathway. These will be designed to increase retention of current players within the Junior Leagues through the implementation of alternative formats of the game that more suitable to their needs; improve the environment of both Junior Clubs and the Performance Pathway through a quality control and assessment process based on the models of sporting success identified in Chapter 2; address issues regarding the on field behaviour and atmosphere that currently lead to player drop out, hopefully increasing the potential player pool for each NRL club.

The following chapters will go into further detail around the process of development for the minimum standards and the work to integrate the Talent Development Environments and PCDE's into a development framework. It is hoped that this will be able to inform the coach development framework, guide delivery and determine minimum standards of delivery across each stage of the pathway. Through this work, we are hopeful that a true development pathway can be delivered, rather than a competition structure only, which seems to be the case today.

Chapter 4: What does the data say?

4.1 Introduction

This chapter completes the work needed to address the second objective of the thesis by providing further information on the current condition of the grass roots game within NSWRL. It also begins the work needed to address the third objective of the thesis by proposing specific, applied initiatives to address the issues identified by the information gathered.

As discussed in the previous chapter, participation levels throughout the NSWRL area have been in decline for a number of years. Some of this can be attributed to more accurate reporting of registrations and the move from a paper to an online process, stricter criteria regarding the number of participants registered in different formats (which removes duplication) has also led to more accurate figures. However, these cannot fully explain the reduction in numbers, nor mask the fact that the NSWRL appears to have several issues that require some innovative solutions. As such, future research is required.

For historical reasons explained in Chapter 3, the responsibility for game development has been divided between the NRL Game Development department and the NSWRL. Responsibility for the recruitment of potential participants for Junior League clubs currently resides with the former, whereas responsibility for retaining those participants within their Junior League clubs and for the administration and delivery of all competitions rests with the latter. Ultimately, this has led to a disconnect between the strategy and method of player recruitment, the issues and barriers to recruitment experienced on the ground by clubs and any form of combined methodology to solve these.

More specifically, the recruitment strategy is developed on a national scale, with the traditional targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) for a National Governing Body (i.e., increased participation) being met through consistent methodology and delivery throughout Australia. Criticisms of this national approach are, firstly, that it is inflexible to local needs and focuses too much on the big picture rather than addressing local concerns and, secondly, that it is developed and agreed with no input from either the NSWRL or the Junior Leagues and clubs that it is supposed to help. As such, this has led both to a feeling of alienation from the state organisations, Junior Leagues and clubs due to the responsibility for falling participation rates being assigned to them and a slow rate of change with clubs and districts not being given the flexibility to even identify their problems and/or develop their own solutions.

Importantly, the issue facing the NSWRL and its member Junior Leagues was rooted in the fact that they currently did not know what the issues within each district were, whether there were any commonalities in issues that could be resolved with a common solution across borders, the nature of solutions required or even how they would be able to deliver them once developed. Therefore, to begin to address some of these questions, a comprehensive mixed methods study was undertaken across all NSWRL Junior League districts and with multiple stakeholders (i.e., participants and parents). Specifically, the aim was to better understand the reasons behind the falling participation rate and provide a framework on which to build participation and growth strategies for the future.

4.2 Methodology

A mixed methods approach was chosen for this study in order to strengthen the validity of the results. Since each method, qualitative and quantitative, possess their own strengths and weaknesses a number of researchers (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson & Turner, 2003) believe that combining methods can overcome and single methods validity weaknesses. Greene, Caracelli & Graham (1989) have also shown that a mixed method approach can have additional benefits in the areas of initiation (discovering contradictions between data sets), aid in expansion in order to provide a deeper and broader understanding of the data, identify complementary data (overlapping parts of a phenomenon or a finding) and assist with development of data through using one method to inform the use of the second. These benefits are particularly relevant to this study, where the importance of overlapping information and using this to develop further lines of investigation would be especially important.

This mixed methods study was conducted in two parts. Firstly, a quantitative online questionnaire was administered to obtain data from a large sample of participants in the sport. Secondly, and following completion of the questionnaire, smaller focus groups with a sample of survey participants and parents were conducted face-to-face in order to understand certain issues in greater depth. This followed the sequential explanatory strategy for analysing data as set out by Terrell (2012) of quantitative data collection, quantitative data analysis, qualitative data collection, qualitative data analysis and interpretation. Both methods of the study are given equal emphasis, with the data integrated during the interpretation phase. For both parts of this study, ethical approval was provided by the University of Central Lancashire's

ethics committee (Appendix 5) prior to the collection of any data and each participant provided informed consent prior to taking part.

4.2.1 Participants

4.2.1.1 Online Questionnaire. Access to potential participants was facilitated using the Junior Rugby League online registration process, to which participants had consented to being contacted by the NSWRL and NRL for marketing and research purposes previously. A total of 45,002 participants, all listed on the NSWRL registered database, were approached to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire had a completion rate of 2.6%, resulting in 1,176 participant responses. Low completion rate increases risk on non-response errors in the study, particularly for whole groups/cultures where engagement is an issue. It may be that generalising from the sample to the population becomes risky (Dillman, 1999), however many researchers are questioning that a low response rate will provide biased results (Massey and Tourangeau, 2013). According to Sivo, Saunders, Chang and Jiang (2006), little information exists on the adequate response rate for mail questionnaires or how to attain a higher response rate form the population. However, when compared to typical response rates of 0.000013% in political polling, as described by Cook, Heath and Thompson (2000), which often provide accurate results, a response rate of 2.6% is adequate to provide comfort on the validity of our results. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 6. A breakdown of completed responses per district is shown in Table 4.1 and the ethnic composition of the sample in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1. *Sample Return Size by Junior League District*

Club	**Sample**
Balmain	69
Canterbury/Bankstown	106
Cronulla/Sutherland	123
Eastern Suburbs/South Sydney	129
Manly Warringah/North Sydney	94
Parramatta/ Convent	223
Penrith	246
St George	47
Western Suburbs	50
None of these	22

Table 4.2. *Ethnicity of sample.*

Ethnicity	**Sample**
Australia	968 (82%)
International	464 (39%)
Asian	32 (3%)
European	176 (15%)
African	7 (1%)
South American	11 (1%)
North American	5 (0%)
Middle East	68 (6%)
New Zealand	85 (7%)
Pacific Island	93 (8%)

4.2.1.2 Focus Group. The terminology of focus groups as opposed to group interviews was determined according to the work of both Gill et al (2008) and Tong, Sainsbury & Craig (2007). Gill et al state that "focus groups are used for generating information on collective views and the meaning that lies behind those views" (p. 293). This was in line with our desire to understand the underlying reasons as to why parents and athletes no longer wished to participate. Gill et al also go on to state that focus groups should be used in a "multi methods design, to explore a topic or collect group language or narratives to be used in later stages" (p.293), again a situation with clear parallels to the research aims and purposes within this thesis. Tong, Sainsbury and Craig (2007) also state that focus groups are "semi structured interviews with groups of 4-12 people……..Although participants individually answer the facilitators questions, they are encouraged to interact with each other" (p. 351) again, a situation which parallels the aims and purposes of this thesis.

Focus groups were targeted at participants who had indicated in the questionnaire that they would not be returning to play the following season but that they would be willing to take part in further research (question QD5 on the survey in Appendix 6). As presented in Table 4.3 below, the first focus group was conducted with the parents of Junior League participants who were aged 4–12 years (n = 6, 4 male and 2 female). The second group was conducted with Junior League participants aged 13 years and above (n = 6, all male; M_{age} = 14.5 years ± 1.4)

Table 4.3 Participant demographics for the two focus groups.

Focus Group 1		Focus Group 2	
Participant	Descriptor	Participant	Descriptor
1	Father, two sons playing aged 7 and 14	7	Played for 7 years
2	Mother, one son playing aged 9	8	Played for 11 years
3	Father, one son playing aged 7	9	Played for 8 years
4	Mother, two sons playing aged 8 and 11	10	Played for 6 years
5	Father, one son playing aged 11	11	Played for 3 years
6	Father, two sons playing aged 8 and 12	12	Played for 2 years

All participants of focus group 1 gave informed consent prior to taking part. For the participants in focus group 2, all children provided assent and their parent or guardian gave informed consent for them to take part prior to commencing the focus group process.

4.2.2 Data Collection

4.2.2.1 Online Questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of multiple choice ranking and rating questions, developed through the professional judgement of NSWRL employees (the Community Football manager, Head of Player Development and Community Competition Coordinators responsible for delivery of development programmes in NSWRL based community clubs) and current participation literature (e.g., Ryska, Hohensee, Cooley & Jones, 2002; Fraser-Thomas, Côté & Deakin, 2008; Côté & Hancock, 2016). The questionnaire was then presented to a further panel for evaluation and effectiveness against the aims of the study. This panel consisted of

representatives from three Junior Leagues and one representative from the Participation Department of the NRL. Suggested revisions from this panel were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire, which were rechecked by them as a process of confirmation.

The questionnaire was distributed by either direct email or the regular community newsletter of the NSWRL to all current Junior League participants. The electronic version of the questionnaire was distributed by Gemba (an independent research company recruited to act as gatekeeper for the distribution of the questionnaire). An explanation of the study aims, purpose and an electronic link to the questionnaire were provided within the email. All participants were informed that only completed questionnaires would be collected and that participants who completed the questionnaire were offered the opportunity to enter a prize draw to win one of five pairs of tickets to the 2017 State of Origin match in Sydney.

The questionnaire permitted parents to decide to answer on behalf of their children, if the participant was under the age of 13 years, the questionnaire was available online for a period of 6 weeks. Those districts with a low number of returns ($n < 100$) at the mid-point of the planned period were followed up with further emails and a request to the Junior League administrator to remind their clubs to fill in and return the questionnaire.

4.2.2.2 Focus Group. Focus group participants had indicated their willingness to be contacted for further study by answering question QD5 in the questionnaire. Following initial analysis of the online questionnaire a semi-structured interview guide was developed in order to elicit more detailed information on the key points identified in the questionnaire. Accordingly, key themes that were addressed included the motivations as a parent and participant for getting started in the game, the

influence of the NRL in that decision, learning points from other sports regarding the attractiveness of those games, when the participant will stop sampling other sports, the reasons why they will not continue participating and any suggestions to the format of the Junior League game that may make it more attractive for them to participate. The semi-structured nature of the focus group allowed the interviewer to proceed in greater depth on issues and explore other areas if they arose. Interview guides for both focus groups can be found in Appendix 7.

The same interviewer was used for both focus groups to promote consistency, with focus group 1 taking place 1 week prior to focus group 2. The focus group meetings took place at neutral locations in the central business district (CBD) and Parramatta districts of Sydney. Each focus group was recorded both auditorily and visually with a mean interview duration of 1hr 36min.

4.2.3 Data Analysis

4.2.3.1 Online Questionnaire. Data were collected by Gemba, analysed using proprietary software and presented descriptively in tabulated and graphical form, as reflected in the industry report provided in Appendix 1.

4.2.3.2 Focus Group. Each interview was first listened to a number of times in order to understand the key points and major issues raised. This was followed by transcription of the interviews and a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the responses initially using deductive reasoning to identify specific instances within the sessions that reinforced the general themes previously identified in the quantitative study. Further inductive reasoning was used in order to determine if any issues had been raised that had not been previously identified in the questionnaire.

4.3 Results and Discussion

4.3.1 Participant Response Trends and Demographics

It was hoped that the questionnaire would achieve a sufficiently large number of responses from all 11 of the NSWRL Junior Leagues to be able to understand the issues facing each of them. Unfortunately, the response rate was inconsistent across districts and in some cases insufficient to extract meaning on an intra-district basis. Notably, the districts with the lowest sample returns, as shown in Table 4.1, were also the districts suffering from the most sustained fall in participation rates.

Ideally, a return rate of 4% (minimum of 100 responses per district) would have allowed sufficient confidence in the results; however, the return rate experienced in this questionnaire is comparable to that of similar surveys previously conducted by Gemba for sports such as Rugby Union, Cricket and AFL. For this reason, the districts were combined, and it was not possible to provide specific individual guidance. While this may be an issue in determining suitable strategies for their area, it is symptomatic of the lack of engagement and participation in those districts.

Reflecting Table 4.2, there was a large European make up to the sample, most probably due to the geography of the game and its traditional playing base. While we do not have accurate participation figures on the overall ethnicity of our participants, the low return from New Zealand and Pacific Island cultures is surprising given their perceived large playing population within Sydney. Post-hoc feedback from the Junior Leagues with large Pacific Island populations suggested that these participants may be less computer literate (or more probably that they do not have access to a computer at home) or that this is not the appropriate format with which to engage them. Other cultures that are heavily represented within the general population of Sydney, such as Middle Eastern and Asian, are not well represented in the questionnaire either. This is

reflected in the playing population and indicative of a larger inclusivity issue of failing to engage with multi-ethnic communities

4.3.2 Key Insights from Research

Important insights can be grouped into four areas of concern and are explored in greater detail below with the aid of data from both the questionnaire and focus groups.

4.3.2.1 Pathway and Sampling. An early sampling phase indicates that participants are trying lots of sports at younger age groups and specializing later on. Supporting this more diverse involvement, schools offer a large range of sports for sampling. This presents a good opportunity for participants to take part in a multi-sport environment.

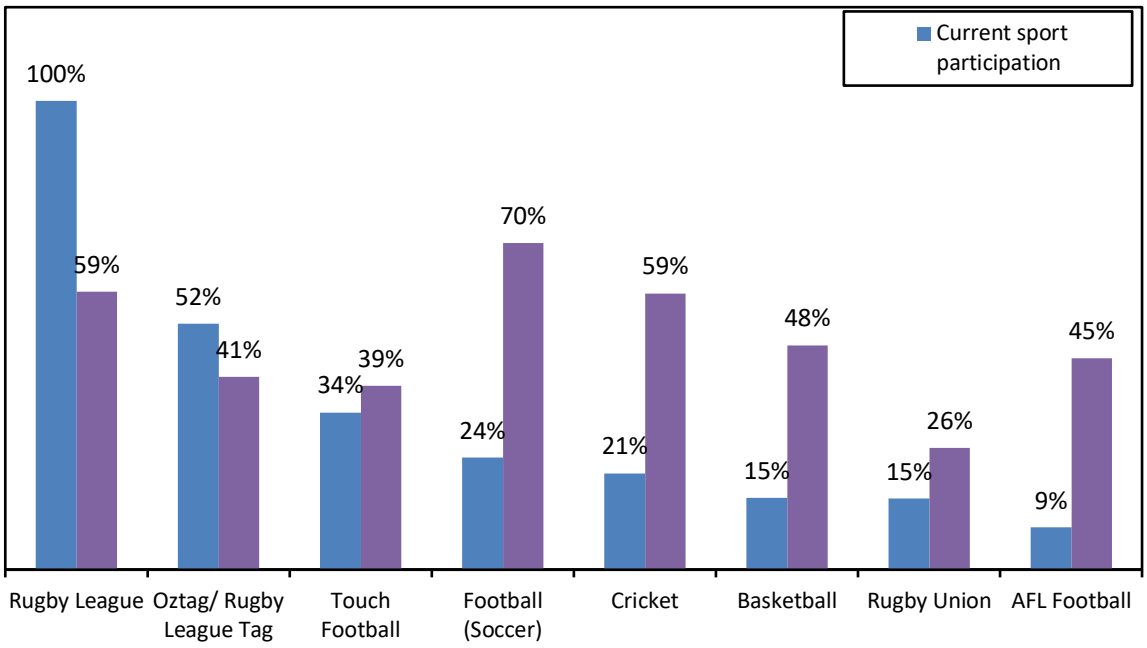

Figure 4.1. Current sport participation versus sports offered at school.

Among these different sports was Australian Rules Football (AFL), considered to be a traditional rival, but this is not borne out by data in Figure 4.1. AFL is offered

in 45% of schools but taken up by only 9% of our participants. Further to that, it is interesting that Soccer is offered at more schools than Rugby League (70% vs. 59%;). In a Rugby League state such as New South Wales, both AFL and Soccer have successfully managed to make inroads into school delivery and offer potential participants an opportunity to sample their sport.

Participation in our key competitor sports (soccer, AFL, basketball and cricket) reduces as participants get older as seen in Figure 4.2. Players appear to be specialising at later ages and committing to single sports, despite an increasing number of school sport options with age.

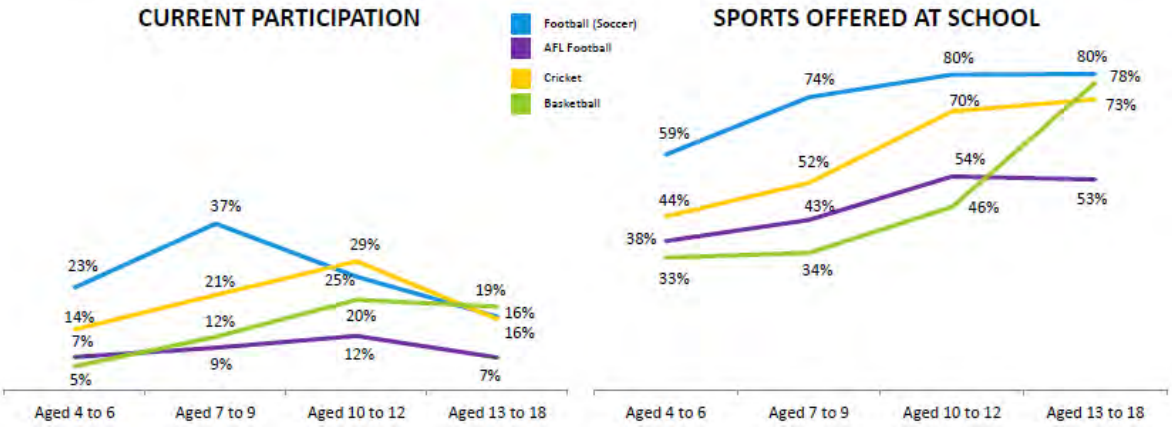

Figure 4.2. Current participants and involvement in other sports.

This would suggest that the risk of losing current participants to key competitors is highest for us in the 7–9 years and 10–12 years age groups and that future recruitment and retention strategies should be targeted to those age groups.

While the number of sports offered at schools increases with age, the number of sports participated in by our participants remains relatively constant throughout the age groups. Crucially, the alternative sports participated in at later ages tend to be alternative formats of our game (Touch or Tag) rather than competitor sports such as

soccer and AFL. This reinforces the need to recruit and retain at younger ages with an appropriate format of the game in order to create life-long interest.

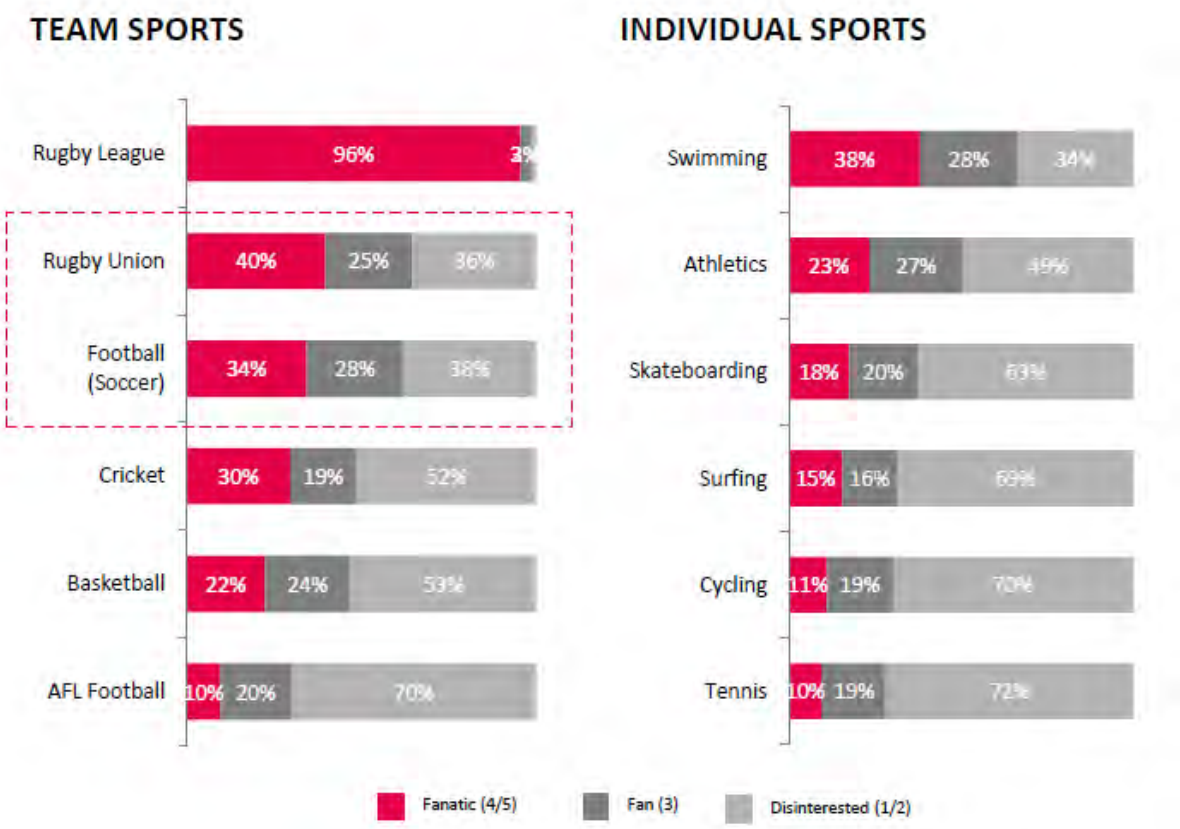

Figure 4.3. Passion Levels among Rugby League Participants within the questionnaire.

Perhaps underpinning this participation trend, Figure 4.3 shows that our participants report more passion about other football codes such as Rugby Union or Soccer. Parents and participants believe that Soccer is a gateway sport for other codes, their programmes considered safe to play at younger age groups while still supporting and following an NRL team and planning to play RL at an older age. This approach is highlighted in the following exchange from the first focus group:

> Participant 4: That's where it's a real shame. These kids, they have so much passion for the game but because they don't have the physicality to play. In

> our area they play soccer, and it is around 11. A lot of them drop to soccer, but they know all the stats of the [footy] players. From Friday night to Monday night they watch every game.
>
> Interviewer: So, they're still very passionate about the sport
>
> Participant 2: They just can't play it anymore.
>
> Participant 5: My son will always be a fan, but he may eventually just be a spectator. As opposed to playing. And that's probably how the vast majority of his friends will be. I look at his friends and I can't see any of them playing grade 8, grade 9 rugby. Just based on the way that they play the game.

Further study is required to determine what age groups show the most passion for Soccer while also participating in RL.

There are also social norms reflected in these results. Sports such as swimming or surfing are national obsessions, casual and performed on a regular basis with friends. Passion for these does not necessarily reflect an interest in an organised form of the sport, or a barrier to participation within RL provided that opportunities are tailored to accommodate those interests.

4.3.2.2 Recruitment of Participants. Forty three percent of parents responded on behalf of their children and 57% children responding for themselves, as seen in Figure 4.4. This was investigated in order to understand who the decision maker is in the family regarding participation and at what age any transfer in decision making may occur.

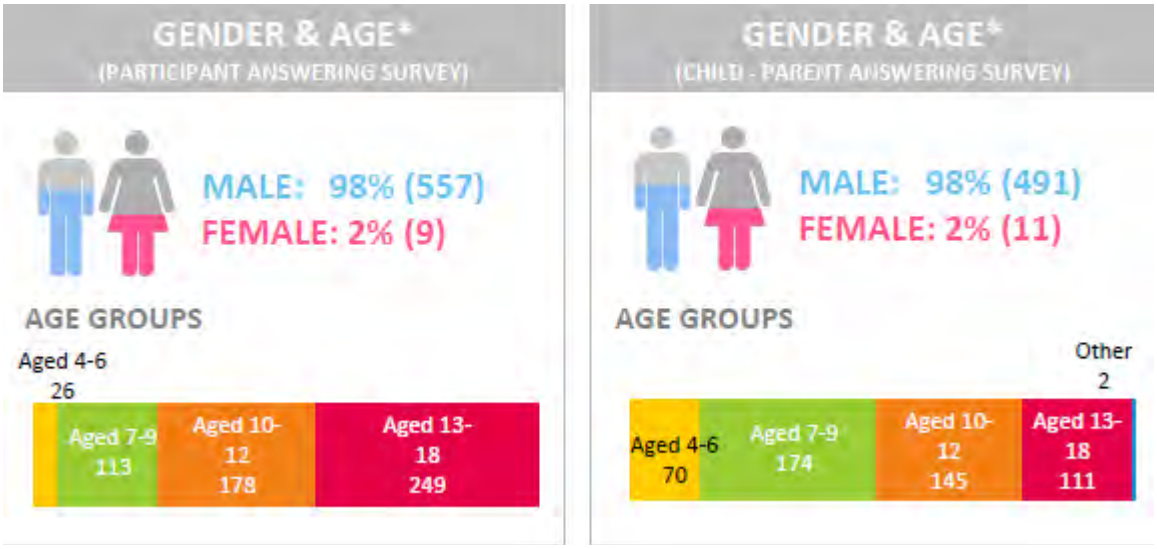

Figure 4.4. Participant responses - child and parent responding on behalf of their child.

A high response rate of fathers contrasts directly with the perception of the mother as the decision maker in the family. This perception was reinforced through the focus group where a number of fathers admitted that while they would like their son to continue to play, their mother would have the final say. Instances such as, Participant 3: "His mother wanted him to play a sport, a team sport, get some social interaction" and Participant 5: "Yeah, the commitment's too big. And my wife has an influence. She is anti 'League' because she believes there's going to be a lot more injuries in League and reads some of the negative press."

The following exchange highlights the concerns of mothers, and the part they have to play in continuing participation once Rugby League has been chosen:

> Interviewer: Your mum or dad wouldn't be concerned at all because of this. How about the safety aspect? Does the safety aspect come into play?
>
> Participant 11: Yes! My mum is always ringing me about me playing. Always telling me not to play, telling me to wear my mouthguard.

While it may be that mothers make the decisions and fathers complete the registrations and provide details, there is doubt over the question of whether we are receiving participant feedback or parent opinion in the quantitative analysis. Therefore, caution is required when interpreting some of these results.

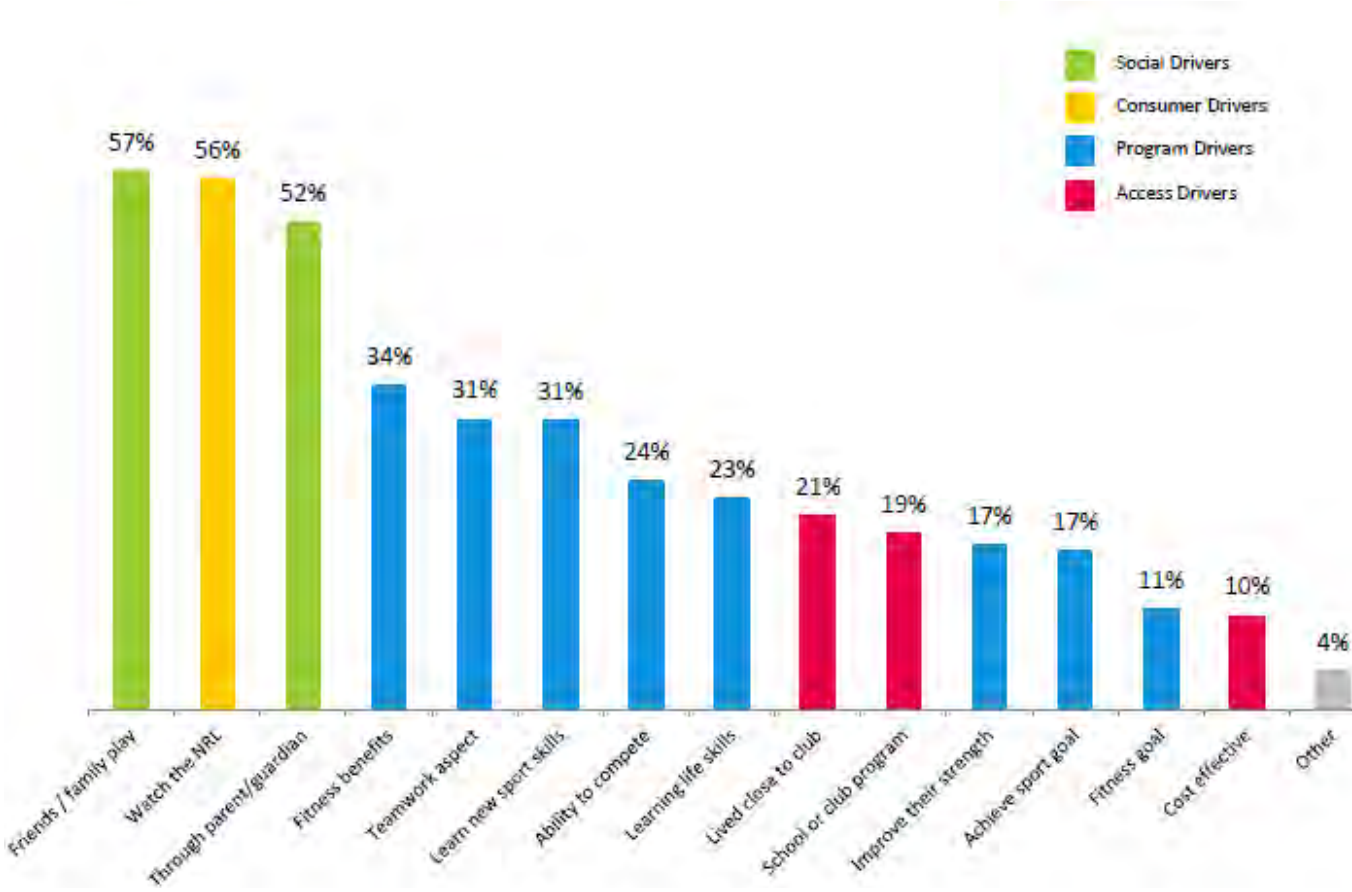

Figure 4.5. Why do they play? The first point of entry for participation.

Reinforcing the position of mothers as key decision makers, Figure 4.5 highlights the importance of family and friends on participation in our Junior Rugby League. Children want to "play with friends" and NSWRL participants are no different. Feedback from both adults and children in the focus groups reinforces this message: Participant 5: "My son's friends at school coming together, playing in a

team and him wanting to be part of it. He just came to us and said, they're starting this season down the road, can he play?" and:

Participant 10: Just mates were playing it and then got me to play it with them, so I said alright.

Interviewer: Were there other sports that were being considered?

Participant 10: I was playing soccer but I didn't like it, so…

It would appear that the motivations for participating in sport have evolved slightly since Longhurst & Spink (1987) investigated the motivation for participation in sport of Australian children. Their study, while looking at participation in multiple sports for participants aged 8 to 18 years, found the most important reasons for participating were to improve skills, be physically fit and to compete. Significantly, they found that extrinsic, social factors for participation were more important to the younger age groups. This was reinforced by the work of Morris, Clayton, Power & Jin-Song (1996) who, in a large scale study of Australian sport and physical activity, found that young participants rated fun higher as a reason for participation compared to older participants who rated health and fitness as more important. Perhaps this is a factor in the reasons for beginning to participate but becomes less important as participation continues.

Family passion for the sport is also a key entry point. A history with the sport and passion for it within the family can have a strong influence on participation, as shown in focus group 2 by Participant 9: "I started playing because all my uncles played, and I just joined the family club. I really liked it so I kept playing".

This shows the importance of early socialisation within the sport, so it is important for NSWRL to engage and acquire participants early. Data in Figure 4.6 shows that Junior League participants start early and stay for longest—66% of

NSWRL participants in the 7–9-year-old age groups, 85% of 10–12 year olds and 89% of the 13–18 year olds have played JL football for 3 or more years. This suggests that if NSWRL can recruit and retain participants for a period of at least 3 years, the chance of them wanting to become lifelong participants increases.

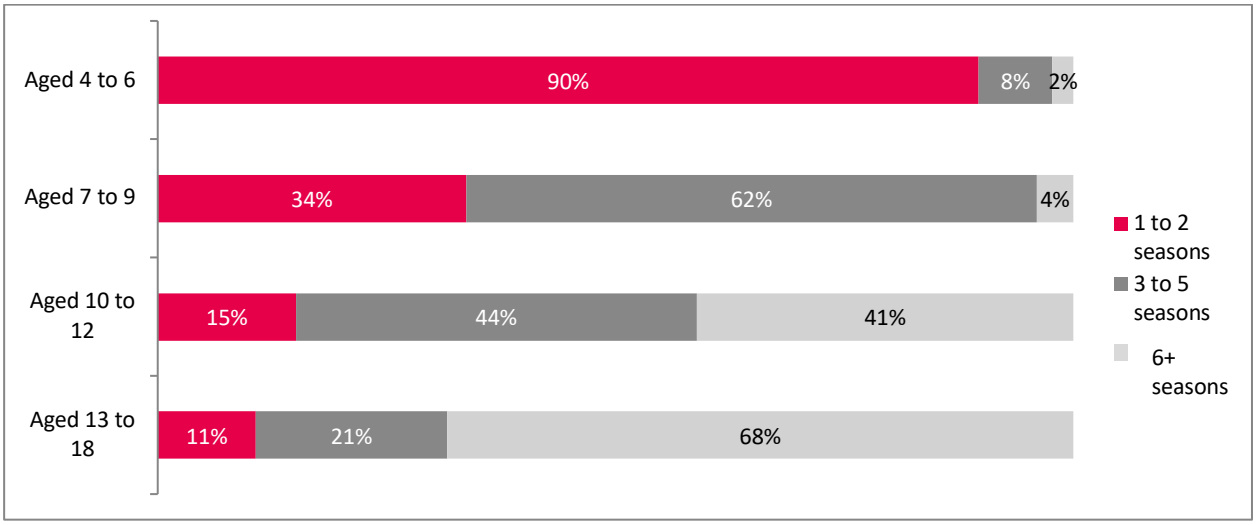

Figure 4.6. Number of Seasons Participated per Age Group

Current NRL Development delivery of recruitment programmes focus on the 13–18 school group brackets. Based on the results of this study, that would appear to be the wrong demographic for major focus. New participants in this age group only make up 11% of the current population. The study also suggests that new participants (those who have played for one or two seasons) in the older age cohorts (10–12, 13–18) are less likely to continue playing than those who have played for longer periods. This indicates a need to refocus on younger age groups in order to increase the number of participants sampling the sport while concurrently working on environmental improvements to provide them with an incentive to stay involved in the game.

4.3.2.3 Reasons for Participant churn. The research suggests that there is a level of interaction between the majority of the reasons for participant drop out. This

focus on the physically biggest athletes in the smallest number of teams gives rise to the perception of the sport being too dangerous within a club setting. This concern is focussed on different aspects of safety and the physicality of the sport. However, physical size difference can impact in other areas apart from just safety. This was endorsed by Campbell, Bracewell, Blackie and Patel (2018) who identified that "smaller players have their confidence crushed, whereas larger players who have experienced a certain dominance in their younger years, come to a standstill when this advantage starts to fade. Commonly these players, due to relying on the advantage of their stature, miss out on essential early skill development" (p. 319). In short, those that are most likely to stay might not be as skilled as they could be. In turn, this then lowers the level of skill at the very top.

There is also the element of intimidation for smaller athletes and the feeling of not being able to physically compete against the majority of their opposition. Ford and Williams (2011) highlighted the psychological as well as physical challenges faced by a player born in the 4th quartile of their age group. Although this perceived intimidation factor leads to a lack of confidence in themselves and their ability, it is perhaps more reflective of poor quality of coaching and the lack of attention to the squad as a whole rather than the game per se. The risk of injury for smaller, late maturing athletes, particularly between the ages of 10–13 years when maturation rates begin to change, and size differences become more noticeable, may also lead to large drop-out rates.

To further complicate any potential solutions to address the current churn rate, the importance of the reasons for churn differs throughout the age groups. These variances in the reasons for churn (see Figure 4.7) mean that different strategies will

be required to be developed in order to address issues at various age groups as well as different sporting competitors in the market place.

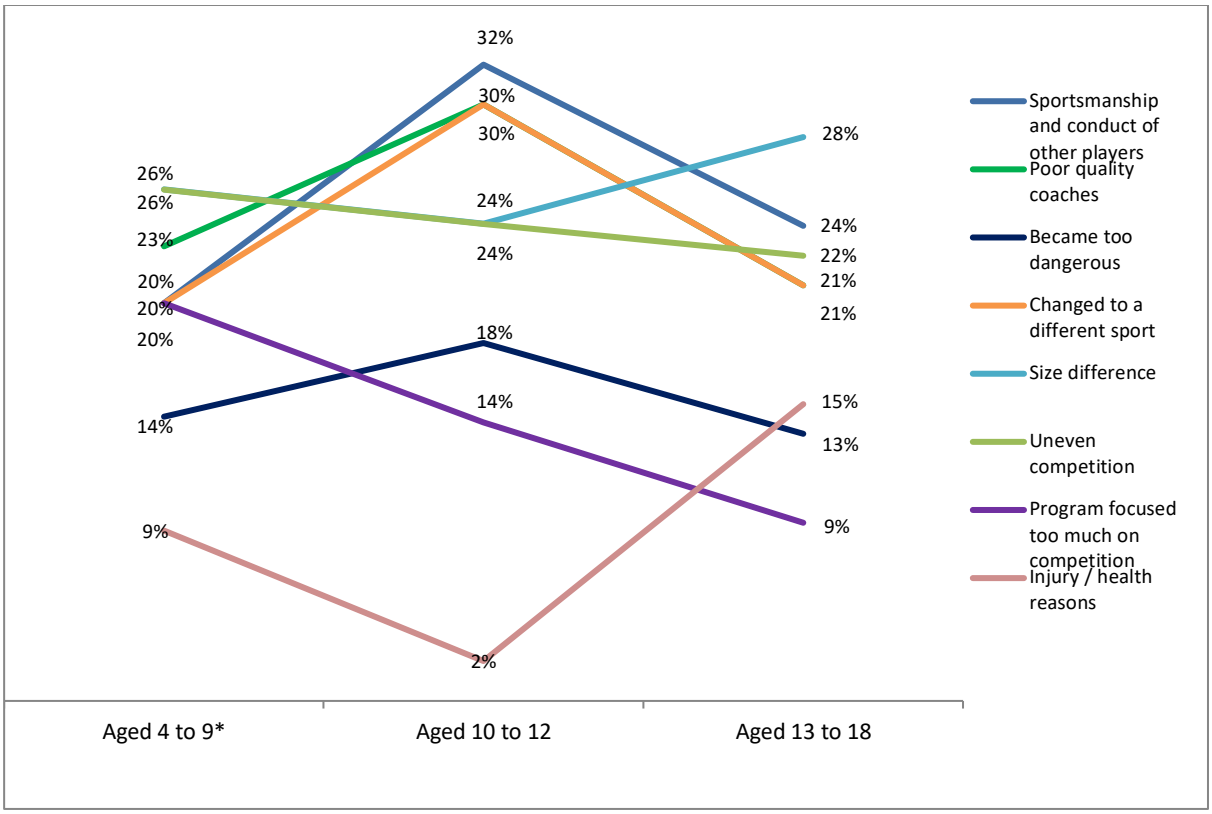

Figure 4.7. Top Drivers of Churn by age group

For the younger age groups, the sport appears to be stuck in a vicious cycle around the physicality and contact levels of the sport, the perceived safety levels and the want to participate in 'Rugby League'. All mothers in focus group 1stated that the biggest factor putting them off letting their children continue to play was the contact levels and physicality. Comments such as these support the notion: Participant 2: "it doesn't matter how well they're coached, how good they are as a team, it's now just coming down to sheer brute force that they can't control."

And

Participant 2: It's more about making it safe for my son, he's only a tiny player. So, he like, would be below average height. For me, if he wants to play I'll make it as safe as I can make it.

Interviewer: Safety, right.

Participant 2: Like, within reason. So, if he isn't out there participating or like, confident to tackle, I would not let him out on the field because he's going to get hammered.

When a modified form of the game was proposed to them that removed or lessened the amount of contact involved, such as Touch or Tag football, they all stated that they would not be interested in playing since it was not 'footy'.

Interviewer: Do you see touch format and Oztag as Rugby League or Rugby?

Participant 2: My son doesn't.

Participant 6: No, that's not Rugby League

Participant 5: My son's done touch, but I don't see it as rugby league.

The physical aspect of the sport combined with the perceived unfairness of the competition is a major churn factor for younger age groups. However, for our older participants, ages 13–18 years where the maturation levels begin to even out, the physicality of the sport is a major attractor, something that draws participants in and keeps them engaged. A number of participants in focus group 2 echoed the sentiments of this response:

Interviewer: Do you think it's safe? What's your take on playing?

Participant 8: There's always injuries in all sports. It depends on if you do it right or do it wrong.

Interviewer: So you cop it?

Participant 8: Yes."

A further aspect of the physicality of the game was feedback regarding the unevenness of competitions and the issues around 'super teams'—the collection of all the best players within a district into a single team.

> Participant 12: The size, some of them are huge. I really find that all of them they're in one team. For example, Cabramatta, all the big boys are in one team. It's more spread out when it comes to Catholic Schools comps.

And

> Participant 9: yes, they think if they go to that team it will be a lot better. All the players go to Wenty or Cabramatta because they think they're dominant clubs. That's where all the big players go because they want to dominate.

While the current rules of Junior League competition are an issue when it comes to the unevenness of competition, a further factor is the attitude and ability of our current coaching workforce. Figure 4.8 cites the overall quality of the coaching experience and the attitude and behaviour of coaches along with their knowledge and skills as major causes of participant dissatisfaction for those who were unlikely to return.

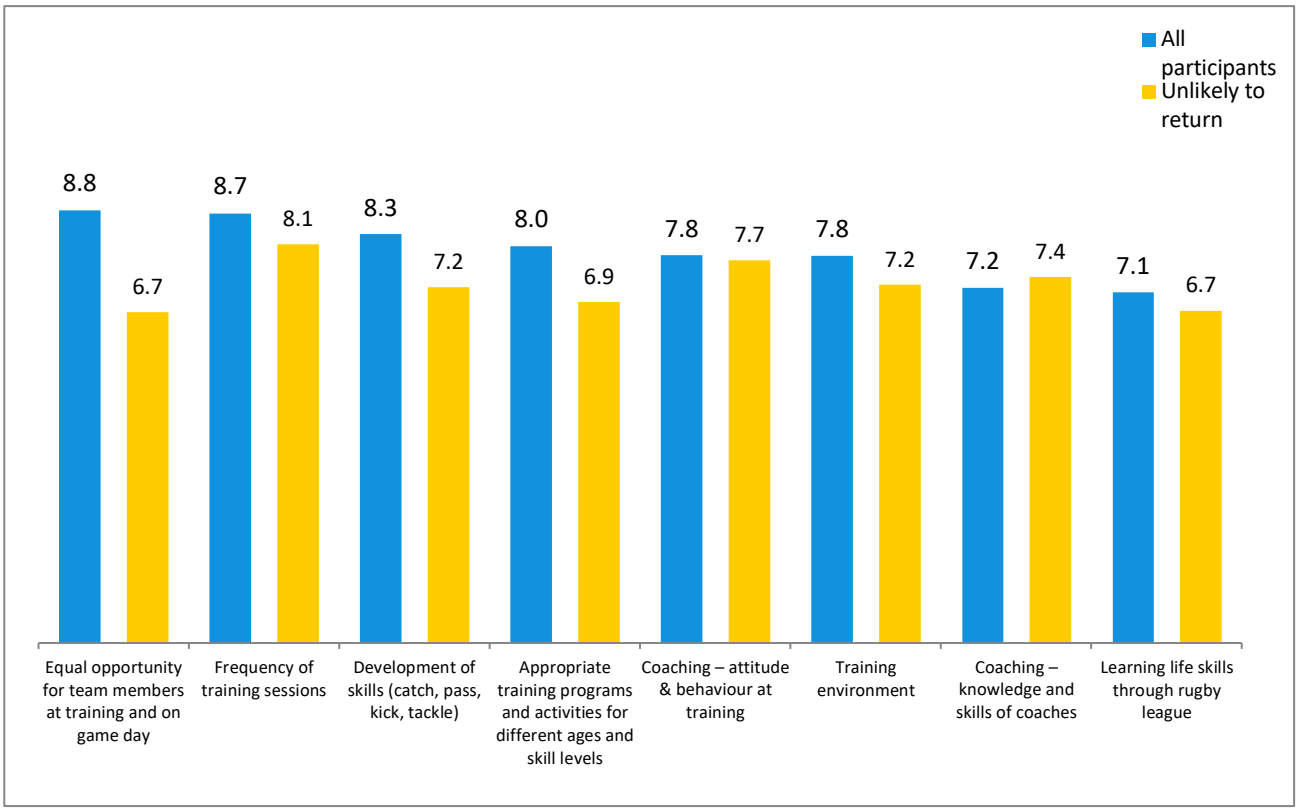

Figure 4.8. Satisfaction Rating- Skills and Development

Interestingly, the biggest discrepancy between satisfaction ratings for all participants and those unlikely to return was for an 'equal opportunity for team members at training and on game day'. A study by Keegan, Harwood, Spray and Lavallee (2009) confirms the importance and influence that coaches have in determining the quality of a child's experience in the sport. An over emphasis by coaches on winning a competition leads to comments such as these:

> Participant 3: I'm an assistant coach at the club that we're at and it was all about rotating the children through… Other clubs wouldn't do that, they had their favourite players, the guy who would always score every time he touched the ball.

And:

> Participant 6: Some of the coaches are to blame too

Participant 4: oh yeah, they just send them out there to whack kids

It is these participants who do not return due to dissatisfaction with the Junior League experience and a shrinking participation base. However, Walters et al. (2012) highlighted the fact that in 'sports of national significance' such as Rugby League in Australia 'the high cultural expectation of competence might put coaches at all levels under increased pressures'. This perception of increased pressure to perform may go some way to explaining less than optimal coach behaviours for long-term participation.

Coaching quality is an interesting issue and dependent on the definition of good coaching. One focus group participant expressed the following view:

> Participant 12: I think they're [Rugby League Coaches] much more skillful than other sports. Rugby League seem to know what they're doing more. They don't sort of look at who's the kid, they focus on who's the best and they pick them.

So one must be careful not to tar all the coaches with the same brush. However, due to a lack of appropriate coach education, it is suspected that the traditional view of a good coach (the vocal coach on the sideline who shouts instructions throughout play, wins games and recruits well) may be what some parents or participants define as a good coach. Further research should be carried out into this and the perceptions of our athletes and parents as to what quality coaching looks like.

Interestingly the perception of uneven competitions and single teams with all the playing strength concentrated in them was not a factor when discussing school competition. School competitions, while seen as less important, were also seen as safer and sometimes more fun option to play Rugby League.

The attitude and sideline behaviour of other parents was identified in both the questionnaire and focus groups as an issue that significantly impacted the overall Game Day experience. Raised in both the questionnaire and focus groups responses, as seen in Figure 4.9 below, on the 'Game Day experience' was the attitude and behaviour of other parents on the sideline throughout the games.

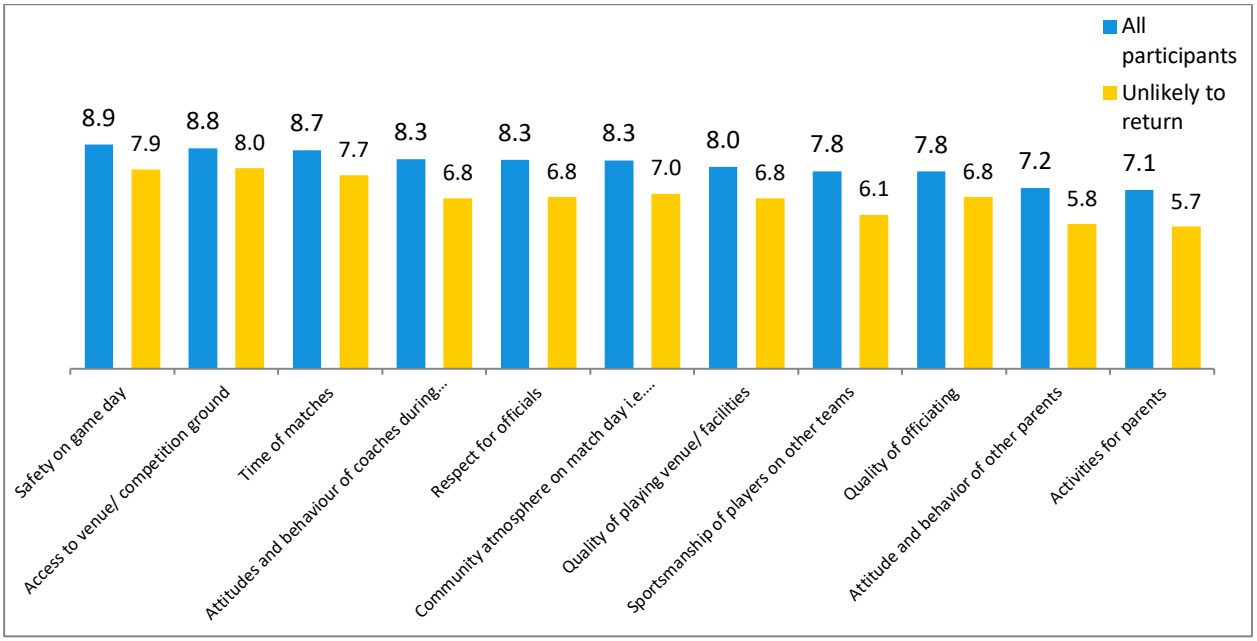

Figure 4.9. Satisfaction Scores- Game Day Experience

Sideline attitude and behaviour, while a societal issue and not confined to RL, is the second most important reason why participants drop out. Studies in sports such as American Football and Swimming by Crone (1997) and Fraser-Thomas and Cote (2009) have identified that parents can overemphasize winning, thereby exerting pressure on the participants and demonstrating inappropriate behaviour when children lose. While undoubtedly some of these issues are caused through the social and economic make up of our participants and the clashes between cultures created through the urbanisation of Sydney, precious little work has been carried out by the NSWRL or the NRL to address this.

Instances where certain Junior Leagues' employ Security Guards to attend their matches create perceptions that the venue or the experience is not a safe one.

> Participant 5: I've got to mention that, because Rugby League's the only sport that I've been to or seen where you go to now there's security guards, crowd control.

This perception becomes reality when bad behaviour on the sidelines spills onto the field and affects the game for those participants, in incidents such as the one highlighted in focus group 1 below:

> Participant 9: It sucks the fun out of the game. You're out there trying to have a game and they're... all you can hear is them having a go at the ref, it gets the ref angry and he goes harder on the team. The fights start because the parents are yelling at other parents, parents yelling at the players, and players yelling at each other.
>
> Interviewer: Does that happen every week?
>
> Participant 12: it depends what team it is.

This is hardly an atmosphere designed to promote integration and participation, so it is no surprise that parents in our focus groups talk about the hostile and aggressive environment when attending RL matches. Parents feel this 'hostile' and 'aggressive' atmosphere puts kids off and the attitude of coaches and parents contribute to this atmosphere. There is also a belief that this is a unique issue for RL, one that is not experienced in other similar sports such as Rugby or AFL.

> Participant 4: …in the U6s we had a fight where parents had a fight at the game. That freaked my kids out because we don't fight at home. Then my boy, when he was in Under 10s, he had a similar situation, but his coach got

involved. I never see it at Union, we do nippers, swimming AFL. We've done tennis we've been in netball. But I saw it in one year, twice.

This belief may reflect the sample size involved in the qualitative study, along with the make-up of the sample who are not returning and have clearly had a bad experience of attending Junior League games. Evidence from Elliott and Drummond (2014), Bowker et al. (2009) and Holt et al. (2008) all show that this atmosphere certainly is not an isolated issue for RL, but it is important to accept that it may be more of an issue for RL than other sports. Brackenridge, Pitchford and Wilson (2011) have highlighted the role of sport policy, and therefore the role of the NSWRL, in improving parental and generic spectator behaviour in youth sport. In summary, preventing churn is a multifaceted problem spanning the game, participants, coaches *and* parents.

4.3.2.4. The Product. The level of participant engagement is high across all age groups and across multiple participation channels, as evidenced by Figure 4.10. Participants are happy to play at Junior League club, school competition, casually at school or socially with friends.

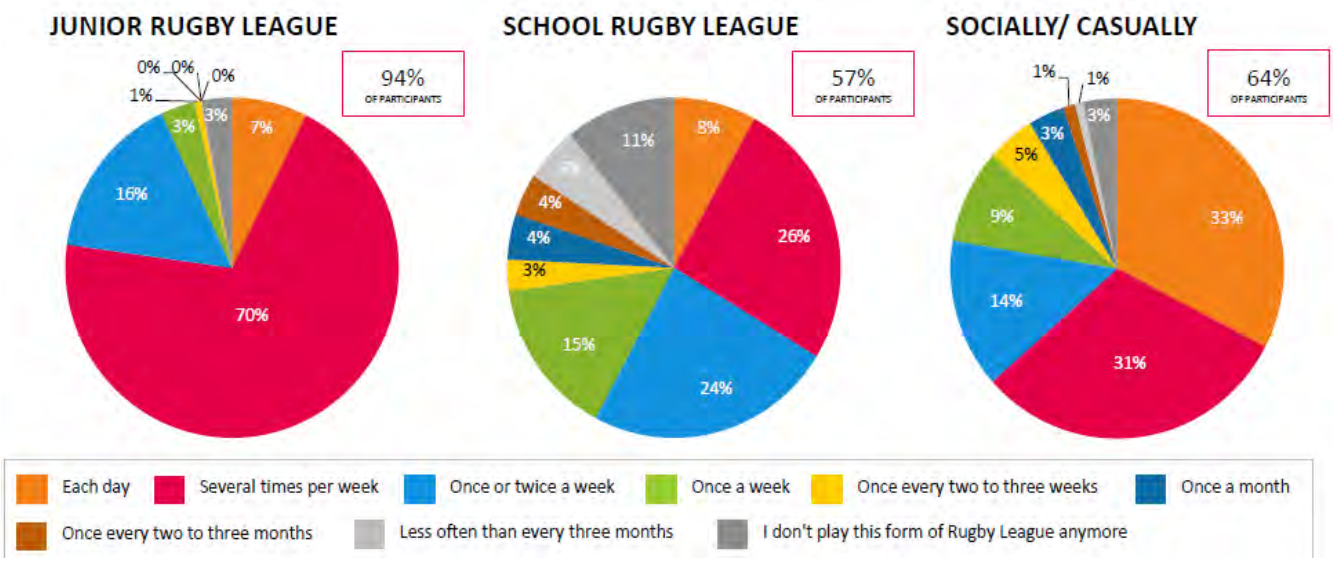

Figure 4.10. Frequency of participation in each environment.

Altogether, 77% of NSWRL Junior League participants play at least three times per week, this includes organised games, training or social games at their club. Given this high rate of participation, the seeming willingness of our participants to engage in multiple formats of the game in multiple different environments, should be studied further. Issues such as the frequency per age group, frequency as a factor in burnout and drop out and at what level of the game this occurs (i.e., talent development, elite or community level) are all areas of further consideration.

School RL is less frequent, with only 26% taking part several times a week at school. The less organised programmes at school reflect a national decline in delivery of school sport in general. Unfortunately, the comments in previous sections of this report, and those below from focus group 1, illustrate that while Oz Tag and Touch may supplement the full contact version of the game, they are not a replacement for it.

> Participant 1: It's a problem I can't fix. On the one hand size is an issue, but when you talk about Oztag the attitude is no that's not the answer.
>
> Participant 2: Someone said that's the wussy version of Rugby League!

4.4 A Summary of the Key Insights

4.4.1 Pathway

Our younger participants are 'sampling' the sport and trying a number of different sports alongside rugby league. If we can get an athlete to participate regularly for 3 years, they are more likely to engage for much longer, thus reducing churn rates. This makes the sampling phase a key area of recruitment for NSWRL, the more athletes that sample the sport at an early age, the more athletes will be retained in the sport, provided issues such as quality of coaching and the sporting environment are also addressed. At the younger ages, internal issues are more of a threat to

participation than other sports, we know they will be trying other sports and must ensure the quality of experience that they have when they play Rugby League means that they return.

Our older participants are more 'specialised' and committed to single sports. They want more Rugby League, either through longer and more regular training sessions and increased competition opportunities or through different formats of the game such as Touch Rugby and Tag Rugby. This 'sampling' to 'specialisation' model would appear to agree with Côté's developmental model of sport participation. The move to specialisation would also agree with the findings of Brooks et al. (2017, page 1) who found that 91% of American university athletes "believed that specialisation increased their chances of getting better at their sport either 'quite a bit' or a 'great deal'".

4.4.2 Recruitment

The importance of family and friends to new participants, particularly in the younger age groups cannot be overstated. In the younger age groups parents are the primary decision makers, specifically mothers, and particularly for a contact sport such as Rugby League. While the NRL is seen as a recruitment tool for player participation due to athletes watching their heroes on TV and wanting to emulate them, the true impact may not be as great as believed. Mutter (2014) in a study on German soccer found that past success of the German national soccer teams only resulted in a slight increase in participation in amateur soccer. However, it was also found that present success of the team resulted in an increased desire for current participants to play more regularly. This is echoed in a number of studies (Green, 2012; Stamatakis and Chaudhary, 2008) on the impact of success in the Olympic games on sport participation who found that participation actually decreased in key

sports in the years immediately following a games where the UK had been successful. Far from having an impact on overall participation levels, Green (2012) suggest there is little to no correlation between mass participation and Olympic success. This has been reflected in participation figures within Rugby League in NSWRL following NRL Grand Final wins, with the Junior League failing to see significant growth in participation in following years. Green also suggests that the only participants who may see top level, elite sportsmen (as NRL players undoubtedly are) as role models are those who already perceive themselves to be on the same career path to success. This would suggest that the success of NRL teams has little to no impact on the mass participation levels required in our younger age groups.

The perception of the NRL is also a big factor in mothers not allowing their children to participate. The physical aspect of the NRL game and the risks associated with it such as concussion or serious injury all tarnish the perception of the Junior League game. If parents are going to be a significant recruitment driver for us, then a better job needs to be done in differentiating the game played by our young athletes in Junior League from the game that is watched on TV every weekend. McCarthy and Jones (2007) highlighted the importance of "tailoring youth sport in the sampling years" (p. 400) to the needs of the child rather than the parent.

Differentiation does not necessarily have to involve the competition format or rules of our product, although these have been enacted through the Modified Games rules at 6–9 and 9–12 age groups since this study was completed. These include changes such as smaller pitch size and team numbers, second chance rules for minor mistakes, non-competitive seasons (although score keeping in individual games is still carried out). The product elements that are more important from a recruitment perspective for parents are simple things such as ensuring that their child has fun and

enjoyment while playing, experiences teamwork and being part of a social group. Team sports are seen to promote confidence and develop social skills in their children. However, there appears to be a different opinion regarding the importance of competition, with participants ranking it higher than parents as a reason to play the game. However, the perception of Rugby League as a sport, and the NRL in general, is not a good one throughout Australia. Too many scandals, bad behaviour and severe injuries at senior levels of the game have led to the perception that Rugby League is a sport for 'boofheads' and not a fit environment for kids. Parents of current participants identified this perception, particularly when expressed by friends, as a reason for withdrawing their child from playing. We know that children want to play sport with their friends, so when parents perceive soccer as a safer sport and a better environment, they then try and recruit fellow participants. Peer pressure is an enormously strong driver for children, and it would appear for parents too.

4.4.3 Junior League Satisfaction

While there is always room for improvement, overall participant satisfaction levels with Junior League are high. In speaking with GEMBA, who have carried out these studies for numerous sports and organisations throughout Australia, whilst we need to recognise the room for improvement in certain areas, typical satisfaction levels for sports in trouble sit around the 3–4 out of 10 level or lower. It is therefore positive that there is no satisfaction score lower than 6.2 out of 10 with the majority of our 'hotspot' issues being rated above 7 out of 10 by participants. It should be noted that athletes unlikely or unsure about returning have lower satisfaction levels.

Satisfaction rates have indicated some 'easy' fixes in areas such as communication levels from Junior Leagues and safety on game day. Satisfaction issues requiring more in-depth solutions include the provision of equal opportunity in

training and on game day and the overall quality of coaching. These are not issues that can be fixed easily and will require a long-term commitment to coach education and development programmes in order to improve coach knowledge on 'how' to coach and 'why'. Improved coach education will in turn have an effect on their definitions of success and a realisation that, particularly for community sports such as ours, lifelong participation, retention of participants and enjoyment of participants is more important than winning an U8 competition with 8 players and no one else returning to play the following year.

There is also the perception that the environment on Junior League game day can be seen as 'hostile' or 'intimidating' due to poor sideline behaviour of parents and coaches along with athlete hostility towards referees. This shows us that the issue is deeper than just poor-quality coaching. A programme of parent education is required to sit alongside that of coach education in order to prevent the 'adultification' of our children and the reasons for their participation.

4.4.4 Reason for Churn

There are a number of common elements in the identified reasons for Junior League dissatisfaction, namely size difference, uneven competition (due to the creation of super teams and player grading), poor coaching attitude and behaviour (but interestingly not coaching knowledge) and poor player conduct. Size difference, in particular, was identified in both the quantitative and qualitative analysis as a major reason for churn. This can be linked to player recruitment and parents' perception of rugby league as a dangerous sport, therefore driving them to seek alternatives for participation. The perceived and actual size differences in certain Junior League districts makes the competition unfair and uneven, leading to a loss of motivation and interest from the smaller, less physically developed able participants.

The comparisons of rugby league to other sports are not always favourable either. Rugby League is seen as less accommodating to all sizes of athletes and more restrictive in ball movement, again leading to a loss of motivation and interest and the subsequent drop off in participation.

4.4.5 Product

When discussing the issues with the product, sample bias must be taken into account. It should be noted that the majority of the returns for the quantitative study were returning participants, therefore by definition they are at least satisfied with the product and enjoy taking part. For those returning participants, the frequency of participation is not an issue; committed Junior League participants want more Rugby League and are willing to commit to different formats of the game in order to fulfil this. Our younger participants want shorter sessions, preferably less than 60 min per session.

Potential refinements, including grading of the competition and improving the competitive balance of clubs should be considered in order to address issues of size difference and uneven competition. Grading of competitions in particular presents a major challenge for NSWRL in regard to club, coach and parent education. Current grading practice in younger age groups consists of identifying all of the best players and selecting them in the same team in order to win the A-Grade competitions. Coaches and parents want to win the League and clubs bask in the glow of U6 to U12 champions in order to attempt to recruit more players for the next season. In practice, most clubs end up with only a single team in each age group since the grading process has identified the participants of lower ability, put them all in the same team and transformed their experience from a positive to a negative. Until coach and parent

education reflect the need to maintain as many players taking part for as long as possible then the product on the field will always be limited.

The following chapter will address the third and fourth objectives of the thesis, based on the concerns raised in the reasons for churn within Junior Leagues and identify a number of potential solutions for this concern.

Chapter 5: Recreational Formats – W8s and M8s

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will address both the third and fourth objectives of the study through the delivery of applied initiatives to resolve previously identified issues and by measuring the success and impact of those initiatives.

As detailed in Chapter 4, the major reasons for player churn in our Junior Leagues include perceived poor quality of coaching, unevenness of competitions due to differences in size and competitiveness of teams and the length of time and commitment required in order to take part in a full Junior League season. Further to this, the perception of the current format of the game and pressure from friends and family not to play what they felt was a miniature version of the NRL, with all the negative connotations and perceived bad reputation that it brings, was also a major factor in participant drop out throughout the season. Other issues such as fairer games, less structured rules and increased opportunity to adapt and shape the game to meet the presenting participant needs were also identified as factors that affected participation and drop-out rates in the Junior League competitions. Importantly, it is clear that the issues identified so far are wide ranging and require more than a single solution to address.

Chapter 4 also showed that younger participants, particularly those in the sampling stage of development, did not have any other formats of the game available for them to play that would maintain the characteristics of Rugby League yet, make it more accessible to them and easier to take part. Crucially, Capranica and Millard-Stafford (2011) in their study of early or late specialisation models across multiple sports, stressed the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to any format modifications, rather than simply scaling down an adult version of the game. On this

basis, it was felt that other versions of the game that focussed on the recreational and social aspects and the ability to play with friends outside of the structured Junior League format, would align to this research and be beneficial to skill development, enjoyment and, ultimately, participation rates. A friendlier, more casual version of the 13-a-side game would not only provide a more welcoming environment for parents and children to take part in, but it would also more clearly differentiate Junior League football from the perception that it was just a miniature version of the NRL game seen on TV every week.

Similarly, a solution to the issue of an overcrowded sporting weekend and other family commitments was required in order to alleviate pressure on parents and give participants an alternative way to take part without sacrificing other sports. Removing the game from the weekend and playing at a non-traditional day and time would again differentiate the Junior form of the game from the NRL, consequently allowing families to have their weekends free for other sports if they wish and render Junior League more accessible.

In order to address these issues, a number of alternative, or recreational, formats of the game were developed, offering a version centred on being fun, safe and inclusive while at the same time socially and culturally accessible. This was achieved through the creation of two formats of the game, ‘W8s’ and ‘M8s’ (see Appendix 9 for detailed information about recreational formats of the game). It was hoped that these formats would require little to no training sessions, allow participants to dip in and out with friends and create a conversion pathway from the alternative, or ‘Recreational Formats’ as they became known to regular 13-a-side participation, through the recruitment of new players and the retention of current participants who may previously have dropped out.

5.2 Overview of the 'Recreational Formats' in 2016

5.2.1. W8s

5.2.1.1 Rationale. Feedback from the focus groups in Chapter 4 identified that size differences really became an issue when participants entered their U13 season and the game enforced International Rules on a full-size pitch. While the definition of size (height, body mass) was not clarified within the focus groups, prevailing consensus is that it would be a combination of both factors that cause parental and participant concern. The broad cultural heritage and background of our participants (45% of current NRL players are from Pacifica backgrounds, 12% from Indigenous and Torres Straight Islands, figures that are mirrored, if not exceeded when we consider the Junior League game) and the different maturation rates of those Polynesian and Pacifica participants in particular were highlighted. Malina (2009), in an analysis of youth sport programmes, identified that these individual differences in growth and maturation may lead to competitive unevenness and an increased risk of injury, which reinforces the message presented by the previous parent and children focus groups.

The principle of matching youth athletes on the basis of growth or maturity is not a new concept. Crampton (1908) first suggested the concept of "physiological age" and Rotch (1908) proposed the use of hand-wrist radiographs to determine "anatomical age" to be used for school, child labor and athletics. This concept is currently applied in a number of sports, particularly combat sports where competitors have been grouped according to age and weight-based criteria for a number of years. The more modern principle of "biobanding" is an extension of these principles, with participants grouped on a maturational basis rather than age and has been applied

successfully in the English Premier League Football according to Cumming et al (2018).

Historically, NSWRL has at various times offered a 'weight and age' restricted competition for the Junior Leagues. In previous iterations, weight restricted football has been offered as a season long alternative to unrestricted football and appears to have gone through cycles of success and failure, appearing for a number of years and then disappearing. The W8s format offered to current participants differed as a result of the findings from Chapter 4. In essence, it was used primarily as a retention tool through the timing of the programmes and the 'quick hit', shorter format of the programmes.

A weight and age-based format of the game may, therefore, provide those participants who were worried about the transition, or who may be thinking of dropping out, with an alternative to remain in the game. The Junior League districts most affected by unevenness of competition (i.e., Western Suburbs, Parramatta and St. George) were identified as venues for the first trial of the format.

5.2.1.2 Format. The format consisted of a small-sided, mixed gender game with teams of 10 fielding eight players. Teams were encouraged to 'player match' if they participated with more or less players than the recommended number in order to encourage maximum participation. For 6 weeks, participants played on a non-competitive basis (i.e., there were no trophies presented or winners recognised at the end). Scores were kept in each game, but the emphasis was on participants enjoying the experience. Weight restrictions were determined by the 80th percentile on the World Health Organisation growth chart for boys (http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts) and the following weight limits determined, applicable for both boys and girls who took part:

- Under 9 – < 30 kg
- Under 10 – < 34kg
- Under 11 – < 38kg
- Under 12 – < 45kg
- Under 13 – < 50kg

Each game consisted of two periods of play, each lasting 10 min. The games were played across the field, initially on dimensions of 40m × 20m. The dimensions (in particular the width) of the field could be altered with the agreement of both coaches, or the NSWRL appointed Ground Manager, in order to suit the participants' needs. During the six programme sessions, a team would play two games in each session. Teams were not bound by traditional district boundaries (i.e., St. George teams can only play in the St. George Junior League competitions) and could enter to take part in a number of ways. Specifically, teams could be nominated by local Clubs, players could register to take part with their Club via LeagueNet (the NSWRL player registration system) or, individuals without a team could register to take part via an online link to NSWRL who would accommodate players into teams.

5.2.2 M8s

5.2.2.1 Rationale. While the quantitative date collected in Chapter 4 indicated that frequency and duration of training was not an issue for our regular participants, there were a number of Junior Districts where this had been highlighted as problematic. North Sydney and South Sydney Junior Leagues were two areas where commitment to a season-long Junior League programme had been identified as a barrier to participation. In North Sydney in particular, the Junior League season clashed with the Public School Rugby Union commitments, meaning that a number of participants who would have liked to take part were unable to do so.

The M8s format was planned as a 'social' format with less commitment, no requirement to be part of a team and no requirement to sign up for an extended period of time. This would provide a less structured, less committed format of the game with no requirement to train, played at a non-traditional time with multiple games in one session to allow for maximum participation. It did not matter if participants did not return the following week, or took a break and came back later, as the format would still be available for them to play again.

Data from Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.11) showed that as Junior League participants got older, they diversified and played more formats of the game (tackle, touch and tag). Therefore, the U13, U14 and U15 age groups were targeted as it was felt that these were most likely to participate and provide enough numbers to make the trials viable.

5.2.2.2. Format. The format consisted of a small-sided, mixed gender game with teams of 10 fielding a minimum of eight players. Participants could register in the same ways as the W8s format. Given the casual nature of attendance, all participating teams were made to 'player match' if they participated with more or less players than the recommended amount to encourage maximum participation. To ensure an even match, the NSWRL appointed Ground Manager could alter the make-up of each side and mix teams if required.

The programme took place over 6 weeks, on a non-competitive basis. While scores were kept for each game, given the fluid nature of selection for each team involved, any need for an overall winner was removed. Each game was played across the field (40m × 20m) and games lasted 20 min with two periods of 10 min. A number of rule modifications were implemented mid-way through the programme in order to create more space and thereby a more attacking game, which was aimed to

increase enjoyment. Alterations such as having the scoring team kick off, making the tackler retreat to his/her own goal line before rejoining play and replacing the kick off with a tap restart were implemented. Coaches and referees were encouraged to be flexible with the rules and listen to participant feedback during play.

5.3 Methodology

This study was conducted in two parts. First, a quantitative online survey was administered to obtain data from a sample of participants in both formats. Second, and following completion of the survey, an analysis of participant conversion to the 13-a-side format of the game was conducted to determine retention rates of current and new participants from the M8s and W8s programmes. Ethical approval (Appendix 5) was provided by the University of Central Lancashire's ethics committee prior to the collection of any data and each participant provided informed consent as part of the online process prior to taking part.

5.3.1 Participants

A total of 360participants took part across the W8s and M8s programmes, with 96% of W8s participants being current Junior League participants compared to only 83% of M8s programme participants. Further to this, in the W8s programme, 96% of participants were male, compared to 91% in M8s.

All participants across the W8s and M8s programmes were approached to fill in the questionnaire. All were listed on the NSWRL Registered Player database in order to take part in the programme. Registration on the programme included consent to be contacted for marketing and research purposes by the NSWRL and NRL.

The questionnaire had 58 completions, resulting in an overall completion rate of 16.1%, the W8s programme had 23 completed surveys (22 male, 1 female) and a completion rate of 16.3%. Responses were received from 9 participants aged 9–10 years old, 11 participants aged 11–12 years old and 3 from participants aged 15 and above. The M8s programme had a completion rate of 14.6% (35 completed surveys; 32 male, 3 female). Responses were received from 1 participant aged 9–10 years old, 16 from participants aged 11–12, 13 from participants aged 13–14 years old and 5 from participants aged 15 and over.

5.3.2 Data Collection

The questionnaire consisted of multiple choice ranking and rating questions (Appendix 10). The questionnaire content was developed to address issues discovered from the research (both qualitative and quantitative) in Chapter 4, with questions developed through the professional judgement of NSWRL employees and the current participation literature. The questionnaire was then presented to a further panel for evaluation and effectiveness. Broadly, the questionnaire asked participants to answer questions relating to the reasons for taking part in the programme, the attractive elements of the format and suggested changes to the format of future programmes. This panel consisted of representatives from the three Junior Leagues involved in the trial programme and one representative from the Participation Department of the NRL. Suggested revisions from this panel were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was distributed by direct email to all participants in the programmes. An explanation of the study aims, purpose and an electronic link to the questionnaire were provided within the email. All participants were informed that

only completed questionnaires would be collected. If the participant was under the age of 9 years, the questionnaire allowed parents to answer on behalf of their children, with the questionnaire being available online for a period of 4 weeks.

Part two of this study did not require any active involvement from participants. Instead, regardless of the participation format, registration data was stored in the NSWRL LeagueNet system to aid in tracking participants and their future participation format, if any.

5.3.3 Data Analysis

The online questionnaire data were collected by Gemba, analysed using proprietary software and presented descriptively in tabulated and graphical form by means of the report in Appendix 9.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 W8s

5.4.1.1. Participant Feedback. Disappointingly for the recruitment aspirations of the programmes, 96% of participants in the programme currently participated in Junior Rugby League, although interestingly it was not the traditional definition of Junior Rugby League. Figure 5.1 demonstrates that 61% of W8s participants currently participated, or had previously participated, in school Rugby League competitions and 56% currently, or had previously, participated in NRL Game development delivered Rugby League programme. This would suggest the format was marketed to an already captive audience rather than attracting new participants to the game due to the changes in format.

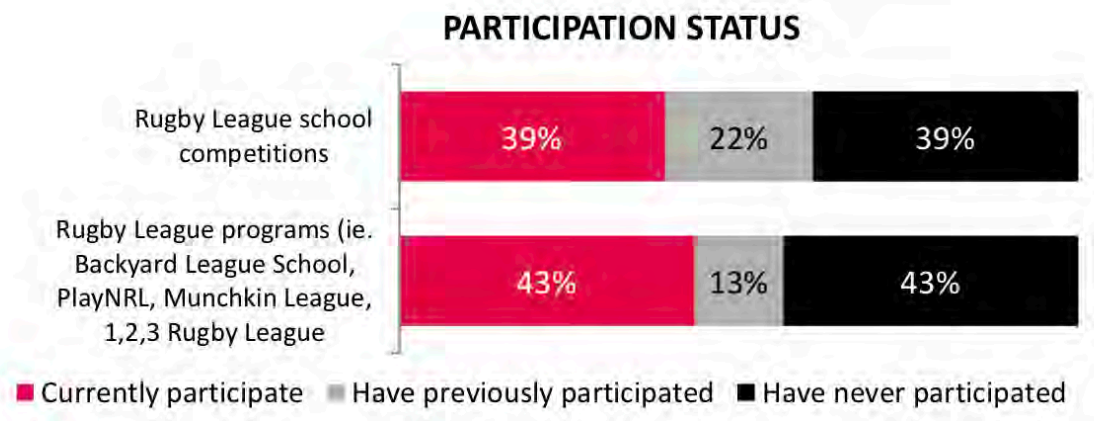

Figure 5.1. Current participation status of 2016 W8s participants.

Those who did take part in the format appeared to enjoy doing so. The programme was rated as excellent by 43% of participants and a total of 65% enjoyed the programme 'a lot'. As indicated by Figure 5.2, the additional safety of the game and speed of the game were key indicators of satisfaction. This would appear to show that the format is providing a safer environment for participation and addressing one of the major reasons for churn in the sport.

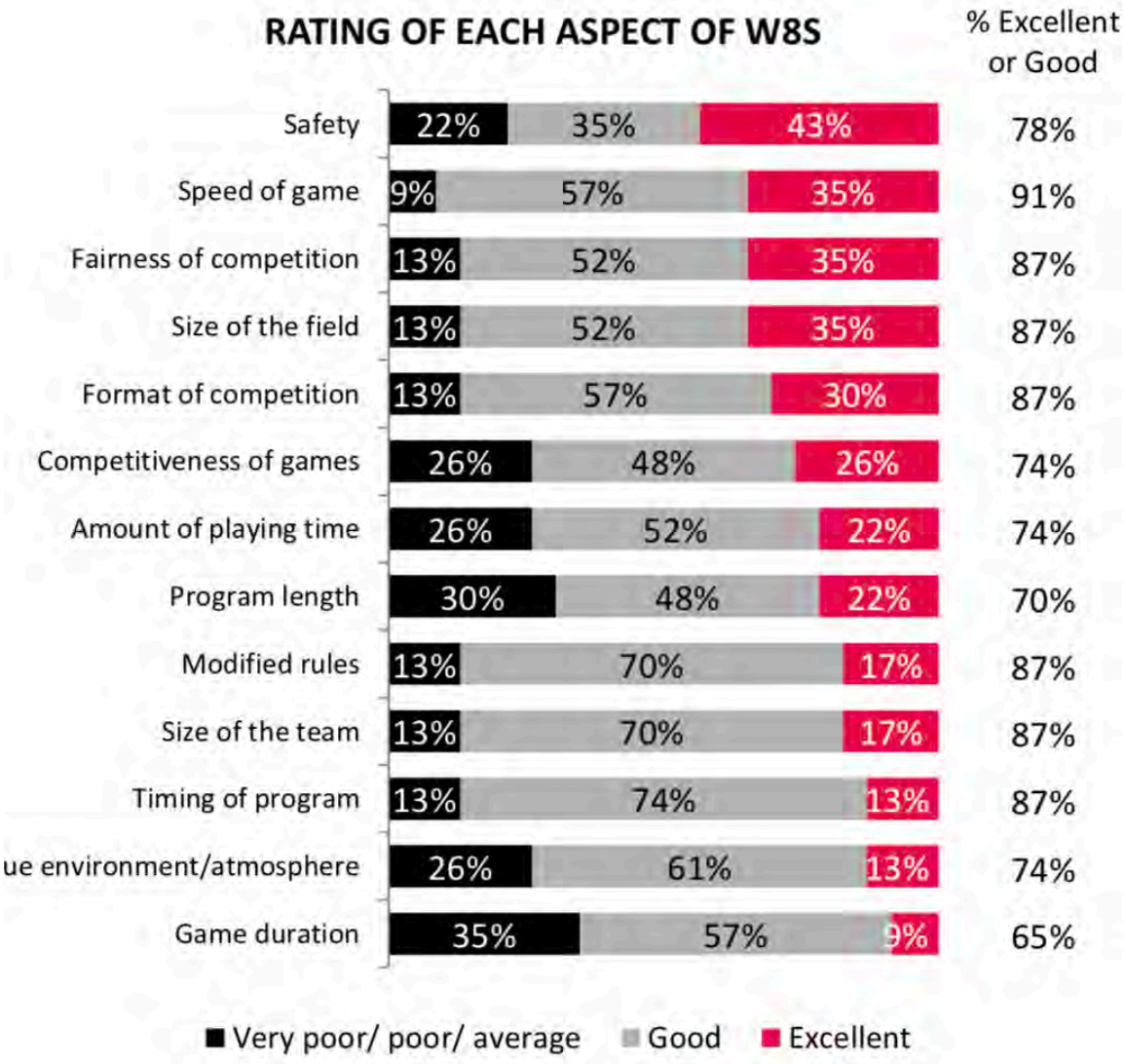

Figure 5.2. Participant satisfaction rating for each aspect of W8s programme.

Critically, the even size of opponents was identified as one of the most appealing elements of the format. This was to be expected given the changes applied to this format in light of previous participant feedback in Chapter 4; however, these data suggest that the right balance in the weight ranges for each age group had been generally achieved.

Other elements such as ‘more touches’ and ‘simpler rules’ were all highlighted as appealing elements for participants. Faster games can, to a certain extent, be

attributed to the weight restriction limiting the differences in body shape and size and allowing an opportunity for the smaller, faster athletes to thrive. It can also be attributed to the reduced team sizes, although this was mitigated in planning by reducing the size of the pitch. Either way, the different formats clearly served to positively change the nature of play and experience for those taking part.

The least favourite element of the format was identified as too little game time (Figure 5.3). A complaint from the research in Chapter 4 was that in Junior League not participant gets enough game time. Players are often left on the bench for long periods, or not used at all, leading to complaints of too little game time. In the W8s format of the game, while the complaint is similar, the underlying reasons are crucially different. Due to the reduced team sizes, a lack of on field time for all participants was no longer an issue. Rather, participants enjoyed playing the game and wanted the games to be longer so that they could continue to play. In other words, participants had tasted something they liked and were keen for seconds!

While contact was not ruled out or reduced by the format (no rules were designed to eliminate contact, other than a tap restart rather than a kick off), not enough contact was also rated as a least favourite element. This could be due to the increased pace of games which, despite the reduced duration lead to generally higher end of game scores. This view is strengthened by the fact that some players felt the game was now too fast.

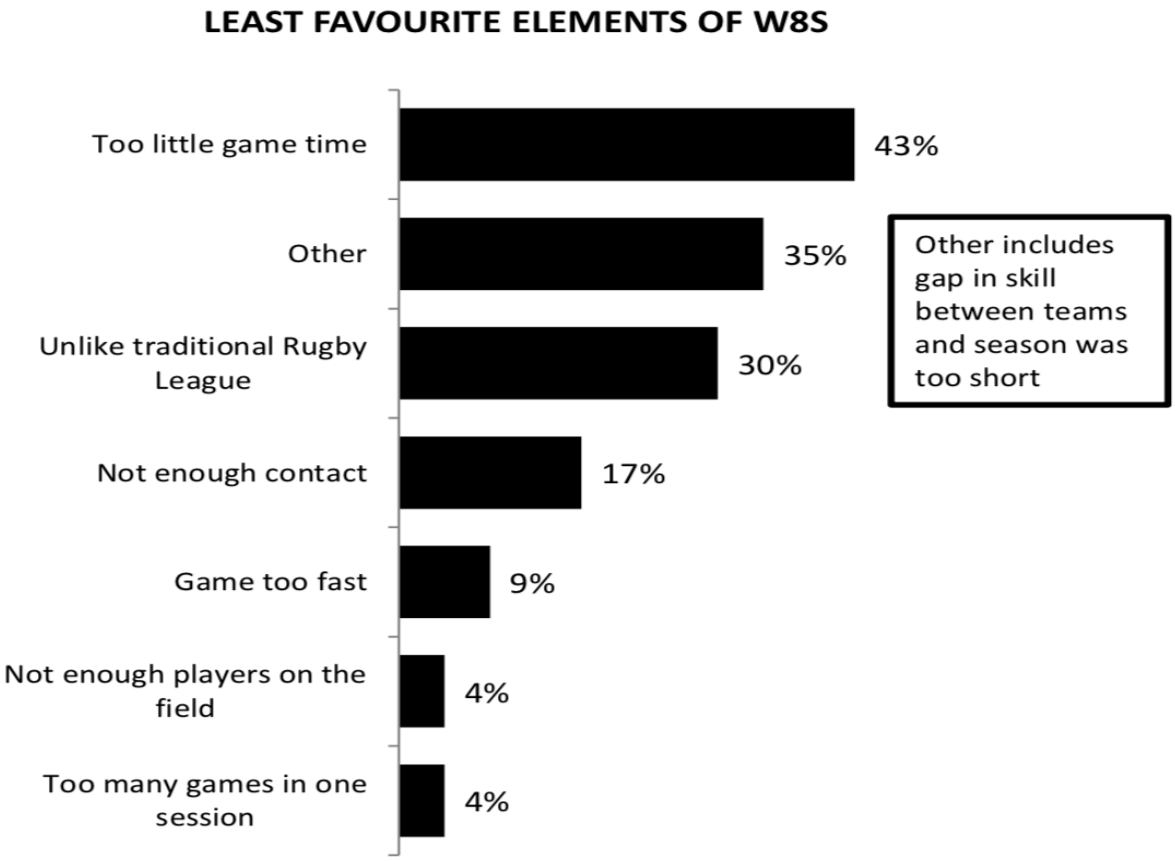

Figure 5.3. Least favourite elements of 2016 W8s programme.

5.4.1.2. Effect on previously identified 'reasons for churn'. Research in Chapter 4 identified poor sportsmanship of players as the third lowest satisfaction rating and a major cause of participants not returning to the game. Figure 5.4 shows the W8s format resulted in a majority of participants experiencing a Large–Moderate impact on poor sportsmanship and conduct of players. This shows the format was successful in generating a friendlier atmosphere and addressed one of the main reasons for churn.

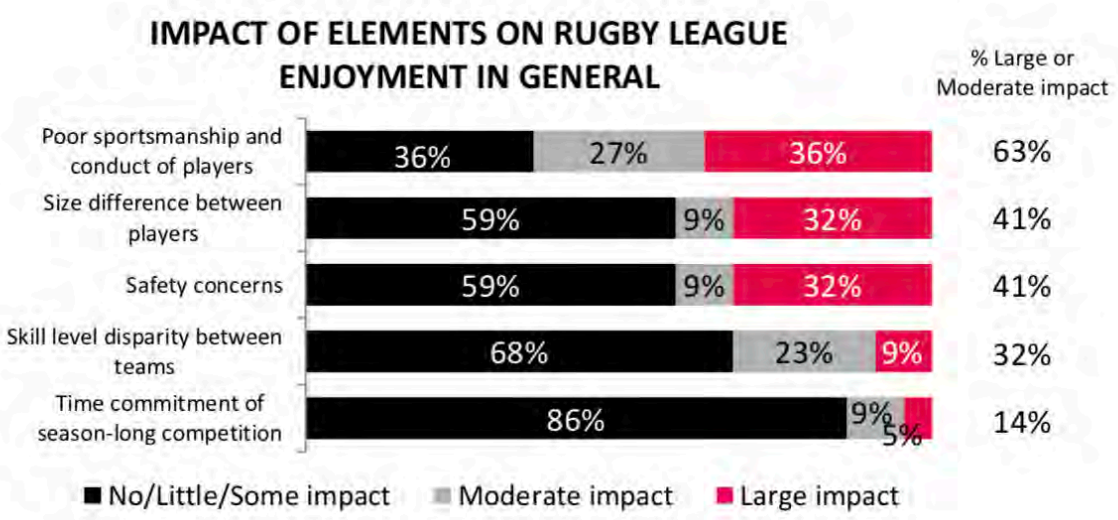

Figure 5.4. Impact of the W8s programme on previously identified reasons for churn

Surprisingly, given the aims of the format, only 41% of participants were aware that the format was designed to explicitly address the issues identified previously in the size difference and safety concerns of the traditional format of the game. This finding is disappointing and requires further investigation. Given the publicity involved, the weighing-in procedure prior to every session and the focus on weight-based matches, it is difficult to see how this was not identified as more of a positive factor by participants.

Another interesting result was that 86% of participants felt that the shorter, 6-week commitment of the W8s format had little to no impact on their participation when compared to the time commitment of a season long competition. This may be partly explained by the make-up of the format participant and the fact they were regular Junior League participants who would play whatever the commitment involved. Given those aspects, it was again pleasing to see that 43% of participants rated their experience of W8s as 'excellent' compared with only 30% rating their Junior League in general as excellent.

The W8s format was not seen as a competitor or replacement to Junior League football; 52% would play W8s and Junior Rugby League if they were on at different times, only 22% would play both W8s and Junior League in the same season. Further investigation of the format will determine whether it is a retention tool for people who would otherwise have dropped out, or just an alternative format for current participants who were willing to continue to take part in Junior League.

5.4.2 M8s

5.4.2.1 Participant Feedback. An apparent larger presence of female participants in the programme is an exciting aspect of this format. While a small sample size is acknowledged, when compared to the tackle format of the game where the percentage of female participants is around 5% (approximately 2,000 female participants compared to 40,000 male), the relative overrepresentation of females in this format of the game provides something to focus and build on.

When probing the participants' motivation to take part, 20% cited 'competition'. Further consideration should be given to this response and their definition of 'competition'. Given the intended variety of this format across the programme, the main emphasis was on social interaction and not rivalrous competition. On reflection, it is perhaps the opportunity to compete on a level playing field against other participants that is the attraction, with participants meaning 'fair competition' as a new perspective on their previous experience. If this interpretation can be verified, it would appear that the format addresses some of the challenges and issues raised through Chapter 4.

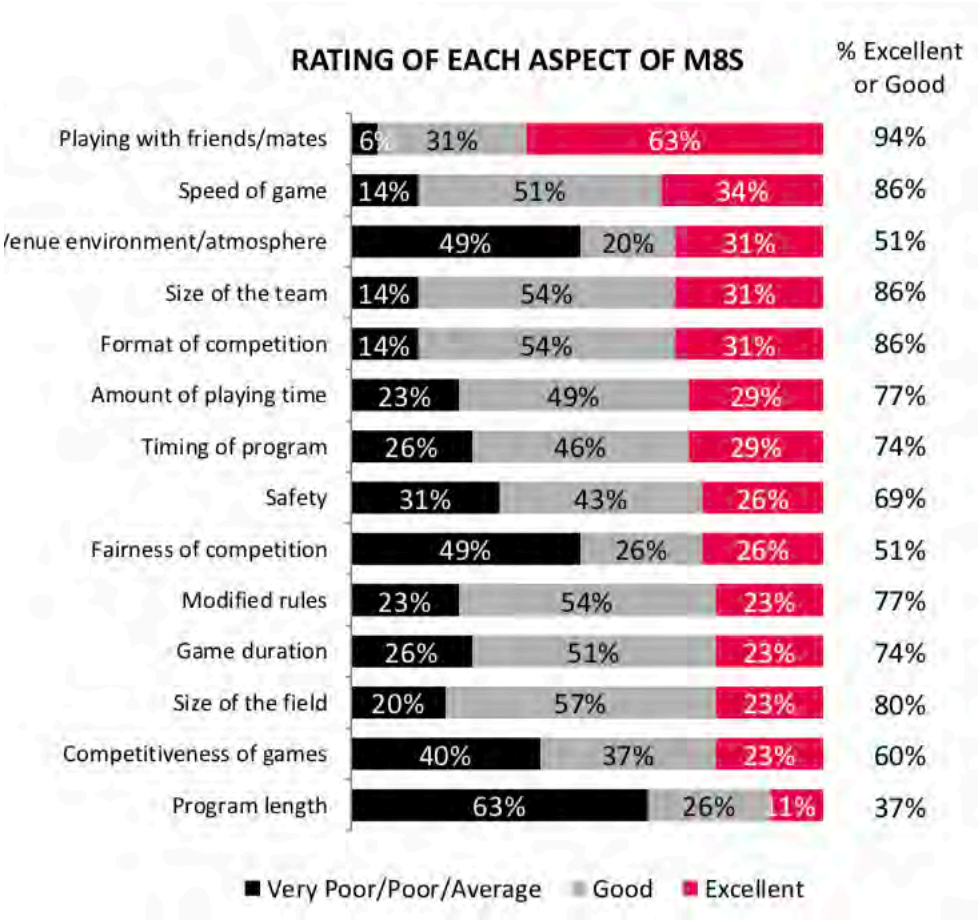

Figure 5.5. Satisfaction ratings of each aspect of M8s programme.

The importance of the environment to participation was also highlighted in the satisfaction ratings in Figure 5.5. With approximately half of participants feeling that the environment was 'poor' or 'very poor' this is an aspect that needs to be addressed in any future venue choices since the performance environment has been recognised as a factor to participation and development. Martindale, Collins and Daubney (2005) highlight the need for creating an integrated, holistic and systematic environment in order to develop talent.

One other aspect rated as 'poor' or 'very poor' was the length of programme. The feedback from parents and athletes was that the programme was too short, and they would have preferred a 6–8 week programme rather than 4 weeks. Interestingly,

the dedication and commitment to a long season is a driver for falling participation rates, but participants of a new format want it to be available for longer. Again, this may be explained by the fact that 83% of M8s participants are also Junior League participants and therefore a captive audience.

One serious issue, highlighted in Figure 5.6, was almost a third of participants identifying no equality in size or age within the matches as their least favourite element. While this is a troubling aspect of the format, this can largely be explained by an error in the format rules and a 'traditional' approach from one team when entering the format. In the pilot programme at St. George, entries were spread across two age groups, U13 and U14. Both age groups played in the same programme, with one entry coming from a team of U14 representative squad players who had approached it as an opportunity to keep players together for longer and win another competition. They were particularly resistant to any mixing of teams or alteration to traditional rules of the game. While this initially resulted in some one-sided scores on the first evening of the pilot programme, it forced an innovation of the rules, with greater flexibility for the organizer to allocate or split up teams, in order to make the games fairer and more even in age and size.

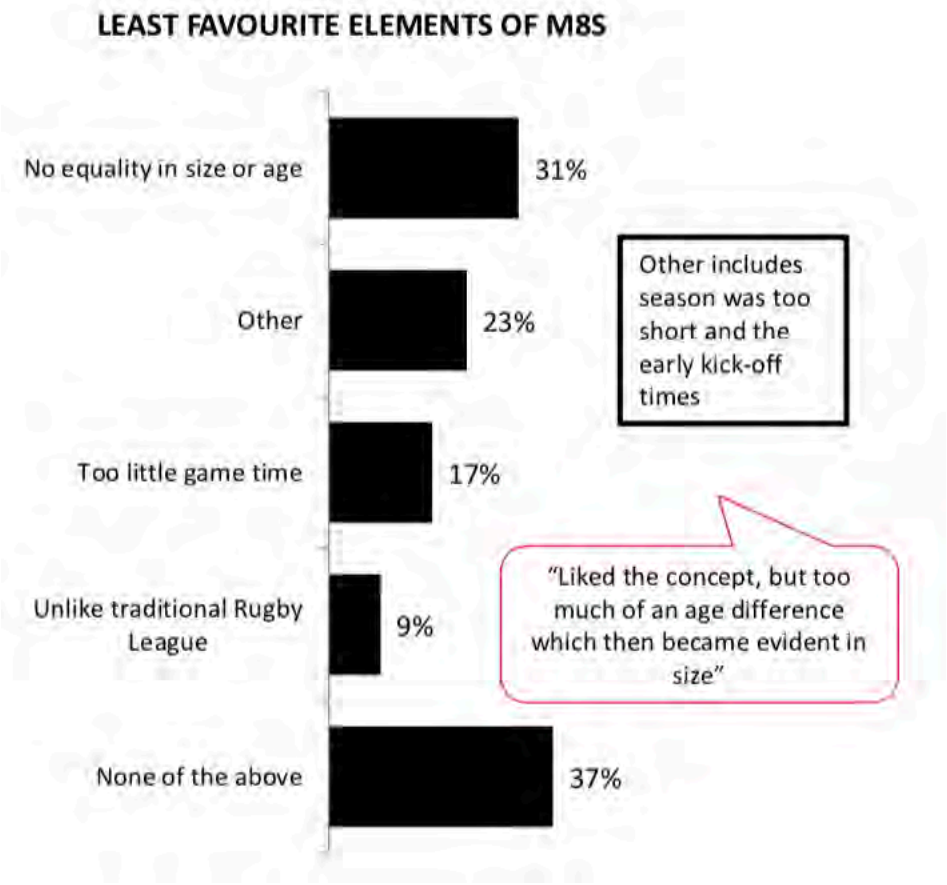

Figure 5.6. Least popular elements of the M8s program.

Pleasingly, 51% stated they were likely to participate in M8s again, with M8s not seen as a competitor to Junior League football, rather as a supplement to it. Over 57% would play M8s and Junior League at different times of the year but only 23% would play it during the same season as Junior League.

5.4.2.2. Effect on previously identified 'reasons for churn'. Unevenness of competition was identified in Chapter 4 as a major reason for churn and highlighted again in Figure 5.78, with 82% of participants feeling that the M8s format had little to no impact on the disparity in skill level between teams. As such, the problem appears to persist.

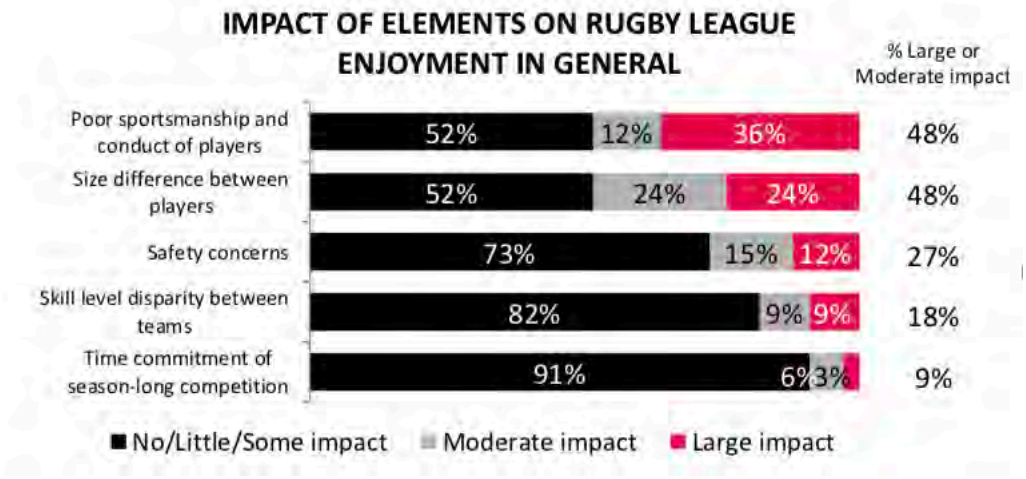

Figure 5.7. The impact of the M8s programme format on the enjoyment of the game.

The casual nature of the format meant there was always going to be a large skill and ability range taking part. The pilot concept in St. George had players staying in their teams throughout the session and clubs entered teams to play together. After the first session it was identified that this would not work since it was just providing another form of competition. For the remaining three sessions, the referees and session managers were encouraged to alter teams both in play and before play. The players were told to expect to play in different teams in order to keep games even, with most accepting of the concept. In this way, it was hoped that M8s would recreate some of the "playground rules" that they may use while in casual play with their friends.

While the format was not felt to address issues of skill disparity, it would appear to have made a greater impact on the issues of size disparity. Perhaps the flexibility of the teams, with players being moved in and out of the side in order to keep games even, provides this solution and allows the larger participants to be distributed evenly.

While 51% of participants felt that the M8s format of the game was more fun and enjoyed themselves more than playing regular Junior League, 49% also felt the flow of the game was better than Junior League. While the first result was to be expected, the flow of the game is an unexpected benefit that can perhaps be explained due to evenness of competition and less pressure to perform or win.

5.5 Refinements and Relaunch

5.5.1 M8s

Further expansion of the recreational formats of the game was planned for the 2017 post-season and 2018 pre-season period. In total, 15 M8s programmes took place with 648 participants in the 2017 post-season period across five Junior League districts: Balmain, Parramatta, Penrith, Canterbury and Western Suburbs. These districts hosted events for age ranges U10–U16 with mixed sex for all age groups. A further 15 M8s programmes were scheduled for the 2018 pre-season period, with a total of 411 participants and events in seven Junior League districts, South Sydney and Cronulla being the additional districts taking part. The pre-season programme was more targeted in its age ranges, based on the success or failure of the post-season programmes and the previous identification from Chapter 4 as the U13s being the critical age group for a reduction in participation. Programmes were delivered in the U10–U12 age range and were a mix of single and mixed sex programmes. By splitting the programmes into these categories, it was hoped to gain further insight into the retention and recruitment capacities of the M8s programme.

5.5.1.1 2017 Post-Season Programmes. Table 5.1 shows that of the 648 participants taking part in the 15 post season programmes, 440 participated in the 2017 Junior League season (68%; see Appendix 11 for raw data). The recruitment benefits of the format were exemplified by127 new participants to the game (i.e., they

had not played in the 2017 season and were not previous participants from further than 2 seasons ago), therefore showing a 20% rise in recruitment.

Table 5.1. *Registration Database for Participants in the 2017 Post-Season Recreational Format Competitions to Determine Current Participation Avenues for Athletes Taking Part*

	STATUS OF PARTICIPANTS IN 2017 SEASON					
2017 End of Season Comps.	Participants	Continuing from Previous	Did not participate	New Registration	Returning from 2+	Grand Total
M8s U10 Parramatta	68	52	13	2	1	68
M8s U10 Gala Day	59	39	15	5	0	59
M8s U10 Penrith	56	35	12	6	3	56
M8s U11 Canterbury	86	63	12	6	5	86
M8s U12 Parramatta	64	53	3	5	3	64
M8s U12 Balmain	29	19	5	3	2	29
M8s U12 Canterbury	41	22	16	1	2	41
M8s U12 Gala Day	41	25	13	0	3	41
M8s U12 Penrith	29	22	4	2	1	29
M8s U12 Wests	43	29	5	7	2	43
M8s U12 Canterbury	50	37	6	2	5	50
M8s U14 Balmain	17	7	7	1	2	17
M8s U14 Canterbury	54	31	12	3	8	54
M8s U14 Wests	10	5	4	1	0	10
M8s U16s Wests	1	1	0	0	0	1
2017 End of Season Total	**648**	**440**	**127**	**44**	**37**	**648**

Furthermore, 44 (6.8%) were new registrations into the Junior League for 2017—possibly due to exploration of different formats—which again aided recruitment and possibly shows conversion from one format to another. In addition, 37 participants (6%) were returning to the game after a break of >2 seasons. This again shows the success of the format in recruiting new participants and attracting previous participants back to the game.

Table 5.2 shows the destination of participants in the 2017 post-season recreational format events. This participant tracking was carried out to determine the next sporting destination for new participants who tried the recreational formats. It was hoped to determine if they converted from the M8s format to regular 13-a-side participation in Junior League football. Of the 648 who took part in the 15 programmes, 174 (26.8%) did not participate in the 2018 Junior League season. This shows a small reduction in the usual full contact participation churn rate of 30–33%.

Table 5.2. *Final Destination of Participants in the 2017 Posts-Season Recreational Format Competitions for the 2018 Junior League Season*

ST ATUS OF PARTICIPANTS IN 2018 SEASON						
2017 End of Season Comps.	Participants	Did not participate	New	Returned from previous	Returned from break	Grand Total
M8s U10 Parramatta	68	17		50	1	68
M8s U10 Gala Day	59	15		40	4	59
M8s U10 Penrith	56	16		37	3	56
M8s U11 Canterbury	86	17		68	1	86
M8s U12 Parramatta	64	12		52	0	64
M8s U12 Balmain	29	4		24	1	29
M8s U12 Canterbury	41	19		19	3	41
M8s U12 Gala Day	41	16		23	2	41
M8s U12 Penrith	29	5		24	0	29
M8s U12 Wests	43	9		34	0	43
M8s U12 Canterbury	50	11		38	1	50
M8s U14 Balmain	17	10		7	0	17
M8s U14 Canterbury	54	18		34	2	54
M8s U14 Wests	10	5		5	0	10
M8s U16s Wests	1	0		1	0	1
2017 End of Season Total	**648**	**174**	**0**	**456**	**18**	**648**

The fact that 18 of the 37 (48.6%) participants who had tried the M8s format in the 2017 post season after a break from Junior League competition of >2 seasons

returned to play Junior League in 2018 would again suggest that the M8s format is a good tool to recruit new and previous participants to the longer form of the game.

5.5.1.2 Pre-Season 2018 programmes. There were 411 registered participants for the M8s programmes (Table 5.3), of which 267 (65%) had played in the previous 2017 Junior League season. A further 12% of participants were either a new registration in 2017 (36 participants; 9%) or were returning to play after a break of >2 years (14 participants; 3%). Encouragingly, 94 (23%) had not played in the 2017 Junior League season and were therefore new recruits to the game.

Table 5.3. *Registration Database for Participants in the 2018 Pre-Season Recreational Format Events*

	STATUS OF PARTICIPANTS IN 2017 SEASON					
2018 Pre-Season Comps.	Participants	Continuing from Previous	Did not participate	New Registration	Returning from 2+	Grand Total
M8s U10 Parramatta Gala	61	40	14	3	4	61
M8s U12 Parramatta Gala	9	9	0	0	0	9
M8s U10 Canterbury	33	17	9	3	4	33
M8s U10 Cronulla	10	7	1	2	0	10
M8s U10 Manly	67	32	23	11	1	67
M8s U10 South Sydney	8	7	1	0	0	8
M8s U10 Parramatta	7	3	3	1	0	7
M8s U10 Penrith	6	3	2	0	1	6

M8s U10 Western Suburbs	20	15	4	1	0	20
M8s U12 Canterbury	6	3	2	0	1	6
M8s U12 Manly	133	91	25	14	3	133
M8s U12 South Sydney	19	17	2	0	0	19
M8s U12 Parramatta	17	11	5	1	0	17
M8s U12 Penrith	6	5	1	0	0	6
M8s U12 Western Suburbs	9	7	2	0	0	9
2017 End of Season Total	**411**	**267**	**94**	**36**	**14**	**411**

The number of new recruits to the game (35%) may be due to the timing of the M8s programme. A pre-season timing might be perceived as a 'taster' format before going on to participate. This is reinforced by the fact that the pre-season programme delivery has a slightly higher recruitment level than the post-season events: 23% compared to 20% in post season. The fact that 14 (3%) participants were returning after a break of >2 seasons would appear to reinforce the perception of the M8s format as a gateway to participation and recruitment. In support, 34 (8%) of the M8s participants went on to play in the 2018 Junior League season (Figure 5.4) as brand new participants and a further 15 (4%) returned to Junior League after a break of ≥2 years. This again reinforces the recruitment aspects of the format, with Manly being the most successful in this respect: 25 of the 200 participants going on to register for the first time as a Junior League participant for the 2018 season.

Table 5.4 *Final Destination of the 2018 Pre-Season Recreational Format Events for the 2018 Junior League Season*

ST ATUS OF PARTICIPANTS IN 2018 SEASON						
2017 End of Season Comps.	Participants	Did not participate	New	Returned from previous	Returned after break	Grand Total
M8s U10 Parramatta Gala	61	15	2	44	0	61
M8s U12 Parramatta Gala	9	0	0	9	0	9
M8s U10 Canterbury	33	9	1	22	1	33
M8s U10 Cronulla	19	0	0	9	1	10
M8s U10 Manly	67	6	13	44	4	67
M8s U10 South Sydney	8	1	0	7	0	8
M8s U10 Parramatta	7	2	1	4	0	7
M8s U10 Penrith	6	1	1	4	0	6
M8s U10 Western Suburbs	20	4	0	16	0	20
M8s U12 Canterbury	6	1	0	4	1	6
M8s U12 Manly	133	11	12	104	6	133
M8s U12 South Sydney	19	1	0	17	1	19
M8s U12 Parramatta	17	3	3	10	1	17

M8s U12 Penrith	6	0	1	5	0	6
M8s U12 Western Suburbs	9	2	0	7	0	9
2017 End of Season Total	**648**	**56**	**34**	**306**	**15**	**411**

While it is disappointing that 56 of the participants (14%) did not continue on to participate in the 2018 season, further research is required to determine why. There is the possibility of individualizing enquiries through the Leaguenet registration database and this is something that should be explored further.

5.5.2. W8S

Following on from the success of the pilot programmes in 2016, we were unable to run any W8s carnivals in either the 2017 pre- and post-season or 2018 pre-season windows. A number of different offers were tried, with initiatives such as the competition format as described above; both 6 weeks and 4 weeks; gala days for a concentrated format (multiple shorter games in one day); different age groups (U12–U16) and in different, targeted Junior Leagues with large Polynesian populations and significant unevenness of competitions such as Western Suburbs, Parramatta and Penrith.

In all those cases, it proved impossible to sufficiently recruit enough participants to make any of the formats viable. This may be due to a number of different reasons, the simplest and most straightforward being that it is just not an issue for sufficient numbers of athletes for us to continue with the trial. The game as a whole may be listening to the vocal minority who feel that size difference is an issue but who are outweighed significantly by those who do not feel it is a problem.

Furthermore, it may be down to our processes and publicity. The registration process may prevent players from participating, particularly the club entry process. Size difference may be an issue that affects only one or two participants in each team, causing them to drop out. A lack of awareness of the issue in clubs mean they may not feel it is a sufficient enough problem to enter a full team into the programme. In each of the programmes that were cancelled, a significant number of individual entries were received who were happy to be assigned a team. Unfortunately, there were insufficient numbers for a viable programme.

It may also be that there is a stigma associated with weight for age football. It was highlighted in the focus groups conducted in Chapter 4 that other formats of the game such as Tag or Touch are not seen as 'real' football. This may also be the case for any weight restricted format of the game throughout Sydney, the perception being that those participants are too small, or too soft to compete in traditional tackle football.

Given the apparent lack of interest in the W8s formats, we went back to the drawing board, as can be seen in Appendix 12 (or on page 44 on https://www.nswrl.com.au/siteassets/documents/nswrl-pp-manual-2018-final.pdf). The W8s recreational format rules were incorporated into the Junior League Policy and Procedures manual and offered as a regular season playing option rather than a carnival or festival option. In this manner, the W8s format was offered to Junior Leagues as an option for the Division 2 and 3 competitions. Those players who felt they were good enough to take part in Division 1 competition were offered unrestricted weight competitions. However, if the Junior League wish, they can now deliver weight and age football in Division 2 and 3 competitions. Therefore, those who feel they are the best players and those who want to, can compete in an

unrestricted competition, others can find a level of competition suitable to them. In this way, the aim was to remove any stigma from the format and allow delivery across wide age ranges in order to determine the ones most affected. Currently we are in negotiation with two of our Junior Leagues who are willing to trial this approach across all their age groups but are yet to see it practically implemented.

5.6 Key Insights

In summary, the W8s programme was perceived to be better than Junior League at addressing the core issues of a perceived disparity in size of children in each grade and delivered a better experience for those involved. The programme had strong satisfaction levels overall, and for elements such as 'safety' and 'fairness/equality of competition' with participants feeling that the programme would be best delivered prior to the existing Junior League season. Despite this feedback, NSWRL have been unsuccessful in securing participants for programmes in this period of the season. This would be in agreement with the work carried out by Krause et al (2015) in Rugby Union throughout Australia who found that 'body mass criteria for playing down an age group' were not supported by the evidence (page 358). This study found that only a small proportion (approximately 5%) of all participants in the U13-U15 age range shared the highest and lowest tertiles for speed, relative peak power and body mass and that physical size was not related to injury. As such, we feel that some of the principles employed may have merit in the future, but perhaps not as an alternative format in its own regard.

The M8s programme also had high programme satisfaction and appeal, although unlike the W8s programme, it was not seen as a better experience than Junior Rugby League. The different focus of the programme, targeting the social and mate-ship elements of Rugby League, led to a high rating in 'fun/enjoyment' and an

increased number of participants either returning to the game, or being recruited as new participants who have not played before. While the format does not directly address the core issue of size inequality, given the flexibility of the rules, these core issues can be addressed directly by the referee and session managers.

Moving forward, Chapter 6 will investigate the importance of participant environments in the development of talent. It will focus particularly on the development of a measurement tool for those environments and the identification of appropriate criteria, based on the SPLISS model describe in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6: Gold Shield and Blue Shield Awards

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses both the third and fourth objectives of the study through the delivery of applied initiatives to resolve previously identified issues and by measuring the success and impact of those initiatives.

As highlighted in Chapter 2, the NSWRL has consistently failed to combine the Australian Sports Commission's dual objectives of building mass participation and elite sports success. Indeed, the concerns that Elliott (2004, p. 7) raised regarding Australian Athletics being a sport that "projects an image of elitism that undermines its ability to attract a significant number of grassroots participants to its ranks" have parallels with the current situation of the NSWRL and the findings of the participation study discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Such a perspective being reflected in the primary focus on funding and development within the elite as opposed to grassroots ranks.

In conjunction with this perception of elitism, Phillips (2000) identified the ability to govern the sport effectively, specifically the organizational capacity to manage the "many and various sectoral interests involved in the sport" (p. 83), as one of the major themes to emerge in relation to the general condition of Australian sport. As discussed in Chapter 3, the number of different sectors involved in the player development pathway within NSWRL is large, and the ability of the NSWRL to manage each of these successfully is varied at best. To a certain extent, the pathways review undertaken in 2015 (Chapter 3) reduces those environments and takes some steps to increasing the ability of the NSWRL to manage those environments appropriately. So, reform is definitely in motion but clearly more work is needed.

One way to drive change in such an organization is to benchmark industry expectations against specific criteria. At the elite level, the implementation of minimum standards and linked funding awards greatly increases the ability to manage that sector, the only limiting factor being a lack of information on the current condition of the clubs and the environments associated with them. At the grassroots level, the same limiting factor exists only on a larger scale, with almost 300 clubs distributed across 11 Junior League districts. The lack of information on current club environments, when combined with the scale involved and the previously identified lack of control regarding Junior League delivery and operational rules, poses a significant problem when attempting to improve and monitor the environments for mass participation across the NSWRL development pathway. As such, addressing this task forms the primary basis of this chapter.

The first step to solving some of those limiting factors was to identify the criteria that would provide the correct environment to allow for sporting success and develop a tool that would allow NSWRL to monitor those environments at each level of the pathway, from Junior League to elite level. In this way, NSWRL would be able to ensure that all clubs provided the basic environment required not only to develop elite level athletes in the future, but also to promote long-term participation in Junior League clubs and the sport. To this end, Green (2005, p. 236) states that "effective systems for training and motivating and supporting athletes are better predictors of success than are any measures intended to identify talent". De Bosscher et al. (2011), as identified in Chapter 2, also agreed that an investment in a blend of criteria (pillars) may increase the efficacy of developing more athletes with the ability to play at an elite level. Put simply, there needs to be a more prominent focus on processes rather than outcomes.

Given the differing needs of the targeted participation and performance environments required, development and monitoring approaches for each must be slightly different also. In other words, the blend of criteria (pillars) as identified by De Bosscher et al. (2011) and the recognised importance for each criterion should be tailored based on the differing needs of the participants at each level of the game and, therefore, the differing areas of development required.

In order to address these differing needs and environments, two monitoring tools were created based on the criteria identified by De Bosscher et al. (2009) and the four pillars of sporting policy that were identified as possible indicators of sporting success. To this end, the Gold Shield award was created as a monitoring tool to regulate and improve the environment offered to athletes involved in the NSWRL Elite level competition, the Intrust Super Premiership (ISP) NSW. Likewise, the Blue Shield award was created to address the issues associated with mass participation in our Junior Leagues, provide a link for the athletes to progress through from mass participation to elite level and, also, to promote participation growth through the recognition of a club providing the appropriate environment for a safe and enjoyable experience. Each of these awards were linked to differing rewards upon completion; funding and competition entry for clubs completing the Gold Shield award; public recognition, NSWRL staff support and competition entry for the Blue Shield award. The challenge for both awards was to determine if those pillars identified by De Bosscher et al. (2009) at a national level, could be translated to represent success at a State or Local level of delivery and for the sport of RL. It was through those rewards that the issues of governance were to be overcome and the ability of the NSWRL to regulate, manage and govern the interests of the various sectors under our control was to be increased.

6.2 Overview of the Monitoring Tools

6.2.1 Gold Shield

The Gold Shield award was designed as an elite level qualification that would provide entry criteria for Senior teams wishing to compete in the NSWRL Elite competitions such as the ISP NSW Cup and the Jersey Flegg Cup. It was also designed to consider the differing levels of support within clubs entered in those competitions, based on the club structures and affiliation models. The majority of clubs (n = 7) who enter into those competitions operate on a 'nuclear club' model, with the same team owning and operating the pathway from U16 to NRL level. We also have five 'affiliated club' models, where the NRL club shares responsibility for delivery on their pathway with an affiliated Junior Club who enters a team in the ISP or Flegg competitions. This can give rise to differing standards of delivery and facilities for players at the elite level of the game that is not acceptable or conducive to good development.

Therefore, the Gold Shield award was intended to ensure that all teams have the same minimum standards of support, planning and financial control and that players experience no difference in quality of environment whatever team they are playing in. It was also planned that a by-product of this award would be to raise the importance and profile of the ISP NSW competition due to increased investment in resources and facilities from all clubs involved.

The NSWRL also receive numerous applications for entry into our competitions, based on nothing more objective than a desire to compete at the highest level. The Gold Shield award provided us with entry criteria with which to assess those applications and ensure that potential entries meet minimum standards of facilities, long-term planning and financial guarantees. Through this process, the Gold

Shield award should provide an avenue for strong, sustainable and growing competitions, as well as increase the number of clubs with the ability to play at the highest level. It was also planned that an online data entry site for the Gold Shield award would become the single evidence 'vault' for the NSWRL when dealing with all clubs with regard to their staff accreditations, statutory declarations, salary cap measures, etcetera. Simplifying the monitoring processes of the NSWRL as well as ensuring all information was stored in one place for each club, would improve organisation performance with regard to the structure of sports policies; the second pillar of sporting success as identified by De Bosscher et al. (2009).

6.2.2 Blue Shield

As highlighted by Chelladurai (2001), an organisation (or club) will be effective if its internal processes are logical and consistent. Therefore, in following this advice, the primary purpose of the Blue Shield award was to recognise Junior League clubs with consistent and high-quality processes and promote those who deliver best practice to our Junior League participants. The NSWRL wanted to steer participants towards the clubs who worked hard to deliver the required environment and provide the quality of delivery to engage participants in order to help them to grow as players and people. Eime, Payne and Harvey (2008) confirm the importance of the link between well run, healthy environments and increased rates of participation at sporting clubs. Through the Blue Shield award, participants can be sure they are at a well-managed club that wants to provide them with the best development environment possible so that they feel more ready and able to recommend the club in particular, and sport in general, to their friends and family. In this way, the Blue Shield award and the environment that goes with it can be used as a development tool for clubs *and* recruitment tool for future participants.

The importance of the environment and its effect on participation were highlighted in the work of Sallis & Owen (2002). Whilst investigating the specific neighbourhood in which participants lived, rather than the environment created within a specific club, they found that availability and awareness, as well as cost and proximity to facilities were all factors that influenced participation. There were a number of objectives and aspects to consider when developing this safe environment at our clubs and the benefits involved in doing so. Firstly, the development of clear goals and objectives for each club that can be communicated to its participants as well as the wider community. This would demonstrate the club's focus and ambition for the future and provides a solid foundation for growth. Secondly, an analysis of the current volunteer base that would allow gaps to be identified and current qualifications to be assessed, from board level volunteers to those supervising the BBQ each weekend. Future recruitment and training needs can be identified and planned for in order to assist those volunteers to better serve the club participants. Thirdly, an organised approach to the club's systems and structures in order to develop the logical and consistent internal processes previously identified, enabling the club to be run more efficiently and effectively. Fourthly, additional investment and support from schools and local government willing to invest in organisations who ensure quality and child friendly systems and procedures. Finally, addressing issues such as equality, disability and child protection policies should increase parent confidence in allowing their children to participate. Each of the objectives for the award addresses key reasons for churn in participants that were identified in Chapter 4.

The Blue Shield award, again through an online portal, would allow all these objectives and criteria to be assessed in one place and through one tool. Providing a

single evidence 'vault' for almost 300 Junior League clubs and allowing them, and the NSWRL, to track volunteers working with children, check qualifications, identify areas of development for club facilities and volunteer training, would be an invaluable tool for both club and governing body. It is also an attempt to shift the focus in Australian sport solely from the elite level and emphasise the importance of junior participation in an encouraging and nurturing environment; an issue previously highlighted in Chapter 2.

Reflecting the considerations outlined above, the purpose of this study was to firstly, assess current delivery and the ability of the NSWRL to affect change in each of the pillars of sporting success previously identified by De Bosscher et al. (2009). This evaluation was used to develop the monitoring tools identified above. Once the pillars of success that the NSWRL could impart most meaningfully change had been identified, the second stage was to deploy monitoring tools for both the Junior League (Blue Shield) and Elite game (Gold Shield) and obtain initial feedback from those stakeholders involved.

6.3 Methodology Part 1 – Developing the Monitoring Tools

6.3.1 Participants

A working group consisting of 10 NSWRL and 3 NRL staff members with experience in the delivery of programmes and policies across both the elite and Junior League levels of the game was convened. Staff from NSWRL included the Community Competitions Manager, the Head of Competitions, and 7 Community Competitions Co-Ordinators. Staff from the NRL included the National Development Manager, the NSW Development Manager and the Sydney Metropolitan Regional Manager. A mixture of staff from both organisations was obtained in order to ensure fair representation throughout the process.

6.3.2 Procedure

The current delivery capability and responsibility of both the NSWRL and the NRL was compared against the nine key indicators of success previously identified by De Bosscher et al. (2009). Through this comparison and high level discussion, the group were able to identify which of the key indicators of success the NSWRL would be able to monitor effectively and therefore include in the Gold and Blue Shield awards.

According to De Bosscher et al. (2009), each of the pillars of success can be further categorised into Critical Success Factors (CSF) that determine the success or failure of any initiative in that area. Further discussion from the expert panel identified the CSF's that were most applicable to the environments involved and that the NSWRL would be able to monitor appropriately. These CSF's were incorporated into the assessment tools with measures identified that related the CSF to the specific sporting landscape within the NSWRL.

Given the differing levels of environments we were attempting to monitor, different measurements of effectiveness for each CSF were utilized for the separate awards. For the Junior League level (Blue Shield), each CSF was measured using the same 5-point scoring scale in De Bosscher et al.'s (2009) study, where "1" indicated little development and "5" indicated a high level of development. For the purposes of the Blue Shield assessment, "1" was classed as a non-submission of evidence, "2" was an incomplete submission, "3" was a submission that required significant updates, "4" was a submission that required some minor adjustment and "5" was a well written, up to date and implemented submission. For the "Elite" level (Gold Shield), given the nature of the evidence required and the increased standards expected at this level of the game, measurement was a pass/fail basis.

6.4 Results

Table 6.1 shows a summary of results from the expert panel meetings. There is a perceived greater number of pillars of success where the NSWRL has the capability to monitor and affect change at the Junior League level than there is at the elite level of the game.

6.4.1 Critical Success Factors for Gold Shield

Criteria for the award were assessed across four areas, namely: governance and administration (relating to the Organisation and Structure of Policies pillar), finance (relating to the Financial Support pillar), media and facilities (relating to the Training Facilities pillar). Each of these will now be examined in turn. The governance and administration requirements included criteria relating to the following: -

- Evidence of a club constitution;
- Where applicable, suitable evidence of the affiliation agreement between the ISP NSW entry club and their affiliate club;
- Detailed breakdown of the club's management structure, including evidence of specific roles, responsibilities, qualifications and accreditations across areas such as football, administration, medical, sports science, wellbeing, finance and media within the club;
- Code of conduct documents for both players and staff;
- Evidence of a strategic plan to promote the profile of the competition and raise visibility of the teams entered;
- A copy of the club's liquor license (this is part of the Australian Sports Commission's Good Sports criteria);

- Incorporation certificates, particularly for affiliate clubs who may not have had the level of support and organisation of an NRL club;
- Insurance documents in order to provide adequate level of cover for directors and officers, public liability and professional indemnity.

Where evidence of club developed policies was required, NSWRL delivered blank template documents in order to provide a framework for the club to build on. These template documents were provided both in the 'Guidance Document'(Gold Shield Guidance document can be found in Appendix 13) provided to clubs prior to the assessment and also online throughout the monitoring tool. This information was partly requested in order to provide the single evidence 'vault' for NSWRL when dealing with compliance with competition rules and partly to ensure that clubs realized the importance of the competition and allocated staff and administration resources towards it accordingly.

Table 6.1. *Assessment of Current Status and Capability of NSWRL Against Previously Identified 9 Pillars*

	Input	**Throughput**								**Output**
Pillar	**Financial Support**	**Structure of Sport Policies**	**Participation**	**Talent ID & Development**	**Athlete Post Career Support**	**Training Facilities**	**Coach Development**	**National Competition**	**Scientific Research**	**Success Measures**
Gold Shield	All receive centralised funding. Variance in club funding	NRL responsible for 'elite', NSWRL for 'sub-elite'. Some alignment	Fixed due to squad sizes and investment	NRL clubs carry out ID /development of talent within environments controlled by NSWRL	No current capacity or responsibility for this in NSWRL	National Facility guidelines	Responsibility rests with NRL. No current capacity in NSWRL	Competition structure is fixed	Part of National Research Board	Aligned structure, increased competition parity.
NSWRL ability to effect change	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited	None	Yes	None	Yes	Limited	
Blue Shield	No centralised funding for Junior League or Clubs	NSWRL responsible for competition administration. Policy implementation is devolved to Junior Leagues. Some alignment	Participation rate falling	Effects of talent ID on participation rates at this level. 'Development' or 'Super' clubs are an issue	No current capacity at this level of the game	National Facility guidelines	As above.	Possibility of overplaying due to competitions in different environments and lack of organisational alignment	Part of National Research Board.	Increased participation rates.
NSWRL ability to effect change	None	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	None	Yes	Yes	

The Finance criteria requested included information such as the annual operating budget for the ISP NSW team (including a monthly Profit & Loss document); a copy of the Annual Report and audited accounts; confirmation of electronic accounting systems and the statutory declaration of accurate accounts; a financial compliance declaration, indicating the club's compliance with the Australian Tax Office (ATO) rules, Office of State Revenue and payroll and superannuation (pension) obligations.

These criteria required clubs to provide evidence that they were financially stable and had sufficient funds to complete the season. Statutory declarations were included to provide a method of accountability if clubs fail to complete the season or fail to maintain their financial obligations to the ATO, State Revenue or players and staff. At this level of the competition, the likelihood of this happening is slim to non-existent, however it was included to instill best practice.

Media requirements included evidence such as the club's Media Policy, the working document that addresses player responsibilities when interacting with the media; a Communication Policy linked to the club's risk management document in order to identify who is in charge of communications if a serious incident occurs. It is important for players and officials at this level of the game to promote the club, competition, the league and themselves in the best possible light. Players must be aware of their responsibilities towards the media in terms of fulfilling interview requests, how to use social media and the ramifications if social media and other communications are abused or the law is broken. The media and communications policies of clubs should assist with this. Again, template documents for both policies were developed and provide by the NSWRL.

There were four areas for assessment of a club's facilities, namely; the pavilion and amenities, field of play, additional facilities and emergency medical equipment. Facilities criteria were based on the NRL Guidelines for State, Regional and Local facilities and are included in Appendix 14. Given the profile and status of the competition, State level criteria were expected of all clubs. The specific criteria, including number and size of certain rooms, floodlight brightness, support structures (car parks, concessions etc.) were provided in the guidance document. While these are basic criteria, it is surprising how often games were played at venues without adequate facilities in previous years, or when facilities at grounds were not used (usually the PA system). The purpose of these criteria were to ensure that the facilities are in place to provide the best possible experience for players, referees and spectators alike when attending a game in this competition.

Finally, there has previously been nothing in the Competition Guidelines or any other criteria specifying what medical equipment (if any) was to be to hand at either the ground or in the possession of either team. The only relevant rule stated that each team must bring their own Doctor to the game in order to ensure medical care was available for their own players. This led to notably variable standards of care and treatment of on field medical emergencies according to the venue a game was played at. In an attempt to standardize the level of support available, as well as provide a level of reassurance for each Doctor as to what to expect when attending a game, the Emergency Medical Equipment (EME) was provided with an assessment to the status and suitability of all equipment carried out on a yearly basis by an approved medical company. The full list of EME can be found in the guidance document in Appendix 9.

6.4.2 Critical Success Factors for Blue Shield

The greater scope for the NSWRL to implement and monitor change at this level is reflected by the Blue Shield incorporating six factors compared to the Gold Shield's four. The additions were community and welfare (relating to the Foundation and Participation pillar) and 'on-field' (relating to the Competition pillar), while other areas requested further or different information from the Gold Shield Award.

The finance criterion in the Blue Shield requested evidence of funding agreements (between club and Local Council), sponsorship arrangements and government grants. This is an important area for all Junior League clubs, with the most proactive in this space being able to provide a high quality of facilities and a secure long-term future for the club.

The media criterion additionally requested information from the Junior League club's website and social media activity, highlighting the importance of the club website and the support given to it. This enables the club to attract new participants and provide the appropriate level of communication required to satisfy current participants, an issue that was highlighted in Chapter 3. A marketing strategy was also required at this level in order to provide evidence of a marketing and promotion plan to attract new participants and engage with the community. Again, all documents requested were provided in template form by the NSWRL. (Blue Shield guidance document can be found in Appendix 15)

It may seem strange to see more marketing and media criteria in the Blue Shield aimed at Junior clubs and their volunteers rather than the Gold Shield criteria that deals with professional clubs with full time employees. However, in a crowded and competitive marketplace, Junior League clubs must project the most welcoming and inviting atmosphere to the local athletes in order to maintain a strong participation

rate across all age groups from U6 to Open Age. This promotional and marketing activity is repeated yearly in order to recruit and retain participants. Senior clubs who come under the Gold Shield are dealing with captive audiences, usually only in one or two competitions and working as part of a feeder arrangement to a club at a higher level.

The same facilities criteria applied for the Gold Shield and the Blue Shield, the only difference being the standards the club was expected to meet in each criteria. Using the NRL guidelines (Appendix 14), the Junior League clubs were classed as a local facility in this award and expected to meet the corresponding standards.

The Community and Welfare aspect was a stand-alone criteria for the Blue Shield, reflecting the different challenges of a Junior Club and requirements of a club lower on the development pathway. This criteria included assessment on the Volunteer Management Plan in order to recruit and retain volunteers in various positions across the club; Good Sports Accreditation, the process by which alcohol could be served or brought onto the premises in a safe and appropriate manner; alignment to NSWRL inclusion programmes such as disability/disadvantaged and cultural programmes; alignment to community sport/school programmes by demonstrating a link to school programmes and utilising them as a recruitment tool for new participants. As displayed in Chapter 4, school programmes encourage participation with friends and are a good gateway into the sport.

There are a number of policies and procedures expected of a Junior League club in order to take part in the NSWRL and Junior League competitions. A measurement of compliance in these was included in the 'On Field' criteria of the assessment and included criteria such as the number of qualified coaches and trainers, with measurements to ensure all coaches were accredited and held the required

minimum qualifications; evidence of a suitable participation pathway, ideally a team in every age group; compliance with the Judiciary and Code of Conduct set out in the Operations Manual, with clubs remaining below set limits of suspension for the season; evidence of club support in player and coach development programmes in order to provide additional skills and development opportunities; engagement with participants who drop out of the game and an attempt to provide them with alternative pathways to stay involved, such as volunteering or refereeing.

6.5 Methodology Part 2 – Deploying the Monitoring Tools

6.5.1 Participants

6.5.1.1 Gold shield. A total of 12 teams entered into the ISP NSW competition for the 2018 season, with operational rules making it compulsory that each club complete the Gold Shield monitoring tool prior to their entries being accepted. This operational requirement ensured that the tool review had a 100% completion rate.

6.5.1.2 Blue shield. With approximately 300 clubs within the NSWRL area, the decision was taken to target one from each Junior League district. With 11 clubs taking part, only four completed the online assessment, giving a 36% completion rate.

6.5.2 Procedure

Both awards were assessed and monitored using an online process with each club receiving their own login information as well as a soft copy of the NSWRL developed guidance document. The guidance documents (Appendix 13 and 15) provided NSWRL developed templates for key documents in order to simplify the submission process for each club. All template documents were also provided as downloadable links in the online form, with each template document link positioned next to the relevant assessment question for ease of use. Template documents

included copies of club constitutions, business plan, affiliation agreements between "Elite" level clubs, risk management plan, strategic plan, code of conducts and media policy.

Given the nature of the awards and the increased workload for club staff and volunteers, an education process was developed and implemented prior to the 2018 season. For the Gold Shield, this process began in October 2017, included club workshops, guidance documents, individual club visits and IT support for all teams and was completed prior to the ISP NSW competition starting in March 2018. The education process was slightly shorter for the Blue Shield award, with the scheme being introduced to all clubs at the NSWRL Junior League conference in February 2018. Guidance documents, club visits and online training were provided to each of the identified clubs for the 2018 season and were refined and redistributed following feedback at the end of the same season.

The Blue Shield monitoring tool was distributed to all participants by means of an online portal, with log in details provided through direct email to the previously identified relevant staff at each club. The education process discussed previously had already explained the aims and purpose of the monitoring tool, with NSWRL staff available via email, phone or in person to answer any queries.

Each club had their own dedicated website for data entry, with NSWRL having oversight of all clubs and their information entry. Feedback was gained through club visits from NSWRL staff, annual club satisfaction surveys, regularly scheduled general club meetings and informal discussions through email and telephone with club staff.

6.6 Results

The 2018 season was the first time both these initiatives were delivered. While there had been some natural resistance to new initiatives and procedures, this was to be expected and we are currently working through this with all stakeholders. Feedback, obtained through club visits, meetings and emails from clubs, across both awards has been mixed; the more positive so far coming from the Professional clubs requesting the Gold Shield award.

6.6.1 Gold Shield

Feedback from the experience was not wholly positive. While clubs reported the process worthwhile, particularly in pulling together all the documents from various departments within the organisation and making sure they were all together and up to the standard expected, they found the process difficult. This was due to the 'clunky' interface on the Smartabase system.

As can be seen in Figure 6.1 below (and in further detail in Appendix 16 and the Club Gold Shield Review Document) the award has also forced clubs to improve policies and procedures, often meaning they have had to draft brand new policies where none existed previously, as well as updating existing policies to fit with current expectations and playing venues.

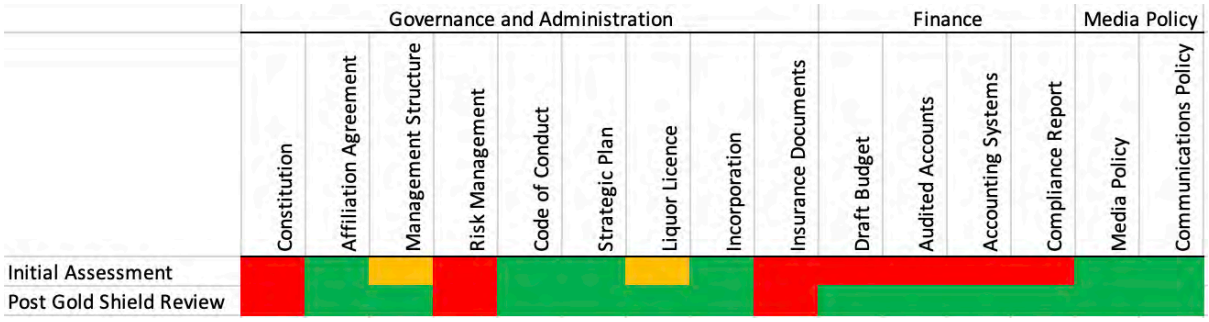

Figure 6.1. Illustration of the change in status for a single club, pre and post Gold Shield assessment.

In terms of the smooth running of the competition and freeing up clubs to focus on the quality of staff and their development, as well as the promotion of the competition, the award has been successful. NSWRL staff have received less requests for staff certification and accreditation information throughout the year, a major cause of issues previously with some clubs attempting to appoint unqualified medical and training staff in the lead up to a fixture.

Internally, the award and the online process has been a great benefit to NSWRL in assessing the capacities of each club and assisting them with providing the most appropriate environment for their players. An example of the Club Gold Shield Assessment documents can be found in Appendix 16. The coach and trainer accreditation process has been simplified immensely through the online process with all information being stored in one system without NSWRL having to navigate away in order to verify qualifications or liaise with external providers.

While all the Gold Shield criteria were seen as minimum standards that all clubs should be achieving before they were permitted to take part in our competitions, there have been a number of areas where clubs have fallen short, particularly in the areas of constitution and financial control. Two clubs initially were unable (or unwilling) to share financial information due to concerns over confidentiality of NRL information. Each club has been provided with a development plan which highlights areas of improvement over the next 12 months to be worked on, assisted and assessed by NSWRL employees, with funding and participation in 2019 conditional on achieving these plans.

6.6.2 Blue Shield

Once again, there was some resistance towards the scheme, the major concern being NSWRL's rationale for doing it. The perception was that it will only increase

the workload of an already overworked volunteer base without any benefit to the club itself. This can be explained due to the lack of education from NSWRL as to the purpose and benefits and the fact that clubs do not understand the purpose of the award—improving the conditions and environment experienced by athletes in order to increase participation.

While there has been an increase in participation for the 2018 season of almost 4%, it is obviously too early to attribute any of this growth to the Blue Shield award, particularly given the limited roll out for 2018. If this growth in participation continues, and the up take in Blue Shield award continues, we would be more confident in attributing it to the friendlier and more efficient environment created by the award.

6.7 Refinement and Relaunch

6.7.1 Gold Shield

As can be seen from Table 6.2 below, the current Gold Shield criteria only cover two of the four pillars that have been identified as possible drivers of success by De Bosscher et al. (2009).

Table 6.2. *De Bosscher et al. (2009) Key Drivers in Elite Sporting Systems*

Pillar	Driver	Influence
1	Financial Support	Possible Driver of success
2	Organisation and structure of policies	
3	Foundation and Participation	
4	Talent ID and Development Systems	
5	Athletic and Post career support	Possible Driver of Success
6	Training Facilities	Possible Driver of success
7	Coaching provision and Coach Development	Possible Driver of success
8	(Inter)national competition	
9	Scientific research	

While performance measures in the areas of the Athletic and Post Career Support pillar (Welfare funding document for 2018 and 2019 can be found in Appendix 17) and the Coaching Provision and Coach Development pillar (see minimum standards funding document for the 2018 and 2019 season in Appendix 18) have been developed in line with the CSF's identified by De Bosscher et al., these currently sit outside the Gold Shield award system. While those measures are compulsory for all clubs to complete, they were part of a separate assessment process.

Through exclusion of these measures, and the funding attached to them, within the Gold Shield tool, it may have generated a perception that athlete support and coach/player development systems sit outside the structure of, and are independent from, a well-run and efficient club. It is not uncommon for silos to form within clubs with the perception from the football department that it does not matter what the commercial department does, or how the administration is performing as long as the team on the field is performing. By creating separate systems to assess these areas, we have potentially reinforced this perception and steps should be taken for the 2019 season to integrate Minimum Standards funding (Player and Coach Development programmes) and Player Welfare funding (Athlete support) into the Gold Shield criteria as a single process.

It should also be noted that while training facilities are identified as a driver for success, the Gold Shield criteria actually measures the standards of the playing facilities. While it is not uncommon for clubs to train at the same venue that they play from, this is not always the case. It is difficult to assess training facilities in a single measure for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is not uncommon for a number of our ISP NSW teams to train from a number of different facilities throughout the season depending on availability and time of year. On occasions, venues can be identified

and utilized on short notice and venues can change throughout the season. As well as training environments needing to be different when aiming to develop different outcomes within performance. In other words, what is *good* depends on what you want to achieve.

Since teams may play at more than one venue throughout year, not all playing venues are included in the submission. The assumption was that since multiple venues will be used for NRL teams then if they are good enough for NRL standards, provided the ISP teams have the same access, then they will be suitable for that level of the pathway too. Secondly, the affiliate club model operated by many of our clubs on their pathway can make the assessment of facilities difficult. A player at an NRL club will train at one facility but then be expected to travel to a second facility if he is playing in the ISP NSW competition that week. We have taken the view that the ISP NSW competition venue should be the one that is assessed and included in our criteria, although the facilities at NRL clubs are by no means ideal in all cases. It would be difficult for us to determine criteria for and assess each venue for every club that is used for training (on field and off field) although this should be identified as the next step for this process.

6.7.2 Blue Shield

The major improvement required for the Blue Shield award is an improvement in our education process and clarity on the benefits, both participation and otherwise, for clubs achieving the award. The education process needs to be expanded greatly in order to reflect more that of the Gold Shield programme. Workshops within each Junior League and individual club visits from NSWRL staff identified with a club liaison role need to be completed between now and the 2019 season. Further education should be carried out on the online entry system so that clubs are able to

navigate more easily. Care should also be taken that the training and education requirements of the award do not expand to a level that prevents volunteers from each club engaging with the process and completing it successfully.

In terms of the identified pillars of success that need to be assessed in order to drive success, the Blue Shield award appears to cover them all. Further investigation is required into individual criterion to determine if these are the most pertinent and relevant to club's future development and environment.

The NSWRL needs to more clearly drive the benefits of the Blue Shield award for clubs by providing tangible rewards for successfully meeting criteria. A reward and recognition scheme that works in tandem with the award should be developed in order to make it more visible to prospective parents and athletes that they are joining a well-run club and the standards they should expect. Club recognition on achieving the award can take the form of equipment or resource provision from NSWRL and even go so far as determining that participation in NSWRL Junior League competitions becomes dependent upon achieving the Blue Shield Award.

6.7.3 Both Awards

The assessment of the Gold Shield award is a very simplistic pass/fail process with a development plan being used to determine an area of improvement if certain documents are sub-standard. A more sophisticated assessment of the quality of each criterion may result in the $200K participation funding becoming attached to relevant criteria and awarded on a sliding scale of competency. While this may make it difficult for clubs to budget on participation, it would focus their efforts adequately on providing improved standards of support, facilities and administration.

While the Blue Shield award would appear to be more sophisticated as it operates on a sliding scale for the evidence required, it is still a work in progress to

determine the weighting and importance of each criteria to the overall success of the project. Further work needs to be carried out in order to determine the critical success factors and reinforce these in the award process.

Finally, further work also needs to be done in order to determine the acceptable level for each criterion. Currently, NSWRL are using a subjective process dependent on the knowledge and experience of staff who have worked in this area for a number of years. How clubs that excel and those who just meet the criteria are differentiated between, whether this differentiation should be done and what it looks like in practice are all questions to be discussed further before any implementation in 2019. The importance of each of the pillars and their relative strength with regards to sporting success is also an area for further investigation. Do clubs and sporting organisations need to be strong across all the pillars in order to be successful or are some more important than others?

The following chapter will investigate the relationship between policy implementation and both sporting success and cultural change, hopefully providing further evidence on the importance of the pillars highlighted by De Bosscher and colleagues.

Chapter 7: Respect Campaign: Policy Affecting Change

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will deal with both the third and fourth objectives of the study through the delivery of applied initiatives to address previously identified issues and by measuring the success and impact of those initiatives.

Previous chapters have identified the need to improve the atmosphere and environment at clubs. Specifically, side-line and on field behaviour have previously been identified in Chapter 4 as a major reason for churn for Junior League participants but have not been directly addressed previously in this thesis or by the game as a whole. Importantly, with the realisation that a direct intervention into participant and spectator behaviour is difficult, most initiatives have treated the symptoms rather than the cause. Some of these issues had been addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 through the introduction of the alternative format programmes (W8s and M8s) in order to reduce the emphasis on competition and the monitoring tools to asses club environment and delivery (Blue and Gold Shield awards).

Poor player, coach and spectator behaviour are also the underlying factors behind initiatives in other sports (e.g., Soccer and netball) such as non-competitive leagues, removing finals and through the implementation of strict judiciary codes in order to punish bad behaviour by all participants. None of these initiatives directly addresses behavioural issues, rather, they remove any perceived opportunity to behave badly or punish those who do after the fact. The NSWRL, like other sports, was missing a direct intervention in order to address this reason for churn.

While it is difficult to directly intervene and affect change in the behaviours of all 40,000 NSWRL Junior League and Major Competition participants, this is the only way to address the underlying cause of poor behaviours. Participants can be broken

down into players, parents, team officials and coaches but, as identified in Chapter 6, the NSWRL has no capacity (or funds) to affect changes in the coach education system at this moment in time. This is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, the responsibility of the NRL. However, the NSWRL can develop and implement education initiatives aimed at directly affecting player and spectator behaviour such as the Respect Campaign. It is through this programme, which will be introduced here, that we NSWRL hope the side-line atmosphere and behaviour of players and spectators will improve. Broadly, the Respect Campaign is a policy developed in order to consistently address on field and side line behaviour throughout the season, and with the aim of reminding participants, volunteers and spectators that Junior League should be a place for them to focus on their enjoyment of the game.

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, any assumption of a relationship between sporting policy and a desired effect or outcome is very difficult to measure and ultimately prove. While Chelladurai (2001) suggested a multidisciplinary approach to measuring the effectiveness of organisations, such as the tools developed in Chapter 6, these do not measure the effectiveness of policies implemented by that organisation. Bressers and Hoogerwerf (1991) stated that the effectiveness of sporting policy can be measured directly through the achievement and measurement of attained and defined goals, or indirectly through policy processes and their presumed effects. Following this process, we would hope that the effectiveness of the Respect Campaign could be measured through the incidence and severity of judicial and code of conduct offences throughout the Junior Leagues.

Judiciary offences can be classified as offences that take place on the field of play and directly contravene the laws of the game. Offences resulting in a sin bin, sending off or a player being put on report would fit into this category. Judicial

offences apply to players but do not extend to team officials or spectators yet would appear to be the biggest contributor to the perception of poor sportsmanship during games.

Code of conduct offences can be classified as offences that take place outside of the field of play such as referee abuse by a spectator or coach, or offences on the field of play that are not directly covered by the laws of the game such as racial or homophobic abuse. The offences are handled using the same NSWRL procedures, but the punishment can be much more severe. Notably, several 10 and 30 year bans have been administered in the Junior League game for some offences in the past. Code of conduct offences would be the biggest contributor to the perception of poor side-line atmosphere at Junior League games and so it is important that these are addressed as a meaningful part of the performance environment. Therefore, it was expected that any change in behaviour due to the implementation of the Respect Campaign should result in a reduction in the number of offences, with an accompanying reduction in the severity of punishments associated with the offences.

7.2. Methodology

7.2.1 Participants

While all Junior League districts implemented the Respect Campaign policy, not all were part of the NSWRL Judicial Process and, therefore, not all were willing to provide necessary data. As described in Chapter 2, the NSWRL does not have full control of every Junior League district, some receive large investment from their local Leagues club, appoint their own staff and control their own competitions while working within the framework of the NSWRL and the Junior League Association policies. A central tenant of the Respect Campaign was to centralise the Judicial Process and bring it under the NSWRL banner. This would allow for the judicial and

code of conduct processes to be standardized across all districts, allowing a greater consistency of offense charge, consistency of punishment and reduced workload for all districts. This was a slow process to achieve full buy-in from all districts, with only 5 districts participating in 2016 and growing to full participation ($N = 11$) in 2018.

7.2.2 Data Collection

The Respect Campaign, and its complimentary initiative Project Blindside (further details in Appendix 19), were designed to be implemented in a staged approach. Each stage was targeted at different sections of the participant base over consecutive years to ensure all stakeholders (i.e., player, coaches and team officials) were involved. In 2016 the policy targeted the player and referee experience, the 2017 policy emphasised coaching behaviour and the aims of the coaches taking part and, finally, the 2018 policy focused on officials such as Team Managers through further education.

Reflecting the overall aim of the Respect Campaign, a participant pledge (Figure 7.1) was introduced in 2016 for all players, coaches, volunteers and spectators through an online process where participants could electronically sign the pledge to uphold the concepts of excellence, inclusiveness, courage, teamwork and respect. Clubs with the greatest number of pledges, as a percentage of their registered participants, in each Junior League district were recognised on the NSWRL website and presented with an award at the end of the season.

Figure 7.1. Respect Pledge

Furthermore, sideline advertising and bollards emphasizing the programme and key aspects of the pledge were distributed to all Junior League clubs in an attempt to prompt spectators to be respectful to all participants. Clubs and Junior League districts were also provided with NSWRL branded images for their websites and social media pages with the '#letthemplay' hashtag specifically created to promote the campaign. A specific themed "Respect Round" was created in the Junior League calendar in order to promote the importance of respect and enjoyment in participation. The round included initiatives such as an audio message created by the NSWRL State of Origin Head Coach that was played over the loudspeakers at every ground prior to kick off, reminding all participants and spectators of the principles of fair play, respect and enjoyment of the game. This meant that initiatives had been targeted at each level of the game, participant, club and League/District, in order to raise awareness of the policy.

Alongside the changes to on field policy in the Respect Campaign, Project Blindside was introduced to combat referee abuse. Integrated into the Respect Campaign, match officials trialed the use of GoPro cameras worn on chest mounts in

order to record all games in selected Junior League districts and age groups. The project was trialed in the U16 age groups within Balmain, South Sydney, St. George, Canterbury and Western Suburbs districts. The scope of this trial was limited by the cost of the GoPro cameras (it was not possible to purchase a camera for every one of the 758 registered NSWRL referees) and the fact that those districts played in NSWRL governed and administered competitions in certain age groups. This allowed us a greater degree of control in implementing policy than in other districts. The U15 and U16 age groups were targeted for initial implementation due to feedback from referees citing these as the most problematic age groups. It was hoped that it would be a deterrent to bad behaviour if participants knew they were being recorded.

In 2017 the policy focused on coaches and coaching behaviour during games, with coaches reminded of their responsibility to behave, set an example for and to be respectful to all participants. Coaching behaviour has been widely accepted as a factor in the continued participation of athletes. Walters et al (2012) identify contextual factors that influence coach behaviours that include sporting organisations and the values and expectations that they impress on the coach. Mageau and Vallerand (2003) in their work on the coach-athlete relationship show how the contextual factors can increase the stress on a coach that results in controlling behaviour that impacts on participant enjoyment. All coaches were provided with a NSWRL cap with "Coach" written on the front. This made them easily identifiable to Ground Managers and meant only accredited personnel were allowed pitch side and to interact with the players. Initiatives such as the Respect Round and the recognition of clubs and coaches continued throughout 2017. The '#letthemplay' initiative grew into an online video (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yubs1B7pg1U), distributed through our social media channels and integrated stars from the NSW State of Origin Blues team

talking about their Junior League experiences and Junior League participants talking about what they loved about the game and why they played it.

"Project Blindside" was refocused in 2017 with the GoPro cameras distributed to Ground Managers rather than the referees. It was felt that the laws of the game adequately covered the on field behaviour with video evidence not required for these offences. The larger issue for the game as a whole was sideline behaviour of coaches and spectators; something not always visible to a referee. Accordingly, the cameras were distributed to Ground Managers who interact and observe those participants more closely and hopefully allow us to affect greater change on these behaviours.

In 2018 the focus of the programme was on Team managers, ongoing education for participants and the development of limited parent education resources. All previous initiatives were continued in 2018 with the addition of an education and training programme for Team Managers, designed to allow them to deliver the appropriate information regarding laws of the game and the game day experience to any parents who may have questions. Misinformation, or a lack of understanding of the rules of the game, can be a cause of frustration and friction for parents and spectators alike. It was hoped that having someone there to provide clear and concise information and answer any questions appropriately may reduce incidences of bad behaviour. A parent education handout outlined the Code of Conduct guidelines and clearly explained what the club expected from its parents and spectators as well as what they can expect the club to provide for them.

Data were collected from the NSWRL Judiciary hearings held on a weekly basis to hear any Judiciary or Code of Conduct offences arising from the previous weekend's round of games. Judiciary offences carry a points penalty depending on the type and severity of the offence, with discounts applied for an early guilty plea: a 1

week suspension was applied for each 100 points accumulated. Hearings were only held for cases where the defendant failed to enter a plea or pleaded not guilty to the offence, early guilty pleas were dealt with without a hearing and the respective suspension applied as per the points total for the offence. In the case of Code of Conduct offences, it is not possible to enter an early guilty plea and all cases are heard at the tribunal. For all competitions run by the NSWRL, the decisions from the tribunal hearings were recorded and collected in the NSWRL database. Variables of interest were the total number of offenses and the severity received for an offense as determined by the number of weeks banned from participating. Baseline information for the 2015 season, prior to the implementation of the Respect Campaign policy, was provided in a total figure for judiciary and code of conduct offences rather than an individual district breakdown. This was due to data not being recorded on a district basis prior to 2016.

7.2.3 Data Analysis

Referee reports and player charges were collected at NSWRL HQ on Monday morning following the weekend's games. All charges were recorded and footage (where available) was viewed by the Judiciary Panel in order to determine what, if any, offence the player should be charged with. All players charged with an offence were notified via email and provided with a charge notice and plea notification. Players were given the option of pleading guilty to the offence and receiving the allocated points penalty, minus a reduction for an early guilty plea, or pleading not guilty and having the charge heard by the Tribunal Panel. All early guilty pleas were recorded in a spreadsheet and any applicable suspension was recorded on the NSWRL player database. Not guilty pleas were heard at the tribunal on Wednesday evenings and the result of the hearing recorded in the same spreadsheet as previously. Results

were collated by NSWRL staff according to the district in which the offence took place. Total and averages for each district were calculated and tabulated.

7.3 Results and Discussion

The slow take up of the centralised judiciary model by districts makes comparison of total offences from year to year less than optimal. Table 7.1 shows the total number of offences, both judiciary and code of conduct, per district per year. This shows the take up of the centralised model across districts, with N/A meaning the district was not part of the process.

By their very nature, on field offences can occur in a spur of the moment manner during the passage of play, governed largely by reactive and automatic processes. As such, these are perhaps more difficult to change using policy implementation alone. This is reflected in the fluctuations in totals across each district as well as in the final totals for each year. This may be more clearly demonstrated by following the initial group of districts who implemented the centralised model. Balmain, Canterbury, Souths, St. George and Western Suburbs all started in 2016 and had year on year combined totals for judiciary offences of 92 in 2016, 159 in 2017 and 97 in 2018. By comparison, the baseline figure for judiciary offences in 2015 for the same group of districts was 137, with an average of 27.4 offences per district.

Code of conduct offences are less frequent and would appear to consist of the type of anti-social and poor sportsmanship behaviour that the Respect Campaign was aimed at; that is, off field offences such as referee abuse, foul language or conduct that disturbs the enjoyment of a game for others. These offences should also be less volatile in terms of numbers with them hopefully being less ‘heat of the moment’ in-game offences when compared to those dealt with by the Judiciary Offences. With a baseline figure for 2015 of 60 and an average of 12 offences per district it is

disappointing to see that the total of offences continued to rise over the years. Again, this is skewed due to the inclusion of a number of new districts in the NSWRL Judicial Process throughout the years. However, using the same 5 districts of Balmain, Canterbury, Souths, St. George and Western Suburbs, the pattern of year on year growth in the number of offences is repeated. This is despite the fact that the average number of offences actually fell in 2016 and 2017, only rising in 2018 due to the large number of offences reported in Western Suburbs that year.

There are a number of possible reasons for this growth, the simplest being that there were just more offences committed over the years. Other explanations may be that, due to the Respect Campaign, officials and spectators were more aware of the issues of bad behaviour and more willing to report it when seen. It may also be a case of the centralization of the Judicial Process under NSWRL control meant that offences were more likely to be charged rather than the old system of District control where there may have been some favouritism. In this case, it may be that a longer period of time is required in order to embed the policy across all districts and gain a true reflection on its success or failure.

Table 7.1. *The Number of Judiciary and Code of Conduct Offences in Each District per Year.*

	Number of Offences							
	Judiciary Offences				Code of Conduct Offences			
District	2015	2016	2017	2018	2015	2016	2017	2018
Balmain		11	22	20		6	5	4
Canterbury		41	52	19		35	47	66
Cronulla		N/A	22	37		3	2	9
Eastern Suburbs		N/A	4	7		4	0	2
Manly		N/A	23	4		N/A	0	5
North Sydney		N/A	12	3		N/A	4	0
Parramatta		N/A	N/A	53		N/A	1	79
Penrith		N/A	N/A	3		N/A	1	10
Souths		13	31	18		6	3	15
St. George		20	13	15		9	7	2
Western Suburbs		7	41	25		9	15	23
Total	**137**	**92**	**220**	**204**	**60**	**72**	**85**	**215**
Average	**27.4**	**18.4**	**24.44**	**18.55**	**12**	**10.2**	**7.7**	**19.55**

Table 7.2 shows the severity of the punishment (in weeks) received for Judiciary and Code of Conduct offences over the 3 years of the Respect Campaign. Unfortunately, the NSWRL do not have any baseline data for the severity of punishments in the 2015 season. The year on year growth in the number of offences is not reflected in the figures for the severity of the offences. This shows an overall downward trend for both Judiciary and Code of Conduct offences, albeit with some volatility across the years. This would tend to reinforce the argument that the growth in the number of offences is due to the centralization of the judicial process and the increased likelihood of the NSWRL to charge participants when compared to their local district. It may also lend some strength to the argument for centralization regarding the standardization of charges and punishments, with less volatility and range of punishments handed out for the same offences.

Table 7.2. *The Severity of Punishment for Judiciary and Code of Conduct Offences in each District Per Year.*

	Severity of Offences (Weeks of Suspension)					
	Judiciary Offences			**Code of Conduct Offences**		
District	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Balmain	22.9	2.7	1.8	2.0	4.2	27.6
Canterbury	8.4	3.8	3.2	124.9	55.1	9.6
Cronulla	N/A	1.5	2.4	N/A	2.0	0.0
Eastern Suburbs	N/A	1.5	1.9	N/A	0.0	0.0
Manly	N/A	3.2	3.3	N/A	0.0	132.5
North Sydney	N/A	1.6	4.0	N/A	14.5	0.0
Parramatta	N/A	N/A	12.7	N/A	N/A	27.8
Penrith	N/A	N/A	1.0	N/A	N/A	4.4
Souths	2.2	1.8	3.3	9.7	2.3	8.7
St. George	2.8	3.9	2.4	9.3	70.3	21.5
Western Suburbs	4.1	2.8	3.4	25.8	535.7	5.6
Average	**8.0**	**2.5**	**3.6**	**34.34**	**76.0**	**21.60**

It should also be noted that the data for Code of Conduct offences can be skewed by the nature of the offences and severity of punishments warranted. Several districts had a number of 10, 30 and 50 year bans, sometimes multiple cases in a single year. While these skew the average punishment significantly upwards for those districts as well as the overall average, they are for precisely the type of behaviour the campaign aimed to stamp out. Offences such as referee abuse, assault or entering the field of play without permission were all included in those multiple year bans. This is a possible area of further education for participants and spectators as it would appear to be an ongoing issue. Those participants charged with such offences and punished accordingly have all expressed ignorance of the penalty and disappointment at the harshness. While awareness of the penalty may not have prevented the behaviour, it may help to include information on potential length of bans in the education process.

7.4 Key Points

The Respect Campaign policy can be evaluated as a partial success. On a positive note, the average severity of offences for both Judiciary and Code of Conduct does appear to be on a downward trend, albeit with some outlying results in one year of each. This would suggest that, while the average number of offences may not be trending downwards, the nature of the offences is altering and becoming less severe.

More simplistically, the campaign has failed to curb the rise in the number of both judiciary and code of conduct offences, though this may be due to an increased willingness to both report and charge offences than previously. In this respect, the implementation of a central NSWRL Judiciary was an important step in the process. This, combined with the buy-in from the districts, albeit a gradual one, has allowed for greater standardization of charges and punishments. This standardisation in approach has been a success of the campaign and resulted in a higher number of less severe issues. While this is not wholly satisfactory, it does show some success on the part of the Respect Campaign.

This chapter has provided the final link in the chain of the studies. It has targeted the disruptive and negative behaviours of the participants involved and in doing so complements the other initiatives that have aimed to improve the format of the games and the atmosphere or environment that games are played in. The following chapter will summarise the findings from these initiatives and highlight the next steps for both the NSWRL as an organisation and for me personally in my learning journey.

Chapter 8: Changing Culture in Grassroots Australian Rugby League: Evaluating the Journey and Laying out the Next Steps

8.1 General Discussion

Each of the objectives of the study have been addressed in a systematic and thorough manner. The first objective, to identify best theory and practice according to literature was addressed in Chapter 2 and found that the impact of jurisdictional division in how the game is governed within Australia and a focus and investment in the elite level of the game raised significant doubts as to whether falling participation rates could be addressed. The objective was further addressed through the identification of a process through which any improvements in the overall governance and environment of football within NSWRL could be identified, monitored and assessed. This was a significant first step for the game since it effectively provided us with a road map to follow in order to identify and assess improvements within the game in general and our development pathways in particular.

The second objective, to determine the current status and condition of grassroots Rugby League within Australia in general and NSWRL in particular was addressed in Chapter 3 and the initial stages of Chapter 4. Chapter 3 provided an assessment of the current delivery framework of the Talent Development Pathway, the environments within and an evidence-based rationale of the performance of each of those environments and the issues faced within them. The financial costs of the pathway, not only in delivery costs but also in player payments where, for the first time, a true indication of the level of investment in players aged 20 and under was achieved and an argument for payment on performance rather than potential put forward; the drain of players, not only from within local Junior Leagues but also the transfer of players country or out of state regions, moving for a perceived opportunity

that they felt didn't exist at home; and the overall performance of the pathway and whether it was fit for purpose or not were all issues identified as to why the current model was not performing as planned. Chapter 4 was a significant and important piece of work and provided further evidence of the current status and condition of the game with a particular focus on Junior League participation and the reasons for participant churn. This provided insights that had not been seen before and allowed an understanding of the reasons why participants play the game that was evidence based rather than the usual 'anecdotal' evidence or gut feel that had been used in the past. The impact of this study on the thesis in particular and football within NSWRL in general cannot be overstated.

Not only did Chapter 4 address the second objective, but it also went a long way to satisfying the third objective of proposing and piloting specific initiatives to solve the issues identified. Without the evidence provided in Chapter 4, it would not have been understood that the perceived safety of players an evenness of competition was an issue for future participation, Nor would it have been understood at what specific ages this was a problem or how action could be taken through the development of the alternative formats of the game. This chapter also identified the game day and training environment for participants as an issue which led to the monitoring tools proposed and piloted in Chapter 6 and the sporting policies that were implemented in order to provide a safer, more appropriate playing environment in Chapter 7.

The final objective, that of measuring the success and determining the impact of the initiatives proposed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, was addressed within each of the chapters themselves. The impact of the alternative formats of the game that were developed in Chapter 5 was determined through tracking the future participation of

athletes who had taken part in the programs in order to see who had transitioned to the full contact version of the game. The alternative programs were designed as recruitment and retention tools with the M8s program in particular being successful both of these aims. The transition of players form alternative formats to regular full contact participation was also tracked and monitored.

The Blue and Gold shield assessment protocols in Chapter 6 were monitoring tools themselves, designed to improve the environment within clubs at both the elite and junior level of the game and providing us with real time information on the impact and improvements achieved. Clubs now have a clearer idea of what an appropriate environment looks like at each level, the operations and policies required to create it and the benefits of doing so.

The impact of sporting policy in Chapter 7 was relatively easy to monitor and assess the impact. Data was collected through the simple monitoring of the type and severity of offences committed both on field by players and off field by coaches, team officials and spectators at the NSWRL Judiciary Panel hearings. An overall trend downwards in severity of offences, both judiciary and code of conduct would suggest that officials, players and spectators are heeding the lessons of the Respect campaign. The rise in participation in the 2018 season following 4 years of decline would suggest that the impact of all four of the objectives has been a positive one.

In reviewing each of the initiatives outlined in the previous chapters, it is impossible to separate one from the others in terms of importance or impact. Each of them is linked and flows from one level of the pathway to the next, based on the information collected throughout. The request from the Board of the NSWRL to review the state of the game in NSW and develop a plan for growth and expansion led to the review of the player pathway. This provided clarity on future competition

structures and principles and a recognition of the need to address the ongoing fall in participation (Chapter 3). Based on the pathway review conducted in Chapter 4, it was understood that the format of our current Junior League games needed to be addressed because this was a key factor reported for participant churn. As such, two alternative formats of the game were developed (i.e., W8s and M8s; Chapter 5), designed to increase recruitment and retention rates in friendly, welcoming and developmentally-appropriate environments. Addressing the format of the games was supported by the introduction of quality control measures, the Gold Shield award which addressed the quality of the environment provided to players at the elite level of our game and, the Blue Shield award designed to improve the environment for participation at our Junior League clubs (Chapter 6). Finally, the atmosphere in which games were played in needed to be addressed in order to improve retention of participants, which was represented through the implementation of the Respect Campaign policy (Chapter 7). Therefore, in attempting to address the problem presented to this thesis, I have genuinely employed an integrated bio(game formats)-psycho(motivation for playing)-social(spectator/officials' behaviour) approach.

While individually, each of these initiatives may have resulted in an improvement to their specific area of focus, they work best when delivered collectively as a single initiative—the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For instance, to implement the Gold Shield monitoring tool, without embedding any of the wellbeing or player development minimum standards below that at younger age groups, would have been too big a jump for both players and clubs. Likewise, the W8s and M8s programmes do not work without the Respect Campaign initiatives; in short, a new format of the game played in the wrong environment would have been unsuccessful.

Each initiative was also designed to address a different influential stakeholder in the pathway—the parent, player, coach and club. The Gold and Blue Shield monitoring tools addressed the clubs, alternative game formats addressed the needs of the participants and the Respect Campaign addressed specific issues around coaching and parent behaviour. As is the case for the levels of the pathway, the participants are interlinked and therefore required the same joined up approach to the interventions. Addressing issues in a single area would not have been effective for the game as a whole. Ultimately this proved to be a successful approach since the 2018 season saw a rise in participation for the first time in 5 years, from 38,725 participants in 2017 to 41,753 in 2018. Participation figures prior to the 2014 season were not reliable since records were paper based and the counting system was arguably too "flexible".

It is also worth noting that the initiatives were developed and implemented while acting under some constraints and limitations. Firstly, and most importantly, was that the NSWRL has no control over the development or delivery of Coach Development initiatives throughout NSW. This is the sole remit of the NRL and the responsibility of the NRL Game Development department to deliver. The NSWRL initiatives were designed to target every level of the game; the macro level through an analysis of playing populations and funding, the meso level through the implementation of policy and competition structure and the micro level though the athlete experience and environment. This lack of control over Coach Development means that an extremely important part of not only the athlete experience, but other factors such as the competition environment and policy implementation are significantly affected. To a large extent, coach behaviour and beliefs are the underlying cause behind a lot of the initiatives developed by the NSWRL to address symptoms identified in Chapter 2 such as an over emphasis on competition. The

inability of the NSWRL to directly affect these coaching behaviours through an education and development process is a significant gap in our capability to affect change in the overall game.

Further limitations, such as the disconnect between the NRL Game Development staff responsible for the recruitment of participants, and the NSWRL Junior Leagues and Clubs who are responsible for the retention of participants also affect our ability to change culture. Well run clubs with welcoming atmospheres and opportunities to develop are not necessarily signposted to potential participants, with Junior Leagues and the NSWRL having little to no input into the delivery of NRL Game Development staff in order to ensure that their needs are met.

In terms of the research process involved in conducting these studies, there are several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the data. Firstly, the longevity and appeal of the alternate formats and the method of assessing whether they have been successful or not. All the success measures of the programmes addressed satisfaction and enjoyment of the pilot programmes and providing an indication of the willingness to participate further. Having a good time and enjoying the programme does not always translate into participating again in a further programme 6 months later in the year. While these data have shown that the formats were successful in translating participation in the pilot programmes into regular 13 a side participation, the alternate format programmes themselves have struggled for numbers in subsequent years.

A further limitation of the research process would be the difficulty in collecting judiciary and code of conduct information from the Junior League districts. This led to an initial lack of reliable baseline data for a number of years previous to the implementation of the Respect programme that would have greatly assisted in

assessing its impact. Secondary to this was the slow and piecemeal uptake of the centralised Judicial process by the Junior League's which led to difficulty in conducting year on year comparisons across the game as a whole. While in some regards these limitations were frustrating and not ideal, they do represent the true reality of working within the applied setting and the challenges faced by programme developers.

8.2 Critical Reflections

On reflection of the success and failures throughout the development and implementation of these initiatives, a key feature has been my ability to manage stakeholders effectively. Indeed, this applies managing upwards to the NSWRL Board and the ARLC, sideways to the NRL, NRL clubs, Junior Leagues and downwards with my staff. In most cases, a well informed and evidence-based approach prevailed when attempting to impart change. However, as detailed below, there have been a number of instances where both politics and self-preservation have meant that proposed changes, despite being underpinned by evidence, have not been supported or implemented.

In managing upwards, the key stakeholders were the NSWRL Board. Consisting of an independent Chairman, two independent Directors and 4 club representative directors; the current board structure has been in place for 6 years. The club representative directors serve 2-year terms, with two positions elected every year at the AGM. While the power base of the NSWRL Board is firmly entrenched, this election system does mean that Directors are at the mercy of the clubs' needs rather than determining the strategic long-term direction of the NSWRL.

This is reflected in the fact that while the board initiated the review of the pathway and were supportive of the recommendations, this support only extended as

far as the support of the clubs. Where there was resistance from our member clubs, particularly the NRL clubs, this was reflected in the attitude and support of the Board, despite previously expressed support and acceptance. The simplest example of this was related to competition structures and principles in order to grow the game and become more developmentally appropriate. While initially supportive of the proposal to eliminate our Harold Matts (U16) competition and replace it with a festival weekend concept, thereby pushing selection to later ages, there was significant resistance to this from our member clubs. Despite being presented with evidence on graduation rates to the NRL from this competition, monetary investment in both programmes and player wages and the return on investment achieved, the prestige and history of this competition meant that clubs were very negative towards any change to the competition or to their current methods of talent identification and development. This resistance meant that the position of our Board changed such that they no longer supported the proposal.

There is no doubt that the Board's reliance on feedback from clubs prior to making a decision is political in nature, with directors knowing that their position may be in jeopardy at the next election if they do not support the view of the clubs. However, some of their reluctance to implement all the recommendations can be traced to the Board's reporting system and how I utilised it. Specifically, the current system does not allow the time for issues such as late specialization, talent development environments and coach development programmes to be fully explained to the Board. Instead, only an overview of the issues to be presented along with the resulting recommendations are provided. It is not the fault of the Board that they do not have a deep understanding of the concepts behind the recommendations, that is my job to present them with recommendations that I believe are best for the NSWRL.

Given the time constraints of NSWRL Board meetings, the board manage by exception with little questioning or validation offered and only discuss issues further if a problem has been identified. Unfortunately, these issues are only identified or raised by NSWRL member clubs once the Board have given approval for a course of action. This means, therefore, that we then have to delay implementation until the issues can be discussed at the next Board meeting or amend the proposals to reflect concerns raised. Despite these limitations, however, in the majority of cases the Board will happily endorse the recommendations of the Football Department and fully implement them but, in cases such as the one described above, the communication process needs to be proactive, highlighting potential issues and problems for them to be aware of prior to any decision. This communication process has been through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) rather than through direct contact with the Board which, not only slows down the process, *also* adds another layer of 'Chinese whispers' before the Board receive the information.

The CEO has been very supportive throughout the process and, by necessity is more informed on the details of the plans and projects than the Board. This is due to him often being the first point of contact for any complaints or issues from clubs or Junior League districts affected by the plans. As an ex-Chairman of an NRL club and life member of a Junior League District, one with very small playing numbers and resources, he has an intimate understanding of the game across all levels of the pathway. From a personal perspective it has been an invaluable process having to justify changes to him. Due to his history and involvement with the Junior League District, his view point can be protectionist and not always supportive towards bigger districts and clubs. This has meant that both sides of the argument needed to be considered, particularly in areas such as development fees (included in the

recommendations from the pathway review) and moving from exclusive to inclusive development programmes, both issues that directly affect the ability of the smaller districts to develop talent. He has also been a valuable link in the chain to the Board, his greater experience in dealing with them enabled him to frame the message in a way they were more willing to accept in most cases. He has been an important step in the process of justifying proposed changes and smoothing the process of selling them to the Board.

Another level requiring some management upwards was my interaction with the ARLC, the controlling body for the game. The current funding model only provides 'adequate funding' for existing programmes, with new programmes requiring a funding submission and approval from the ARLC. Considering that all the programmes involved in this study were 'new', they needed to be presented to the ARLC for funding approval. Due to the make-up of the ARLC Commissioners, I faced similar problems to that presented by the NSWRL Board. The ARLC Commissioners have, with respect, little knowledge of grass roots issues or, indeed, anything below the NRL level, despite being the overarching body for the whole of the game. Their interest in the pathway only relates to whether it provides players for the NRL and have shown their willingness to invest at that level; that is, the Gold Shield award and pathway reform at NSW Cup (ISP NSW) level were an easy sell given their close links to the NRL. A more difficult sell was the justification for funds at lower levels of the game that form the beginnings of the pathway. While it was not specifically my role to interact with the ARLC directly, I was required to provide information to the CEO and evidence for the proposals he presented. Thus, as the research gathered momentum our relationship became increasingly more important in terms of being able to implement any meaningful change.

Management sideways to the NRL, NRL clubs and Junior League districts presented some similar challenges to managing upwards. The NRL clubs in particular took a similar approach to change. They were happy to support it as long as it did not affect them too much or prevent them from doing things the way they had always done them. While a generalisation, it does hold true that the bigger NRL clubs with more money and resources appeared happier to accept change, were more progressive in their attitudes and willing to try new things provided they were based on solid evidence. These clubs, and their staff, had been the influencers that were targeted in order to begin the change process. We knew that there would be a tipping point where the support for the changes would become great enough to allow us to implement initiatives such as new competition structures and standards of delivery for their player development programmes. Staff from the larger clubs were always the most vocal in meetings and so were engaged with first in order to get them onside and supportive of initiatives. By contrast, the smaller clubs were generally very protective of what they were doing and wary of any initiative or change that they perceived to give the larger clubs an advantage. This was despite the fact that their current delivery showed little regard for player welfare or player development principles. Unfortunately, this was a very vocal minority who did not engage in the process with the other clubs, but instead found it easier to raise their issues with the CEO and NSWRL Board in order to achieve their self-serving aims. These clubs were an active barrier to change in a number of areas, despite what the evidence says, and have worked behind the scenes to ensure that the rules fit their needs rather than the evidence. This has been difficult to overcome personally and has left me feeling quite isolated at times, a factor I have grown to recognise as crucial when leading on change.

The situation was similar in the Junior League districts. While all districts were crying out for any help they could get and were desperate for the NSWRL to take the lead in a number of areas, this had not always been for the most altruistic of reasons. Most districts wanted the NSWRL to be the bearer of bad news for their participants rather than the District itself. Others wanted the assistance and help of the NSWRL for time consuming and controversial areas such as Judiciary and Code of Conduct but were not willing to give up control or work with us on other initiatives such as the Respect Campaign. Management of this approach was difficult since the Junior League districts receive $0 investment from the game and $26m from their own District clubs in order to run the game. They were happy for NSWRL to take the blame/responsibility for certain decisions and policies but wanted to maintain control of what policies were implemented and how their districts are run. It had been a slow process to get them all on board but overall this has been achieved, mainly through word of mouth from other Districts who had bought fully in with us. There are one or two hold outs remaining in some areas, usually larger districts such as Penrith who have not opted in to all of our systems (Judiciary) but adopted all of our policies and procedures.

Moreover, the NRL posed different political problems than the other stakeholders, given their assertion that they are in control of the game nationally, but a lack of clear instruction or notification on what areas of the game that actually means. When the NRL was created it was easier to leave some grey areas in the responsibilities of the states and the NRL with regards to pathways and participation than it was to have some difficult conversations and reach an agreement. This has led to more problems some 7 years later and even more difficult conversations now with regards to the positioning and responsibilities of game development. Having

responsibility for recruitment of participants under NRL control and retention of participants under NSWRL control was always a troublesome system, with the NRL happy to encroach more and more in terms of our responsibilities. In the past, no one in NSWRL had cared and the NRL were upset that we now pushed back and wanted to reverse the process, taking back control of areas of the game in order to implement the initiatives described in earlier chapters.

One of the most difficult conversations to have was with the NRL in order to take back control of Game Development into the NSWRL remit. While all parties saw sense in the move, the NRL were not keen to give up control of the largest area of the game. The politics of the whole situation was a massive learning curve for me, with both the NRL and CRL being obstructive throughout the entire process. The NRL did not want to lose control of their staff and the CRL did not want to lose their identity in any merger with the NSWRL. Having successfully negotiated this restructure was one of the most important achievements during my time at NSWRL and provides a single body in charge of the pathway within NSW for the first time in over 10 years. This structure will be key to the next steps for NSWRL in order to grow participation, engage with the different culture and communities of Sydney and deliver our own strategy.

Coach Development initiatives are missing from our proposal at this moment in time. As discussed earlier in this chapter, we have no control of this area of the game and are having to develop work around alternative forms of directly engaging with our coaches. Initiatives such as developing CPD courses alongside the NRL qualification process and integrating requirements to complete them into our operational rules, are all planned for the next 12 months in order to fill gaps and provide learning opportunities. Provided these courses fit into the NRL framework of

coach development (really a coach qualification process since there is no development outside of their regular re-accreditation process) they are happy for us to do this. In an ideal world, this would have formed a much larger piece of work in this body of work.

When I first arrived at NSWRL, the most common answer that I received when asking why we did things was "Because that's the way we've always done it". There was little questioning from staff around whether it was still appropriate for us to deliver their current activities or if it was actually the best way for them to do so. In order to change this approach, I tried to introduce an evidence-based, project management approach to our delivery – show me the benefits and justify the time and effort expended in order to meet our agreed objectives. We streamlined delivery, stopped doing things we were not equipped to do and focused on areas where we could make the biggest impact. The current funding model from the ARLC only provided adequate funding for current programmes and did not allow us to waste what we had so we needed to be able to show the benefit of any new initiative or proposal prior to funding being allocated. Our Community Club Coordinator role was a case in point. Having targeted the quality of delivery in our Junior League clubs and received approval for the Blue Shield programme, we required extra staff in order to deliver and assess the programme. The funding proposal was based on an increase in our coach accreditation rate and player retention rate by improving the environments at each Junior League club. In 18 months, the coach accreditation rate improved from 74%–91% and the player retention rate from 69%–71%. The evidence showed us we had a gap in our delivery, we developed a solution and reaped the rewards.

8.3 Football Specific Recommendations

The next steps for NSWRL following completion of these programmes and initiatives include the expansion of the monitoring tools (Gold Shield and Blue Shield

awards) to include the Wellbeing and Player Development minimum standards into a single tool. This will bring all the pillars of success (Chapter 2) into a single process and reinforce the importance of a joined-up approach to success rather than separating operations and football from each other.

In doing so, there will need to be further development and re-focusing of the Player Development minimum standards. The current standards reflect where the clubs are at currently and dictate what they are allowed to deliver, how often and the qualifications required to deliver it. Over the next 4 years of our funding cycle, the focus should gradually shift to monitor and regulate how things are delivered and the environment they are delivered in. This should include a definition of a Talent Development Environment, how one is developed, what a good one looks like and provide the education and support processes to implement this across all clubs, big *and* small. This should also include work on the Coach Development process and expansion of that programme in order to ensure all participants in the pathway are being catered for and we are continuing with the joined-up approach already established.

Probably the biggest step for the organisation involves a merger with two other bodies. The proposed merger with the CRL appears to be going ahead and will be completed by December 2019. For the first time in over 70 years there will be a single governing body throughout NSW and a massive opportunity for NSWRL to influence the development of all participants throughout the state. This will provide some complications, with CRL programmes being 12–18months behind the NSWRL based clubs in terms of their delivery and standards. The merger will present issues to be overcome, such as protectionism of the CRL and resistance to the NSWRL, but

offers a massive opportunity to fix our competition structures and integrate the player development pathways.

The other merger scheduled for January 2020 is the one that brings NRL Game Development staff into the NSWRL. Some of the advantages were discussed earlier but essentially this will allow NSWRL to focus on female participation and physical education within schools through programmes such as the National Junior Participation Program, emphasising the importance of physical literacy at younger ages. We will also be able to move the Player Development Pathway programmes from an 'exclusive' approach to an 'inclusive' one by incorporating the U13 and U14 development programmes into the coach development and Junior League Club environment process (Blue Shield). A focus on coach education and proper practice will allow more participants to get better coaching rather than just the 20 selected for those programmes currently.

8.4 General Recommendations

There are a number of initiatives and findings within this thesis that can be applied across other sports than solely football. The first and most important take away from this thesis was the importance of gathering all the evidence before making any decisions. The information provided by the participation investigation discussed in Chapter 4 was eye opening in some ways and very reassuring in others. It highlighted new avenues of investigation and delivery that hadn't previously been thought of, particularly around the M8s concept and the importance of friendship in participation, and reassured in other areas, providing data to back up our gut beliefs regarding participation and the importance of a welcoming environment. It also appeared to dispel other myths that had been long held, particularly around the impact of the talent development pathway on participation. The data provided by this search for evidence

was the bedrock on which every other study was built and essential to the success of this thesis.

The second learning point would be the importance of identifying an alternative format of the game that addresses the issues highlighted but also meets the needs of the participant. This is in contrast to our previous approach which had been to shrink the adult game in terms of size of pitch and numbers of players, hoping that this would solve the unknown barriers to participation that existed. This also brought the realization that enjoyment does not always equal participation and the importance of identifying and assessing the correct measures of success. While the W8s format of the game was enjoyed by the participants and had high satisfaction scores, this did not translate into a viable alternative format in the subsequent seasons. I'd relate this to the "Pepsi Taste Test" adverts of the late 1980's and early 1990's, that claimed 8 out of 10 people preferred Pepsi to Coca Cola. In reality, people preferred Pepsi's sweeter taste when asked to compare a small amount to Coke, but they didn't want to drink a whole can. With further, more targeted questioning we might have identified that participants liked this quick hit of the W8's program but didn't want to commit to a longer program.

The last observation for sports as a whole is the importance of a single integrated pathway for the administration and delivery of the game. A systemic, integrated approach to delivery reduces participant confusion, allows for seamless delivery across environments, provides a coordinated approach to problem solving and a rapid response to those problems. This is more preferable and a lot more effective than an ad hoc approach with uncoordinated delivery across a number of governing bodies, administrators and deliverers.

8.5 Summary

In terms of my progression within NSWRL, what I have learnt from this process and what my next steps are, I feel a little conflicted. The process has been a massive learning curve for me and an enjoyable one throughout. I feel that the NSWRL has benefited from my input and the outcomes from this process throughout my time, both in its organisation, processes and systems as well as participation, development and performance results. We have finally achieved a growth in participation; the standards of our competitions and operational procedures improve year on year (mainly through initiatives such as the Gold Shield) with more funding secured for our Elite level clubs; we have more sensible and appropriate development programmes, both in clubs and the NSWRL Origin development programmes and the State of Origin shield has been won twice in the last 4 years after a drought of 9 years previously.

On completion of this thesis, I will take with me the evidence-based approach to learning and development that has proved beneficial throughout this study. Also, the integrated approach required to affect systemic, long-term and sustainable change rather than chasing a quick win by targeting individual areas; nothing occurs in isolation and small changes in one area can result in big changes in others. Also, the realisation that there is no single solution for any problem, rather, lots of different solutions that may be appropriate at any given time. On reflection, I would also attempt to implement the results of this work less through collaboration and consensus and more through direction. Obviously, this would be on the proviso that any Board were willing to implement the changes and weather any backlash presented from it. While the consensus approach has been rewarding, building that consensus has sometimes led to reforms that are watered down and less than ideal in order to achieve

the changes that were required. This has led to questioning whether any change, even if it is not complete, is better than no change at all.

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Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 1

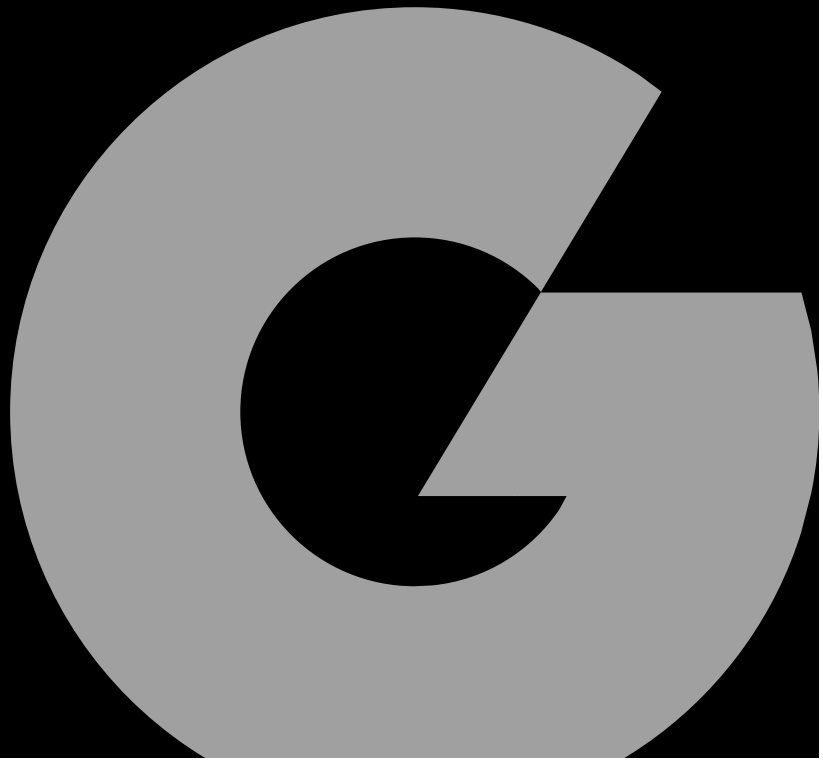
Gemba

JUNIOR LEAGUE PARTICIPANT RESEARCH

NEW SOUTH WALES RUGBY LEAGUE

FINAL REPORT

15 JANUARY 2016



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1 METHODOLOGY

2 KEY INSIGHTS

3 CURRENT RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION

4 PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

5 JUNIOR LEAGUE

6 REASONS FOR CHURN

7 PROGRAM REFINEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

8 JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE DISTRICTS

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1 METHODOLOGY

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THIS PARTICIPATION STUDY SURVEYED 1,176 RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPANTS, FOLLOWED BY FOCUS GROUPS WITH BOTH PARENTS AND PARTICIPANTS

	NSW RUGBY LEAGUE JUNIOR PARTICIPATION STUDY	
	QUANTITATIVE PARTICIPATION STUDY	**QUALITITAIVE PARTICIPATION STUDY**
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	Quantitative; online administrated survey	Qualitative focus groups x 2
TARGET MARKET	Current participants of Junior Rugby League competition	*Unlikely to return next season:* 1. Parents of Junior League participants aged 4-12 2. Junior League participants aged 13 and above
SAMPLE SOURCE	NSW Junior Rugby League database	NSW Junior Rugby League database: Quantitative survey participants
TARGET SAMPLE	Exhausted NSW Junior Rugby League database. Completion rate of ~2.5% with 1,176 completed surveys (out of 45,002 participants)	Focus group 1: 6 participants Focus group 2: 6 participants
FIELD WORK	20th October 2015 – 20th November 2015	Focus group 1: 7th December 2015 Focus group 2: 9th December 2015

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RESPONDENT PROFILE (QUANTITATIVE STUDY)

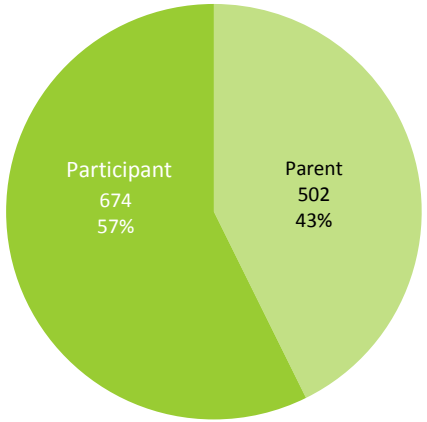
JUNIOR LEAGUE SAMPLE SIZE

CLUB	SAMPLE
Balmain	69
Canterbury/Bankstown	106
Cronulla/ Sutherland	123
Eastern Suburbs/ South Sydney	129
Manly Warringah/ North Sydney	94
Parramatta/ Convent	223
Penrith	246
St George	47
Western Suburbs	50
None of these	22

PARTICIPANT LOCATION

LOCATION	SAMPLE
Central & Inner Metropolitan (2000-2050)	158
North Shore (2060-2090)	35
Northern Beaches (2092-2107)	58
Gladesville-Ryde-Eastwood (2110-2126)	29
Western Suburbs (2127-2148)	159
Parramatta-Hills District (2150-2159)	149
South Western Suburbs (2160-2214)	165
St George & Sutherland Shire (2216-2234)	180
Macarthur Region (2560-2570)	38
Outer Western Suburbs (2745-2770)	200
Other (please specify)	5

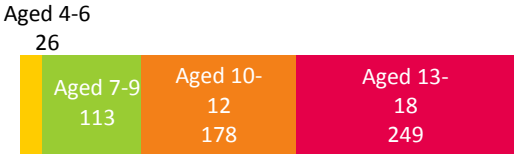
RESPONDENT TYPE



GENDER & AGE*
(PARTICIPANT ANSWERING SURVEY)

MALE: 98% (557)
FEMALE: 2% (9)

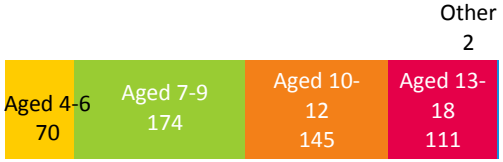
AGE GROUPS



GENDER & AGE*
(CHILD - PARENT ANSWERING SURVEY)

MALE: 98% (491)
FEMALE: 2% (11)

AGE GROUPS



ETHNICITY

ETHNICITY	SAMPLE
Australia	968 (82%)
International	464 (39%)
Asian	32 (3%)
European	176 (15%)
African	7 (1%)
South American	11 (1%)
North American	5 (0%)
Middle East	68 (6%)
New Zealand	85 (7%)
Pacific Island	93 (8%)

*Participant younger than age 4 or older than age 18 are excluded

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2 KEY INSIGHTS

KEY INSIGHTS (1)

TOPIC	HIGHLIGHTS
Pathway	Younger participants are in a 'sampling' phase, participating in a number of competitive sports. Older participants of Junior League become more 'specialised', and are involved in alternative Rugby League formats as well as participating in competitions at school
	Key threats for Rugby League, especially for those younger age groups, are Football (Soccer), Cricket, Basketball and AFL Football
Acquisition	Family and friends are highly influential for new participants entering the sport, particularly in the younger age groups and should be a focus point for future recruitment activity. The product elements i.e. competition format, are less important from an acquisition perspective.
	Recruitment efforts should be focused at younger age groups, as new participants in the older age groups are more likely to drop-out of the sport.
	Parents are primary decision makers for younger new participants. From the parents' perspective, fun/enjoyment and being part of a team socially are the most important drivers of Rugby League participation.
	Team sport is appealing to parents because it helps build confidence and develop social skills. Promoting the benefits of Rugby League as a team sport is critical to optimising recruitment and retention.

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KEY INSIGHTS (2)

TOPIC	HIGHLIGHTS
Junior League Satisfaction	Overall satisfaction levels in Junior League are high. Those unlikely or unsure about returning have significantly lower satisfactions levels.
	Key drivers of Junior League satisfaction include communication from the Junior League, equal opportunity at training and game day, safety on game day and quality of coaching.
	Junior League game day environment can be 'hostile' and 'intimidating'. This is contributed by poor attitude and behaviour of parents and coaches, and participants' hostility towards referees.
Reasons for churn	Key reasons for churn are similar to the reasons for dissatisfaction, being size difference, uneven competition, poor coaching attitude and behaviour and poor player conduct.
	Size difference, in particular, has been identified a primary driver for churn. Size difference makes competition unfair and uneven, leading to a loss of interest and motivation
	When compared to Rugby League, other competitive sports are less restrictive in the ball movement and perceived to be more suitability for all sizes
Product	Frequency of participation is a non-issue. Junior League participants cannot get enough of Rugby League Younger participants though want shorter sessions, preferably under 60 minutes per session.
	Grading of competition (weight and age) and improving the competitive balance of clubs are potential program refinements to address the issue of size difference and uneven competition

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3 CURRENT RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION

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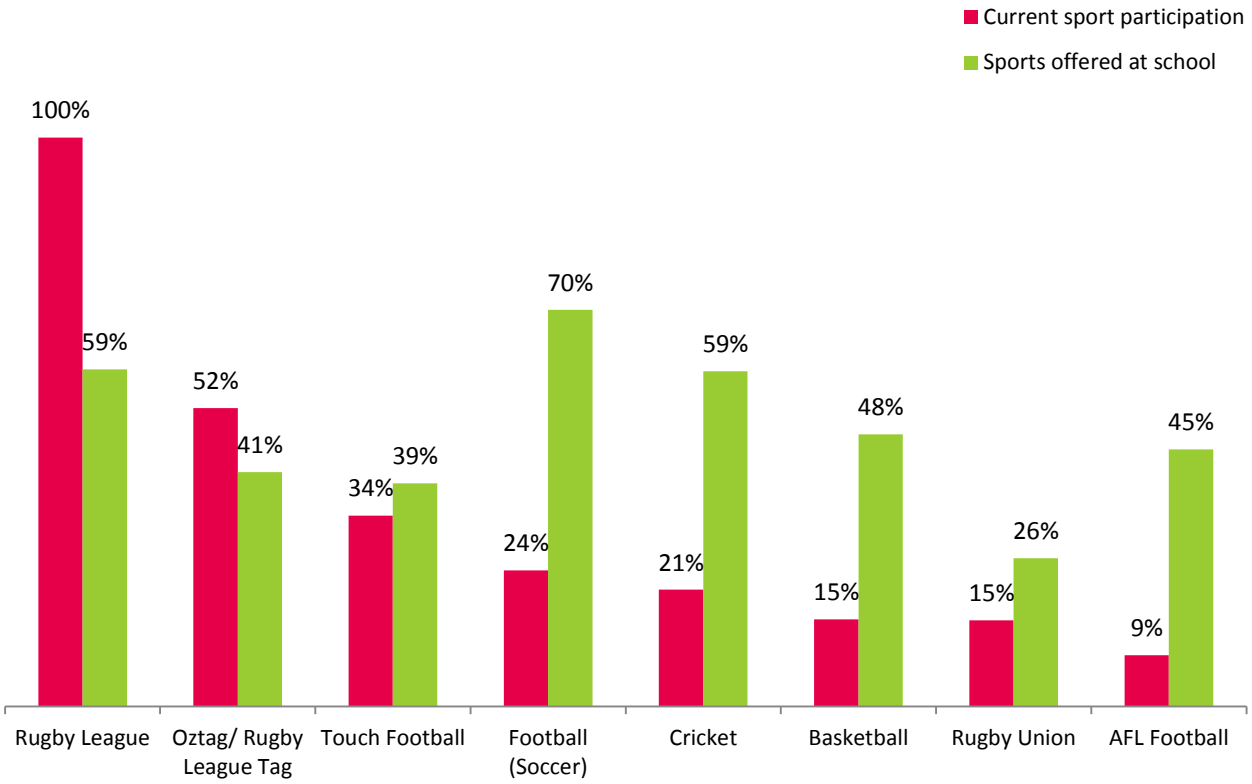
HIGH AVAILABILITY OF ALTERNATIVE PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES EXIST IN SCHOOLS WITH FOOTBALL (SOCCER) THE MOST POPULAR OF THE NON-RUGBY LEAGUE FORMATS

SPORT PARTICIPATION

CURRENT SPORT PARTICIPATION VERSUS SPORTS OFFERED AT SCHOOL



INSIGHTS

- Alternate 'Rugby League' formats, Oztag (52%) and Touch Football (41%) are the most participated sports (other than Rugby League)
- One in four Rugby League participants also currently participate in Football (Soccer)
- Football (70%), Cricket (59%), Basketball (48%) and AFL Football (45%) have a strong presence in schools and provide an opportunity for Rugby League participants to sample/participate in alternative sports
- Despite being offered at 45% of schools, take-up of AFL Football by current Rugby League participants is relatively low

Q: Besides Rugby League, what other sports has your child participated in the last 12 months?

Q: What sports are offered at your child's school?

BASE: N= 1068

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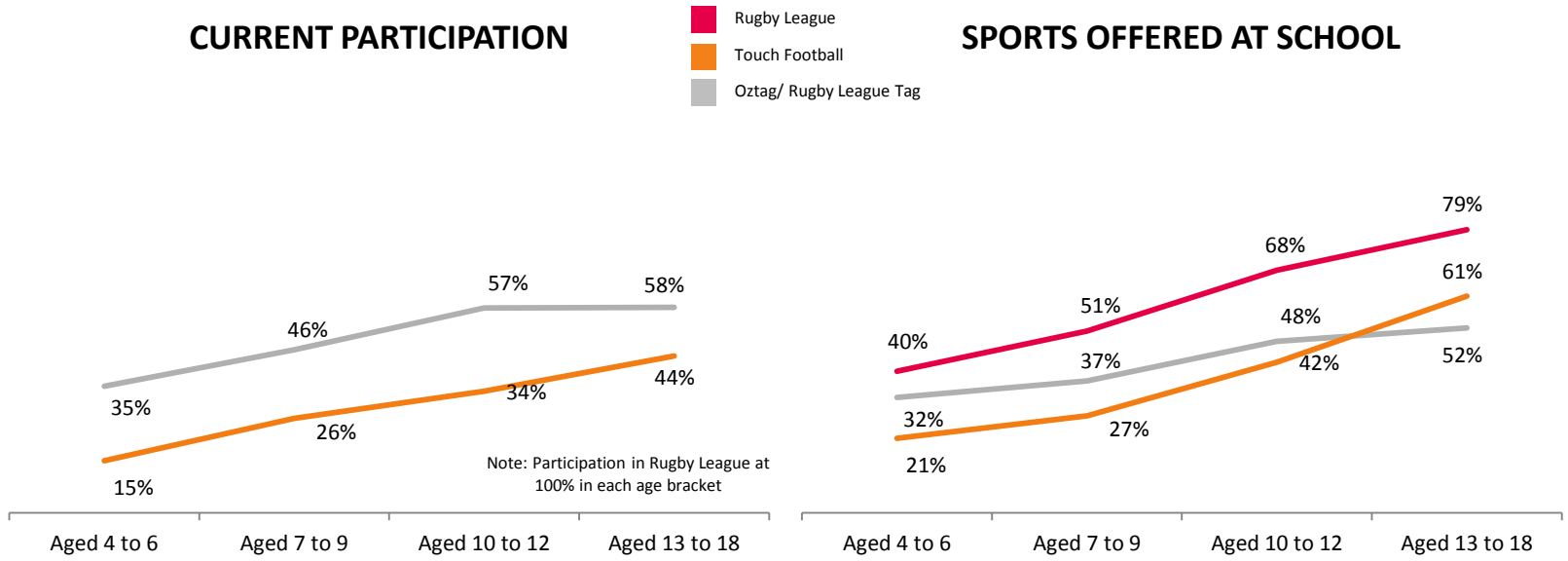
CURRENT PARTICIPANTS ARE HIGHLY ENGAGED. THERE IS HIGH PARTICIPATION IN A VARIETY OF RUGBY LEAGUE FORMATS PARTICULARLY IN THE OLDER AGE GROUPS

SPORT PARTICIPATION AND SPORT OFFERED AT SCHOOL | RUGBY LEAGUE FORMATS

INSIGHTS

- A significant proportion of current Rugby League participants are engaging with alternative formats of the sport throughout each stage of the pathway
- The availability of alternative 'Rugby League' offerings, Oztag and Touch Football, in schools increases with age
- Participation in alternative 'Rugby League' formats, Oztag and Touch Football also increases with age, whilst participation in key competitor sport programs (Football (soccer), AFL Football, Basketball and Cricket) decreases with age. This provides an indication that participants are specialising in Rugby League or alternative Rugby League formats in the older age groups



Q: Besides Rugby League, what other sports has your child participated in the last 12 months?

Q: What sports are offered at your child's school?

BASE: N= 96-360

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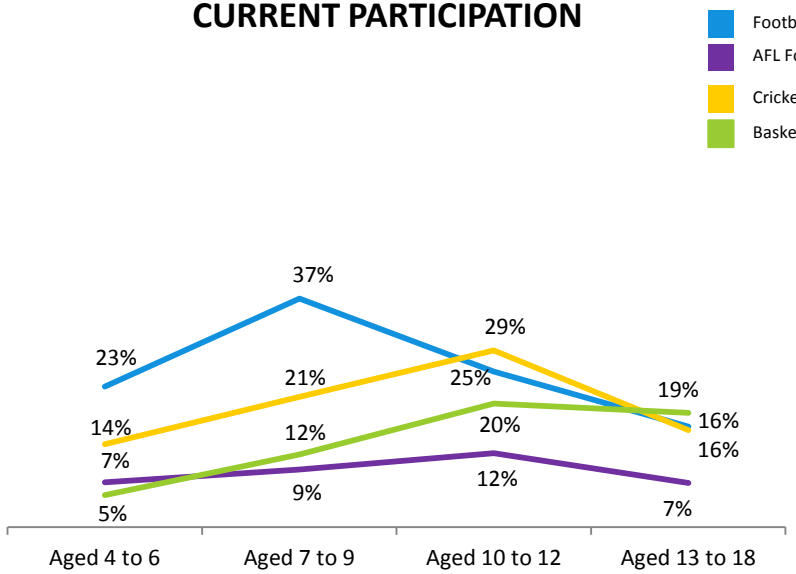
RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPANTS ARE INVOLVED IN A VARIETY OF SPORTS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT, SUBSEQUENTLY DECREASING IN TEENAGE YEARS

SPORT PARTICIPATION AND SPORT OFFERED AT SCHOOL | COMPETITIVE SPORTS

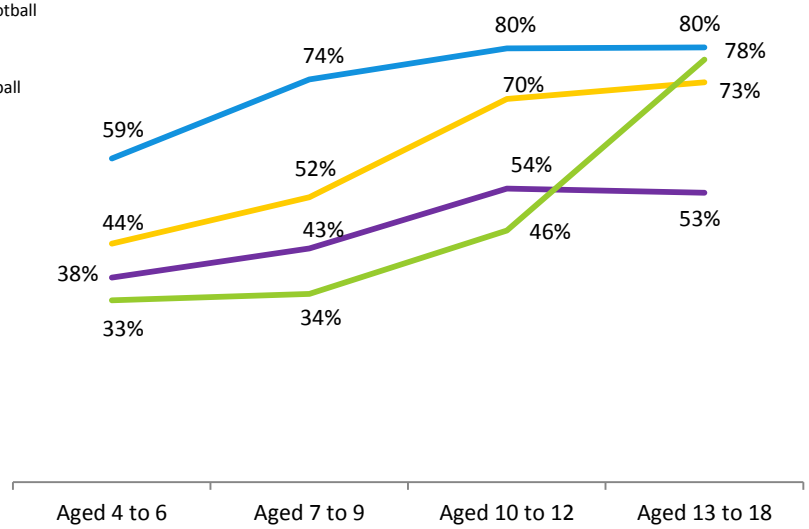
INSIGHTS

- The number of sport participation opportunities available in schools increases with age
- Participation (by Rugby League participants) in alternative sports, with the exception of Football (Soccer) (7-9 years), peaks during the 10-12 age group
- Participation in Football (Soccer) amongst Rugby League participants is the highest of 'non-Rugby League' sports in the 4-6 and 7-9 age group
- Participation in multiple sports decreases with age, indicating participants are less likely to sample or participate in a range of sports as they get older despite the availability of alternative sport participation opportunities increasing
- The risk of participant 'leakage' to key competitors is highest in the 7-9 and 10-12 age groups

CURRENT PARTICIPATION



SPORTS OFFERED AT SCHOOL



Q: Besides Rugby League, what other sports has your child participated in the last 12 months?

Q: What sports are offered at your child's school?

BASE: N= 96-360

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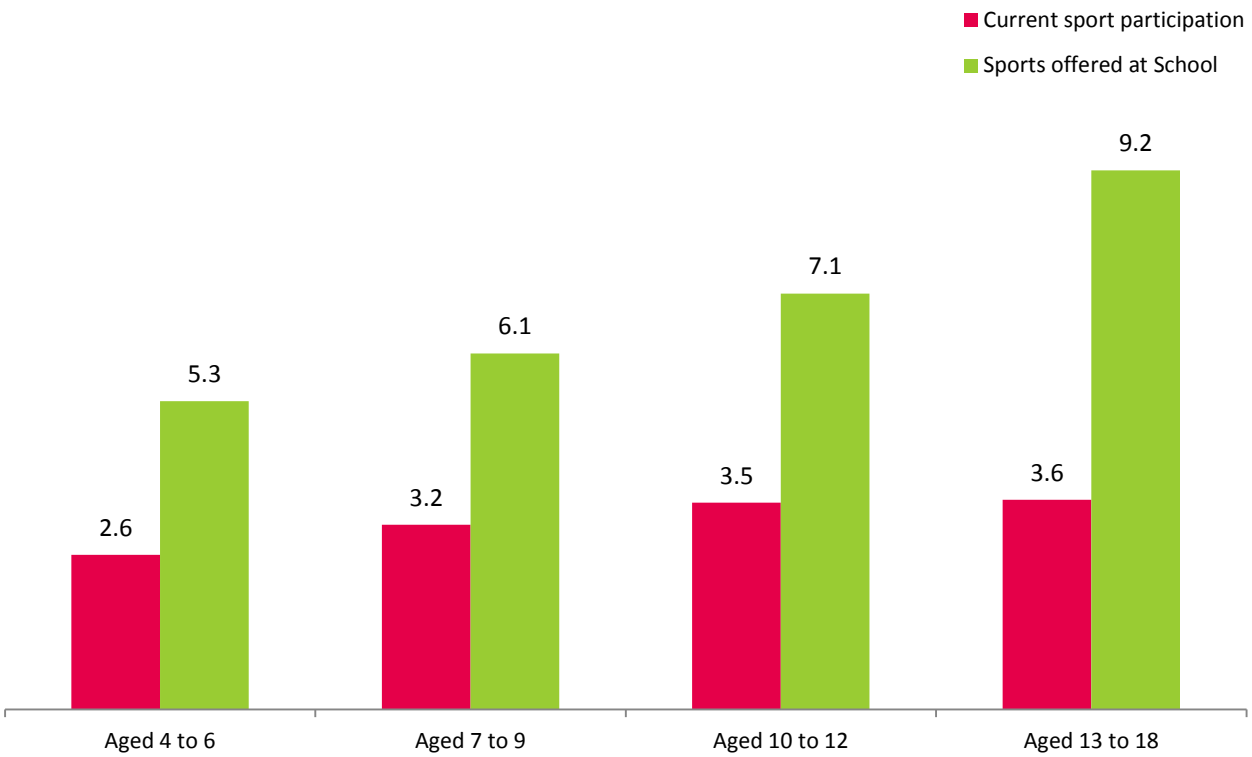
PARTICIPANTS ARE ENGAGING IN MULTIPLE SPORTS OTHER THAN RUGBY LEAGUE AT EACH STAGE OF THE PARTICIPATION PATHWAY

SPORT PARTICIPATION AND SPORT OFFERED AT SCHOOL | AVERAGE



INSIGHTS

- The number of sports participated in remains relatively stable throughout each of the junior age groups identified despite an increase in alternative sports on offer
- Despite the increased availability of alternative sport participation opportunities, teenage Rugby League participants are engaging in alternative Rugby League formats more than key competitor offerings i.e. Football (Soccer) and AFL Football

Q: Besides Rugby League, what other sports has your child participated in the last 12 months?

Q: What sports are offered at your child's school?

BASE: N= 96-360

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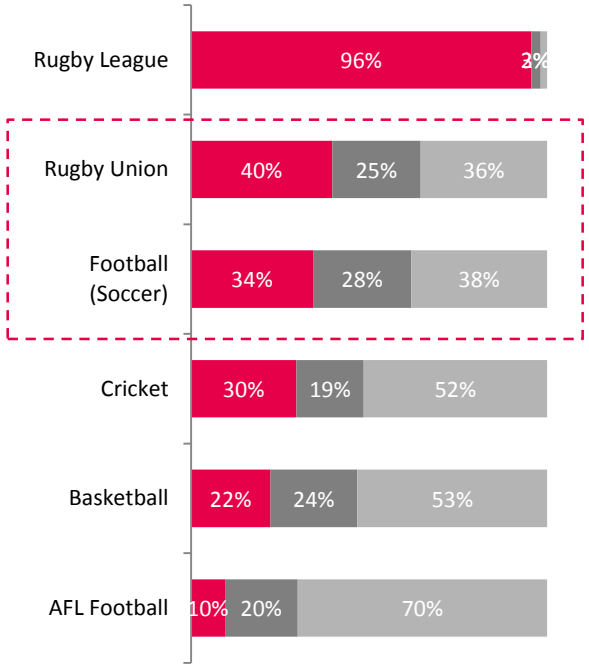
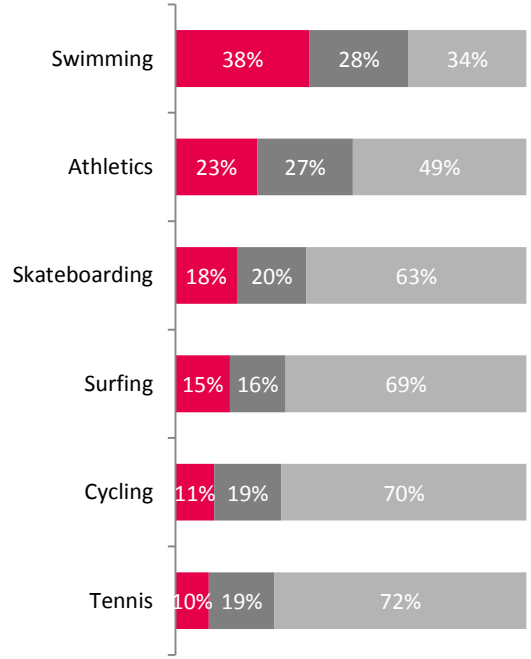
ASIDE FROM RUGBY LEAGUE, RUGBY UNION, SWIMMING AND FOOTBALL (SOCCER) HAVE THE HIGHEST PASSION LEVELS AMONGST RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPANTS

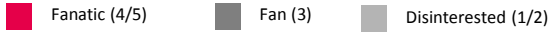
SPORT PASSION

TEAM SPORTS



INDIVIDUAL SPORTS





Q: Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, your passion for the following sports.

BASE: N= 1068

INSIGHTS

- Rugby League participants have a high passion for other football codes, Rugby Union (40%) and Football (34%)
- Passion for Rugby Union (40%) has not translated to participation in the sport by Rugby League participants (15%), whereas Football (Soccer) passion (34%) is more closely linked to participation (24%)
- Rugby League participants are less passionate for AFL Football, with only a small proportion of Rugby League participants fanatical

Passion for alternative sports provides an indicator of NSWRL's key competitors in the Sydney Metro market

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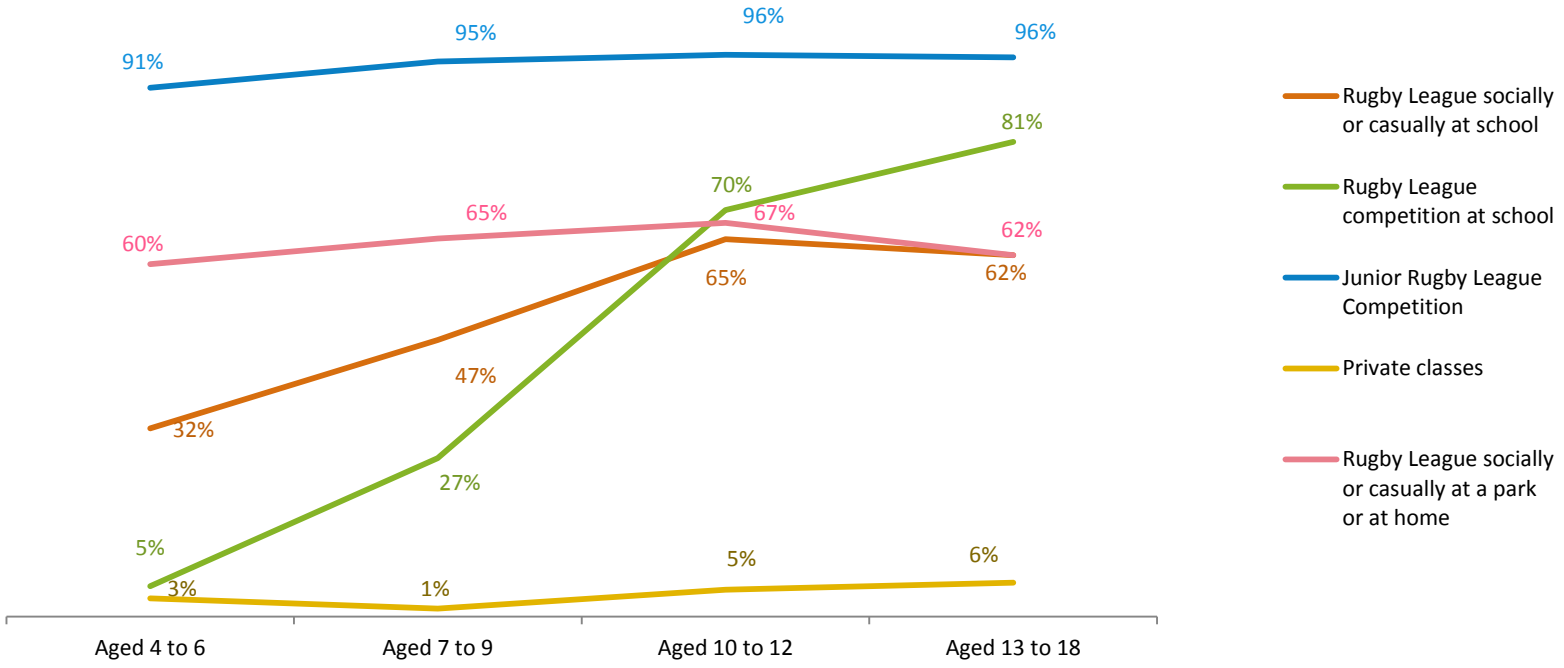
RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPANTS ARE HIGHLY ENGAGED IN THE SPORT ACROSS MULTIPLE PARTICIPATION CHANNELS

TYPE OF PROGRAM | BY AGE OF CHILD

INSIGHTS

- Engagement in Rugby League is high across multiple participation channels, particularly in the 10-12 and 13-18 year age groups
- A high proportion of Junior League participants are also participating in Rugby League competitions at school (81%) in the teenage years
- Social engagement with Rugby League is strong across all age groups with a slight decline in the teenage years



Notes: Backyard League has been removed from this chart given respondent's confusion on Backyard League the program and playing Rugby League in the 'backyard'
1,2,3 Rugby League has also been removed due to low awareness levels and understanding of the program

Q:Which of the following forms of Rugby League have you/your child ever participated in?

BASE: N= 96-360

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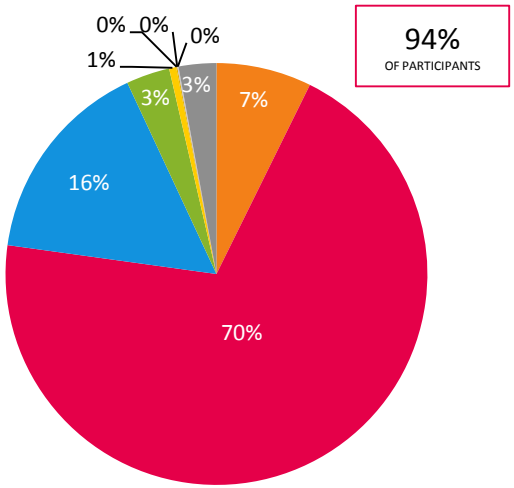
JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE HAS A HIGHER FREQUENCY OF TRAINING THAN THE SCHOOL ALTERNATIVE, WITH MAJORITY OF PARTICIPANTS PLAYING SEVERAL TIMES PER WEEK

FREQUENCY OF RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION | BY TYPE OF RUGBY LEAGUE

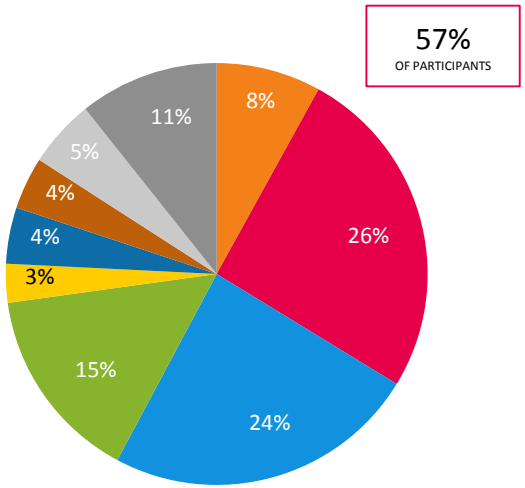
INSIGHTS

- The majority of Junior Rugby League participants (77%) are playing at least several times per week
- School Rugby League is less frequent with only one third of participants playing several times per week
- Participants also play Rugby League socially/casually quite regularly, with two thirds of participants playing several times per week
- Commitment/engagement of Rugby League participants is high across multiple participant streams

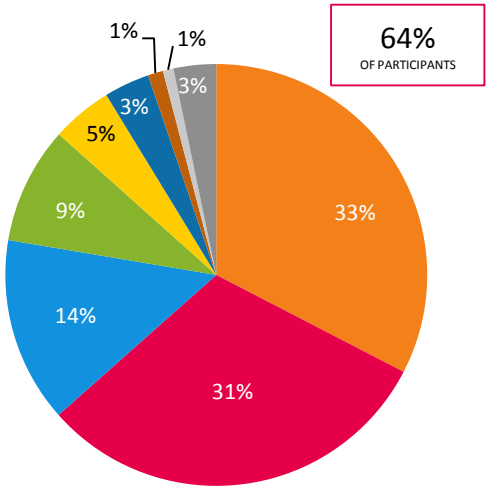
JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE



SCHOOL RUGBY LEAGUE



SOCIALLY/ CASUALLY



Q: During the Rugby League season, how frequently do you/your child participate in the following forms of Rugby League?

BASE: N= 43-1018

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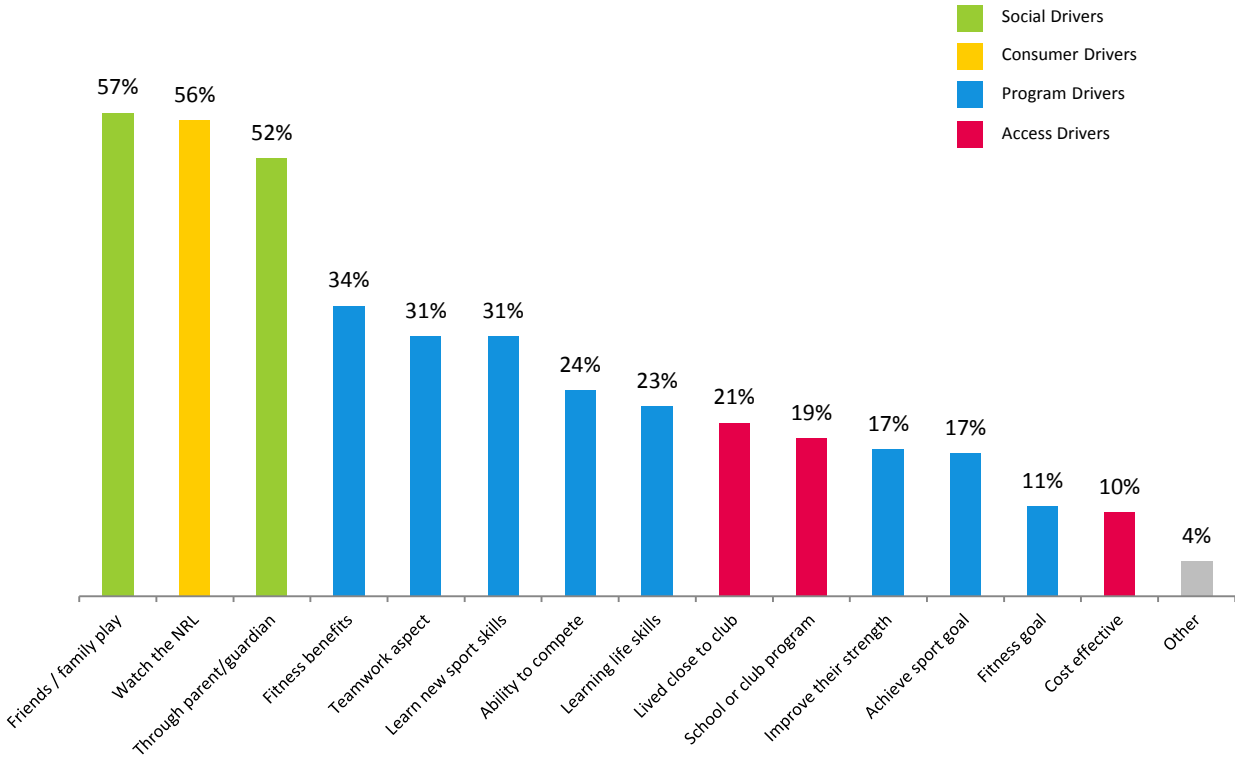
SOCIAL ASPECTS ARE THE LEADING INFLUENCES IN RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION FOR CHILDREN, RELYING HEAVILY ON FAMILY AND FRIENDS AS FIRST POINT OF ENTRY

FIRST POINT OF ENTRY FOR RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION

RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION – INFLUENTIAL INVOLVEMENT



Q: Which of the following were influential in getting you/your child involved in Rugby League?

BASE: N= 1068

INSIGHTS

- Rugby League participation is heavily influenced by family and friends, highlighting the importance of understanding and engaging key decision makers
- Watching the NRL plays a significant role in influencing children (57%) to participate in Rugby League for the first time
- Fitness, teamwork and skill development are also key influencers, underlying the importance of these aspects towards program format and brand positioning

Social influencers are more important than the actual participation product in engaging participants for the first time

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PLAYING RUGBY LEAGUE IS THE PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR KIDS TO START PLAYING RUGBY LEAGUE

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT: ENTRY POINT FOR RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION

‘Playing with friends’ is the primary reason for young participants to be involved in Rugby League

- Young participants are heavily influenced by what their friends are participating in
- It is important to acquire participants early, ideally before kids commit or sample other sports

Family passion for Rugby League is also a key point of entry

- Family passion for Rugby League and the NRL can have a strong influence on kids’ participation in the sport
- Families that are highly passionate about Rugby League are more likely to be involved in grassroots participation

The influence of role models within the NRL

- Young participants admire NRL’s players. Personal connection with the players can be a powerful tool to drive passion
- Target passionate fans of the NRL to grow junior participation
- According to parents, there are further opportunities to leverage the positive role models of the NRL to promote grassroots Rugby League

Source: NSWRL focus groups

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PERCEPTION OF RUGBY LEAGUE IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY IS IMPACTING RECRUITMENT EFFORTS AND PARTICIPATION GROWTH

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT: COMMUNITY PERCEPTION AND IMPACT ON RECRUITMENT

COMMUNITY PERCEPTION	•Parents not involved in Rugby League have a negative view of the sport i.e. dangerous, aggressive, violent •Parents were criticised in social circles for allowing their children to play Rugby League
SAFETY	•Parents and participants believed schools and the broader community perceive Rugby League as unsafe which negatively impacts recruitment and growth efforts, particularly in the school setting •This has provided an opportunity for competitor sports to provide school-based programs and strengthen school-club linkage
PROGRAM AWARENESS	•Those aware of the NRL's school-based programs praised the quality of the content and delivery, however incorrectly referred to the program name indicating potential branding and communication issues
RECRUITMENT	•School perception of and restrictions on Rugby League activity are impacting on the acquisition of new players •Limited utilisation of NRL players to promote the sport in general is inhibiting the recruitment of both new participants and consumers

Source: NSWRL focus groups

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4 PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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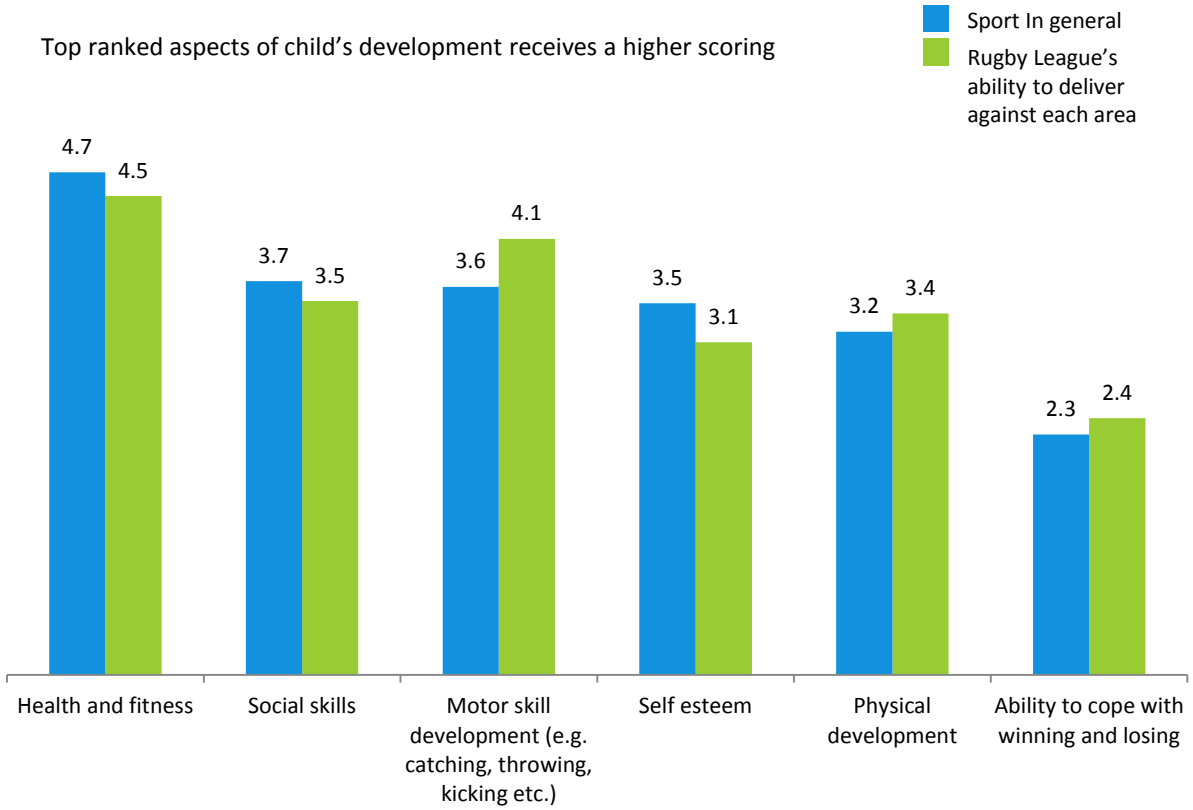
MOTOR SKILLS AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT ARE AREAS WHERE RUGBY LEAGUE EXCEEDS PARENT'S EXPECTATIONS WHEN COMPARED TO SPORT IN GENERAL

IMPORTANCE TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT



INSIGHTS

- From the parents' perspective, sport is most critical for health and fitness and the development of the social skills of child
- On balance, Rugby League's ability in developing each key area is broadly in line with the expectations of parents
- Motor skill development and physical development are areas where Rugby League exceeds expectations

Q: Thinking of the impact that sports or forms of exercise have on your child's development. In your opinion, please rank the importance of sports or forms of exercise in developing each of the following.

Q: Thinking about rugby league in general. In your opinion, please rank the ability of rugby league in developing each of the following.

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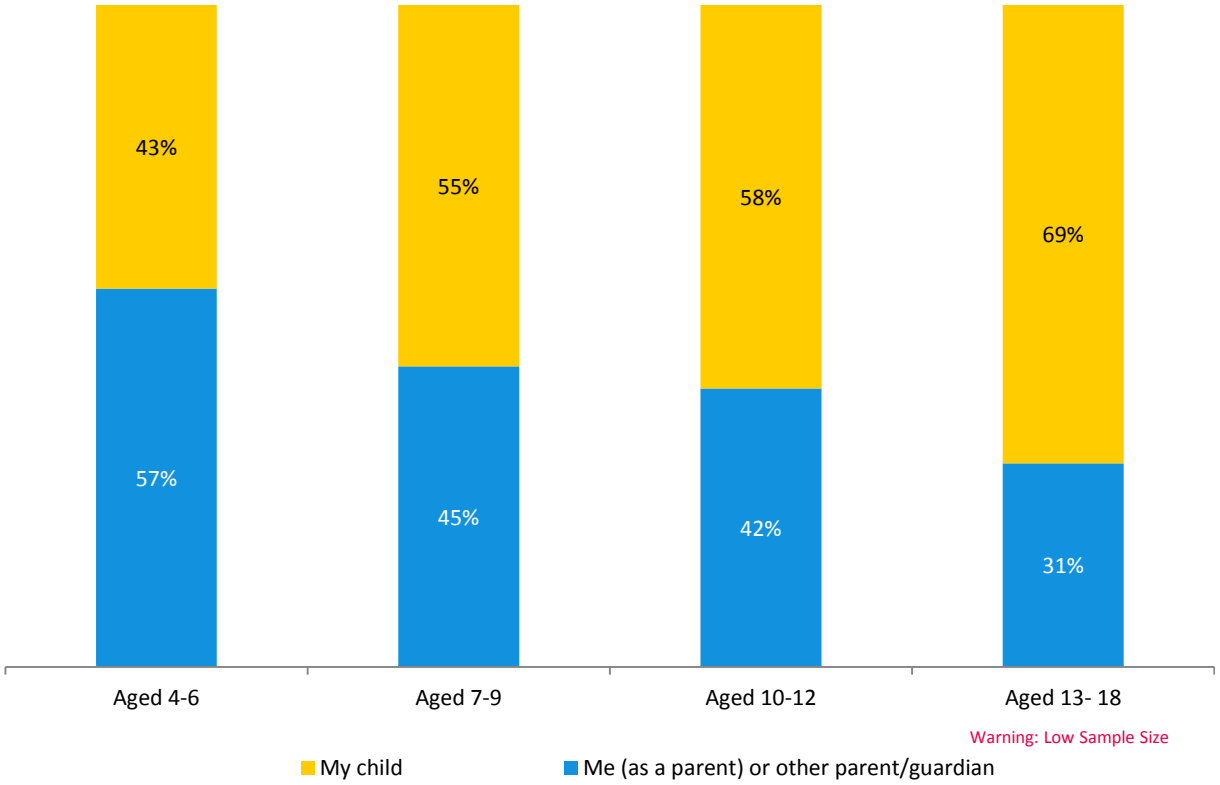
BASE: N= 404

THE PARENTS' ROLE IN THEIR CHILD'S SPORT PARTICIPATION DECLINES STEADILY AS THEIR CHILDREN GET OLDER

PRIMARY DECISION MAKER | BY AGE OF CHILD



INSIGHTS

- Parents play the main role in the decision making for sport participation for their child up until the age of six
- Children aged 7+ still rely on their parents' decision on sport participation, however the child is more likely to be the primary decision maker

To optimise satisfaction and retention, NSWRL requires an understanding of the needs and expectations of both parents and children

Q: Who is the primary decision maker when it comes to your child participating in sport?

BASE: N= 13-145

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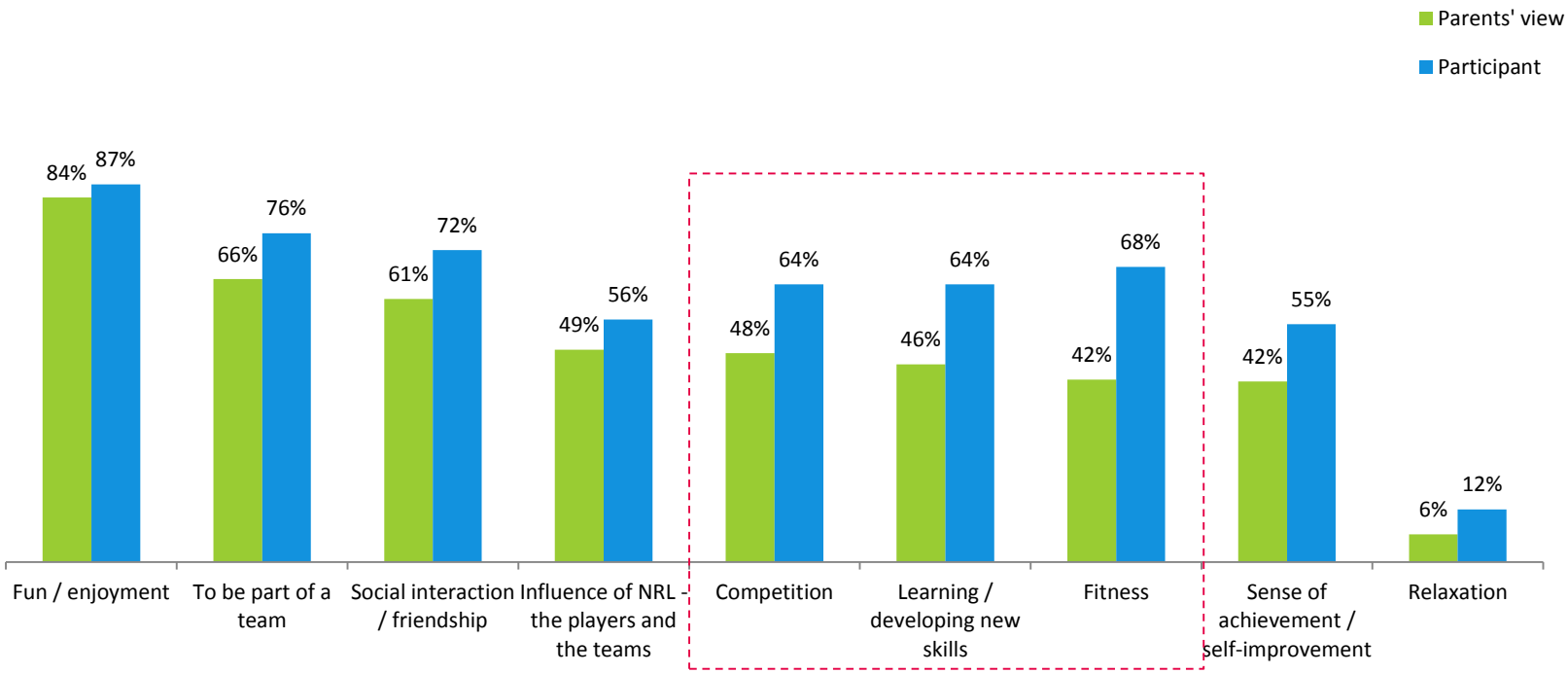
PARENTS AND PARTICIPANTS HAVE A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT VIEW ON PARTICIPATION MOTIVATION IN REGARDS TO COMPETITION, SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND FITNESS

MOTIVATION OF RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION | PARENTS VERSUS PARTICIPANT

INSIGHTS

- Fun / enjoyment and to be part of a team are key motivations to participate in Rugby League for both the parents and the participants
- Competition, skill development and fitness resonate more strongly amongst participants, compared to parents



Q: Which of the following are the main reasons as to why your child/you participate in Rugby League?

BASE: N= 404 - 772

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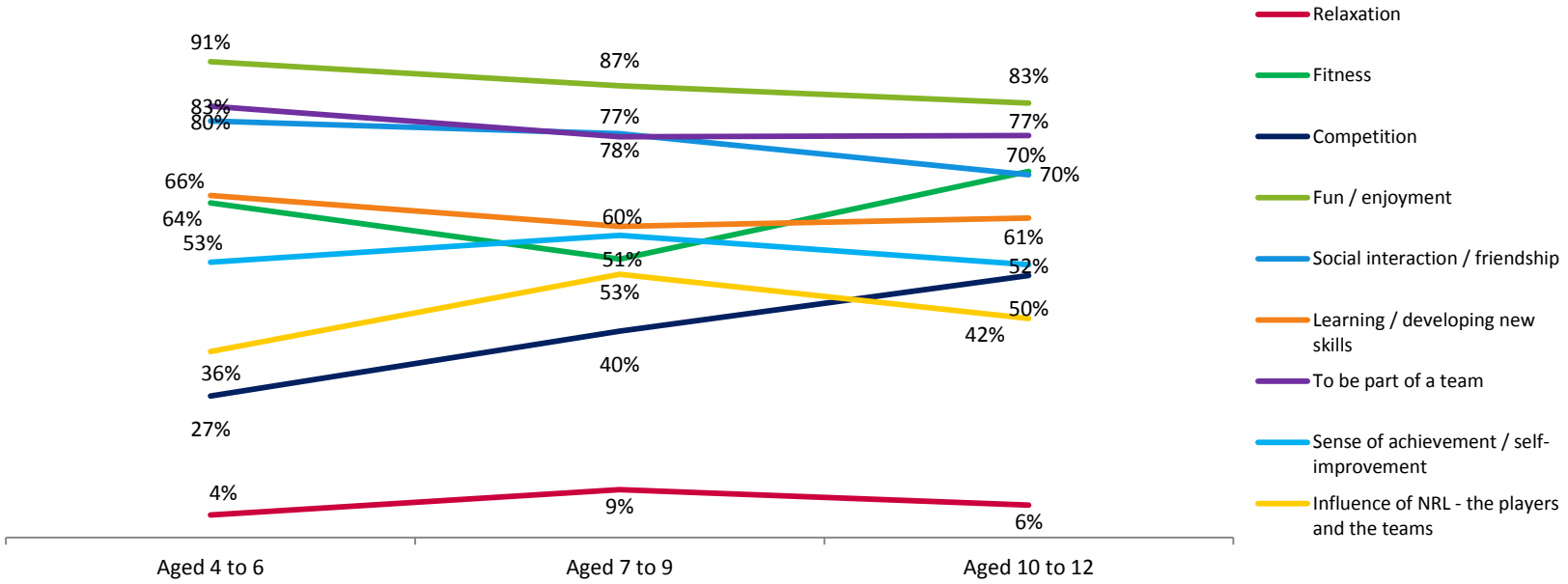
KEY MOTIVATORS ARE SIMILAR AMONGST ALL AGE GROUPS, HOWEVER THE IMPORTANCE CHANGES WITH AGE AND THEREFORE NEEDS SEPARATE APPROACHES

PARTICIPATION MOTIVATION | BY AGE OF CHILD

INSIGHTS

- Fun/ enjoyment, social interaction / friendship and to be a part of a team are the three main motivators for participation in Rugby League across all age groups
- However the importance of fun / enjoyment and social interaction / friendship declines with age and the need for competition and fitness increases
- Aspiration of the NRL as a motivator is quite prominent amongst the younger age groups, specifically for 7 to 9 years of age



Q: Which of the following are the main reasons as to why you [your child] participates in rugby league? If you are a parent answering this question, please answer this from **your child's perspective**. Please select all that apply

BASE: N= 1068

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TEAM SPORT IS APPEALING TO PARENTS BECAUSE IT HELPS BUILD CONFIDENCE AND DEVELOP SOCIAL SKILLS

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT: THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAM-BASED SPORT

SOCIAL SKILLS

Parents strongly advocated the importance of team sport in terms of social skill development

TEAM WORK

Learning to cooperate with other others and contribute to a team are important to parents and an appealing aspect of Rugby League when compared to individual-based sports i.e. athletics, swimming, etc.

SATISFACTION

A healthy team environment is a key driver of participant satisfaction and retention from a parents' perspective

CONFIDENCE

Being part of a team plays an important role in building a child's confidence and self esteem

KEY INSIGHT

- For families where the parent is the primary decision maker, the developmental benefits of team sport participation are highly appealing and influential in selecting the sport of choice for their child
- Promoting the benefits of team sport and facilitating a positive team environment is critical to optimising recruitment and retention of Rugby League participants particularly in the early stage of the participation pathway where the majority of parents are the primary decision maker

Source: NSWRL Focus groups

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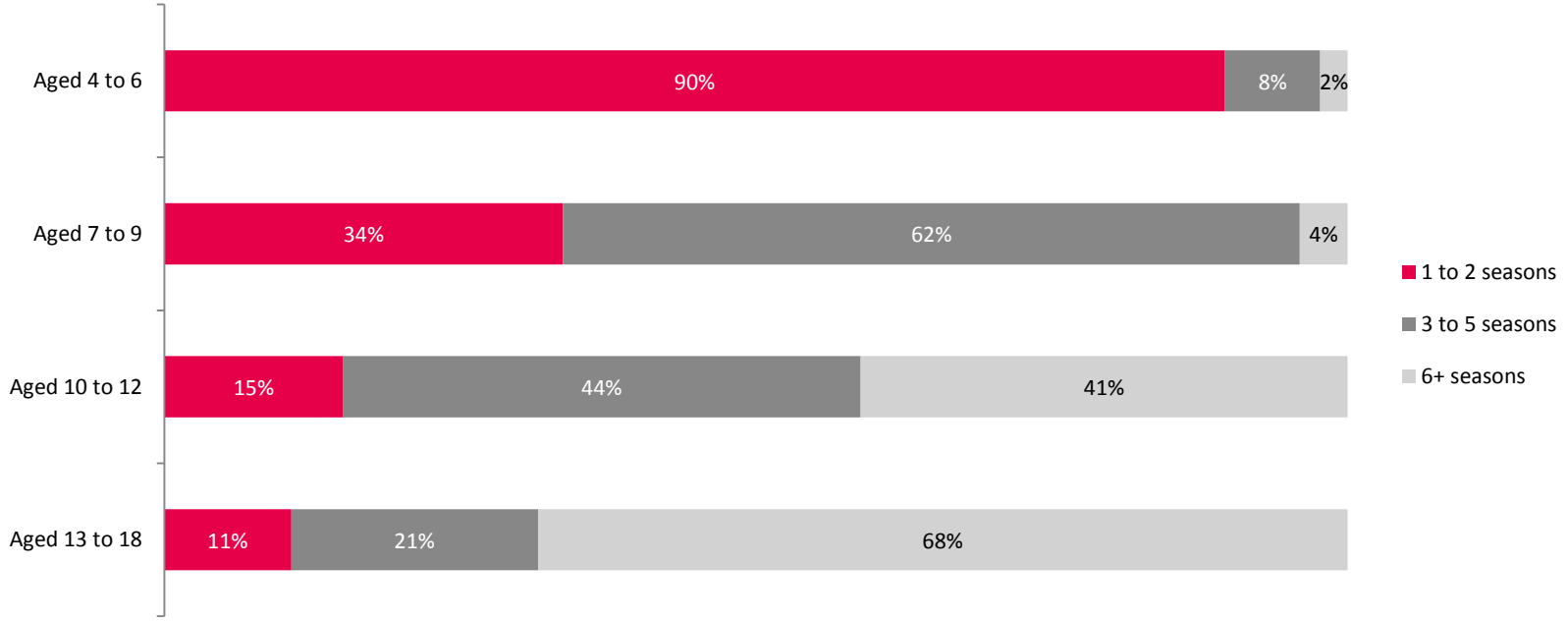
5 JUNIOR LEAGUE

RECRUITMENT EFFORTS SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON THE YOUNGER AGE GROUPS WHERE THERE IS A HIGHER CHANCE FOR CONVERSION

SEASONS PARTICIPATED | AGE OF CHILD

INSIGHTS

- Rugby League participants start early
- The majority of participants in the 7-9 (66%) and 10-12 (85%) age group s have played Junior Rugby League Competition for 3 or more seasons
- New participants only represent between 15% and 11% of the older age groups (aged 10-12 and 13-18 respectively) where current participation recruitment efforts are focused via the NRL school program delivery



Q: How many seasons have you [your child] been playing Junior Rugby League Competition?

BASE: N= 87-345

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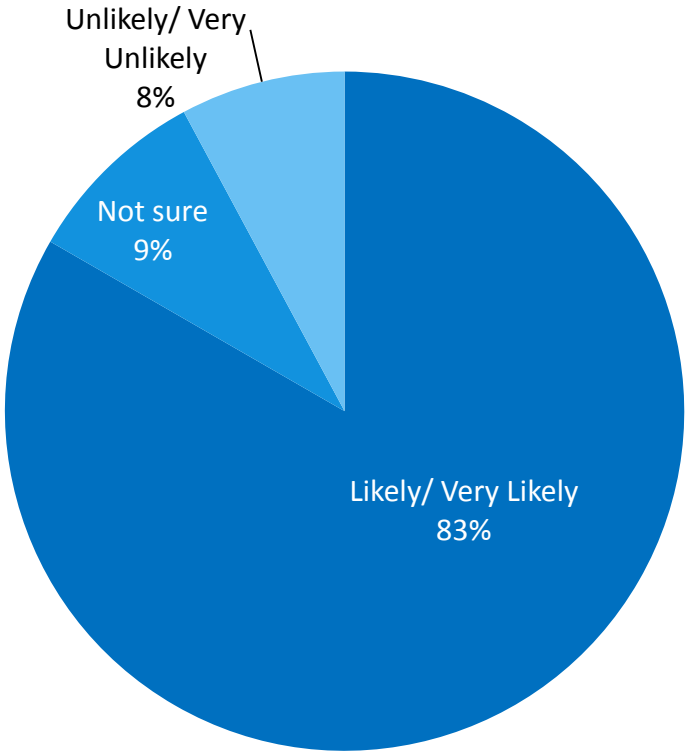
ABOUT PLAYING JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE NEXT SEASON, APPROXIMATELY 17% ARE EITHER UNSURE OR UNLIKELY TO RETURN

LIKELIHOOD TO RETURN TO JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE



INSIGHTS

- Majority of participants are likely to return to Junior Rugby League next season
- Across the board, risk of churn affects close to one in every five current participants

Q: How likely are you [is your child] to return to play in Junior Rugby League Competition next season?

BASE: N= 1018

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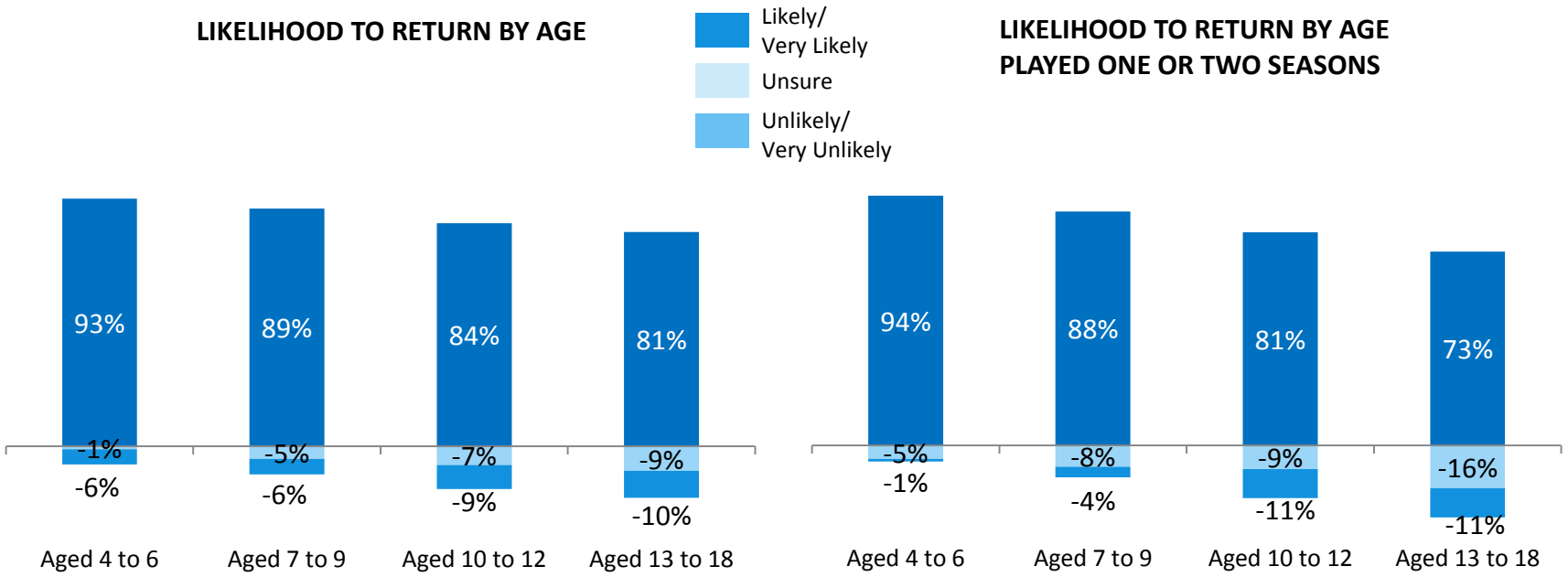
THE LIKELIHOOD OF PARTICIPANTS RETURNING DIMINISHES WITH AGE AND NEW PARTICIPANTS ARE MORE AT RISK OF CHURN

LIKELIHOOD TO RETURN TO JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

INSIGHTS

- 27% of new participants in the 13-18 age group are either unsure or unlikely to return – highest amongst all age segments
- New participants (one or two seasons) in the older age cohorts (10-12 and 13-18) are less likely continue playing Rugby League than those who have been playing the sport for longer periods
- On the other hand, new participants in the younger age cohorts are highly likely to return, highlighting the importance of recruitment and building a solid participation base in the early stages of the participation pathway



Q: How likely are you [is your child] to return to play in Junior Rugby League Competition next season?

BASE: N= 87-345

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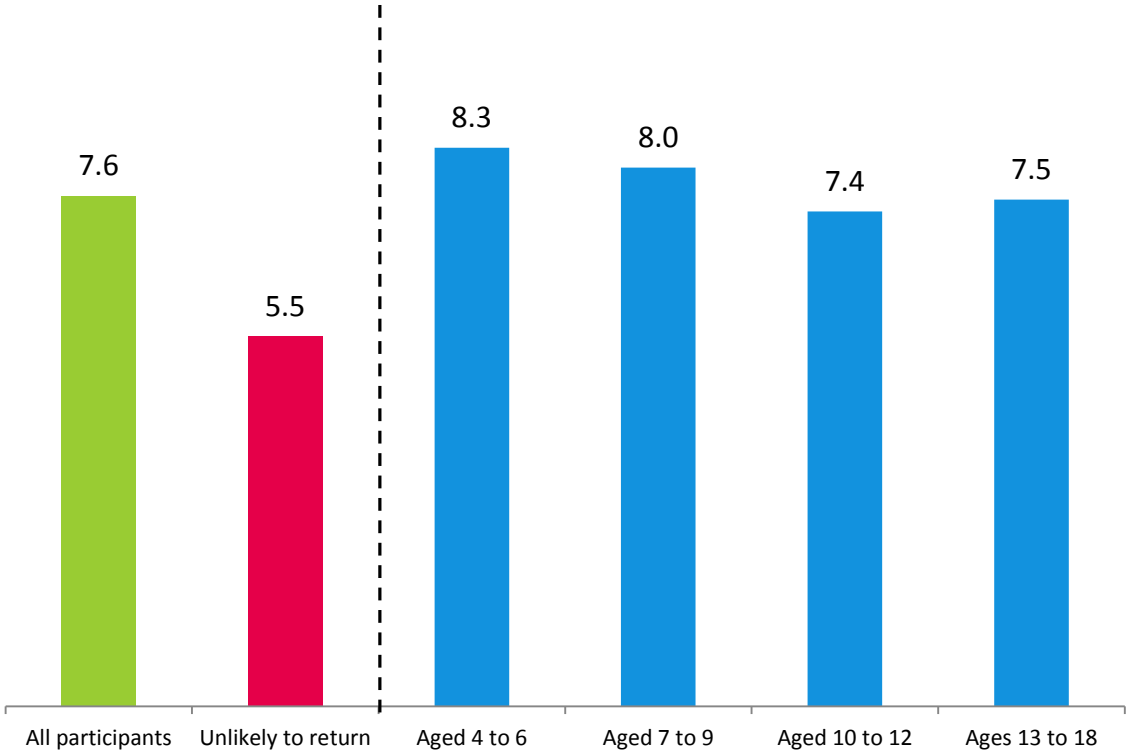
OVERALL, SATISFACTION LEVELS IN THE JUNIOR LEAGUES ARE HEALTHY. YOUNGER PARTICIPANTS HAVE THE HIGHEST SATISFACTION LEVELS

OVERALL SATISFACTION OF JUNIOR LEAGUE | AVERAGE SCORE



INSIGHTS

- Overall satisfaction of Junior League is high – with an average score of 7.6 amongst all participants
- Those that are unlikely to return have significantly lower satisfaction levels, expectedly
- Satisfaction levels decline with participants' age

Q: Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', please rate how satisfied you are with the overall experience participating in Junior Rugby League Competition? aspects of skill & personal development? aspects of the game day experience ? aspects of the competition and club administration? BASE: N= = 69-1018

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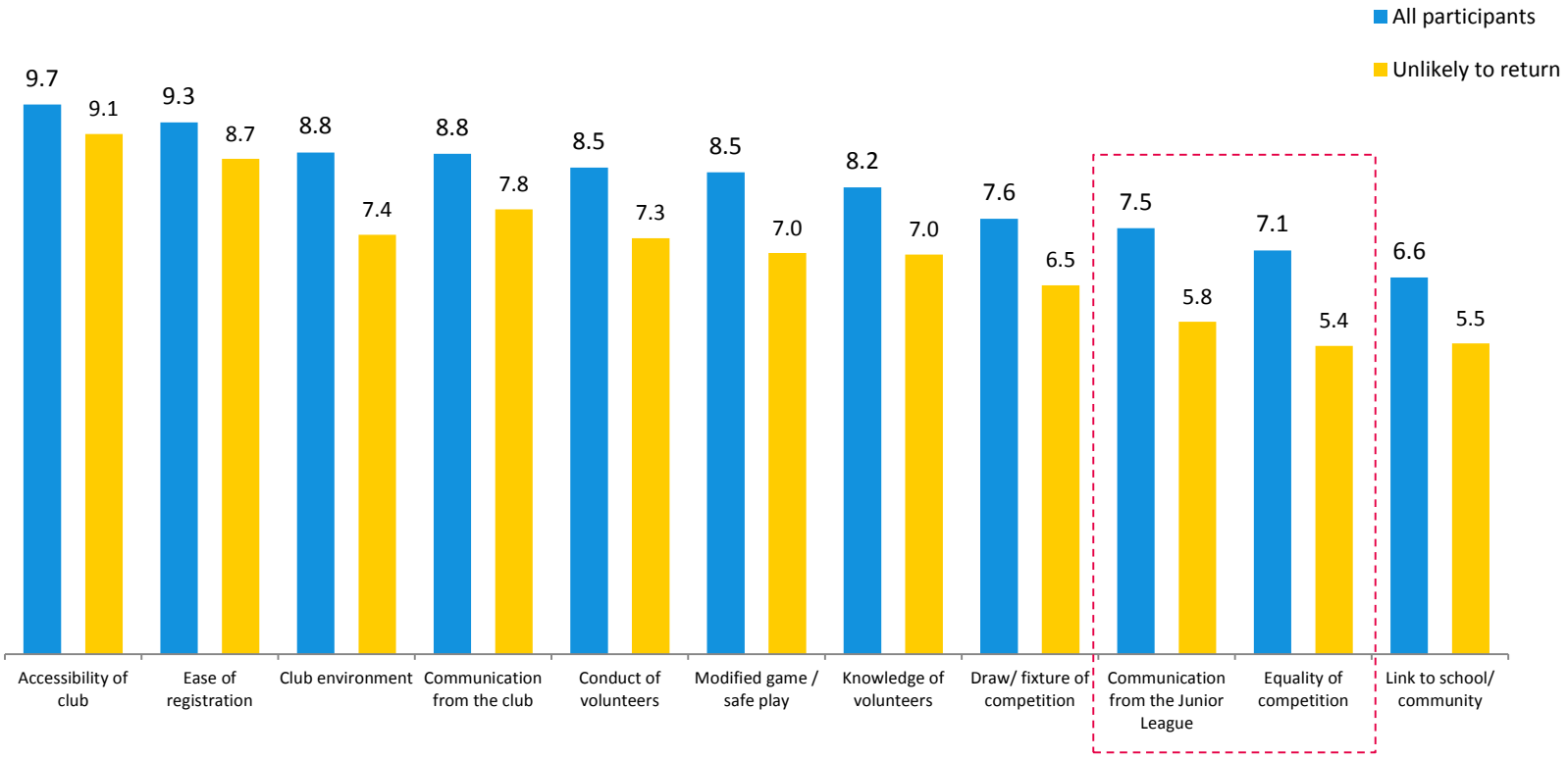
EQUITY OF COMPETITION AND COMMUNICATION FROM THE JUNIOR LEAGUE HAVE LOW SATISFACTION SCORES AMONG THOSE THAT ARE UNLIKELY TO RETURN

SATISFACTION | COMPETITION AND CLUB ADMINISTRATION



Q: Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', please rate how satisfied you are with the aspects ofcompetition and game administration?

BASE: N= 69-1018

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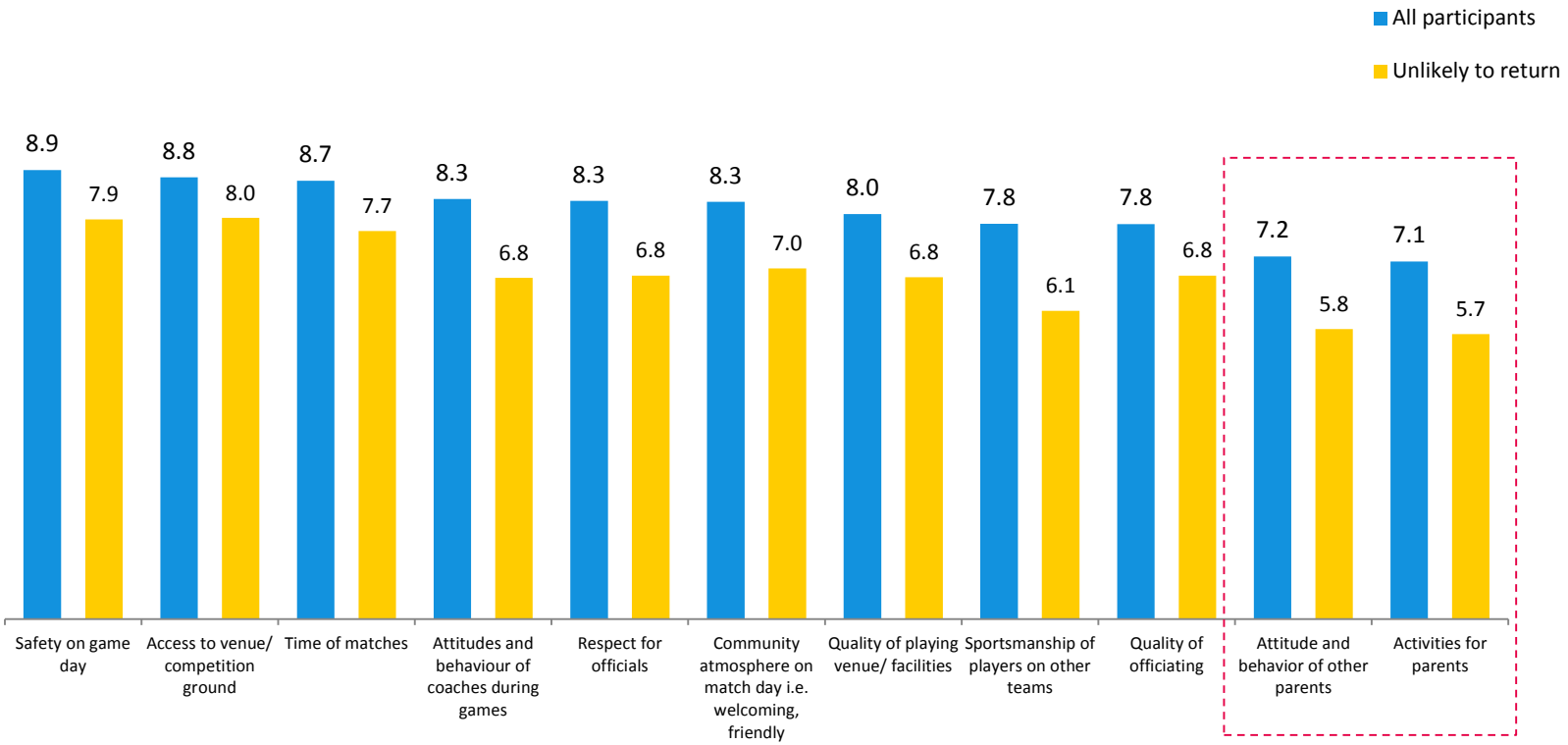
ON GAME DAY, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR OF PARENTS AND A LACK ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE FOR THE PARENTS APPEARS TO BE KEY PROBLEM AREAS

SATISFACTION | GAME DAY EXPERIENCE



Q: Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', please rate how satisfied you are with the aspects of the game day experience ?

BASE: N= 69-1018

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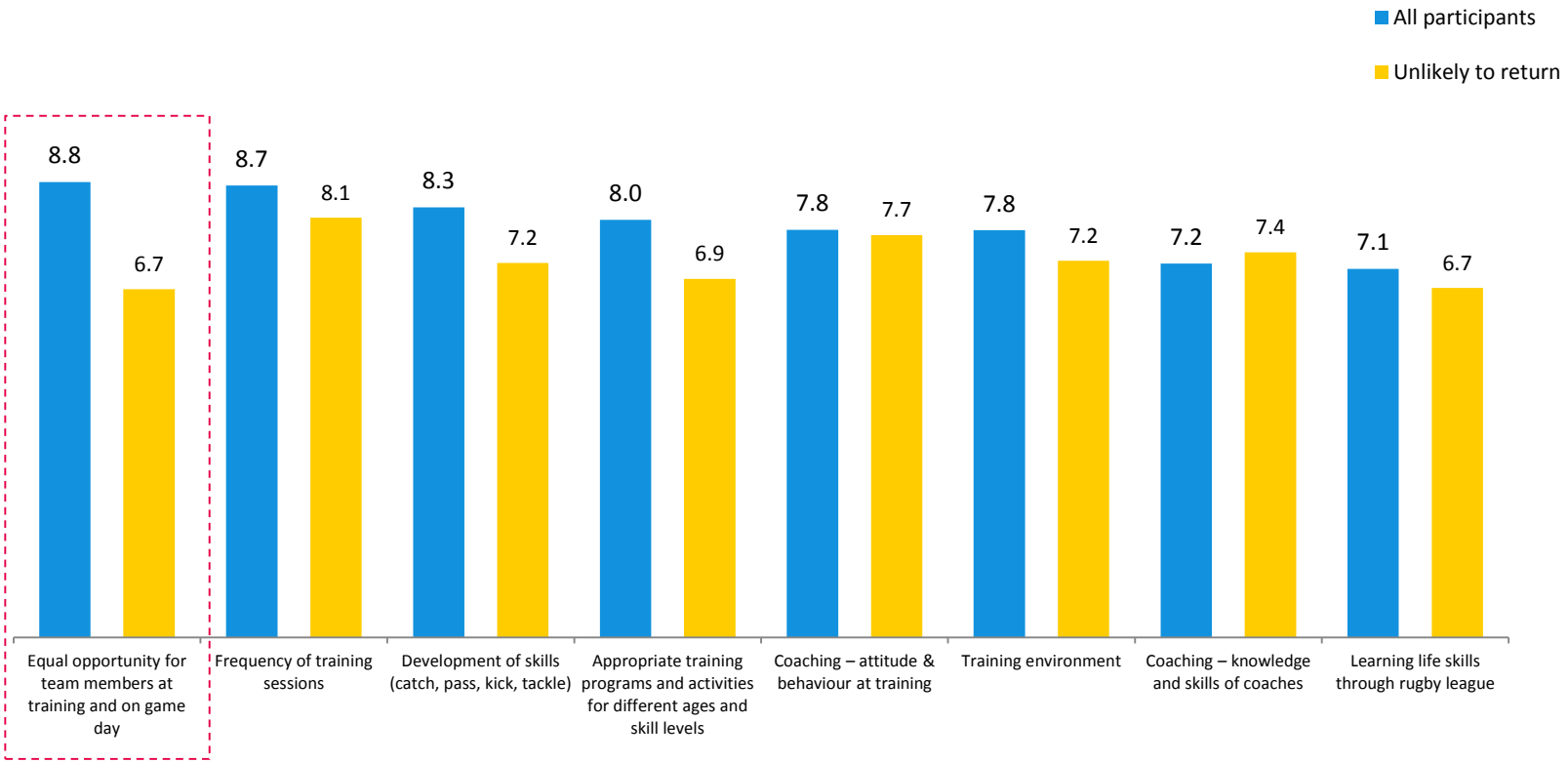
A LARGE GAP EXISTS BETWEEN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR TEAM MEMBERS FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS AND THOSE UNLIKELY TO RETURN

SATISFACTION | SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT



Q: Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', please rate how satisfied you are with the aspects of skill & personal development?

BASE: N= 69-1018

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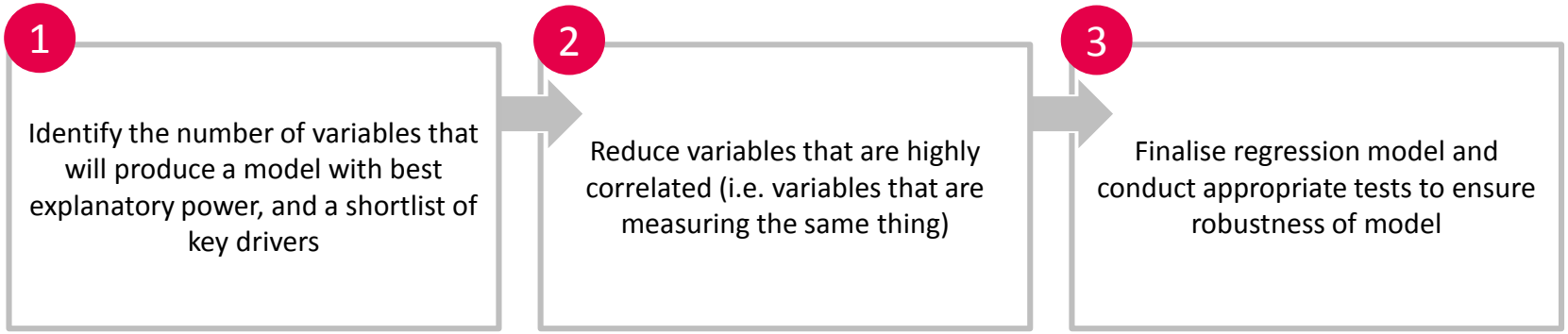
USING REGRESSION ANALYSIS, WE ARE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THE KEY DRIVERS OF JUNIOR LEAGUE SATISFACTION

METHODOLOGY



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REGRESSION ANALYSIS IDENTIFIED SEVEN ELEMENTS THAT HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT IN DRIVING OVERALL SATISFACTION

REGRESSION MODEL | OVERALL JUNIOR LEAGUE SATISFACTION

DEPENDENT VARIABLE (DV)

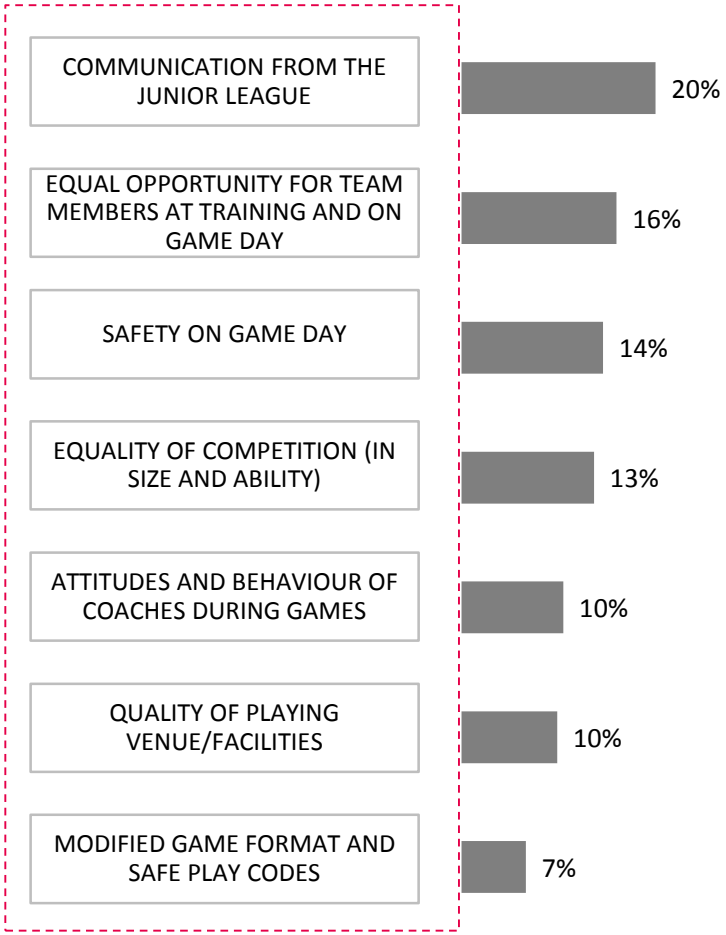
OVERALL JUNIOR LEAGUE SATISFACTION

Adjusted R^2 =53%

Adjusted R2 (r-squared) is a statistical measurement, measuring how close the dependent and independent variables are to the regression line.

The higher the percentage is, the stronger the predictive power of the model.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE (IV)



INSIGHT

- Seven variables have the greatest impact on satisfaction in Junior Leagues – with Communication from Junior League as the number one factor in driving satisfaction
- Together, the variables explain 53% of the variance in overall satisfaction – a robust predictive model

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DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIP AND ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE ARE THE MOST LIKED ASPECTS OF PARTICIPATING IN JUNIOR LEAGUES

THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

Q: What do you [does your child] like most about playing in the Junior Rugby League Competition?

BASE: N= 1018

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OF THOSE THAT ARE UNLIKELY TO RETURN, POOR ATTITUDE OF COACHES AND PARENTS ARE MOST DISLIKED ASPECTS OF JUNIOR LEAGUES

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE | UNLIKELY TO RETURN

Q: What do you [does your child] dislike most about playing in the Junior Rugby League Competition?

BASE: N= 69

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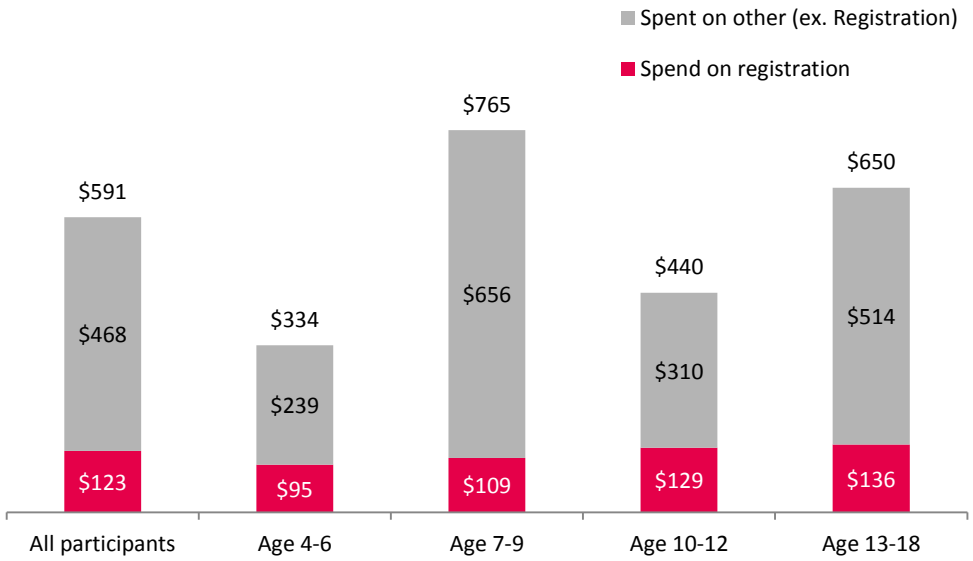
REGISTRATION FEES SHOULD REMAIN COMPETITIVE GIVEN THAT OTHER EXPENSES ARE ON AVERAGE 3.7 TIMES REGISTRATION FEES

COST OF PARTICIPATION

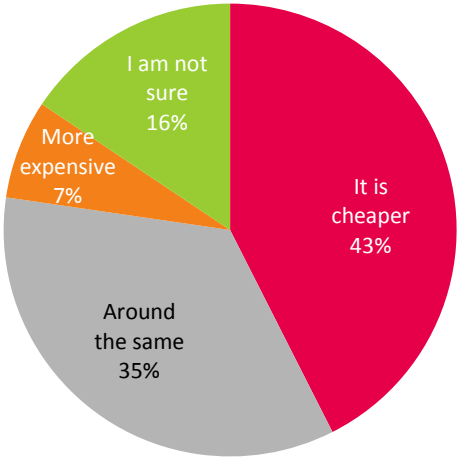
INSIGHTS

- Junior League registration fees are perceived as cheaper than other sports. This is a point of competitive advantage for Rugby League
- Junior League participants spend on average 3.7 times more than Junior League registration fees, on other items such as transport and equipment

Spend on Junior Leagues



Perception on Registration Fees



Q: How much are you currently spending annually on registrations fees [for your child] to participate in Junior Rugby League Competition? besides registrations fees (transport cost, equipment, etc.)?

BASE: N= 57 - 1018

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JUNIOR LEAGUE GAME DAY ENVIRONMENT CAN BE 'HOSTILE' AND 'INTIMIDATING' FOR SOME PARENTS AND PARTICIPANTS

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT: GAME DAY ENVIRONMENT

ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR OF PARENTS AND COACHES

- Poor attitude and behaviour amongst parents and coaches contribute to a 'hostile' and 'aggressive' environment on game day at some Junior Rugby League matches
- The environment has a negative impact on participants' experience when playing Junior Rugby League
- Parents believe this is somewhat unique to the sport of Rugby League and less prevalent in other junior sports

PARTICIPANTS' NEGATIVE SENTIMENT TOWARDS REFEREES

- There is a negative sentiment towards referees for participants in the older age groups
- Referees were described as 'too young' and 'inexperienced'
- This lack of respect for referees also contributed to a more 'hostile' environment for participants on game day

Source: NSWRL focus groups

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WHEN COMPARED TO JUNIOR LEAGUE, SCHOOL RUGBY LEAGUE IS MORE RELAXED AND GIVES KIDS THE BEST OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY WITH THEIR FRIENDS

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT: PROS AND CONS OF JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE VS SCHOOL RUGBY LEAGUE

JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

Positives	Negatives
• Social/friendship • Atmosphere • Competitive • Well organised • Training • Challenging	• Time commitment on game day • Uneven teams • Quality of refereeing • Parent behaviour • Crowd behaviour • Too serious at times • Divergent attitudes amongst team members (some are highly committed, others not) • Strict enforcement of rules • Lacks variety • Player poaching by other clubs

SCHOOL RUGBY LEAGUE

Positives	Negatives
• Variety of formats (tournaments and gala days) • Weight grading • Less serious (compared to Junior Rugby League) • Playing with mates • More teams • Free flowing • Better refereeing • Learning from older players • Greater spread of talent and even teams	• Less organised • Lack of supporters to create atmosphere • Teachers less respected as coaches • Difference in skill levels between participants

Source: NSWRL focus groups

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6 REASONS FOR CHURN

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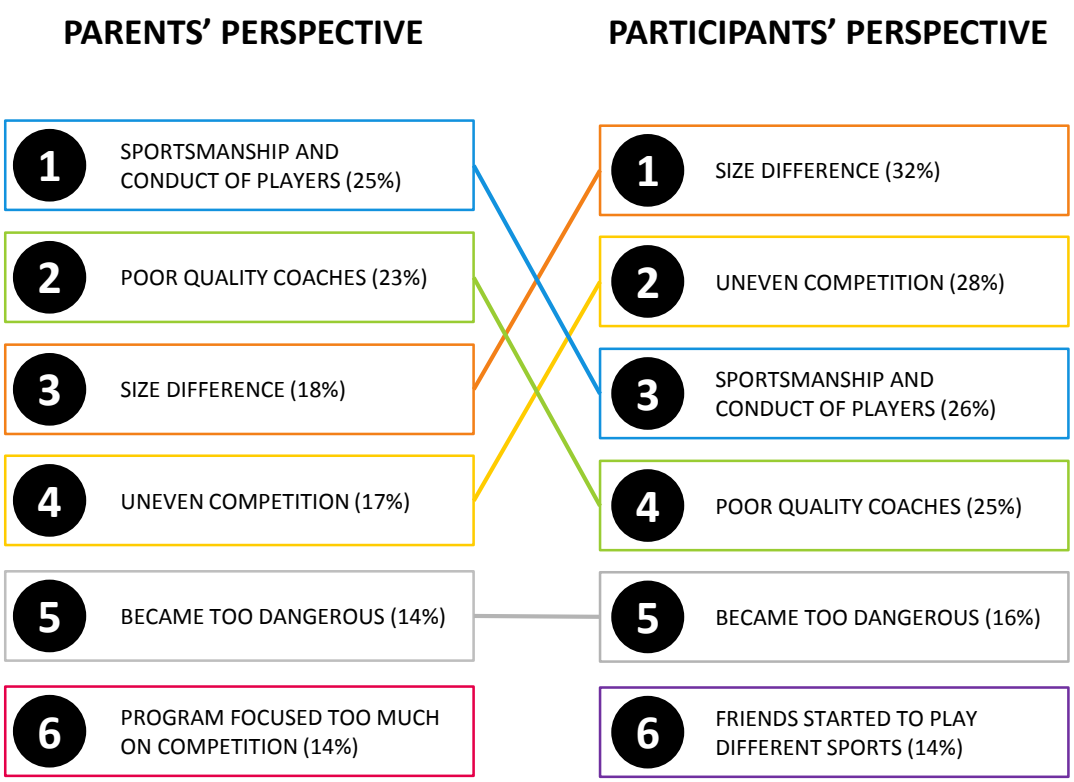
THE FIVE KEY DRIVERS OF PARTICIPANT CHURN HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY BOTH PARENTS AND CHILDREN

REASON FOR CHURN | PARENTS VERSUS PARTICIPANTS



Note: The following reasons did not make the top 6.
Injury / health reasons, Became too busy / other time commitments, Became lazy – non committed, No longer fits into my schedule, No club or team to play for in my local area, Lack of opportunity to participate in social competition, Missed out on representative / development team, No longer had anyone to participate with, Goals for participating in sport changed, Moved location / no longer accessible, Financial reasons, Not good enough to proceed to the next level, Became too old to participate, Not challenging enough, Too much training required
*Lost Interest, Changed sport were excluded from this analysis as they are not reasons for churn

INSIGHT

- The top 5 reasons for participant churn are the same from both a parent's and child's perspective
- Size difference (32%) and an uneven competition (28%) are the primary reasons for participant churn from a child's perspective
- Player conduct (25%) and quality of coaching (23%) are the key reasons for participant churn as identified by parents. These are also significant contributing factors from a child's perspective

Size difference, competition format, player conduct and coaching quality are the key drivers of participant churn

Q: You mentioned that you are [your child is] unlikely to sign up to play Junior Rugby League Competition next season. From the list select the main reasons why you [your child] won't continue playing in the Junior Rugby League Competition BASE: N= 153

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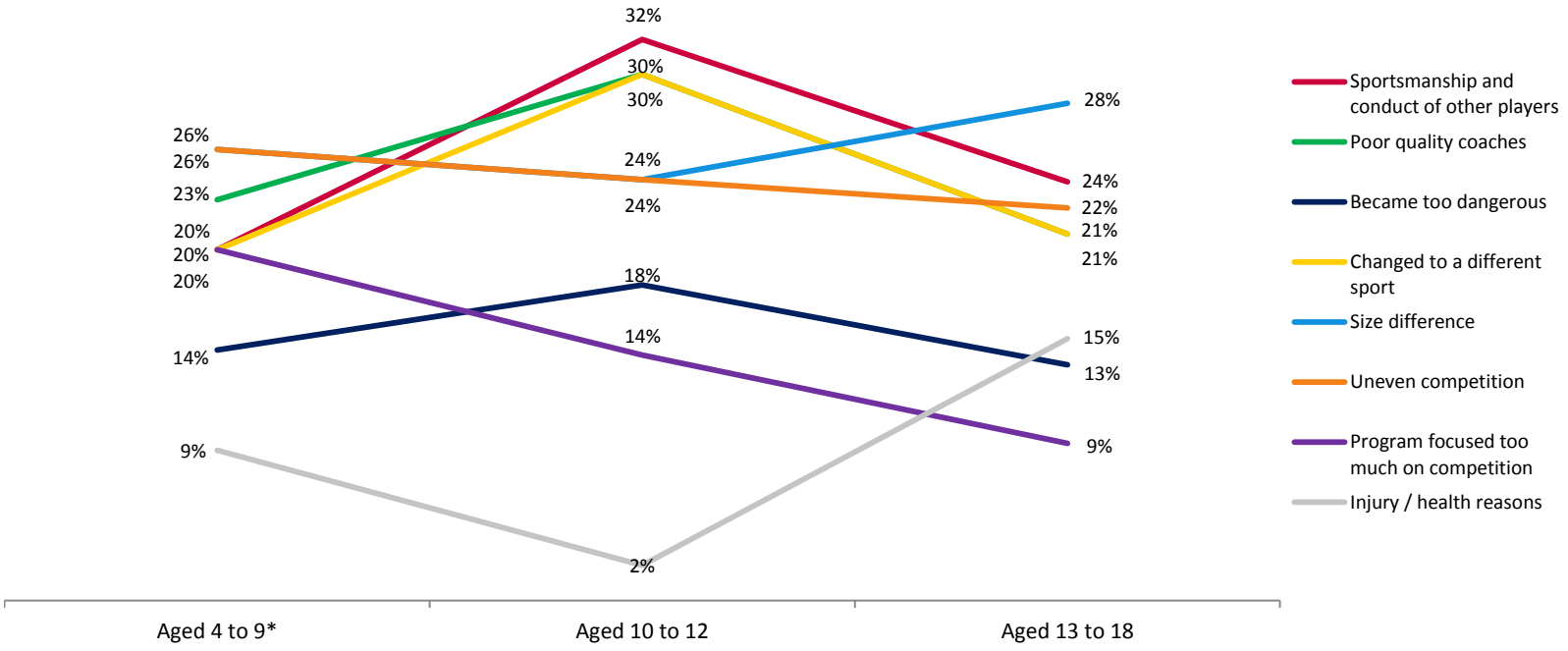
WHILST THERE ARE SOME COMMON CHURN DRIVERS FOR RUGBY LEAGUE, THE TOP DRIVERS VARY BY AGE GROUP

INSIGHTS

- Size difference, uneven competition and coaching quality are the major reasons for participant churn in the 4-9 age group
- Sportsmanship and conduct of other players, coaching quality and changing to another sport are the key drivers of participant churn for the 10-12 age group
- Size difference, sportsmanship and conduct of other players and uneven competition are the major reasons for churn in the 13-18 age group
- Despite the top five churn drivers being the same across each of the age groups analysed, there is variance in the main reasons for participant churn indicating slightly different strategies are required to address participant churn for each age group



Q: You mentioned that you are [your child is] unlikely to sign up to play Junior Rugby League Competition next season. From the list select the main reasons why you [your child] won't continue playing in the Junior Rugby League Competition

BASE: N= 35-67

*Age groups 4-6 and 7-9 combined due to insufficient sample

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SIZE DIFFERENCE MAKES COMPETITION UNFAIR AND UNEVEN, LEADING TO A LOSS OF INTEREST AND MOTIVATION

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT: KEY REASONS FOR CHURN

Size Difference	• The issue of size difference is more prominent from the age of 8 or 9, when growth spurts lead to difference in size amongst kids of similar age • Smaller kids are intimated by the bigger opponents and their confidence impacted. Children's lose of confidence is a key problem from a parents perspective
Lack of Involvement	• Competition format of Junior Rugby League pushes coaches to become selective in their use of players and not providing equal opportunity for all participants • Less involved participants will eventually become disenchanted and lose the enjoyment of playing the game
Uneven Competition	• 'Super teams' (clubs with best players, coaches and greater access to resources) typically dominate the competitions and get stronger through poaching other players. This is more prevalent in the older age groups • On the contrary, School Rugby League has a more even spread of talent – making it more fun, more social and less competition-focused
Physicality of the Sport	• Physicality of the sport is more a concern for parents, rather than the participants themselves • Parents believe there is a higher risk of injury in Rugby League and is more taxing on the body, compared to other sports • On the other hand, older participants enjoy the contact aspect of Rugby League and see this as a key reason to play

Source: NSWRL focus groups

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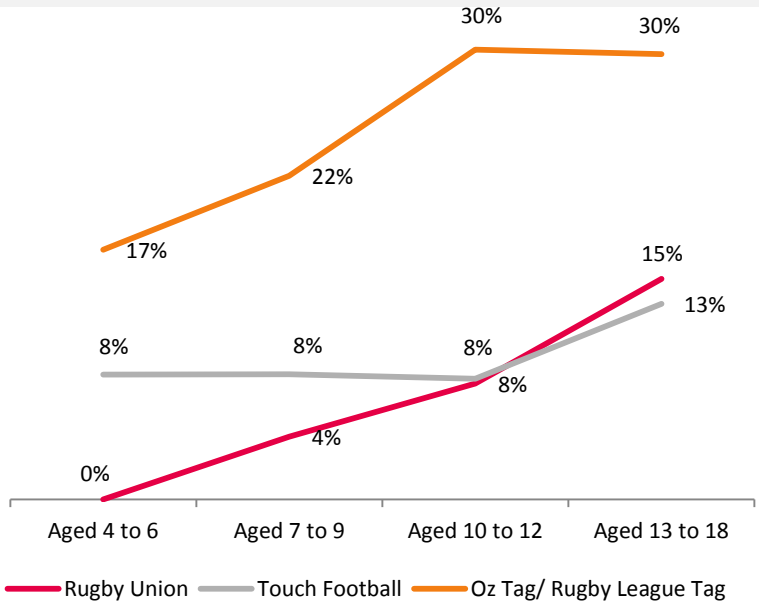
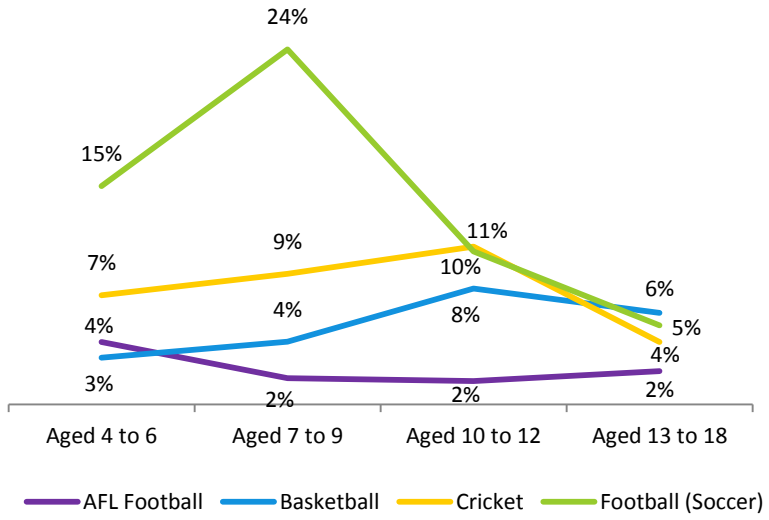
RUGBY LEAGUE RISKS LOSING PARTICIPANTS TO SOCCER IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE PATHWAY WHILST RUGBY UNION EMERGES AS A THREAT IN THE TEENAGE YEARS

OTHER SPORTS CHILD MOST ENJOYED

INSIGHTS

- Oztag / Rugby League Tag provides the most enjoyment for Rugby League participants across all age groups with the exception of the 7-9 age group
- The risk of participant churn to 'non-Rugby' sports decreases significantly in the teenage years with enjoyment in key alternative sports low and enjoyment in 'Rugby' formats trending upwards
- The risk of participant churn to Football (Soccer) is high in the early stages of the participation pathway with the 4-6 age group (15%) and 7-9 age group (24%) indicating high enjoyment in the sport
- The risk of participant churn to Rugby Union increases with age and spikes in the teenage years





Q: Other than Rugby League, which sport below do you [does your child] most enjoy playing?

BASE: N= 96-360

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THE MOST APPEALING ASPECTS OF OTHER SPORT PARTICIPATION OFFERINGS PROVIDE KEY LEARNINGS FOR RUGBY LEAGUE PROGRAM REFINEMENT

APPEAL OF SPORT

INSIGHTS

- The most appealing aspects of Touch Football and Oztag/Rugby League Tag when compared to Rugby League are the timing/length of the season as well as the opportunity for skill development
- Football (Soccer) has the highest rate of participation (other than Rugby League) in the early stages of development (5-9 years). The aspects that resonate most strongly with Rugby League participants are safety and friendship (19%) as well as skill development and teamwork (15%)
- In order to understand the impact of other sports and improve the current program offering, NSWRL should further investigate the most appealing aspects of competitor programs, including the season structure and skill development opportunities provided in Oztag and Touch Football, the competition format offered in Basketball and the mechanisms in place in Football (Soccer) that foster friendship

TOP 3	Basketball	Cricket	Football (Soccer)	Rugby Union	Touch Football	Oztag/ Rugby League Tag
1	Competition/ Atmosphere (16%)	Seasonality (26%)	Safer/ Not as Physical (19%)	Skill Development (16%)	Seasonality (25%)	Seasonality (32%)
2	Different Sport (16%)	Skill Development (16%)	Friendship (19%)	Fun/ Enjoyment (13%)	Skill Development (22%)	Skill Development (19%)
3	Skill Development (11%)	Team Work (14%)	Team Work (15%)	Different Sport (12%)	Safer/ Not as Physical (11%)	Fun/ Enjoyment (15%)

Q: Compared to rugby league, what makes [INSERT SPORT SELECTED AT QD6] appealing? Please comment on the key differences between Rugby League and [INSERT SPORT SELECTED AT QD6].

BASE: N= 62-282

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‘FREE-ROAMING’, NON-RESTRICTIVE PLAY AND SUITABILITY FOR ALL SIZES ARE KEY ADVANTAGES OF COMPETITOR SPORTS

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT: ADVANTAGES OF OTHER SPORTS VS RUGBY LEAGUE

FOOTBALL (SOCCER)

- Free-roaming/ non-restrictive
- Perceived as a safer sport
- Greater presence and opportunity in school
- Suitable for all sizes, particularly for smaller participants
- Less physical

AUSTRALIAN RULES

- Free-roaming/ non-restrictive
- More points scored
- Greater variety of skills development
- Suitable for all sizes
- Good for fitness

CRICKET

- Non contact
- Seasonality (summer sport)
- Growing presence of Big Bash League
- Lower fitness requirement
- Variety in formats
- Team camaraderie
- Different types of skills

RUGBY UNION

- Suitable for all sizes and levels of athletic abilities
- Opportunity for all
- Less rules / better flow of the game
- Participants more actively involved
- More positions available
- Less physical

INSIGHTS

- When compared to Rugby League, a key advantage of other competitor sports, according to parents and Junior League participants, is the suitability for all sizes
- Movement (and flow) of a Rugby League game is more restrictive when compared to other sports - not all participants are fully engaged in the game play at all times

Source: NSWRL focus groups

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7 PROGRAM REFINEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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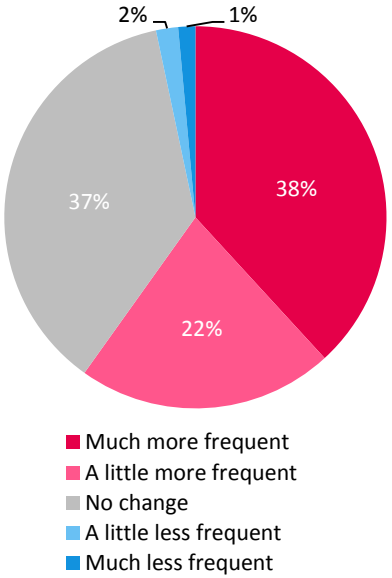
PARTICIPANTS' DESIRE MORE FREQUENT TRAINING AND LONGER SESSIONS

PREFERRED SESSIONS AND FREQUENCY

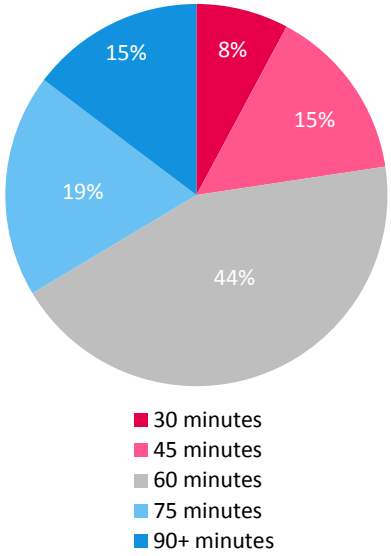
INSIGHTS

- Three in five participants want more frequent sessions, and only 3% want less frequent sessions
- 60 minute sessions are the optimal amount of time, however one in three want at least 75 minute sessions
- Weekends are the most desired session slots, followed by Friday nights

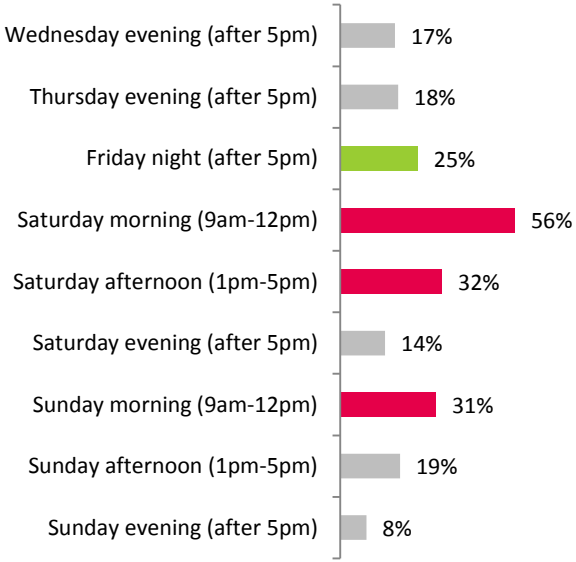
FREQUENCY OF SESSIONS



PREFERRED LENGTH



PREFERRED SESSION SLOT



Q: Would you [your child] like to participate in Rugby League more often, less often, or about the same? Q: When participating in Rugby League, what is your [your child's] preferred length of one session? Q: Which of the following best describes the time(s) that you [your child] would ideally like to play Rugby League? BASE: N= 1068

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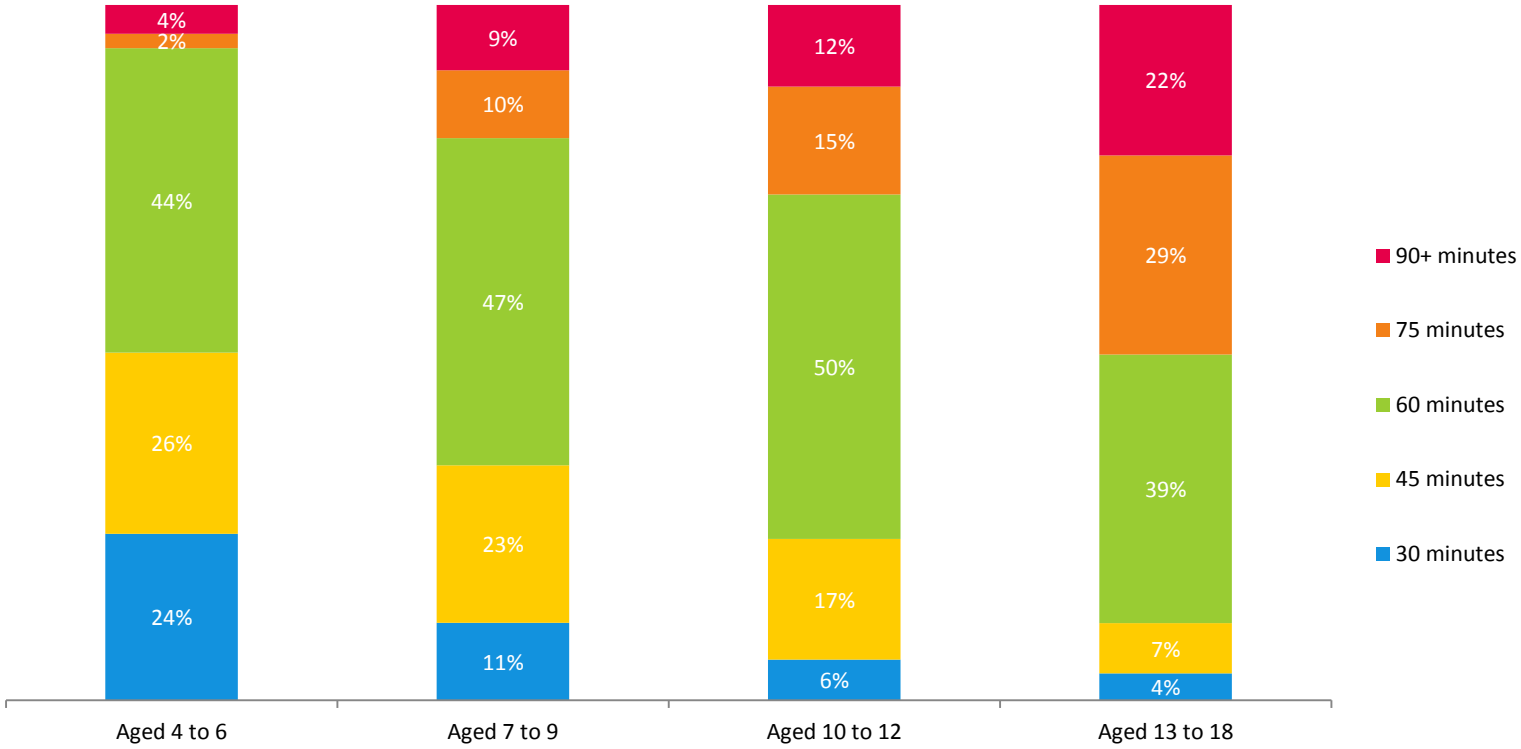
DESIRE FOR SESSION LENGTH CHANGES WITH AGE. YOUNGER AGES PREFER SESSIONS UNDER 60 MINUTES, WHEREAS OLDER AGES PREFER MINIMUM 60 MINUTE SESSIONS

PREFERRED SESSION LENGTH | BY AGE OF PARTICIPANT



Q: Which of the following best describes the time(s) that you [your child] would ideally like to play Rugby League?

BASE: N= 96-360

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TEAMWORK AND ENJOYMENT ASPECTS OF RUGBY LEAGUE ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN RETAINING PARTICIPANTS

FUTURE PARTICIPATION | REASONS TO CONTINUE

INSIGHTS

- Three in four participants rated team bonding / teamwork as the most important aspect for future participants
- While program aspects are important, enjoyment and achievement are also key

Q: Which of the following aspects are most important to you [your child] in continuing playing Rugby League in the future?

BASE: N= 1176

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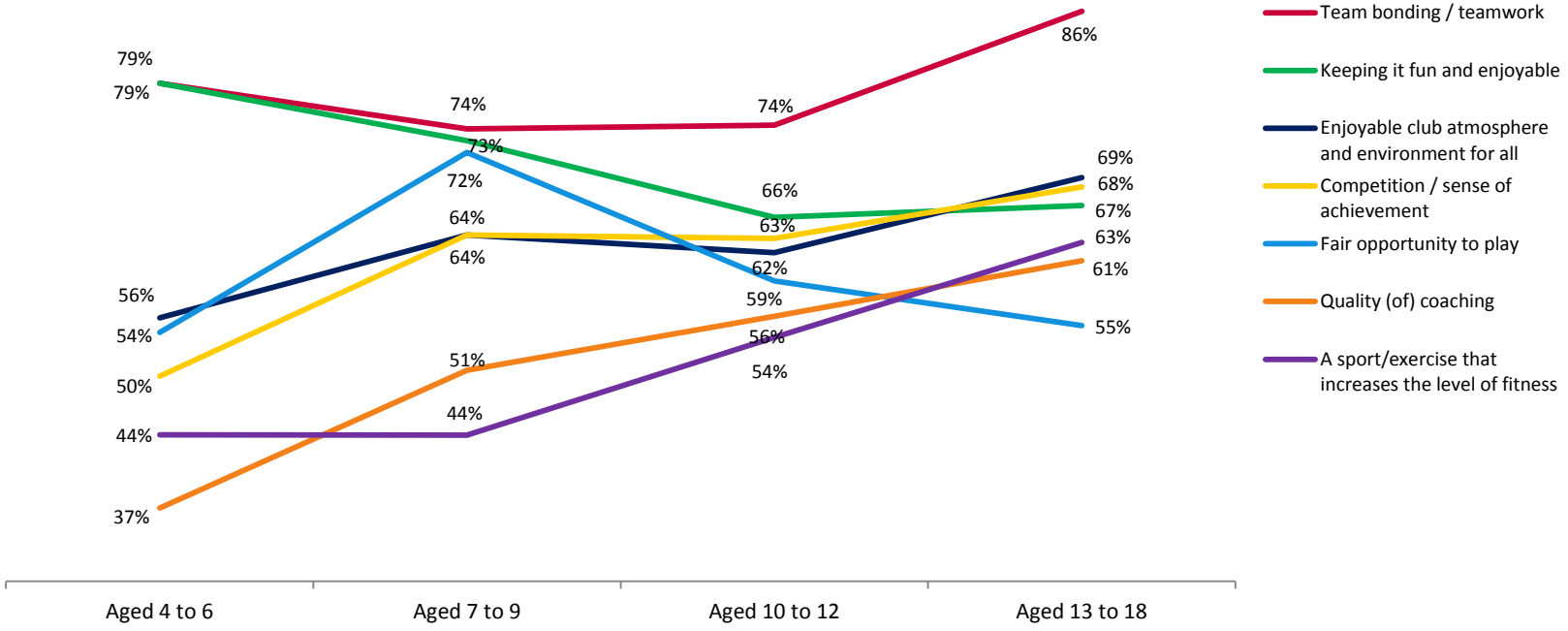
MEETING THE DEMANDS OF PARTICIPANTS AND RETENTION BECOMES MORE COMPLEX WITH AGE

FUTURE PARTICIPATION | REASONS TO CONTINUE BY AGE

INSIGHTS

- Fun and enjoyment is considerably less important for continued participation in the 10-12 and 13-18 age groups
- Quality coaching, increasing their level of fitness and competition / sense of achievement become more important as age increases
- Being part of a team and keeping the participation offering fun, enjoyable and inclusive are the most important factors for the early age groups (4-6 and 7-9), whilst the older age groups want a more holistic experience with multiple reasons important for continued Rugby League participation



Q: Which of the following aspects are most important to you [your child] in continuing playing Rugby League in the future?

BASE: N= 1176

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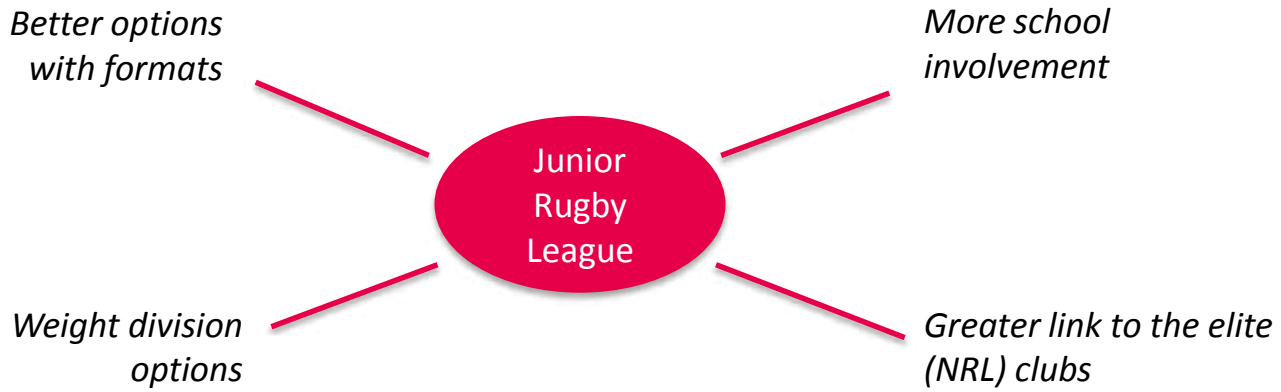
WE GAVE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ARTICULATE THE IDEAL JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE EXPERIENCE

THE BRIEF: "THE IDEAL JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE EXPERIENCE"

Exercise: Provide suggestions on program refinement and improvement to be made in order to retain you (your child) as a participant

- What can Junior Rugby League do to enhance the participation experience?
- Thinking of the reason(s) for not returning next season, what can Junior Rugby League do to retain you?
- What role should competition play in the participation exercise?

ILLUSTRATIVE



Source: NSWRL focus groups

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PARENTS AND PARTICIPANTS PROVIDED PROGRAM REFINEMENTS THAT ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF 'SIZE DIFFERENCE' AND 'UNEVEN COMPETITION'

QUALITATIVE INSIGHT: COMMON THEMES ON IMPROVEMENTS TO JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

PARENTS	**IMPROVE COMPETITIVE BALANCE OF CLUBS**	**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR GAME TIME**	LESS GAME RULES AND STRUCTURE	MORE SOCIAL / FOCUS ON MATESHIP
	INCREASE OPTIONS OF FORMATS AND BETTER PATHWAY	**GRADING OF COMPETITION (AGE & WEIGHT)**	GREATER SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT	MORE FAMILY ORIENTATED
PARTICIPANTS	MORE EXPERIENCED (OLDER) REFEREES	**FAIR COACHING**	**GREATER NUMBER OF DIVISIONS**	**GRADING OF COMPETITION (AGE AND WEIGHT)**
	BALANCED AND FAIR COMPETITION	INVOLVEMENT OF NRL PLAYERS	IMPROVEMENTS TO TRAINING VENUES AND EQUIPMENT	BETTER PERCEPTION OF SPORT

Source: NSWRL focus groups

IN BOLD = REFINEMENTS ADDRESSING 'SIZE DIFFERENCE' AND 'UNEVEN COMPETITION'

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8 JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE DISTRICTS

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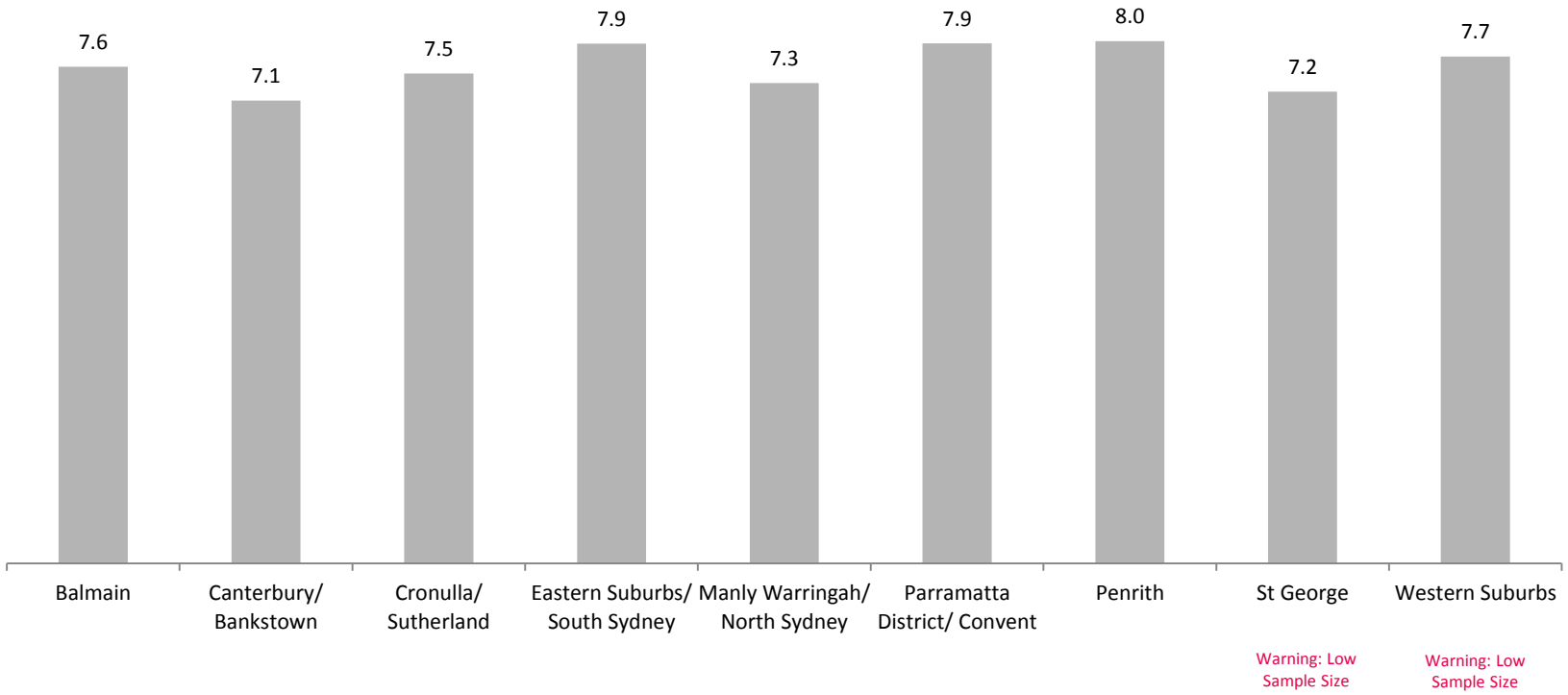
SATISFACTION IS STEADY ACROSS THE LEAGUES. PENRITH HAS THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WHILE CANTERBURY/BANKSTOWN HAS THE LOWEST

OVERALL SATISFACTION | BY JUNIOR LEAGUE



Q: Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', please rate how satisfied you are with the overall experience participating in Junior Rugby League Competition?

BASE: N= 45- 213

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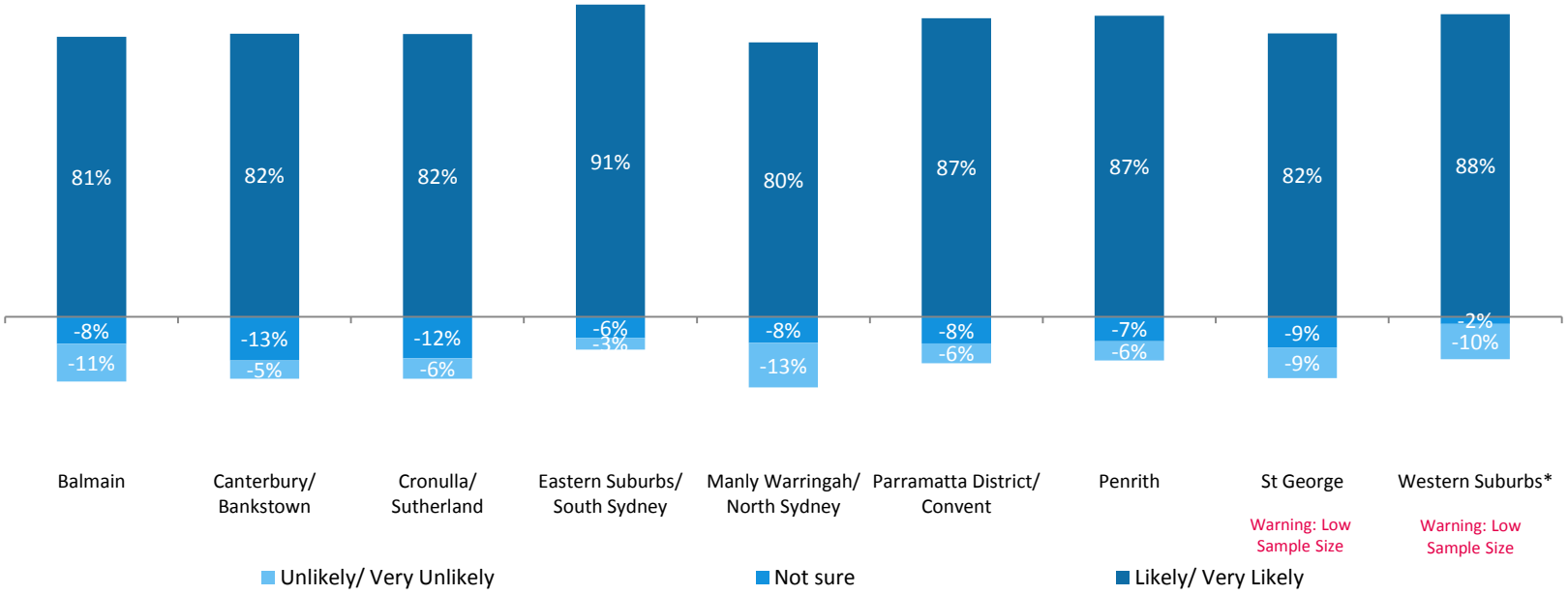
EASTERN SUBURBS/SOUTH SYDNEY SET THE STANDARD FOR LIKELIHOOD OF CURRENT PARTICIPANTS TO RETURN

LIKELIHOOD TO RETURN TO JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

INSIGHTS

- Eastern Suburbs and South Sydney have the highest likelihood for return of participants, with most set to continue playing next season
- Similar to satisfaction, Manly and North Sydney have the lowest likelihood of retaining current participants



Q: How likely are you [is your child] to return to play in Junior Rugby League Competition next season?

BASE: N= 45- 213

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ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR OF COACHES DURING GAMES AND EQUALITY OF COMPETITION SCORES HAVE THE GREATEST VARIATION BETWEEN LEAGUES

KEY DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION SCORING BY DISTRICT

BEST IN PRACTICE — WORST IN PRACTICE

	Balmain	Canterbury/ Bankstown	Cronulla/ Sutherland	Eastern Suburbs/ South Sydney	Manly Warringah/ North Sydney	Parramatta District/ Convent	Penrith	St George*	Western Suburbs*
Modified game format and safe play codes	8.4	8.3	8.6	8.4	8.7	8.7	8.3	8.7	8.3
Equality of competition	6.8	6.4	7.1	7.3	7.1	7.2	7.5	6.2	7.5
Communication from the Junior League	7.7	7.0	7.3	8.1	7.4	7.6	7.6	7.0	7.6
Quality of playing venue/ competition ground	8.1	8.0	7.7	8.2	7.8	8.4	8.0	7.5	7.7
Quality of officiating	7.7	7.2	8.2	7.5	8.0	8.2	7.7	7.9	7.6
Attitudes and behaviour of coaches during games	8.1	7.1	8.4	8.1	8.7	8.6	8.6	8.1	8.5
Equal opportunity for team members at training and on game day	8.6	8.2	8.4	8.6	8.8	8.6	8.3	7.9	8.2

Q: Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', please rate how satisfied you are with the aspects of [satisfaction category]?

BASE: N= 45- 213 *Warning: Low Sample Size

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Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 2

Structural and Operational Review 2015

B-J Mather

April 2015

Contents

CONFIDENTIAL

- Philosophy
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- Coaching Provision and Development
- Competition Structure
- Scientific Research

Philosophy

- Purpose
- Principles

Philosophy- Purpose

- The purpose of this structural and operational review is to allow the NSW RL Football Department to build a system which will deliver continued excellence in our performance as a Governing Body and allow for the effective administration of both our competitions and our performance pathways.

- One the appropriate vision has been agreed, commitment to the delivery of that vision, and the structure required to make it happen, must be on a long term basis.

- "It takes consistency in the actions of the system/sport to pursue excellence- not over the short term but the long term. The minimum time period for the fruitions of purposeful and deliberate preparation to show up as medals is quadrennial, but more often than not it takes two quadrennials. Throughout this time, it can feel as though the hard work is done in vain. However, as with any partnership, it requires commitment to fight for the cause through the good times and the bad times. The hard times must strength the resolve to be the best in the world and not weaken it."
  Gary Anderson, GB Bobsleigh Performance Director

Philosophy - Principles

1. Elevate and integrate the NSWRL Community- engage with the with NSW RL corporate strategy by implementing a top down, hub and spoke model of competition and club relations across the whole state. Clubs and schools at different levels of the pathway need to be related and interdependent.

2. We must make it as **easy** and **enjoyable** as possible for anyone to play Rugby League within NSW, at the appropriate level of their ability.
3. Parity of competition at each level of the pathway.

The Greatest Game of All

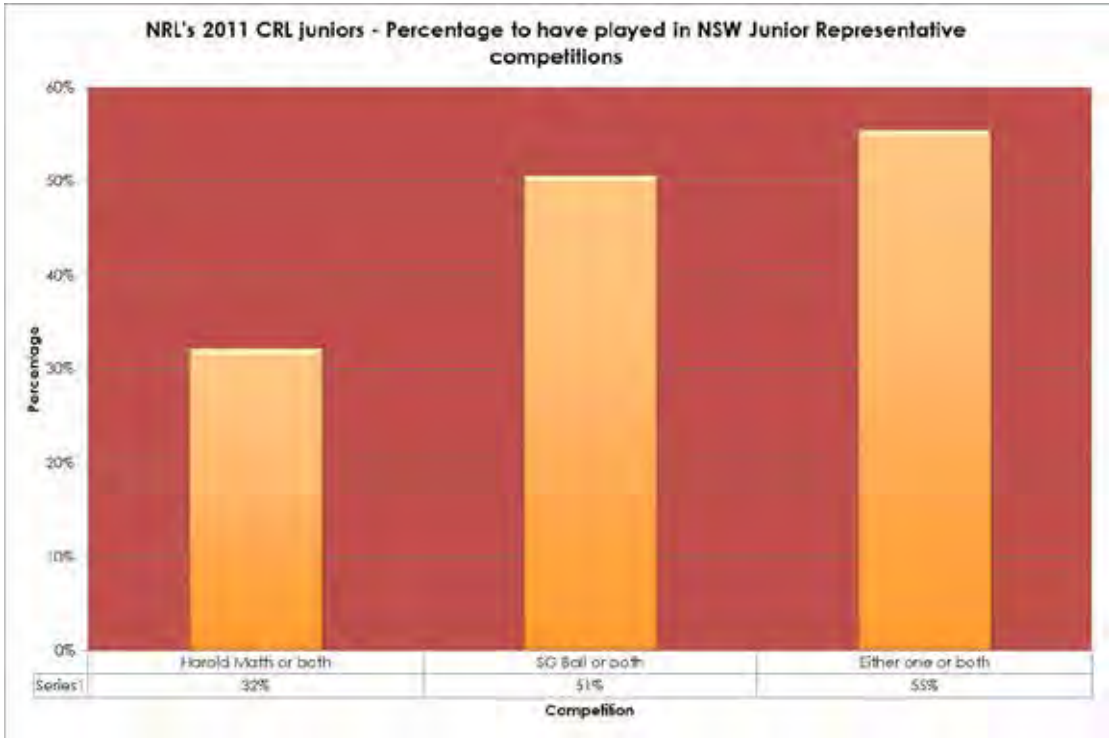
Current Situation

- Country Rugby League
- Junior Representative Rugby
- Senior and Junior Competitions

Current Situation- Country Rugby League

The successful implementation of any competition and performance pathway strategy for the NSW RL is dependent on the integration of structures between the two organisations. Currently there is little to no contact with CRL areas of NSW with regard to competition entry and administration and little evidence of a structured approach to the inclusion of CRL within the NSW RL Performance Pathways. This is to the detriment of both organisations.

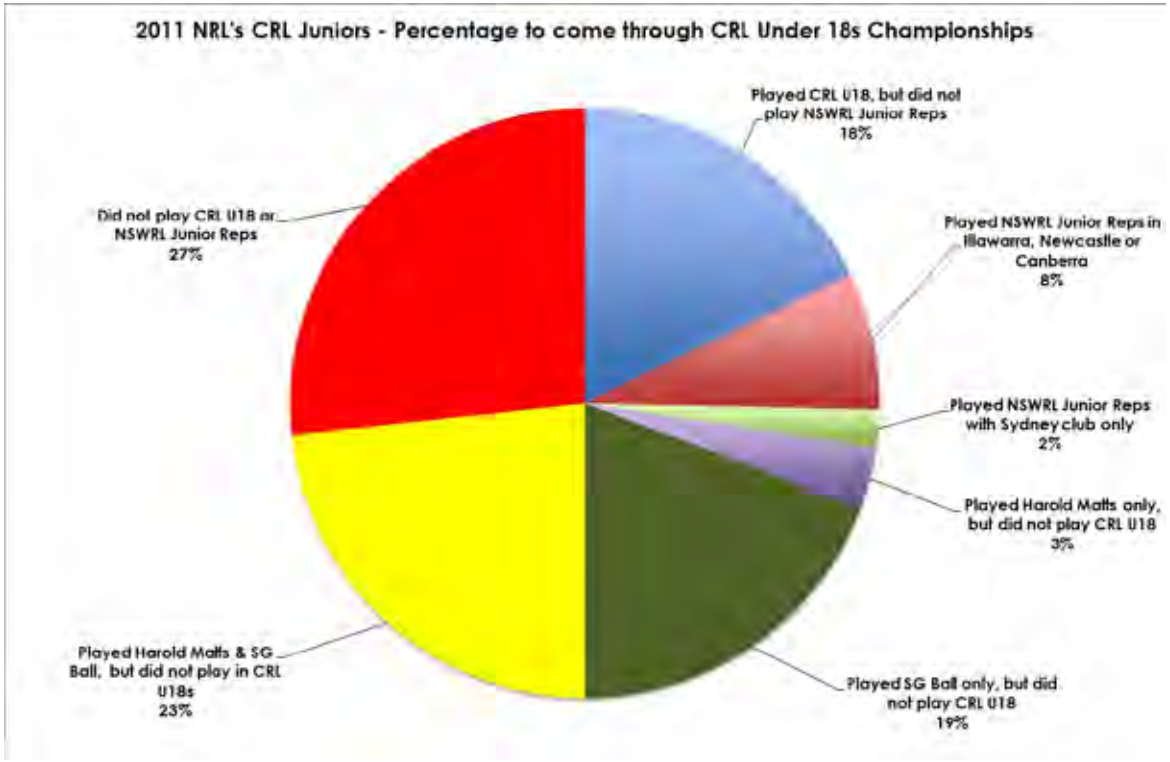
- Facts (as of 2011)
- The CRL provides 31% (146) of current NRL players, NSWRL provides 28% (131)
- However, 55% of those CRL players were developed through playing in NSWRL Junior Representative competitions



- This means that we're removing athletes from Country areas in order to develop their ability to play at the highest level..

Current Situation- Country Rugby League

- In fact, only 18% of those 131 players currently playing in the NRL have been produced exclusively by the CRL U18 Championships with no involvement from the NSWRL junior competitions or clubs.



This raises several questions:-

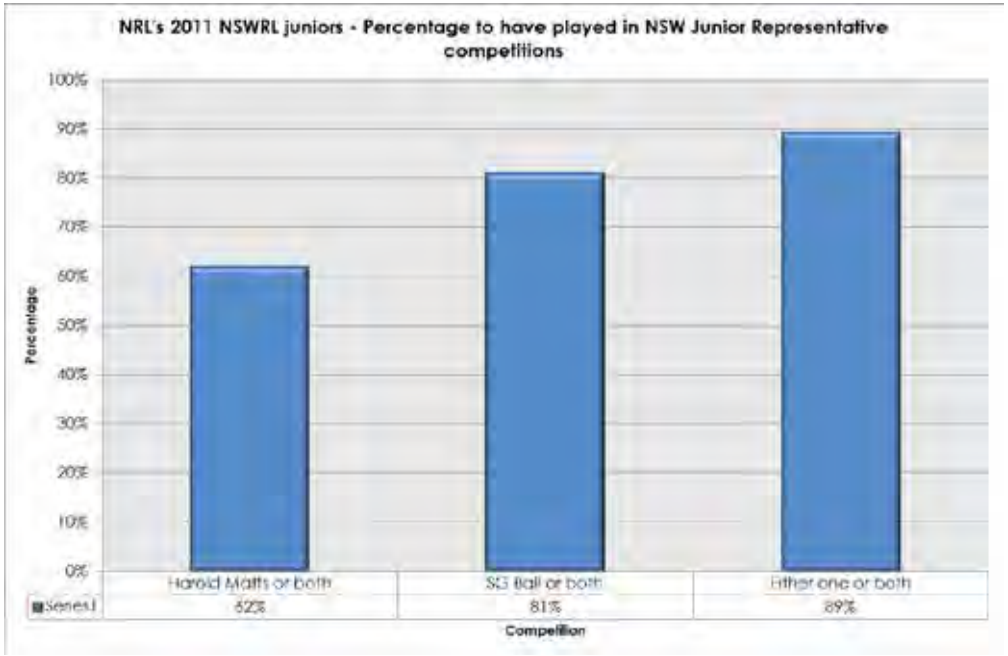
1. Why do the majority of athletes feel they have to leave the Country in order to play NRL?

2. What is it about the NSWRL junior competitions that prepares athletes for the NRL better than the CRL?

3. What effect is this player drain having on Country areas , the playing numbers and standard of competition.

Current Situation - Junior Rep Rugby

- The current Harold Matts and SG Ball Junior Representative competitions are highly successful in producing talent for the NRL.
- Of the NRL players who have been produced by the NSWRL, 62% of them played Harold Matts, 81% SG Ball and 89% played either one or both.



However, we must ask whether our competition and representative structures have produced a self- fulfilling prophecy.

Rugby League is a late-specialisation sport, with athletes fully developing around the ages of 20-23. As such, if we are providing the correct development opportunities, the percentages of athletes playing in the NRL who have also played in junior rep should be lower.

Current Situation- Competitions

Senior Competitions

- Managed in isolation of each other, leading to inconsistency of delivery and added complication for clubs wishing to communicate with the NSWRL.
- Consistency of message and clarity of communication is therefore difficult to achieve.
- None of the current senior competitions can be said to represent the “State of NSW RL” with the NSW Cup, Ron Massey Cup and Sydney Shield being predominantly Sydney based competitions.
- Entry into these competitions is based on a purely historical and financial basis rather than following any strategic approach to growing and strengthening the game within NSW.

Junior Competitions

- Separation of administration within NSW RL for Senior and Junior Competitions.
- Individual Junior League, those sitting outside the Junior League Association, function in isolation with no assistance or guidance from Senior Clubs, Game Development or the NSW RL.
- Multiple delivery bodies and competitions for Junior League competitions throughout the Greater Sydney area. Outliers within the Junior Leagues who refuse to join the Junior League Association
- Multiple delivery bodies and competitions for Schools competitions in an unstructured season that produces fixture clashes, an over load of competition choices and the possibility of overplaying and burnout issues for the most talented athletes.

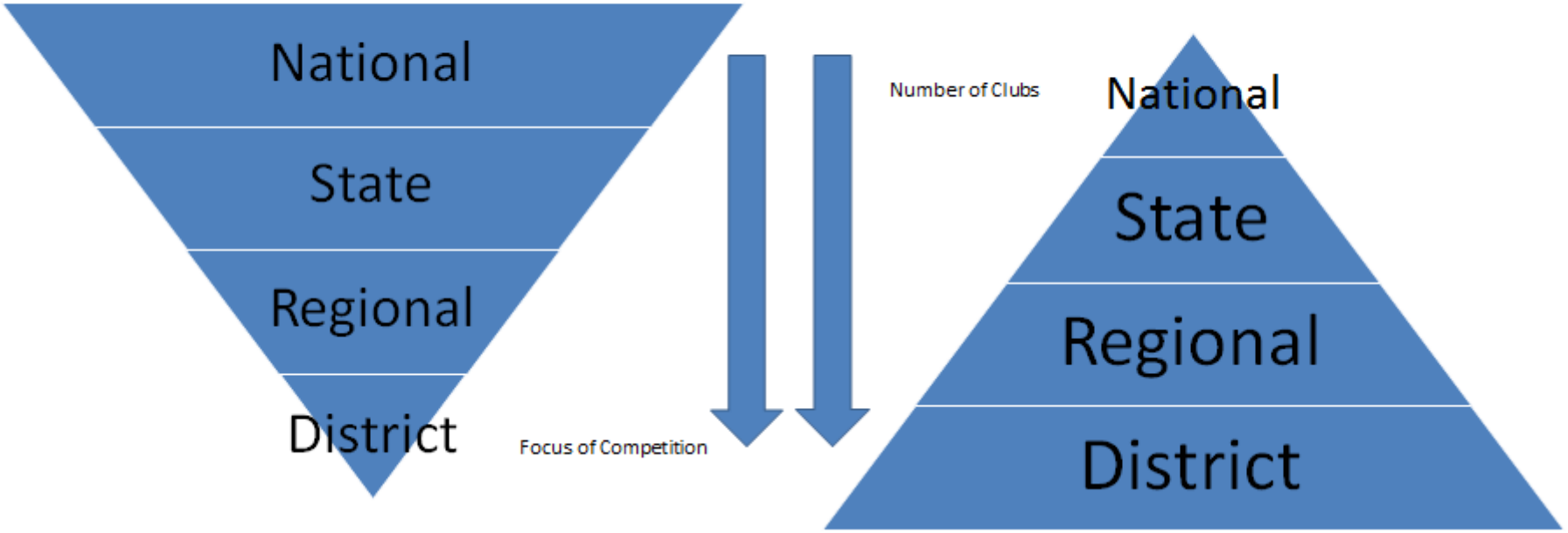
The Greatest Game of All

Competitions

- Structural Enhancements
- Recommendations for the future

Competitions – Structural Enhancements

Competitions are structured around a top down approach- from National level with the NRL, State Level with the NSW State Cup, Regionally for the 'Ron Massey Cup' and 'Sydney Shield' and in Districts for A Grade and Junior League Competitions.

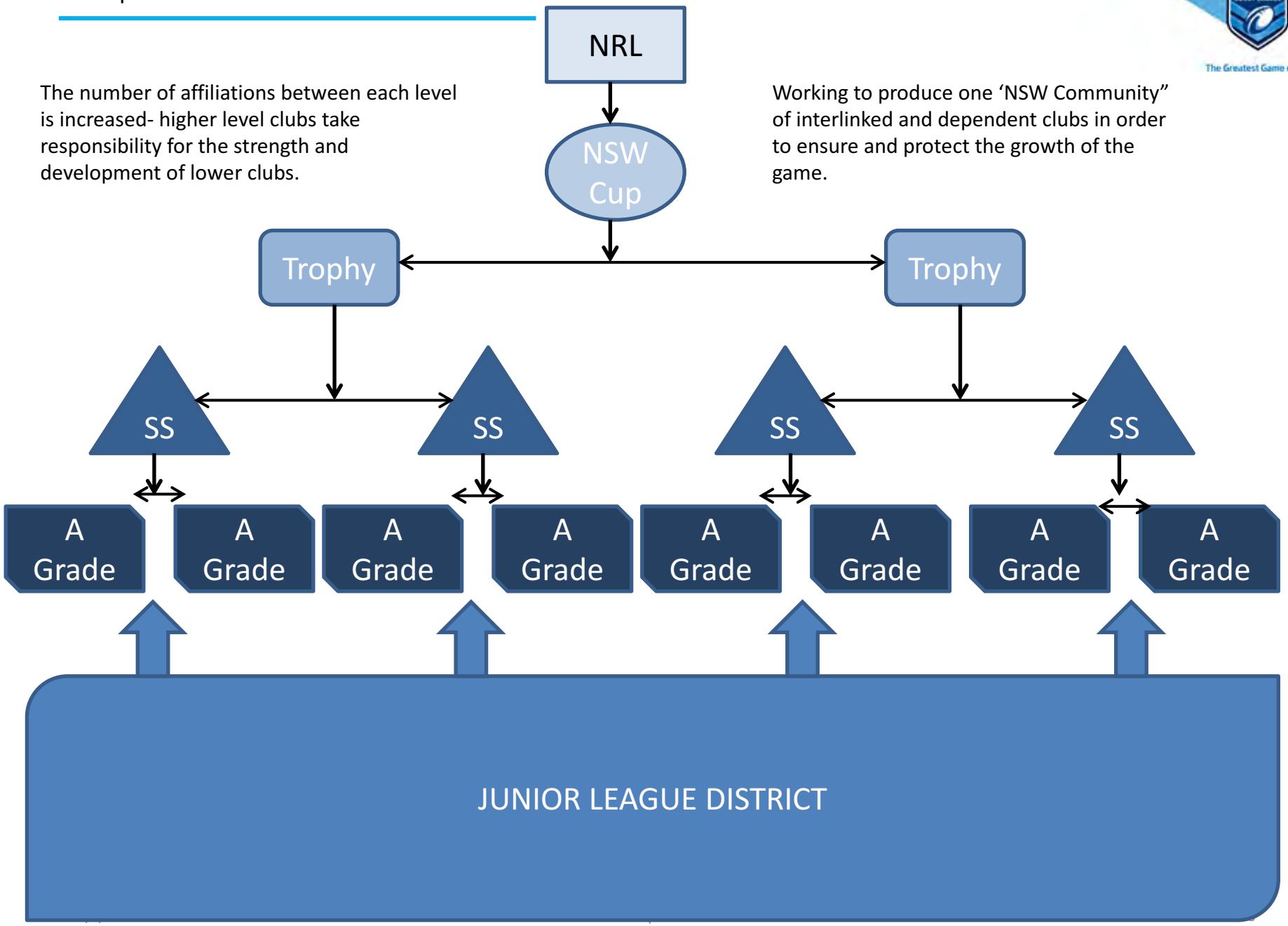


The number of clubs involved, and affiliated, in each level of the pathway will grow. Clubs compete in the appropriate level of competition according to playing ability, affiliations and finances.

Competitions- Structural Enhancements

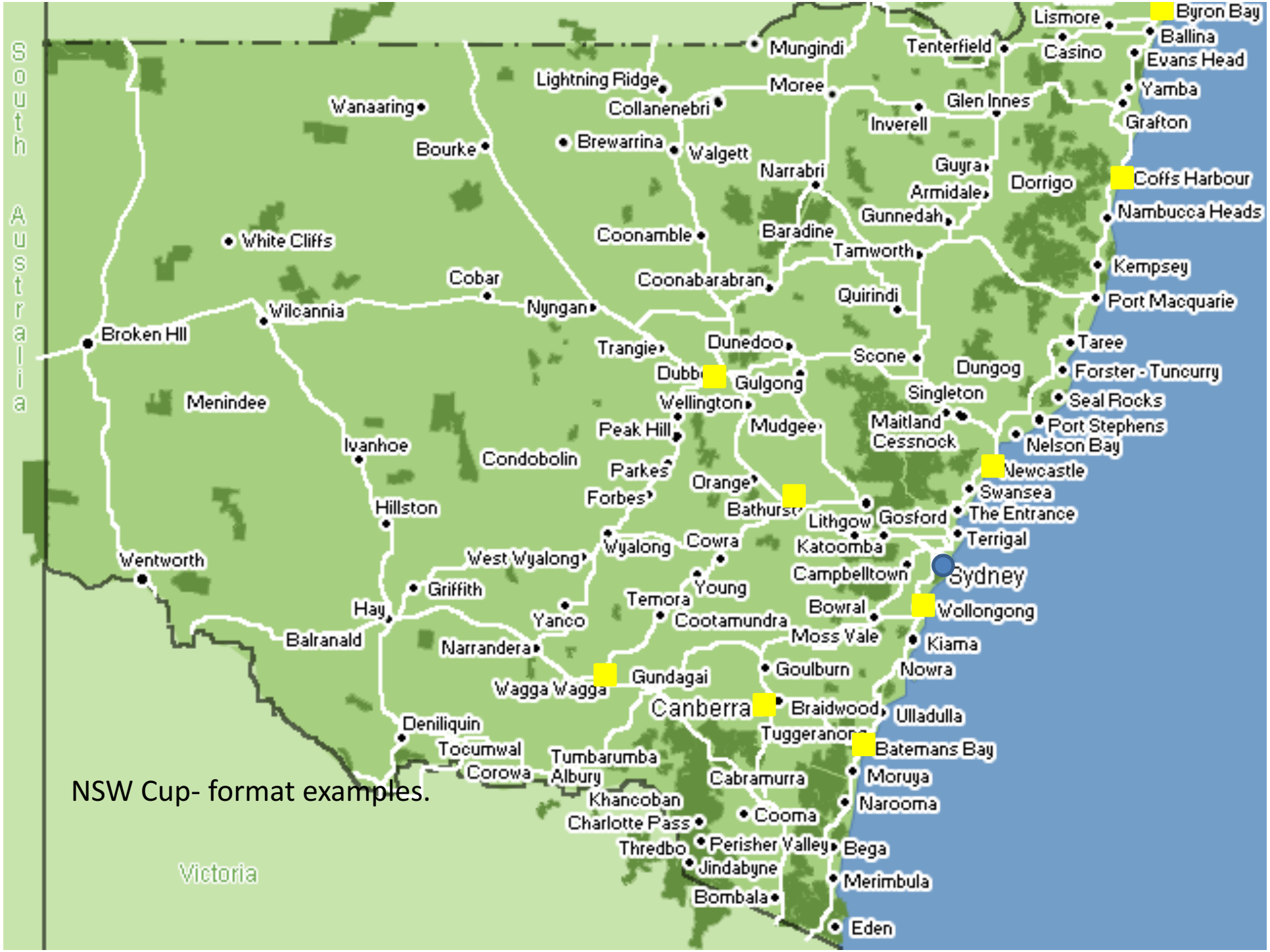
The number of affiliations between each level is increased- higher level clubs take responsibility for the strength and development of lower clubs.

Working to produce one 'NSW Community" of interlinked and dependent clubs in order to ensure and protect the growth of the game.



Competitions- Recommendations.

Country	• Consistent with previous reports,the NSWRL and CRL merge to form one Governing Body for Rugby League in New South Wales. • Change of emphasis to allow Country players to be developed in the Country and for the Country.
Structure	• Entrance into each of the competitions is dependent on having a 'full pathway' up to the clubs level of competition. • Any athlete playing in a NSW RL senior competition must be contracted and receive payment. Any athletes in a NSWRL junior competition must not be contracted or paid.
Junior Rep	• Junior Representative programmes are expanded to become player identification and development programmes rather than short term representative 'hits'.
Senior Comp	• The NSW Cup becomes a state wide competition- expanded to include sides from the metropolitan area, Country, NZ Warriors and other strategic expansion areas. • Ron Massey is renamed the NSW Trophy- becomes a state wide competition played on a regional basis with the state split into two regions. • Sydney Shield becomes the NSW Shield- state wide competition played in a number of regional conferences.
Junior Comp	• Unification of junior school and club associations into one governing association with representatives from all parties. Tasked with rationalising and integrating the various calendars.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Cobar
Coonabarabran
Quirindi
Port Macquarie
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Nyngan
Broken Hill
Trangie
Dunedoo
Scone
Taree
Dungog
Forster - Tuncurry
Dubbo
Gulgong
Singleton
Menindee
Wellington
Seal Rocks
Maitland
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Deniliquin
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Tumbarumba
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Albury
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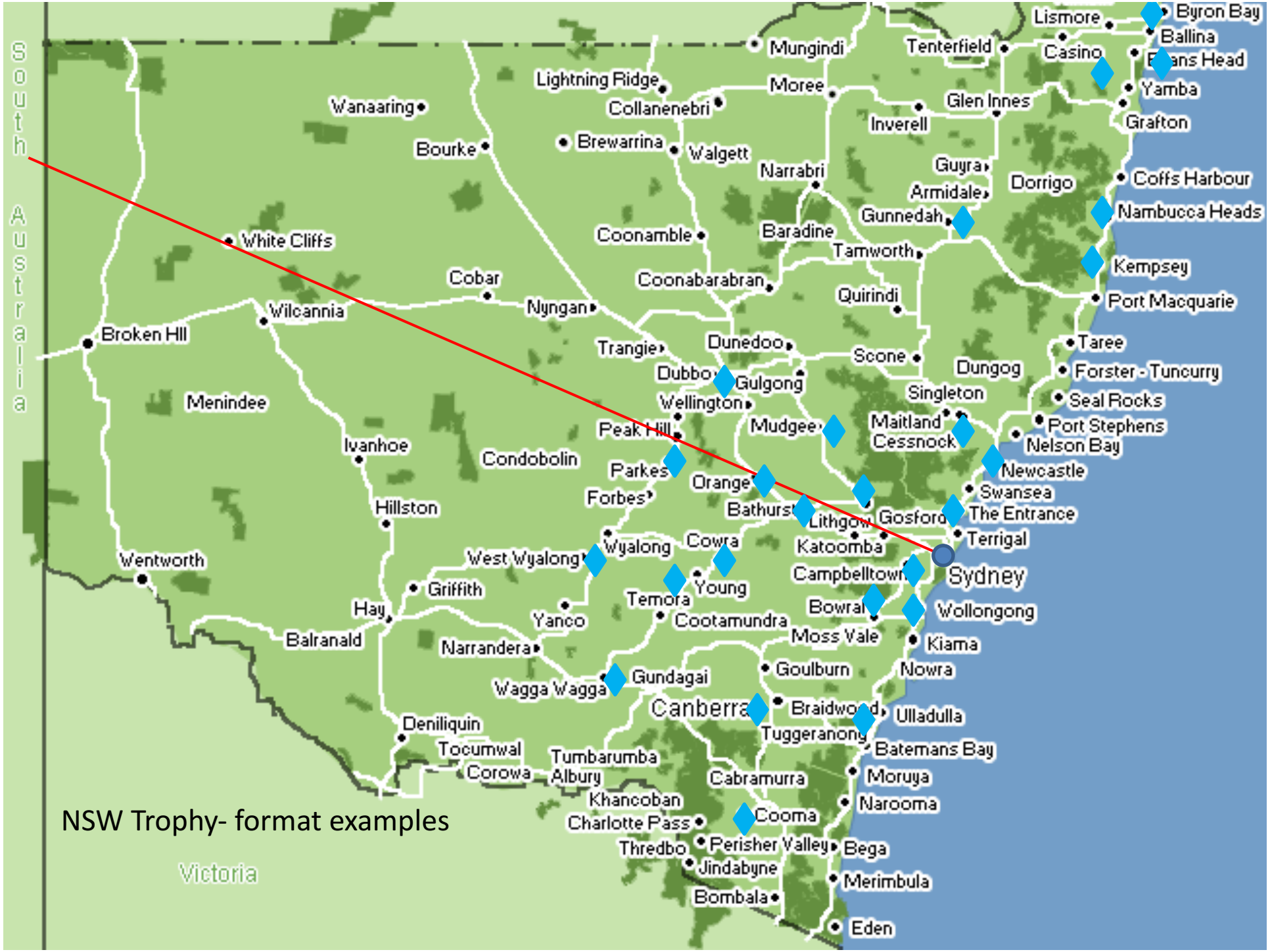
Bombala
Eden
NSW Cup- format examples.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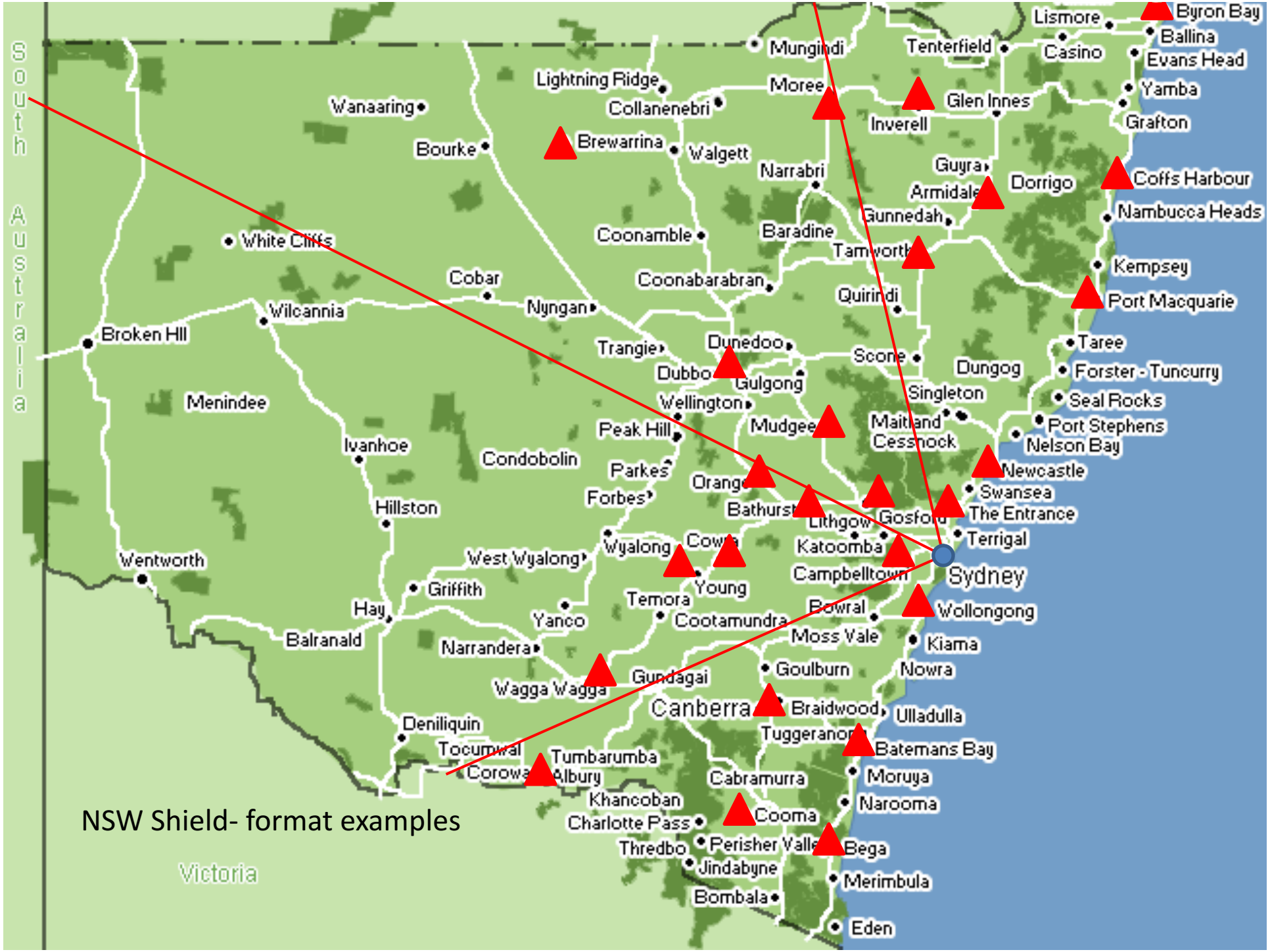
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NSW Shield- format examples

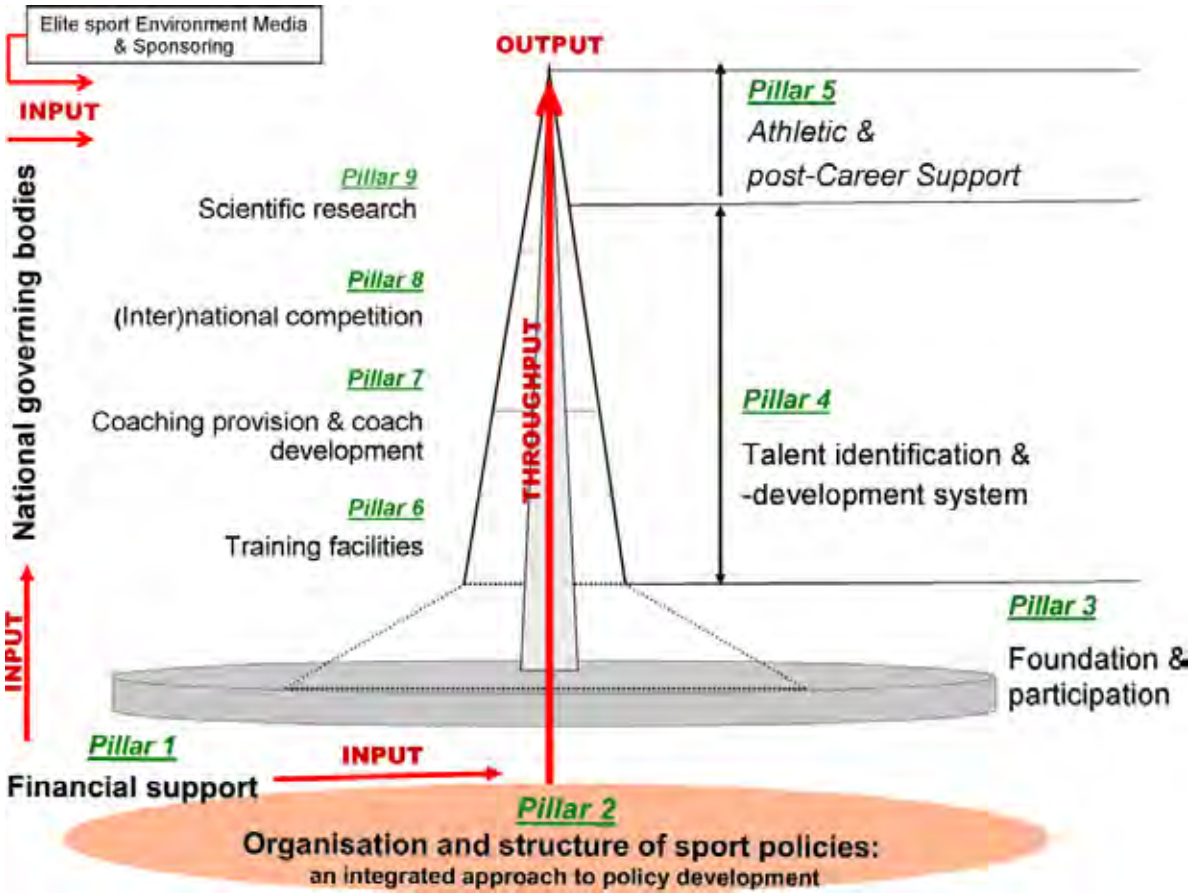
The Greatest Game of All

The System

- The Foundation Pillars
- Financial Support
- Integrated Policy Development
- Foundation and Participation
- Talent ID and Development
- Post Career Support
- Training Facilities
- Coaching Provision and Development
- Competition Structure
- Scientific Research

The System- Foundation Pillars

1. Financial Support
2. Integrated approach to policy
3. Foundation and Participation
4. Talent Identification and Development
5. Athletic and Post-Career Support
6. Training Facilities
7. Coaching Provision and Coach Development
8. (Inter)national competition
9. Scientific Research



De Bosscher et al, 2009.

Currently, the NSWRL is not the master of its own destiny- we have varying levels of control and delivery across each of these pillars.

The System- Foundation Pillars

Two pillars have been identified as being critical in making the difference between success and failure of a system:

- Pillar 4, Talent Identification and Development.
- Pillar 9, Scientific Research

1. Financial Support
2. Integrated approach to policy
3. Foundation and Participation
4. Talent Identification and Development
5. Athletic and Post-Career Support
6. Training Facilities
7. Coaching Provision and Coach Development
8. (Inter)national competition
9. Scientific Research

We have a high level of control of the talent identification and development systems of our Junior reps but little to no evidence on which to base recruitment. Subjective opinions rather than objective evidence and no integrated approach with game development does not allow us to influence the development of the required players.

We currently have no research and innovation function within the department. At the very least, we should be collecting evidence to answer why our success at Junior Rep level is not transferred at a Senior level.

The System- Identified Changes

Financial Support

- We will remove our reliance on the NRL and ARLC for funding through the identification of Government grants for our member clubs and the NSWRL
- A form of Revenue Sharing for all clubs involved in the Senior Competitions will be investigated. In order to create a parity of competition and ensure interconnectivity across all levels, monetary awards are based on the number of affiliations, size of the player base, community engagements undertaken and current financial situation.
- We will recruit a full time staff position of Grants and Awards Officer, responsible for the identification and completion of funding and grant applications for both clubs and the NSWRL.

Integrated Policy

- Merger of the NSW RL and the CRL to produce a single governing body to administer all competitions and programmes across the state.
- The staffing structure of the NSW RL Football department will be re-organised in order to remove people working in silos and adopt an integrated approach to competition and programme management.

Foundation and Participation

- Adopt a state delivery model of the national policy around Game Development, with all game development activity coming under the control of the NSWRL. This brings us in line with other major sports, such as the AFL, and provides a continuous pathway, simplification of administration and an integrated approach to participation and talent identification.
- The creation of a 'rapid response team' of game developers who can be placed in areas of greatest need in order to increase activity and participation, develop players and coaches, establish clubs and support competitions across all age groups

The System- Identified Changes

Talent ID

- We will recruit a full time Performance Solutions Manager, initially to develop a game wide performance analysis system which will provide an evidence base from which to identify and recruit talent to the NSWRL performance programmes.
- We will expand the NSWRL Performance programmes from their current, stand-alone representative week events to year-long programmes with regular contact throughout the year.
- We will recruit a full time Performance Coach, independent of any club activity, to become the Head Coach on all NSWRL junior performance programmes and to identify, recruit and develop potential assistant coaches from within the clubs
- We will create a virtual high performance unit, under the direction of a full time High Performance Manager. The High Performance Manager will act as an intelligent purchaser, identifying needs from within the NSWRL programmes and sourcing solutions from international experts in those areas.

Post Career Support

- Investigate the possibility of a Rugby League apprenticeship in order to ensure that all athletes aged 16-18 are either in vocational training, full time employment or education.
- Every player contracted to play in a NSWRL senior competition must undertake a minimum of 30hours community engagement activities every year

Training Facilities

- Development of a High Performance Training Centre, incorporating cutting edge facilities with a research and innovation function. This centre should act as the training base for all NSWRL performance programmes, the administration centre for the NSWRL and the centre for all player and coach development activity.
- Investigate possible partnerships with NSWIS or Universities in order to provide access to cutting edge sports science, sports medicine, exercise physiology and biomechanics equipment and intellectual expertise.

The System- Identified Changes

Coaching Provision

- Responsibility for coach education and development should transfer to NSWRL, providing an integrated approach to delivery and allowing us to implement a NSW Blues system of coaching and playing that integrates with the National Coaching Qualifications.
- Creation of coaching resources as stand-alone modules which sit outside the national framework but are required for any NSW coach who wishes to coach on the performance pathway. These resources will educate coaches on the NSW Blues coaching and playing philosophies/
- Recruitment of a Coach Education Officer and Coach Development Manager in order to devise, create and deliver NSW Blues coaching resources to pathway and club coaches

(Inter)National Competition

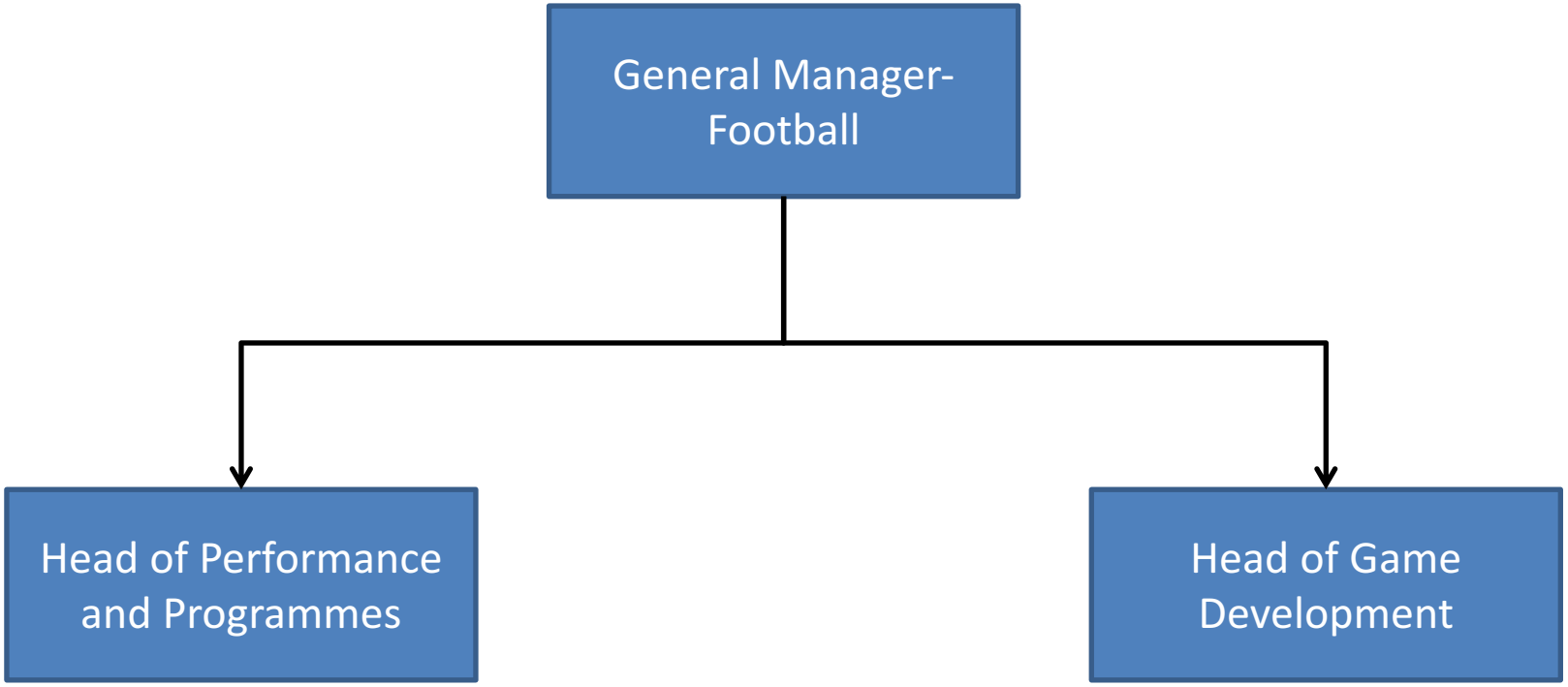
- Adoption of the state competition strategy and structure outlined above.

Scientific Research

- Recruitment of a Research and Innovation Manager, working within the High Performance Centre and managed by the High Performance Manager. Responsible for coordinating, conducting and disseminating all research across NSWRL programmes.
- We will create links and research opportunities with Universities and NSWIS to source cutting edge solutions to performance issues.

Department Design

Department Design



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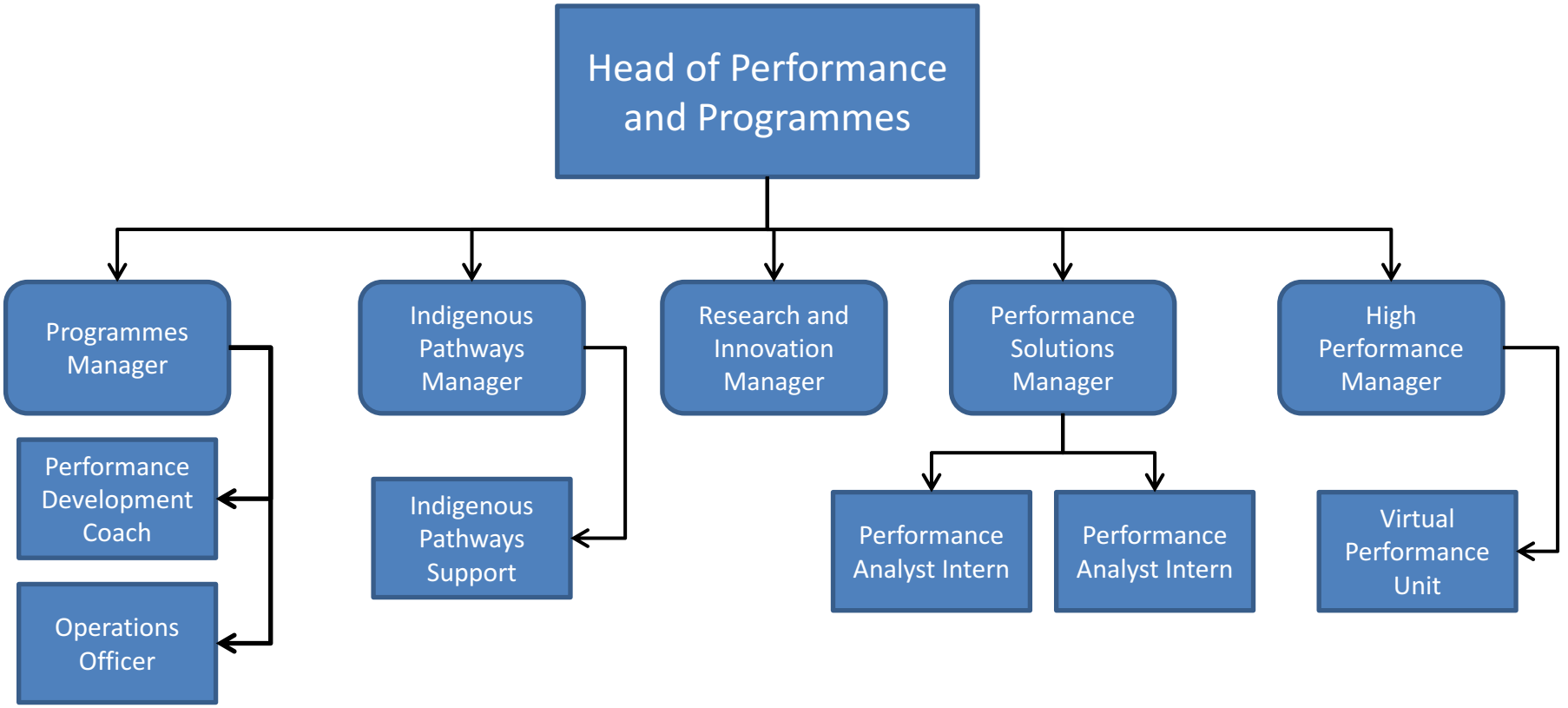

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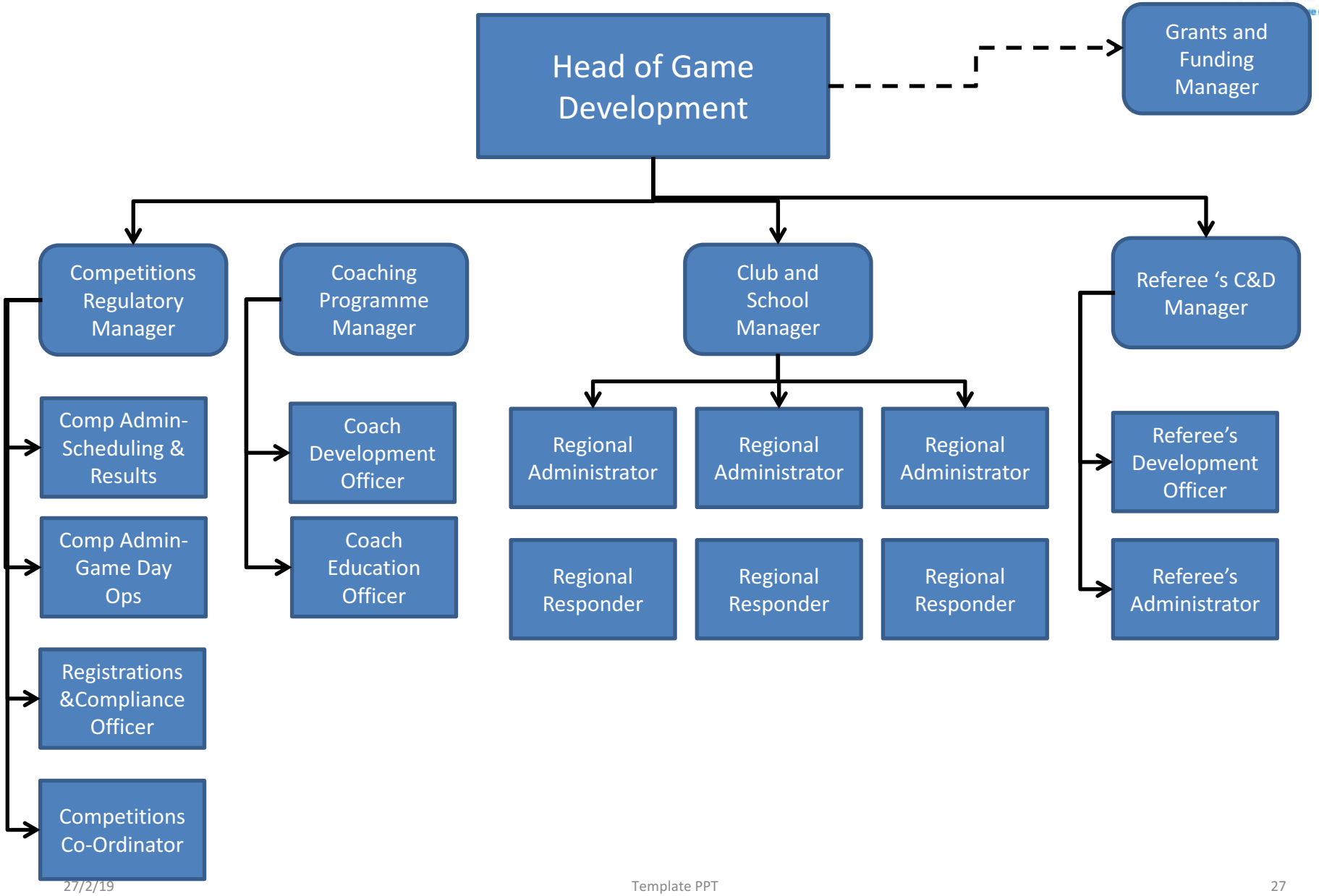

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Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 3

COMPETITION STRUCTURE & ELITE PATHWAYS STRATEGY

Shane Richardson

A FULL REVIEW OF SEASON STRUCTURE - 3 PIECES OF REVIEW

- TOP TIER – 29 SEPTEMBER 2015
- SECOND TIER ELITE PATHWAY – 29 SEPTEMBER 2015
- PARTICIPATION & DEVELOPMENT – MARCH 2016

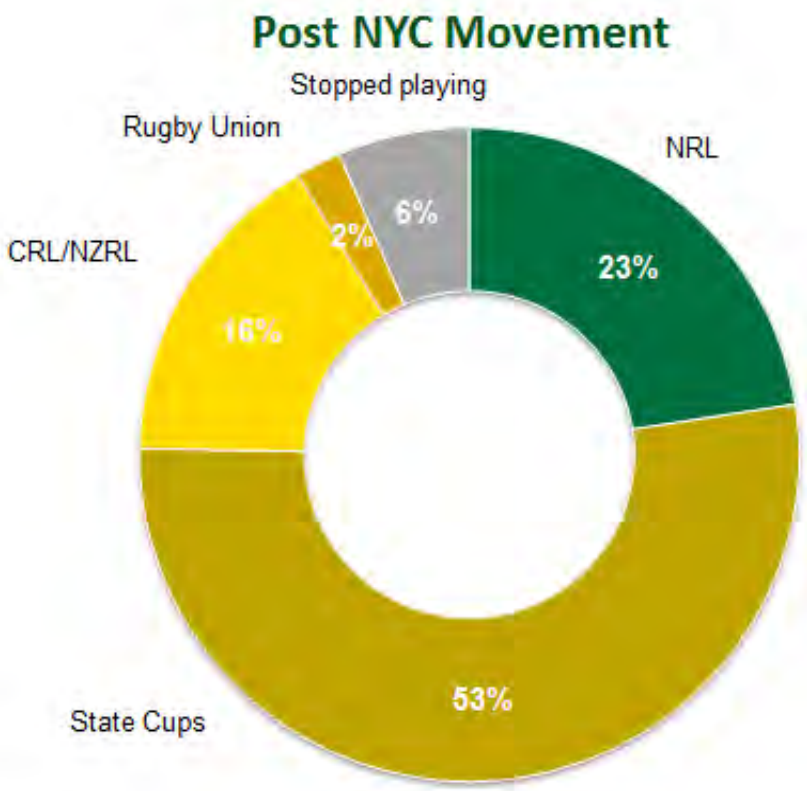
COMMERCIAL RETURN → **PLAYER WELFARE** → **CLUB PROFITABILITY**

KEY POINTS

40	Player welfare for the Top 40 players – review of all matches including All Stars, mid-Season test, Country v City, PMXIII
30	Game hypothesis – Academics/Clubs/Queensland Institute of Sport
✓	Review of number of matches played in Premiership, along with other matches played
12	Week maximum pre-season training
8	Weeks minimum annual leave
2	The maximum number of pre-season matches any player can play
✓	Review of number of Tests played over a 5 year period
✓	Control of games and placement

OUR RESEARCH SHOWS THAT THE TRUE PATHWAY IS THROUGH THE **SECOND TIER AND NOT THE NYC**

We tracked the movement of 1200 NYC players in their final year of NYC over 4 years*



Key Insights

- Only 23% of players leave the NYC and make their NRL debut
- More than 50% of players leave the NYC and play in the State Cup competitions

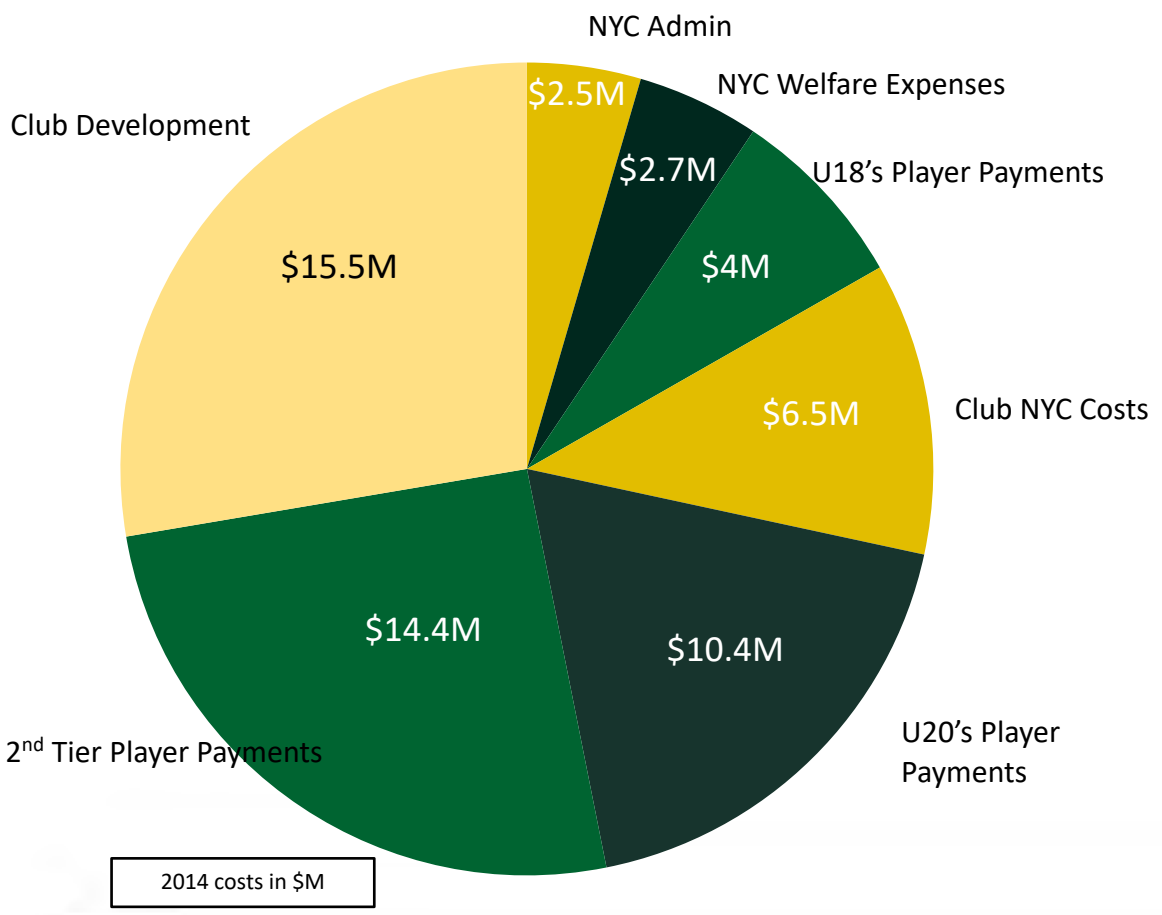
Way Forward

- The pathway should reflect the reality – Players are developing in the State Cup competitions
- The pathway should not hold back the elite players - the top 20% of players will be offered Rookie Contracts with NRL Clubs under the improved pathway

* See Elite Pathways Report for further details

BY IMPROVING THE PATHWAY WE ARE REMOVING AT LEAST **$16M** FROM CLUB BOTTOM LINES

$56M IS BEING SPENT ON PATHWAYS AND DEVELOPMENT GAME WIDE



We estimate we will remove the following expenses from NRL Clubs

- $10.4m in player payments to NYC players
- $6.5m in Club NYC costs (medical, coaches)
- $4m in player payments to U16's & U18's

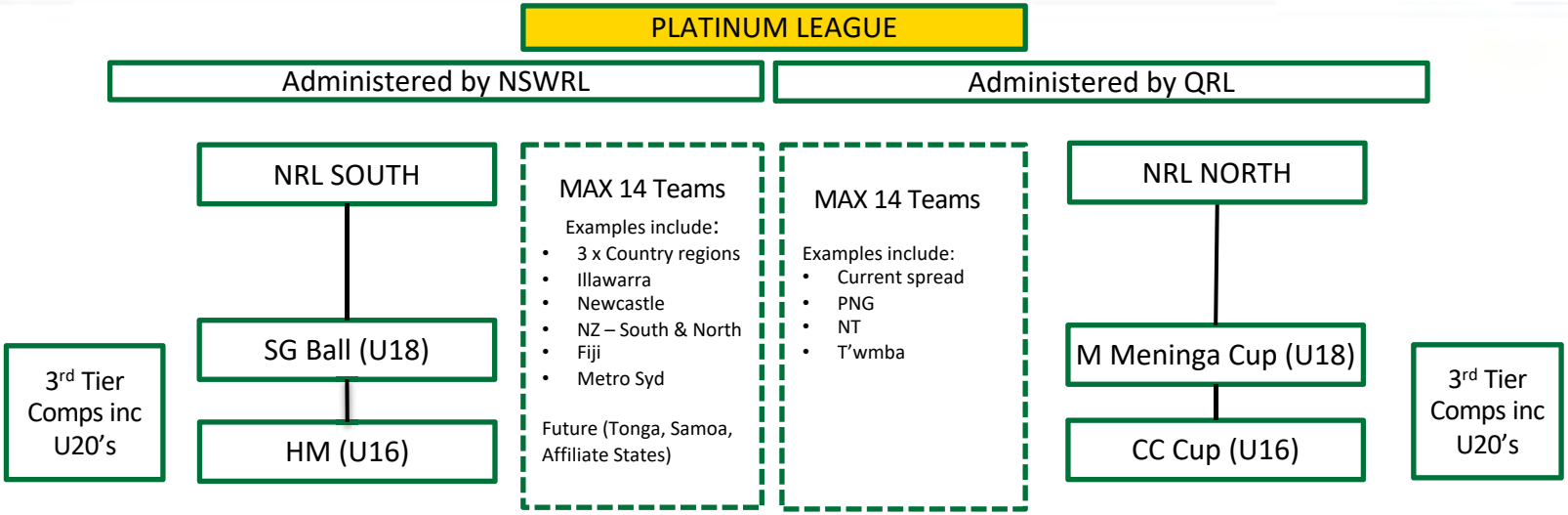
These costs will be replaced with $5.76m of rookie expenses to NRL Clubs.

NRL Clubs will also save on second tier payments.

By reducing Club expenses rather than increasing Club grants, Clubs become more sustainable without adding to player payment costs

* Based on 2014 figures provided to Club & State Services

WE ARE STRENGTHENING, EXPANDING AND IMPROVING THE SECOND TIER AND OVERALL PATHWAY FOR PLAYERS



- Removal of NYC Competition – better pathway
- Status quo re U16's and U18's **with** expansion into other areas (NZ, NSW and QLD Country)
- Stand alone franchises
- Governance by NRL – controlled environment with formal club agreements and application process
- Improving the quality of administration & coaching – quality succession planning for the Game
- Raising the profile and quality of the competition which has broadcast and commercial potential
- By broadening the game's footprint, we capitalise on our strengths over the AFL
- Pathway allows players to stay at home, welfare begins at home
- Maintain current investment in the game but **encourage** and seek new investment

WE ARE RESTRUCTURING:

1. THE ROOKIE SYSTEM
2. INTRODUCING A SECOND TIER CAP
3. EXERCISING MORE CONTROL OVER AGENTS

TOP 30

- Salary Cap inc M.P.A
- 3 Rookies Cap - 360k per year (2 YR) in addition to Top 30
- Year turn 18
- Supplementary Cap
- 150 k (if required)
- Free agent after 2 years

Second Tier

- Second Tier Cap
- 350/400 - 80% use
- Distribution of players from Top 30 + Rookies
- *No players contracted until turn 18*

Agents

- More control by the NRL
- 3 year maximum contract term
- Must have turned 17 to sign contract
- Review of management fees

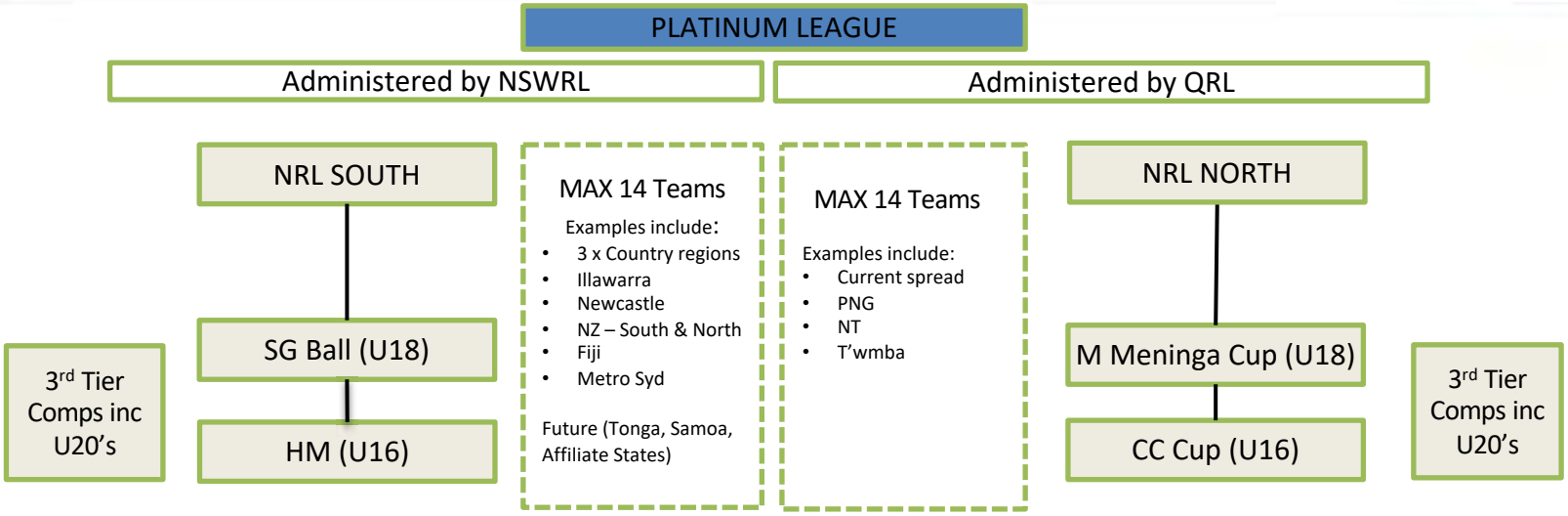
Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 4

Competitions Structure Proposal

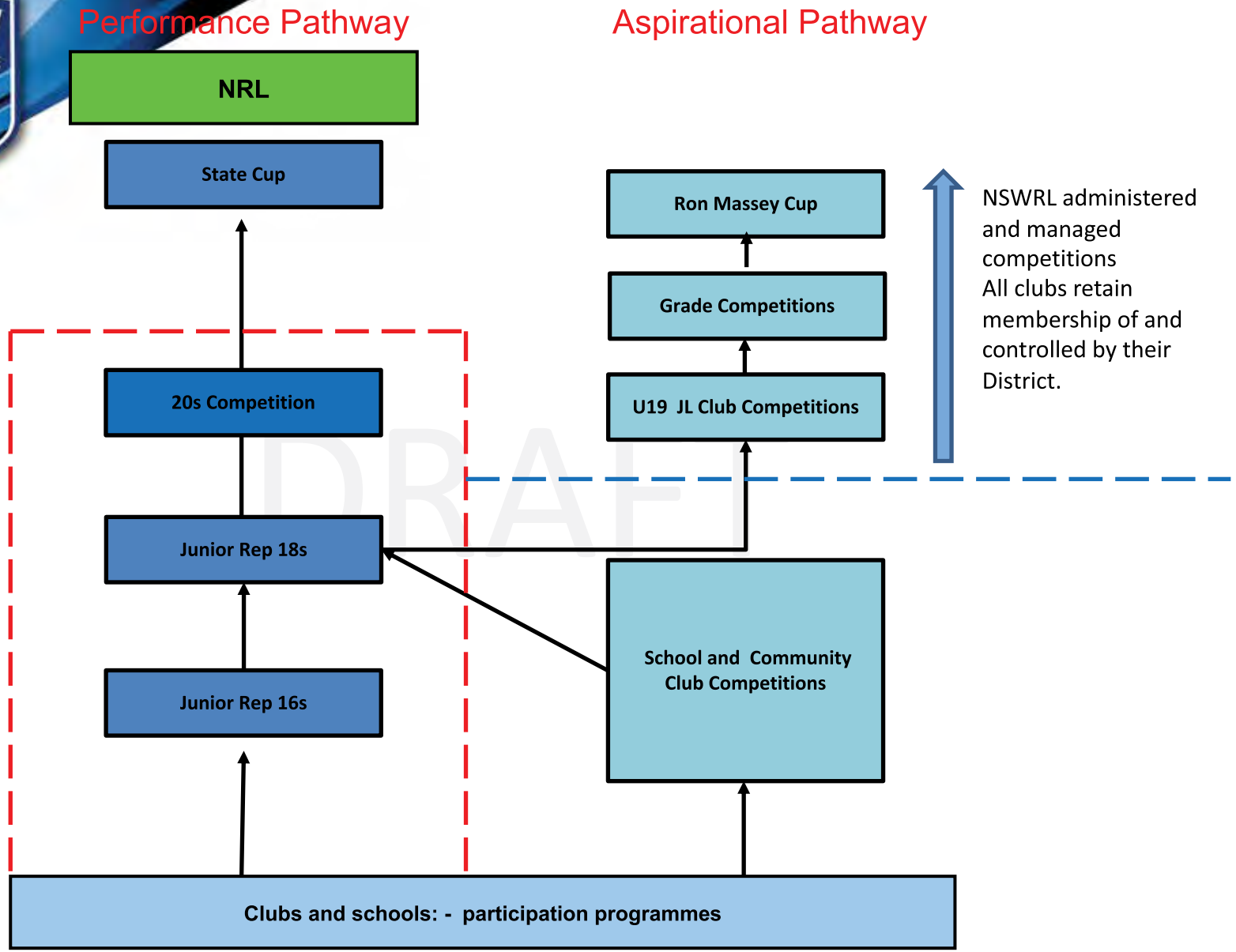
30th July 2015

WE ARE STRENGTHENING, EXPANDING AND IMPROVING THE SECOND TIER AND OVERALL PATHWAY FOR PLAYERS



- Removal of NYC Competition – better pathway
- Status quo re U16's and U18's **with** expansion into other areas (NZ, NSW and QLD Country)
- Stand alone franchises
- Governance by NRL – controlled environment with formal club agreements and application process
- Improving the quality of administration & coaching – quality succession planning for the Game
- Raising the profile and quality of the competition which has broadcast and commercial potential
- By broadening the game's footprint, we capitalise on our strengths over the AFL
- Pathway allows players to stay at home, welfare begins at home
- Maintain current investment in the game but **encourage** and seek new investment

Performance and Aspirational Pathways



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v2.3

Academies- Why and What?

Academies

(Education and Development Regions)

Why?

- Disconnect between game development, competition management and player development within the NSWRL region
- Inflexible strategies for game development and competition management throughout NSWRL region.
- Delivery and competition management based on outdated district boundaries
- Sharing of information between Academies; develop more, better players for NRL as a whole.

What?

- A single body, responsible for delivery of community football, game development, competition management and player development.
- Overarching delivery strategy with individual flexibility within each Academy to meet objectives.
- 8 Academies throughout Sydney, with boundaries based on playing population not Junior Districts.
- Positions funded by ARLC, Academies are contracted to deliver objectives within those boundaries. Mission Command, not hierarchical control
- Provide cutting edge delivery in high quality facilities.

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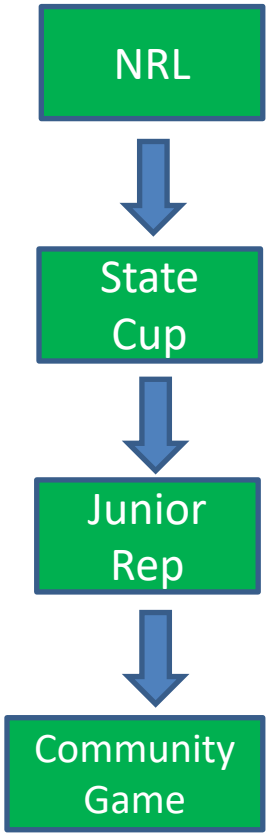
Academies- Boundaries

Sustainable Pathway…

Conversion Rate, between 1:3 and 1:10. Assume the worst!!!



Approx 2-3 contracts per year.

Approx 20-30 players required.

Approx 200-300 players required.

Approx 2000-3000 players required.

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Participation Figures

	2014 Figures	2015 Figures (May 30th)
Balmain	2041	1866
Canterbury	4035	3842
Cronulla	3769	3475
Manly	2597	2066
Parramatta Conv.	804	557
Parramatta	6026	5916
North Sydney	808	823
Penrith	8383	8389
South Sydney	4063	3696
St. George	1647	1279
Western Suburbs	3560	3188
Canberra	4315	3400
	41,873	**38,672**

Boundaries

Based on conversion rates and current participation figures, junior rep programs and player development programs should take place in 8 regions:-

1. Canterbury
2. Cronulla
3. Parramatta
4. Penrith
5. Souths
6. North Shore (Manly/Norths)
7. Central Sydney (Balmain/St.George)
8. Western Sydney (Western Suburbs/Group 6)

Non-NSW regions

1. Canberra
2. Newcastle
3. Illawarra
4. Central Coast- Roosters

Each of these regions should form High Performance “Academies” in high quality facilities.

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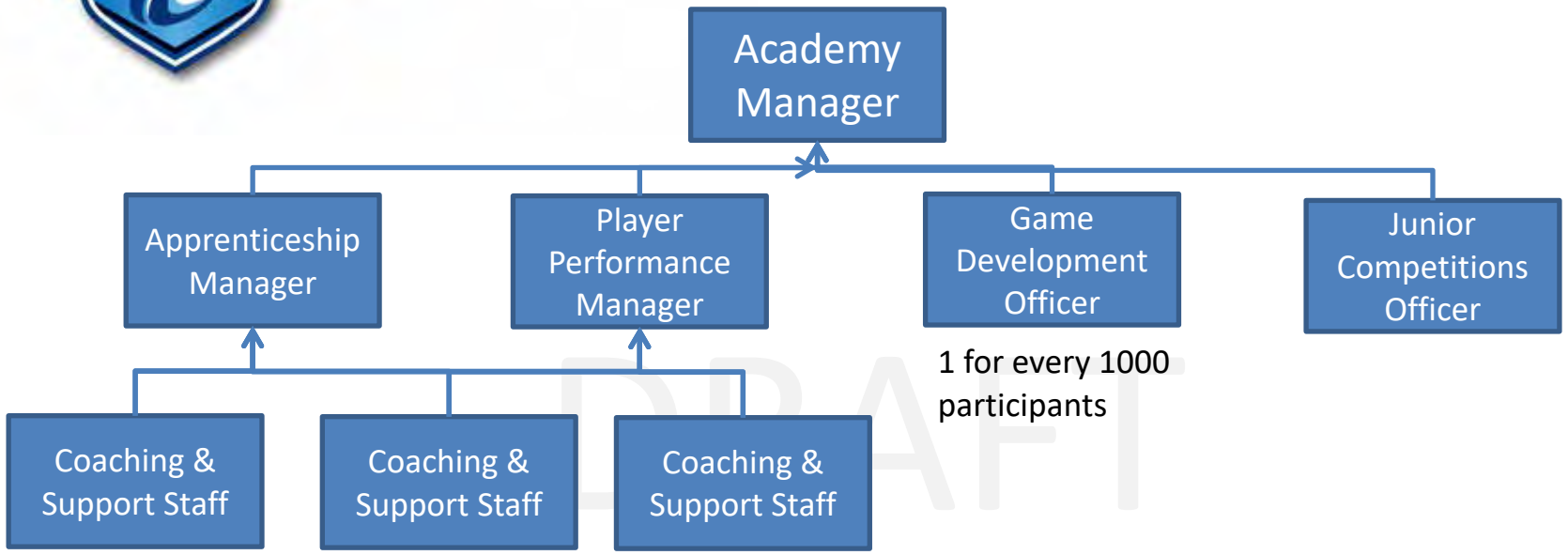
Academies- Staffing Structure

Staffing Structure



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Existing Roles
Apprenticeship Manager= Welfare Officer
Game Development Officers

Roles Requiring Funding
Academy Manager= Football Manager
PPM = C&D Manager

Academies- Competition Formats

Format

Harold Mathews Competition

- U16s age groups
- Development Programs between April and September
- 8 weeks of player and coach development programs, followed by a competition opportunity. Repeated twice
- Inclusive development programs, delivered within community clubs, to all who wish to attend.
- Competition Opportunities- weekend carnivals at the end of term 2 and term 3.
- Academies are able to enter as many teams as they wish into the carnivals.

SG Ball Competition

- U17 and U18 age groups combined.
- 11 week competition, each Academy plays the others once.
- Schedule is reversed each year.
- Top 4 finals series
- Academies enter one team each into the competition
- Larger squad sizes, players selected from within academy boundaries
- Focus remains on inclusive coach and player development programs

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Format

State 20s Competition

- 12 team competition
- One team from each Academy
- 6 rookie contract players (3 from year 1, 3 from year 2), plus further 15-20 apprentices.
- 22 rounds, home and away
- 11 rounds, 4 week break, 11 rounds.
- 6 team final series.

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Apprenticeship Scheme

The Scheme
Cert III Professional Athlete

Apprentices must:-

- have a contract of employment
- receive same benefits of employment as the clubs other employees

The Scheme is split into two training streams:-

1. Rugby Specific- covered through day to day, on field activities associated with the technical and tactical aspects of training to play
2. Key Skills and Generic Educational Components- these can be covered through the Mental, Physical and Lifestyle components of the regular working week such as media skills, diet and nutrition, risk analysis, health and safety. Or they can be tailored to fit the educational needs of the athlete.

Employers receive funding to offset the wages of each apprentice, and the RTO receives funding for the delivery of the Key Skills associated with the scheme.
The Employer can assist in the delivery of key skills components through the role of the Apprenticeship Manager. Each employer would be audited and subject to Internal and External Verification of results.

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The Scheme
Cert III Professional Athlete

U20s

6 Rookies + 19-20 Apprentices

Compulsory 2 year employment contract

12 Team competition

12 x 20= 240 apprentices registered on the scheme

Minimum Trainee Wage is:-

School Leaver- $20,134

School + 1 year - $23,431

School + 2 years- $27,268

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Employer Benefits:-

1. State Funding to offset the Wages of each apprentice- $4000
2. RTO funding to deliver Key Skills components of scheme- up to $4270

Therefore, an minimum contract for an apprentice **could** cost each club as little as:-
School Leavers:- $11,864
School Leaver + 1 year: -$15,161
School Leaver + 2 years: - $18,998
With each club receiving a minimum of $165,400 to offset costs.

Academies- Facilities

Facilities

Options:-

- Clubs deliver Academies from existing facilities, if high quality.

- Partnership with Universities is explored, in order to gain access to sports science support, facilities and administration support. A University partnership in each region without its own high quality facilities.

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Academies- Partnerships

Partnerships

- Sponsors- Clean Skin Academies, whole of game delivery.
- Apprenticeships
- University partners
- Education Delivery Provider

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State Cup

Locations of Teams

Current 12 teams

- Penrith
- Mounties
- NZ Warriors
- Illawarra Cutters
- Wyong
- Canterbury
- Newcastle Knights
- Newtown
- Wests Tigers
- North Sydney
- Manly
- Wentworthville

Proposed Structure- 14 teams

- 2 x CRL
- Newcastle
- Illawarra
- NZ North
- NZ South
- Fiji
- Sydney Metro x 7

No NRL Brands in the 2nd Tier

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Locations of Teams

Problems with Proposed Structure and Locations of Teams

- Is the CRL able to provide a further two viable State Cup teams, given the size of it's population centres.
- Would players move from Sydney to Country for an opportunity to play 2nd tier football.
- It creates a disconnect in the pathway. Players are not able to see a clear progression from the start of the talent pathway to the NRL in the proposed structure.
- Return to play pathway is unclear for NRL players who are injured or do not get picked that week.
- Why Fiji and not WA?

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Q Cup v NSW Cup

Q Cup Team	NRL Affiliate	Dist. To Affiliate	Population	Ave. weekly wage
Wynnum- Manly	Broncos	0km	2,143,121	$1,588
Ipswich Jets	Broncos	39km	180,000	$837
Norths Devils	Broncos	0km	2,143,121	$1,588
Redcliffe Dolphins	Broncos	0km	2,143,121	$1,588
Souths Logan	Broncos	0km	2,143,121	$1,588
CQ Capras	Broncos	635km	83,439	$1,100
Burleigh Bears	Gold Coast	10km	63,414	$1,073
Tweed Heads	Gold Coast	34km	90,254	$746
Townsville Blackhawks	Cowboys	0km	233,907	$1,295
Northern Pride	Cowboys	347km (Cairns)	156,654	$1,057
Mackay Cutters	Cowboys	387km	120,000	$1,173
Easts Tigers	Melbourne Storm	0km	2,143,121	$1,588
Sunshine Coast	Melbourne Storm	4hr flight	282,822	$1,010

Potential Country Locations in NSW Cup

CRL Location	Dist. To Closest NRL team	Population	Ave. weekly wage
Albury	553km (Sydney)	45,627	$1,120
	326km (Melbourne)		
Bathurst	200km	41,682	$866
Tamworth	405km	47,595	$644
Dubbo	400km	36,089	$1,052
Wagga Wagga	245km (Canberra)	54,670	$978
Mudgee	270km	9,830	$1,023
Newcastle	0km	425,895	$1,750
Wollongong	65km	286,587	$1,086

Participation Comparisons

QRL Region	Participation	CRL Region	Participation
Cairns	3837 (11 team A Grade)	Tamworth (Group 4)	1905 (5 team A Grade)
Mackay	3130 (8 team A Grade)	Dubbo (Group 11)	2536 (9 team A Grade)
Townsville	4040 (7 Team A Grade)	Wagga Wagga (Group 9)	2985 (11 Team A Grade)
Sunshine Coast	4659 (6 team A Grade)	Mudgee (Group 10)	2798 (9 Team A Grade)

Finance

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Current State Cup Teams- High Level Finance

Average Total Income	$446,835
Average Player Payments	$331,775
Average Total Expenditure	$724,637
Average Profit/Loss	**-$287,432**

Average Leagues Club Investment	$385,964
Average Game Day Revenue (season)	$37,881

Current Location of Teams

2015

NRL	State Cup	Junior Rep
Canberra	Mounties	Canberra
Canterbury	Canterbury	Canterbury
Cronulla	Newtown	Cronulla
Manly	Manly	Manly
Newcastle	Newcastle	Newcastle
Parramatta	Wenty	Parramatta
Penrith	Penrith	Penrith
Souths	Norths	Souths
Saints/Illa.	Cutters	St.George
		Illawarra
Roosters	Wyong	Roosters Cent. Coast
Warriors	Warriors	Xxxx
Wests Tigers	Wests Tigers	Balmain West.Subs

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Proposed Locations of Teams

2017 and beyond…..

NRL	State Cup	Junior Rep
Canberra		Canberra
Canterbury		Canterbury
Cronulla		Cronulla
Manly		Manly
Newcastle	Newcastle?	Newcastle
Parramatta		Parramatta
Penrith		Penrith
Souths		Souths
Saints/Illa.	Cutters	St.George Illawarra
Roosters		Roosters
Warriors	NZ North NZ South	
Wests Tigers		Balmain West. Subs

Where's WA?
Central Coast Reps?
How do the two new CRL teams fit into the structure?

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Possible Locations of Teams 2017

Academies	State Cup	NRL
Canberra	Mounties	Canberra
Canterbury	Canterbury	Canterbury
Cronulla	Newtown	Cronulla
North Shore	Manly	Manly
Newcastle	Newcastle	Newcastle
Parramatta	Wentworthville	Parramatta
Penrith	Penrith	Penrith
Souths	Norths	Souths
Illawarra	Cutters	Saints/Illa.
Central Coast	Wyong	Roosters
Central Sydney	Balmain	Saints-Illa/Tigers
Western Sydney	Western Suburbs	Wests Tigers
???	Warriors	Warriors

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OPERATIONAL COST COMPARISON

	Operational Costs
Current State Cup Format	$767,505
NRL Proposed Format	$1,707,808
NSWRL Proposed Format	$858,982

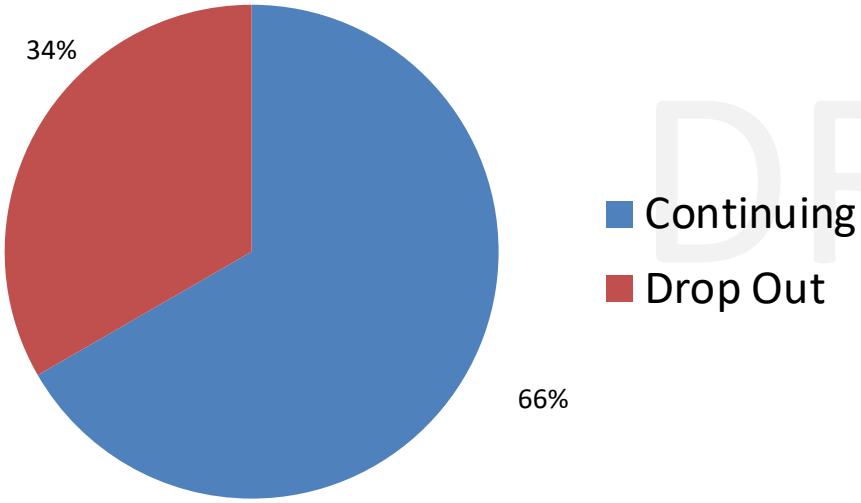
Operational Costs include match officials, flights, accommodation and travel associated with the delivery of the competition.

(NRL format figures are based on CRL teams from Albury and Tamworth, Fiji, Auckland, Christchurch, Newcastle, Illawarra plus 7 Sydney based teams)

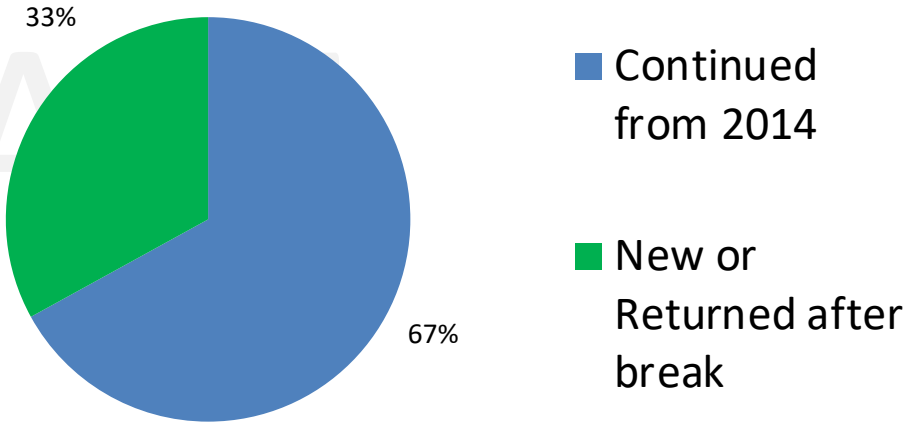
Competition Entry Criteria

Retention v Recruitment Rates

2014 % of JL club players retained vs dropout



2015 % of club players, new or returning after a break of 1+ seasons



Recruitment of new players is high each year, 33% of players in 2015 were new to the game. However, retention of players is poor, with 34% of participants from 2014 being lost to the game. Retention is a NSWRL and Junior League issue, rather than an NRL one.

Retention

The Quality of the experience, for both players and parents, is a significant factor in athletes not returning to the sport.
In a recent retention study in North Sydney, the following factors were identified as the main reasons for a poor experience:-

- Access to notice of team draws and schedules
- Balance of competition
- Standards of facilities for parents
- Implementation of code of conduct for spectators, volunteers and players
- Standards of facilities for participants.

Further work should be carried out in order to determine a wider picture than just one JL District, however, these are all issues which need to be addressed by the NSWRL and the Junior Leagues in order to provide a safe, consistent environment and culture for players and parents to participate in.
The implementation of competition entry criteria will be a key component of this.

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State Cup- The Gold Shield

The Gold Shield

State Cup Entry Requirement

1. Governance + Administration
2. Finance
3. Marketing
4. Media
5. Facilities
6. On Field
7. Welfare

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The Gold Shield

State Cup Entry Requirement

1. **Governance + Administration:** - constitution, insurance, incorporation certificate, management of club (board, CEO etc), reporting and minuting, job descriptions, strategic plan (short, medium and long term), risk management policies, enforce code of conduct, qualified staff. Policy compliance
2. **Finance**:- annual budget, P&L, forecast and re-forecast, computerised accounting, audited accounts, access to government grants. Investment plan to grow the game, do they own their own ground/stadium, salary cap
3. **Marketing**:- CRM database, sponsorship compliance , membership base, sponsor database, marketing strategy, merchandise- product and facility
4. **Media:** - website, regular updates, social media, connected with Leaguenet
5. **Facilities**:- facilities audit, lights, fields, changing rooms, gym, drug testing room, medical room, club house, match officials room, canteen/restaurant, spectator facilities, grandstand, video platform, scoreboard, PA, parking, leagues club. Is it a shared facility, emergency medical equipment
6. **On Field:-** appropriately qualified and sufficient coaches, trainers, managers, players.
7. **Community & Welfare**:- Volunteer recruitment & activation, good sports scheme, responsible alcohol policy, sun safe and heat etc. Training needs + CPD for players and staff. Player welfare program, welfare officer, relationships with JL and J Clubs

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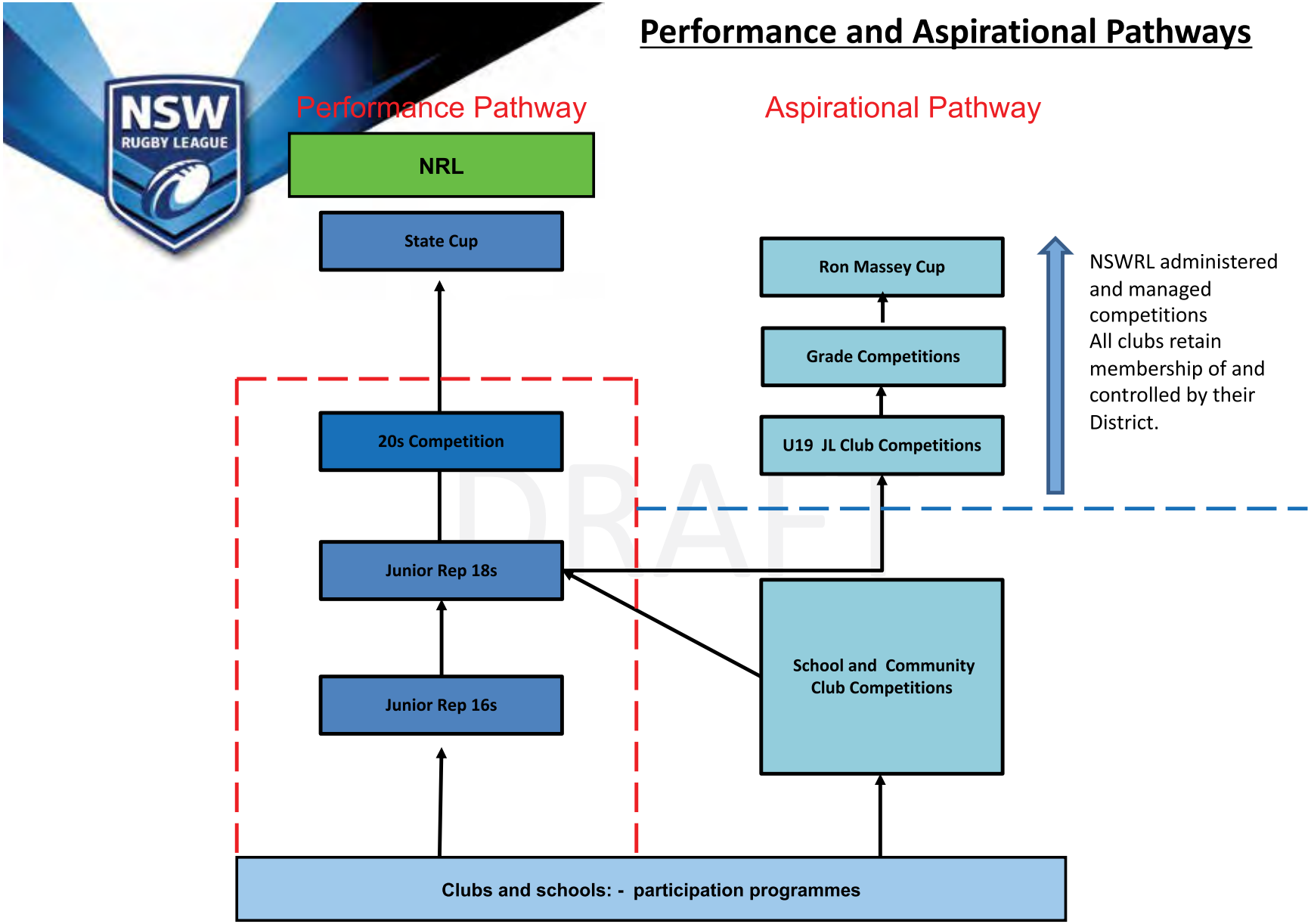
Participation Pathway

Performance and Aspirational Pathways



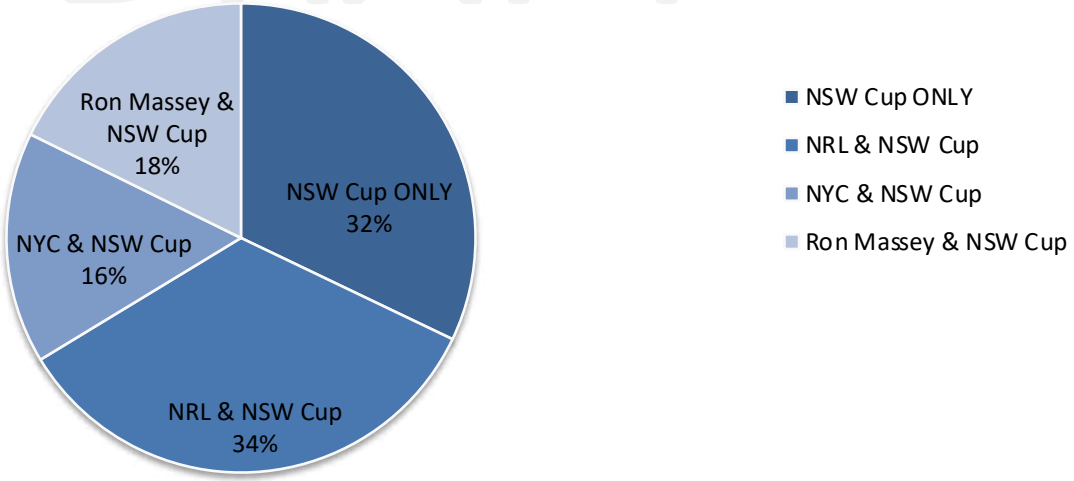
Participation Pathway

Observations

- Too many environments- why do we need a Sydney Shield and a Ron Massey? The clubs involved can't tell us either.
- Current clubs too strong for A Grade- is that the fault of the clubs or the structure of the A Grade comps. Is this even true?
- Creation of Sydney Shield is claimed to have ruined A Grade- is this true?

Evidence Required

- Number of athletes who graduate from RM to State Cup or NRL?



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Participation Pathway- Competition Structure

Competition Structure- Principals

- Competition based on ability rather than location
- Minimise cost but provide the opportunity to progress if needed.
- Consideration given to promotion and relegation between the tiers
- Ability to retain traditional fixtures and the profile of District GF's
- Allow clubs to play more than one grade at the same venue on the same day
- Tiered structure to the competitions, both in ability and geographical spread.
- Quality of officiating (referee, ground manager, concussion officials etc) and match review must be retained in top 2 tiers of competition.

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Recommendation

Parramatta
Manly
North Sydney
Penrith
Wests JL
Group 6
Canterbury
St George
Balmain
Easts
Souths
Cronulla

U6 – U12

North West
North
West
South West
Central
South East

U13 – A
(Tier 3)

Sydney North
Sydney South

Tier 2

Ron Massey Cup

Tier 1

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Participation Pathway

Tier 1- Ron Massey Cup

- Prestige Tournament, recreating history of NSWRL
- Created as an attractive competition for those teams who don't meet entry requirement for the performance pathway or who wish to enter both
- 10 team competition, played across all Junior League Districts and CRL Boundaries
- Each Ron Massey Cup team must have affiliation with a number of Tier 2 teams within its Junior District.

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Participation Pathway

Tier 2 Competitions- Metropolitan North and South

- Played across boundaries, based on regions. .
- According to player supply.
- Competitions administered by the NSWRL, clubs registered and affiliated to their own Junior League.
- PPIS system for all grade comps to ensure even competition
- Winner of Tier 2 North and South competitions enters final series to play off for overall Tier 2 Champion
- Possibility of relegation to Tier 3 competition.

DRAFT

Proposed A Grade Tier 1 & 2

CURRENT

Ron Massey Cup

11 teams

Mounties
Wentworthville
Asquith
Blacktown
Auburn
Windsor
Guilford
Cabramatta
Western Suburbs
Concord Burwood
Kingsgrove

Sydney Shield

13 teams

Wentworthville
Windsor
Mounties
Peninsula Seagulls
Hills District
East Campbelltown
Guildford
Blacktown Workers
Asquith
Auburn
Cabramatta
Western Suburbs
Belrose

PROPOSED

Ron Massey Cup

10 teams

Mounties
Wentworthville
Asquith
Blacktown
Auburn
Windsor
Guilford
Cabramatta
Western Suburbs
Concord Burwood

Metropolitan North

10 teams

Wentworthville
Windsor
Mounties
Peninsula Seagulls
Hills District
Guildford
Blacktown Workers
Asquith
Belrose
Central Coast / Newcastle

Metropolitan South

10 teams

Illawarra 1
Illawarra 2
Illawarra 3
Kingsgrove
Cronulla
South Sydney
East Campbelltown
Auburn
Western Suburbs
Cabramatta

DRAFT

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 5

18 January 2018

Dave Collins / Barrie-Jon Mather
School of Sport & Wellbeing
University of Central Lancashire

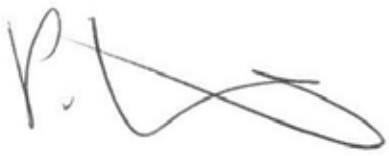
Dear Dave / Barrie-Jon

Re: STEMH Ethics Committee Application
Unique Reference Number: **STEMH 515 CA Third phase**

The STEMH ethics committee has granted approval of your proposal application 'Performance Pathway Structure and Assessment Criteria - Phase Three'. Approval is granted up to the end of project date* and is conditional upon amending the application form in all the relevant places (e.g. 1.7, 2.7) so that it reflects what is said in the response to conditions document. It is your responsibility to ensure that

- the project is carried out in line with the information provided in the forms you have submitted
- you regularly re-consider the ethical issues that may be raised in generating and analysing your data
- any proposed amendments/changes to the project are raised with, and approved, by Committee
- you notify EthicsInfo@uclan.ac.uk if the end date changes or the project does not start
- serious adverse events that occur from the project are reported to Committee
- a closure report is submitted to complete the ethics governance procedures (Existing paperwork can be used for this purposes e.g. funder's end of grant report; abstract for student award or NRES final report. If none of these are available use e-Ethics Closure Report Proforma).

Yours sincerely



Peter Lucas
Chair
BAHSS Ethics Committee

* for research degree students this will be the final lapse date

NB - Ethical approval is contingent on any health and safety checklists having been completed and necessary approvals gained as a result.

21 August 2018

Dave Collins / Barrie-jon Mather
School of Sport and Wellbeing
University of Central Lancashire

Dear Dave / Barrie-jon

Re: STEMH Ethics Committee Application
Unique Reference Number: **STEMH 515 2nd Phase**

The STEMH ethics committee has granted approval of your proposal application 'Performance Pathway Structure and Assessment Criteria'. **This approval is conditional on the following:- (a) the 3rd party DP contract is approved by a member of UCLan's data protection or contracts team; (b) both the hard drive and USB are encrypted to ensure no loss of personal data whilst being transferred; and (c) data is uploaded to secure folder on the UCLan server**. Approval is granted up to the end of project date*.

It is your responsibility to ensure that

- the project is carried out in line with the information provided in the forms you have submitted
- you regularly re-consider the ethical issues that may be raised in generating and analysing your data
- any proposed amendments/changes to the project are raised with, and approved, by Committee
- you notify roffice@uclan.ac.uk if the end date changes or the project does not start
- serious adverse events that occur from the project are reported to Committee
- a closure report is submitted to complete the ethics governance procedures (Existing paperwork can be used for this purposes e.g. funder's end of grant report; abstract for student award or NRES final report. If none of these are available use e-Ethics Closure Report Proforma).

Additionally, STEMH Ethics Committee has listed the following recommendation(s) which it would prefer to be addressed. Please note, however, that the above decision will not be affected should you decide not to address any of these recommendation(s).

Continued/..

Should you decide to make any of these recommended amendments, please forward the amended documentation to roffice@uclan.ac.uk for its records and indicate, by completing the attached grid, which recommendations you have adopted. Please do not resubmit any documentation which you have **not** amended.

Yours sincerely

Ambreen Chohan
Chair
STEMH Ethics Committee

* for research degree students this will be the final lapse date

NB - Ethical approval is contingent on any health and safety checklists having been completed, and necessary approvals as a result of gained.

5th October 2016

Dave Collins/Barrie-jon Mather
School of Sport and Wellbeing
University of Central Lancashire

Dear Dave/Barrie-jon,

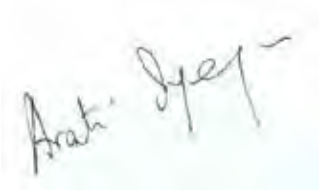
Re: STEMH Ethics Committee Application
Unique Reference Number: **STEMH 515**

The STEMH ethics committee has granted approval of your proposal application 'Performance Pathway Structure and Assessment Criteria_1st Phase'. Approval is granted up to the end of project date* or for 5 years from the date of this letter, whichever is the longer.

It is your responsibility to ensure that:

- the project is carried out in line with the information provided in the forms you have submitted
- you regularly re-consider the ethical issues that may be raised in generating and analysing your data
- any proposed amendments/changes to the project are raised with, and approved, by Committee
- you notify roffice@uclan.ac.uk if the end date changes or the project does not start
- serious adverse events that occur from the project are reported to Committee
- a closure report is submitted to complete the ethics governance procedures (Existing paperwork can be used for this purposes e.g. funder's end of grant report; abstract for student award or NRES final report. If none of these are available use e-Ethics Closure Report Proforma).

Yours sincerely,



Arati Iyengar
Vice-Chair
STEMH Ethics Committee

* for research degree students this will be the final lapse date

NB - Ethical approval is contingent on any health and safety checklists having been completed, and necessary approvals as a result of gained.

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 6

NSWRL PARTICIPANT RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

FINAL DRAFT QUESTIONNAIRE

1st June, 2016

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INTRODUCTION

Hi!

New South Wales Rugby League is seeking your support in completing a short survey aimed at identifying and addressing the issues of current participation rates within the NSWRL Junior Leagues and clubs. We have tasked GEMBA to carry out this survey on our behalf in the hope that it will provide us with some insight to address current falling rates of participation and allow us to provide athletes and parents with a safe and welcoming environment to participate in.

You have been invited to participate as our records indicate that you have played Rugby League in the past and have provided your consent to be contacted. At this stage, we must make it clear that you are under no obligation to complete the survey since participation is entirely voluntary. Information can only be collected from complete surveys and you are free to withdraw from the process at any stage. An incomplete survey will not be collected and the information contained within it will not be available to use by us.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and your participation in this survey would be very much appreciated.

We assure you that your personal responses will remain completely anonymous; if you elect to be included in the prize draw to win ***2017 STATE OF ORIGIN/BLATCHY'S BLUES TICKETS (5 packages available!)*** by providing your email address, we will not attach your contact information to your individual responses. This survey complies with the Australian Market & Social Research Society's codes of practice and all responses will be pooled together and analysed as a part of the overall sample.

We thank you in advance for your time and participation in this survey.

Thank you!

New South Wales Rugby League

QUOTA	Sample Source	Sample Size
NSWRL Participant List	Lists	Exhaust Quotas assign to age/gender/regions

ROUTING	Recommended Survey Respondents	Survey Support
Below age of 12 (4-12)	Parents to complete survey	Kids recommended to sit in
Above age of 13 (13-15)	Child to complete survey	Provide option for parents to sit in
Participant registering with own email (assume 16+)	Child/participant to complete survey	Parent's involvement not required

PROFILING

ASK ALL

QS1. Before we get started, could you please indicate whether you or any of your immediate family works in market research?
SINGLE RESPONSE

- Yes — **Terminate** 01
- No 02

ASK ALL

QS2. Are you male or female?
SINGLE RESPONSE

- Male 01
- Female 02

ASK ALL

QS3. What is your age?
SINGLE RESPONSE

ENTER YOUR AGE

ASK ALL

QS4. Which of these regions do you live in?
SINGLE RESPONSE

- Other (please specify) 09

REFER TO APPENDIX FOR METRO SYDNEY REGION BREAKDOWN

ASK ALL

QS5. How would you describe yourself?
SINGLE RESPONSE

- Parent of a child who participates in rugby league 01
- I, myself, participate in rugby league 02

ASK IF QS5 = CODE 1 (PARENT)

QS6. You mentioned you are a parent of a child that participates in rugby league, what is the age and gender of your child?

If you have more than one child, please base your response on the child you have been invited to provide comment on (as per invitation email).
SINGLE RESPONSE

CHILD	QS5A. GENDER **[SINGLE RESPONSE]**		QS5B. AGE **[SINGLE RESPONSE]**
	Male	Female	DROP DOWN (0-18)
CHILD	1	2	_____

INSTRUCTION PAGES

1) Parents of child aged 4-12 (QS5=1; CHILD AGE 12 AND UNDER)

You have told us you are a parent of a child who is playing rugby league and is aged 12 and under. We would like to invite you to complete this survey on behalf of your child. If possible, please have your child accompany you when completing this survey, in order to get his/her views.

2) Participant aged 13-15 (QS5=1; CHILD AGE BETWEEN 13 AND 15)

You have told us you are a parent of a child who is playing rugby league and is between the age of 13 and 15. We would like to invite your child to complete this survey, under your supervision. But first, we would like to get your permission for your child completing this survey:

OPTION 1: Yes, I give permission to my child completing this survey
OPTION 2: No, I prefer not to give permission to my child completing this survey

3) Own email participate – Assume 16+ (QS5=2)

You have told us you are currently participating in rugby league and we are interested in your views of the sport and your experience playing in Junior Rugby League Competition.

SECTION A – KEY INFLUENCES ON SPORTS PARTICIPATION (PARENT ONLY SECTION)

ASK IF PARENT QS5 = CODE 1

QA1. Thinking of the impact that sports or forms of exercise have on your child's development. In your opinion, how important are sports or forms of exercise in developing each of the following?

SINGLE RESPONSE

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Critical
My child's motor skill development (e.g. catching, throwing, kicking etc.)	1	2	3	4
My child's physical development	1	2	3	4
My child's health and fitness	1	2	3	4
My child's social skills	1	2	3	4
My child's self esteem	1	2	3	4
My child's ability to cope with winning and losing	1	2	3	4

ASK IF PARENT QS5 = CODE 1

QA2. Thinking about **team sports** in general. In your opinion, how well do **team sports** contribute to the development of each of the following?

SINGLE RESPONSE

	Not at all well	Somewhat well	Very well	Extremely well
My child's motor skill development (e.g. catching, throwing, kicking etc.)	1	2	3	4
My child's physical development	1	2	3	4
My child's health and fitness	1	2	3	4
My child's social skills	1	2	3	4
My child's self esteem	1	2	3	4
My child's ability to cope with winning and losing	1	2	3	4

ASK IF PARENT QS5 = CODE 1

QA3. Thinking about **rugby league** in general. In your opinion, how well does **rugby league** contribute to the development of each of the following?

SINGLE RESPONSE

	Not at all well	Somewhat well	Very well	Extremely well
My child's motor skill development (e.g. catching, throwing, kicking etc.)	1	2	3	4
My child's physical development	1	2	3	4
My child's health and fitness	1	2	3	4
My child's social skills	1	2	3	4
My child's self esteem	1	2	3	4
My child's ability to cope with winning and losing	1	2	3	4

ASK IF PARENT QS5 = CODE 1

QA4. Who is the primary decision maker when it comes to your child participating in sport? By this, we mean choosing which sports to be involved in and where to play.

SINGLE RESPONSE

Me (as a parent) or other parent/guardian	1
My child	2

ASK IF PARENT QS5 = CODE 1

QA5. Thinking about the following question from *YOUR PERSPECTIVE AS A PARENT* (not your child's) how important are each of the following, TO YOU, as to why your child participates in rugby league? Please allocate 100 points across the reasons to best reflect how important each is TO YOU.

Please make sure the number of points adds to 100, and distribute the points however YOU wish. For example if YOU WANT your child to participate for only relaxation and social interaction, and they are equally important reasons, you might give them 50 points each, and the other reasons no points at all.

Relaxation	1
Fitness	2
Competition / achievement	3
Fun / enjoyment	4
Social interaction	5
Learning / developing new skills	6
To be part of a team	7

SECTION B – CURRENT RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION (GENERAL)

DP NOTE:
Parents of child aged 4-12 (QS5=1; CHILD AGE 12 AND UNDER): Show 'your child' in all responses
Participant aged 13-15 (QS5=1; CHILD AGE BETWEEN 13 AND 15): Show 'you' in all responses
Participant registering with own email (QS5=2): Show 'you' in all responses

ASK ALL

QB1. Which of the following rugby league programs have you [your child] ever participated in?

MULTIPLE RESPONSE

RANDOMISE RESPONSE

DP: NONE OF THE ABOVE IS EXCLUSIVE OPTION

- Backyard League ○ 01
- Rugby league competition at school ○ 02
- Rugby league socially or casually at school ○ 03
- 1, 2 ,3 Rugby League ○ 04
- Junior Rugby League Competition ○ 05
- Private classes ○ 06
- Rugby league socially or casually at a park or at home ○ 07
- None of the above **(TERMINATE)** ○ 08

ASK ALL

QB2. Besides rugby league, which of the following sports or forms of exercise did you [your child] participate in the past 12 months?

MULTIPLE RESPONSE

INSERT SPORT LIST A

ASK ALL

QB3. Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates you are not at all passionate, and where 5 indicates you [your child] are highly passionate, please indicate **your [your child's] level of passion** for each of the following sports.

SINGLE RESPONSE

		Not at all passionate				Highly passionate
1	AFL Football	1	2	3	4	5
2	Athletics	1	2	3	4	5
3	Basketball	1	2	3	4	5
4	Cricket	1	2	3	4	5
5	Cycling	1	2	3	4	5
6	Netball	1	2	3	4	5
7	Rugby League	1	2	3	4	5
8	Rugby Union	1	2	3	4	5
9	Football (Soccer)	1	2	3	4	5
10	Skateboarding	1	2	3	4	5
11	Surfing	1	2	3	4	5
12	Swimming	1	2	3	4	5
13	Tennis	1	2	3	4	5
14	Motor Sports	1	2	3	4	5

ASK ALL

QB4. At what age did you [your child] start playing rugby league?

SINGLE RESPONSE

DROP DOWN BOX

Under 4	01
4 years old	02
5 years old	03
6 years old	04
7 years old	05
8 years old	06
9 years old	07
10 years old	08
11 years old	09
12 years old	10
Older than 12 years old	11

ASK ALL

QB5. During the rugby league season, how frequently do you [does your child] participate in rugby league?

SINGLE RESPONSE

Each day	1
Several times per week	2
Once or twice a week	3
Once a week	4
Once every two weeks	5
Once every three weeks	6
Once a month	7
Once every one to two months	8
Once every three months	9
Less often than every three months	10

ASK ALL

QB6. How important are each of these things as to why you [your child] participates in rugby league? Please allocate 100 points across the reasons to best reflect how important each is for you [your child]. If you are a parent answering this question, please answer this from **your child's perspective**.

Please make sure the number of points adds to 100, and distribute the points however you [your child] wish. For example if you [your child] participate for only relaxation and social interaction, and they are equally important reasons, your child might give them 50 points each, and the other reasons no points at all.

Relaxation	1
Fitness	2
Competition / achievement	3
Fun / enjoyment	4
Social interaction	5
Learning / developing new skills	6
To be part of a team	7

ASK ALL

QB7. Which of the following sports are offered in your [your child's] school?

MULTIPLE RESPONSE

INSERT SPORTS LIST A	1

ASK ALL

QB8. You mentioned you [your child] played rugby league at school and in the Junior Rugby League Competition, which one of these came first?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- Played at school first, then Junior League ○ 01
- Played in Junior League first, then at school ○ 02
- Started both at the same time ○ 03
- I'm not sure ○ 04

ASK ALL

QB9. Now thinking about rugby league in general, please indicate which of these words (shown below) you associate with rugby league. Indicate as many words as you think apply.

ROTATE STATEMENTS

BRAND ATTRIBUTES	
Australian	Cool
Innovative	Safe
Exciting	Dangerous
Modern	For young people
Gaining popularity	For older people
Losing popularity	Ageless
Popular	Boring
Fun	Exclusive
Has integrity	Community involved
Accessible	International
Aggressive	Relaxing
Social	Intimidating
Tough/ physical	Multicultural

SECTION C – JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE COMPETITION PROGRAM EVALUATION

Now, we want to understand your [your child's] experience participating in the Junior Rugby League Competition

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC1. Which of the following Junior Rugby League Competition do you [does your child] participate in?
SINGLE RESPONSE

Insert Drop Down box with Junior Rugby League Competition (INSERT JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE COMPETION LIST)

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC2. How many seasons have you [your child] been playing Junior Rugby League Competition?
SINGLE RESPONSE

1	01
2	02
3	03
4	04
5	05
6	06
7	07
8	08
9	09
10	10
More than 10	11

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC3 How long does it take for you [your child] to travel (one way) to the primary/main venue or sporting ground where your child plays Junior Rugby League Competition?
SINGLE RESPONSE

Less than 15 minutes	1
16 - 30 minutes	2
31 – 45 minutes	3
46 – 60 minutes	3
61 – 75 minutes	4
76 - 90 minutes	5

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC4. Now thinking about your **Junior Rugby League Competition**, please indicate which of these words (shown below) you associate with Junior Rugby League Competition. Indicate as many words as you think apply.
MULTIPLE RESPONSE
ROTATE STATEMENTS

BRAND ATTRIBUTES	
Australian	Cool
Innovative	Safe
Exciting	Dangerous

Modern	For young people
Gaining popularity	For older people
Losing popularity	Ageless
Popular	Boring
Fun	Exclusive
Has integrity	Community involved
Accessible	International
Aggressive	Relaxing
Social	Intimidating
Tough/ physical	Multicultural

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC5. Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'very dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied'; please rate the following aspects of **COMPETITION AND CLUB ADMINISTRATION** in your Junior Rugby League Competition?

SINGLE RESPONSE

	Very dissatisfied										Extremely satisfied
Conduct of volunteers	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Program/club accessibility	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of registration	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Access to Junior League information	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Communication from the club	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Draw/fixture	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Welcoming and friendly club environment	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Club link to school and the broader community	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Provides appropriate modified formats	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Competition caters for different age and ability levels	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Education and support of volunteers	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Communication from the Junior League	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

ASK ALL

QC6. Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'very dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', please rate the following aspects of the **GAME DAY EXPERIENCE** in your Junior Rugby League Competition?

SINGLE RESPONSE

	Very dissatisfied										Extremely satisfied
Attitudes and behavior of other parents	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sportsmanship of players on other teams	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Quality of playing venue/facilities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Time of matches	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Activities for parents	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Community atmosphere i.e. welcoming, friendly	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Competing against similar size and skill level	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Quality of officiating	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Attitudes and behavior of coaches	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Respect for officials	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Safe environment	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC7. Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'very dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', please rate the following aspects of **SKILL & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT** in your Junior Rugby League Competition?

SINGLE RESPONSE

	Very dissatisfied										Extremely satisfied
Coaching – knowledge and skills of coaches	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Coaching – attitude of coaches	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Appropriate training programs and activities for different ages and skill levels	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Equal opportunity for team members at training and on game day	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Frequency of training sessions	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Learning life skills through rugby league	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Development of skills (catch, pass, kick, tackle)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Safe and positive training environment	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC8. Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 is 'extremely satisfied', please rate how satisfied you are with the experience participating in Junior Rugby League Competition?

SINGLE RESPONSE

	Extremely dissatisfied										Extremely satisfied
Satisfaction with Junior Rugby League Competition	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC9. What do you [does your child] like most about playing in the Junior Rugby League Competition?

OPEN ENDER

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC10. What do you [does your child] dislike most about playing in the Junior Rugby League Competition?

OPEN ENDER

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC11. How much are you currently spending annually on registrations fees [for your child] to participate in Junior Rugby League Competition?

$____.____ [ALLOW NUMERIC RESPONSE ONLY]

I'm not sure

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC12. How much are you currently spending annually [for your child] on participation in Junior Rugby League Competition, besides registrations fees (transport cost, equipment, etc.)?

$____.____ [ALLOW NUMERIC RESPONSE ONLY]

I'm not sure

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC13. Compared to other sports programs out there, how does Junior Rugby League Competition compare in terms of cost?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- It is cheaper ○ 01
- Around the same ○ 02
- It is more expensive ○ 03
- I am not sure ○ 04

ASK IF QB2=CODE 5 (PARTICIPATE IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE)

QC14. How likely are you [is your child] to return to play in Junior Rugby League Competition next season?

SINGLE RESPONSE

Very Likely	○ 01
Likely	○ 02
Not sure	○ 03
Unlikely	○ 04
Very Unlikely	○ 05
Don't know	○ 99

SECTION D – DRIVERS, ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

ASK ALL

QD1. Which of the following best describes how you [your child] first became involved in rugby league?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- Through school ○ 01
- Joined a rugby league club ○ 02
- Played socially with friends ○ 03
- Played rugby league growing up with family ○ 04
- Other (Please specify) ○ 98

ASK ALL

QD2. Which of the following were influential in **first getting you [your child] involved** in rugby league?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

ROTATE LIST

Fitness benefits of rugby league	1
We lived close to rugby league club	2
Rugby league is a cost effective sporting alternative	3
The opportunity to work towards a fitness goal	4
Friends / family that are playing rugby league	5
Improving their strength	6
My parent/guardian [Me/my partner as a parent]	7
School sports / rugby league program	8
The opportunity to work towards and achieve a competitive sporting goal	9
The ability to compete	10
Watching the NRL – the elite competition and the star players	11
Teamwork aspect	12
Learning life skills	13
The opportunity to learn new sport skills	14
Other (please specify)	98

ASK ALL

QD3. Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates it **does not apply at all** to you [your child], and where 5 indicates it **applies very strongly** to you [your child], please indicate the degree to which the following reasons would motivate/ motivated you [**your child] to participate in rugby league**?

ROTATE LIST

SINGLE RESPONSE

	Does not apply at all			Applies very strongly	
For the competition	1	2	3	4	5
To get fit	1	2	3	4	5
To learn a new sport	1	2	3	4	5
To meet new people	1	2	3	4	5
To play with friends/family	1	2	3	4	5
It involves both males and females	1	2	3	4	5
Inspiration from elite rugby league players / NRL teams	1	2	3	4	5

To train for or support their development in another sport or recreational pursuit	1	2	3	4	5
To participate as part of a team	1	2	3	4	5
To get the best out of their ability	1	2	3	4	5
To improve themselves	1	2	3	4	5
To improve skills	1	2	3	4	5
Safe environment	1	2	3	4	5
To have fun / for enjoyment	1	2	3	4	5

ASK IF QC14 = CODE 3 or 4 or 5

QD4. You mentioned that you are [your child is] unlikely to sign up to play Junior Rugby League Competition next season. From the list select the main reasons why you [your child] won't continue playing in the Junior Rugby League Competition.

MULTIPLE RESPONSE

ROTATE LIST

Injury / health reasons	1
Became too old to participate	2
Program or competition no longer offered / available	3
No club or team to play for in my local area	4
Became too busy / other time commitments	5
Changed to a different sport / Wanted to concentrate on different sport	6
Lost interest	7
Financial reasons	8
No longer had anyone to participate with	9
Moved location / no longer accessible	10
Finished school / only played at school	11
Goals for participating in sport changed	12
Friends started playing different sports	13
Became too dangerous	14
Became lazy – non committed	15
No longer fits into my schedule	16
Not challenging enough	17
Not good enough to proceed to the next level	18
Missed out on representative / development team	19
Lack of opportunity to participate in social competition	20
Poor quality coaches	21
Program focused too much on competition	22
Sportsmanship and conduct of other players	23
Too much training required	24
Season is too long	25
Size difference	26
Uneven competition	27

Other (please specify_____)	97

ASK IF QC14 = CODE 3 or 4 or 5

QD5 Are you willing to allow your contact details to be used in order to participate in a related interview at a later stage?	
Yes	No

ASK ALL

QD6. The following statements can be used to describe the attitudes some people have towards rugby league. How well does each of the following describe you [your child] personally? If you feel the statement is not relevant to you [your child] please select 'Does not describe me [my child] at all'.

ROTATE LIST

SINGLE RESPONSE PER STATEMENT

	Does not describe me [my child] at all				Describes me [my child] very well
Enjoys competition and plays to win	1	2	3	4	5
Takes training and competition seriously	1	2	3	4	5
Favourite sport	1	2	3	4	5
Enjoys being part of a team	1	2	3	4	5
Plays rugby league to be with friends	1	2	3	4	5
Is highly dedicated to learning and developing rugby league skills	1	2	3	4	5
Plays for fun and doesn't take rugby league too seriously	1	2	3	4	5

ASK ALL

QD7. Other than rugby league, which of the following sport do you [does your child] most enjoy playing?

MUTLPLE RESPONSE

SHOW LIST SPORTS LIST A

No other sports ○ 99

ASK IF CODE 99 IN QD6

QD8. Compared to rugby league, what makes [INSERT SPORT SELECTED AT QD6] appealing? Please comment on the key differences between rugby league and [INSERT SPORT SELECTED AT QD6].

OPEN ENDER

SECTION E – PREFERENCE IN PARTICIPATION OFFER

We're almost there! This is the 2nd last section of the survey.

ASK ALL

QE1. Would you [your child] like to participate in rugby league more often, less often, or about the same?
SINGLE RESPONSE

Much more frequent	01
A little more frequent	02
No change	03
A little less frequent	04
Much less frequent	05

ASK ALL

QE2 When participating in rugby league, what is your [your child's] preferred length of one session?
SINGLE RESPONSE

30 minutes	1
45 minutes	2
60 minutes	3
75 minutes	4
90+ minutes	5

ASK ALL

QE3 Which of the following best describes the time(s) that you [your child] would ideally like to play rugby league?
MULTIPLE RESPONSE

Wednesday evening (after 5pm)	1
Thursday evening (after 5pm)	2
Friday night (after 5pm)	3
Saturday morning (9am-12pm)	4
Saturday afternoon (1pm-5pm)	5
Saturday evening (after 5pm)	6
Sunday morning (9am-12pm)	7
Sunday afternoon (1pm-5pm)	8
Sunday evening (after 5pm)	9

ASK ALL

QE4. Which of the following aspects are most important to you [your child] in continuing playing rugby league in the future?
ROTATE LIST

Ease of accessibility	1
Quality venues and facilities	2
Ease of fitting into my lifestyle	3
Fits my personal values	4
Social environment / meet new people	5

Easy to learn new skill / skill development	7
Value for money	8
A sport/exercise that pushes the individual's limits	9
No lengthy commitments	10
Ease of measuring performance / tracking development	11
A sport/exercise that keeps the individual active and healthy	12
Team bonding / teamwork	13
Let's the individual blow off steam / relax	14
Builds the individual's confidence	15
Competition / sense of achievement	16
A sport/exercise that increases the level of fitness	17
Quality (of) coaching	18
Safety / safe environment	19
Fair opportunity to play	20
Enjoyable club atmosphere and environment for all	21
Keeping it fun and enjoyable	22
Another reason (please specify_____)	97

SECTION F – DETAILED DEMOGRAPHICS

And finally, we would like to ask you a few questions for classification purposes.

ASK ALL

QF1. Which ethnic group or groups do you [your child] belong to?
MULTIPLE RESPONSE

- Europe (DROP DOWN TO SUB ETHNICITIES) ○ 01
- Australia/Oceania (DROP DOWN TO SUB ETHNICITIES) ○ 02
- Africa & Middle East (DROP DOWN TO SUB ETHNICITIES) ○ 03
- Asia (DROP DOWN TO SUB ETHNICITIES) ○ 04
- North/Central/South America (DROP DOWN TO SUB ETHNICITIES) ○ 04

Australian & Oceania	Europe	Africa & Middle East	Asia	North/Central/ South America
Australian Peoples	British	Arab	Mainland South-East Asian	North American
New Zealand Peoples	Irish	Jewish	Maritime South-East Asian	South American
Melanesian and Papuan	Western European	Peoples of the Sudan	Chinese Asian	Central American
Micronesian	Northern European	Other North African and Middle Eastern	Other North-East Asian	Caribbean Islander
Polynesian	Southern European	Central and West African	Southern Asian	
	South Eastern European	Southern and East African	Central Asian	
	Eastern European			

ASK ALL

QF2. Which of the following ranges does your annual household pre-tax income fall?
SINGLE RESPONSE

- Up to $50,000 ○ 01
- $50,000 to $74,999 ○ 02
- $75,000 to $99,999 ○ 03
- $100,000 to $149,999 ○ 04
- $150,000 or more ○ 04
- Prefer not to say ○ 99

ASK ALL

QF3. Do you [your child] currently attend a public or private school?
SINGLE RESPONSE

- Public School ○ 01
- Private School ○ 02
- No longer at school ○ 03

ASK IF QF4=CODE 1 OR 2 (PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOL)

QF4. What year are you [your child] currently in?
SINGLE RESPONSE

- Prep ○ 99
- Year 1 ○ 01
- Year 2 ○ 02
- Year 3 ○ 03
- Year 4 ○ 04
- Year 5 ○ 05
- Year 6 ○ 06

Year 7	○	07
Year 8	○	08
Year 9	○	09
Year 10	○	10
Year 11	○	11
Year 12	○	12

NEW PAGE PN: OUTRO

Thanks for your help!

You now have the chance to go into the draw to win ***2016 STATE OF ORIGIN/BLATCHY'S BLUES TICKETS***

As mentioned previously, we assure you that your personal responses will remain completely anonymous; if you elect to be included in the draw for by providing your email address we will not attach your contact information to your individual responses. All responses will be pooled together and analysed as a part of the overall sample.

If you would like to enter the chance to win one of these prizes, please enter your contact details below.

Name:

Contact Number:

Contact Email:

Please click **next** to submit the survey

APPENDIX

METRO SYDNEY REGION (TBC) – ILINK TO PROVIDE	
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SPORT LIST A (THIS LIST EXCLUDES RUGBY LEAGUE)	
1	AFL Football
2	Athletics (Track & Field)
3	Badminton
4	Basketball
5	Cricket
6	Cycling
7	Dance
8	Football (Soccer)
9	Gym Workout
10	Hockey
11	Ice Skating
12	Jogging / Running
13	Netball
14	

15	Rugby Union
16	Skateboarding
17	Snow Skiing / Snowboarding
18	Surfing / Body Boarding
19	Swimming
20	Tennis
21	Touch Rugby (Touch Rugby?)
22	Oz Tag/Flag Football

JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE COMPETITION	
1	Balmain Rugby League
2	Canterbury/Bankstown Rugby League
3	Cronulla/ Sutherland Rugby League
4	Eastern Suburbs Rugby League
5	Manly Waringah Rugby League
6	North Sydney Rugby League
7	Parramatta Convent Rugby League
8	Parramatta District Rugby League
9	Penrith Rugby League
10	South Sydney Rugby League
11	St George Rugby League
12	Western Suburbs Rugby League
13	
14	
15	

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 7

NSWRL Qualitative Study
Interview Outline- Key Questions 6-12 focus group.

Introduction

1. Introduce yourself, how many children do you have playing the game, what are their ages and what NRL team do they support.

Getting started in the game

2. What are your child's key reasons why they wanted to start playing Rugby League
3. What motivated you as a parent, to allow or promote them to play the game?
4. How much does the NRL influence your decision to allow your kids to play?

Other Sports and Learning Points from them

5. Putting yourself in your child's shoes, what are their favourite sports outside of Rugby League?
6. What is it about those sports that attract them to playing?
7. At what age do your children stop sampling other sports?
8. Do they stop sampling and, if so, why do they?

Why are they not returning?

9. Why do you think your child will not be playing again next season?
10. What are top 5 reasons as to why children drop out of RL?
11. What changes would you suggest to the current format of the game that would make it more attractive to your child?

Interview Outline- Key Questions 13-Open Age focus group.

Intro

1. What's your name, age, how long have you been playing for and who's your favourite NRL player?

NSW Rugby League Limited
6 Herb Elliott Avenue
Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2127
PO Box 584
Sydney Markets NSW 2129
T +61 2 8756 7000
F +61 2 8756 7097
nswrl.com.au
ABN 11 002 704 761

Getting started in the game.

2. Where did you play Rugby League and why did you start?
3. How much does the NRL impact your passion to play the game?

Other sports and learning points from them.

4. Apart from Rugby League, what sports are you most passionate about?
5. What is it about those sports that attract you to them?
6. What does Rugby League have that those other sports don't?

Why are they not returning.

7. What's the reason why you will not be returning to play?
8. What can the Junior League change that would make you more likely to return?
9. What's good and bad about your game day experience?

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 8

Gemba

DRAFT REPORT

PILOT PROGRAM RESEARCH

NEW SOUTH WALES RUGBY LEAGUE

23 DECEMBER 2016

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THIS REPORT OUTLINES THE RESEARCH RESULTS WHICH ASSESSES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THREE PILOT PARTICIPATION PROGRAMS DEVELOPED BY NEW SOUTH WALES RUGBY LEAGUE.

Gemba

1. PROJECT APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY
2. KEY INSIGHTS
3. WEIGHT FOR AGE COMPETITION (W8S)
4. SOCIAL COMPETITION (M8S)
5. 9-A-SIDE COMPETITION (FRIDAY NIGHT 9S)

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1 PROJECT APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

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NEW SOUTH WALES RUGBY LEAGUE SOUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS PILOT PROGRAMS

BACKGROUND

Registered participants in Rugby League throughout metropolitan New South Wales are declining. To understand the key reasons behind the decline in participation rates, New South Wales Rugby League ("NSWRL") commissioned a research project with Gemba in 2015 to understand the behavioural and attitudinal characteristics of participants across the Junior Leagues that fall within its jurisdiction.

Upon the completion of this research project, NSWRL developed modified programs that were designed to address the key challenges facing Rugby League participation.

Three modified competition formats were developed and this report focuses on evaluating the pilot phase of the programs listed:

- Weight for age competition ("W8s")
    - A program targeted to U9 and U11 children, where participants are graded based on their weight
    - Held at a Parramatta Junior Rugby League club
- Social competition ("M8s")
    - A social based program targeted to U12 to U15 children
    - Held at a St George and a North Shore Junior Rugby League club
- 9-a-side competition ("Friday Night 9s")
    - A social and fun 9-a-side competition targeted to U17 and open age participants and run on Friday nights
    - Held at a Manly Senior Rugby League club

Due to low sample size, the Friday Night 9s program has not been reviewed at this stage.

NSWRL is seeking to understand the participant experiences of the pilot programs and their effectiveness in retaining and acquiring Rugby League participants.

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OVER 50 PARENTS OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN THE TWO TRIAL PROGRAMS ASSESSED TO DATE WERE SURVEYED TO EVALUATE THE PROGRAMS

METHODOLOGY

AUDIENCE	• Trial participants for W8s and M8s (parents answering on behalf of child participants)
QUALIFICATION	• Parent of a child involved in the trial program
METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE	• Online mobile device survey (administered at the trial) • Length of interview 10-15 minutes • Sample size: W8s n=23, M8s n=35
TIMING	• Fieldwork completed between 26 October and 10 November 2016
WEIGHTING	• No weighting applied

Note: At the time of reporting, only N=10 participants completed the Friday Night 9s survey. Due to low sample size, the Friday Night 9s program has not been reviewed at this stage

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2 KEY INSIGHTS

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THE W8S PROGRAM APPEARED TO ADDRESS JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUES' CORE ISSUE OF SIZE DIFFERENCE

KEY INSIGHTS

WEIGHT FOR AGE (W8S)

- The W8s program was better at addressing Junior Rugby League's (JRL) core issues of disparity in size of children in each grade and delivered a better experience than JRL for those involved
- This led to strong satisfaction levels overall and for elements such as 'safety' and 'fairness/ equality of competition'
- Given most trial participants are already involved in JRL, the program would be best run outside of the existing JRL season. A pre-season six week competition is most preferred
- Around half would participate again and have parents who would be open to paying for the program

SOCIAL COMPETITION (M8S)

- The M8s program had high satisfaction and appeal, although unlike for W8s it is not seen as better than the JRL experience overall
- Whilst the M8s program does target the social and mateship elements of Rugby League participation, leading to a high rating in 'fun/enjoyment', it does not address the core issue of size inequality
- Around half would participate again, with similar views around the program being run outside of the existing JRL season

9-A-SIDE (FRIDAY NIGHT 9S)

Due to low sample size, the Friday Night 9s program has not been reviewed at this stage.

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3 WEIGHT FOR AGE COMPETITION (W8S)

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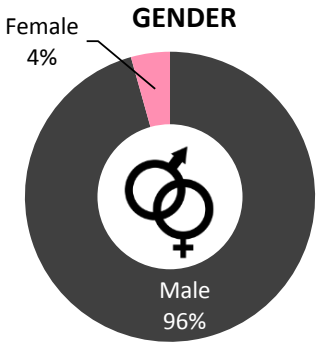
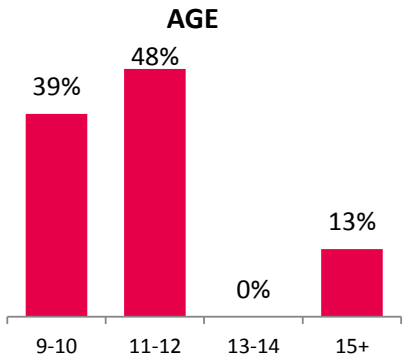
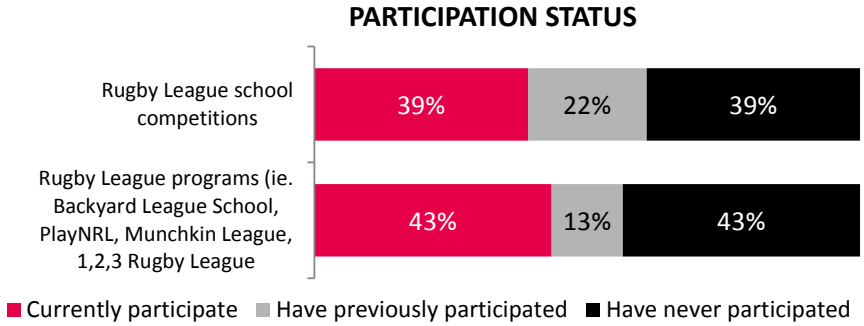
MOST PARTICIPANTS TRIALLING THE W8S PROGRAM ARE ALSO PARTICIPANTS OF JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

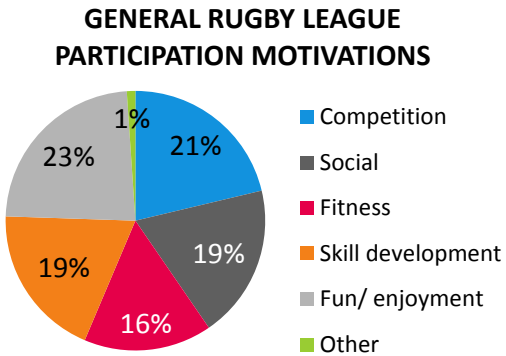
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILING | W8S

96%
Currently participate in Junior Rugby League









Q: Are you male or female? Q: What is your age? Q: Do you currently or have you previously participated in Junior Rugby League Club Competition? Q: Outside Junior Rugby League and W8s, which of the following competitions or programs do you currently participate or have previously participated in? Q: Please indicate which of the following reasons motivate you to participate in Rugby League? Select all that apply.

Base: W8s Participants, n = 23

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PARTICIPANTS WERE GENERALLY HAPPY WITH THE W8S EXPERIENCE, ESPECIALLY WITH THE 'SAFETY' ASPECT AND 'SPEED OF THE GAME'

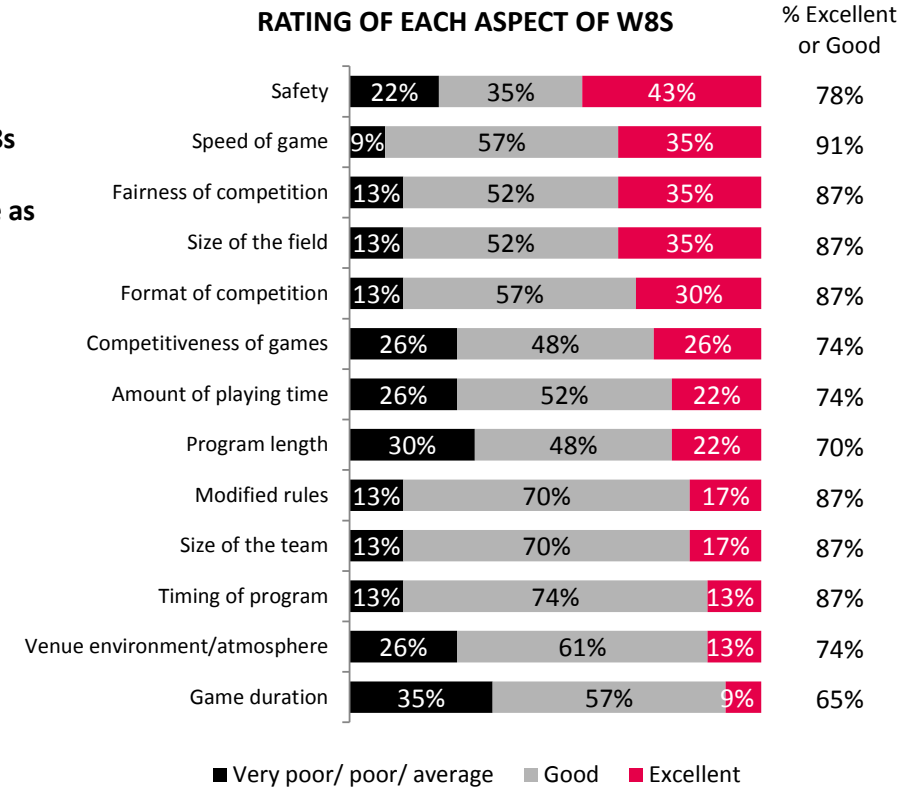
PROGRAM RATINGS | W8S

43%

Rate the experience with the W8s program as 'excellent' overall (a further 48% rate the experience as 'good')

65%

Enjoyed the W8s program 'a lot'



Q: Based on your experience so far, how would you rate the following aspects for W8s? Q: How would you rate your overall experience participating in W8s? Q: Overall, how much did you enjoy W8s?

Base: W8s Participants, n = 23

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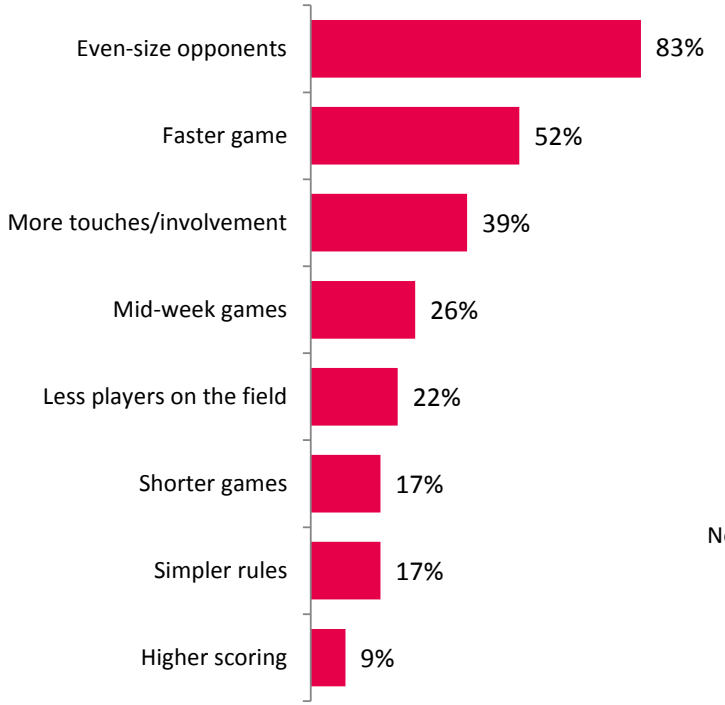
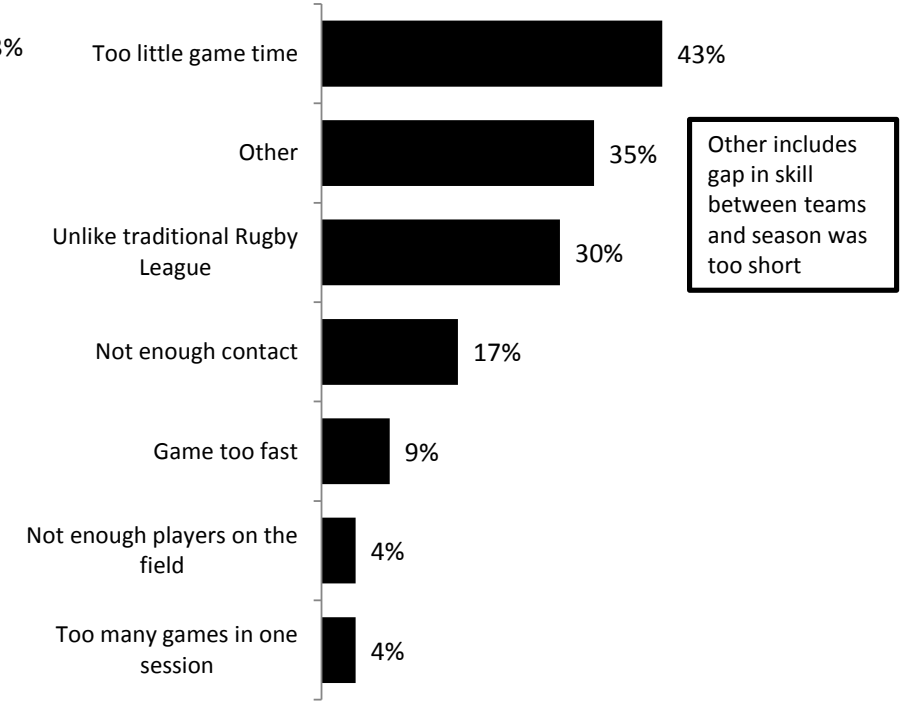
THE EVENNESS OF COMPETITION STANDS OUT FOR W8S PARTICIPANTS AND THEY WANTED MORE GAME TIME

APPEALING PROGRAM ELEMENTS | W8S

FAVOURITE ELEMENTS OF W8S



LEAST FAVOURITE ELEMENTS OF W8S



Q: What are your favourite elements of W8s? Q: What are your least favourite elements of W8s?

Base: W8s Participants, n = 23

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THE PREFERENCE IS FOR W8S TO BE HELD OUTSIDE OF JUNIOR RUGBY SEASON, PARTICULARLY PRE-SEASON

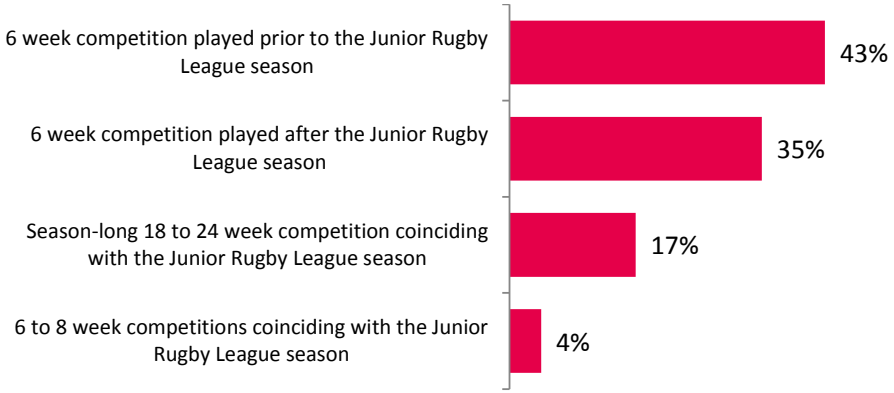
PROGRAM RETENTION | W8S

57%
Are very likely to participate in W8s again

43%
Are very open to paying to participate in W8s (35% are somewhat open)

$12
Is deemed to be a reasonable cost per session for W8s

PREFERRED FORMAT



PREFERRED SCHEDULING

52%
Would play W8s and Junior Rugby League at different times

22%
Would play W8s and Junior Rugby League in the same season

Q: Thinking about the program you are currently participating in, how likely are you to participate in it again? Q: Which of the following formats would be your most preferred to play W8s? Q: If you had the choice to play Junior Rugby League and W8s, which option would apply to you? Q: How open are you to pay to participate in W8s? Q: What is a reasonable cost for each session?

Base: W8s Participants, n = 23

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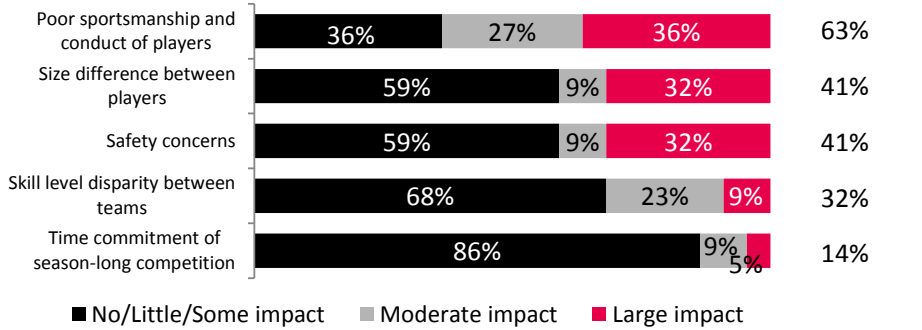
THE W8S PROGRAM APPEARED TO ADDRESS ONE OF THE KEY CHALLENGES OF JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE – THE SIZE DIFFERENCE AMONG PARTICIPANTS

COMPARISON TO JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE | W8S

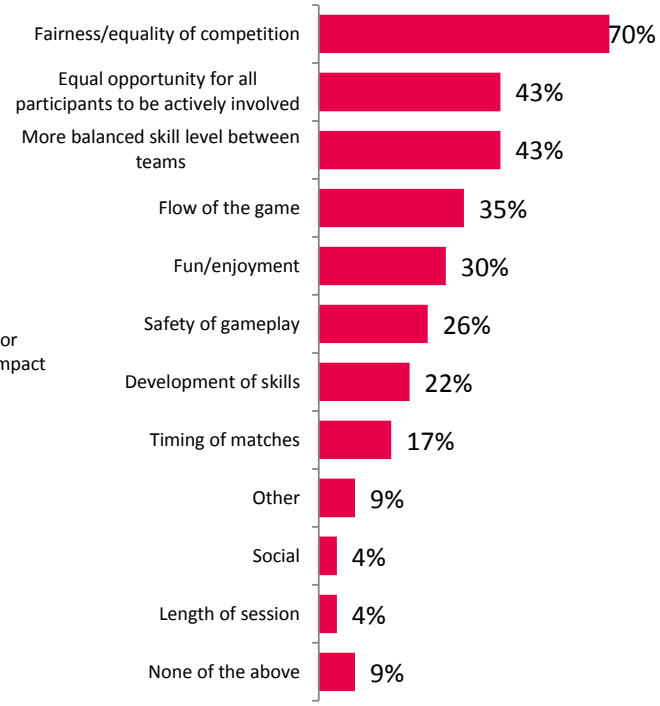
30%

Rate the experience with Junior Rugby League as 'excellent' overall (versus 43% for W8s)

IMPACT OF ELEMENTS ON RUGBY LEAGUE ENJOYMENT IN GENERAL



ELEMENTS OF W8S WHICH ARE BETTER THAN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE



Q: To what extent do the following aspects impact your level of enjoyment of participating in Junior Rugby League? Q: How would you rate your overall experience participating in W8s? Q: How would you rate your overall experience participating in Junior Rugby League competition? Q: Which of the following aspects are better in W8s than Junior Rugby League competition? Q: How likely are you to considering joining a Junior Rugby League team because of W8s?

Base: W8s Participants, n = 23

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4 SOCIAL COMPETITION (M8S)

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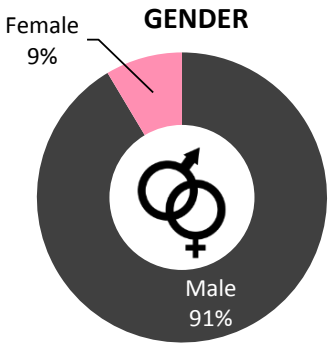
THE M8S PROGRAM CATERS TO OLDER PARTICIPANTS (COMPARED TO W8S), WITH A MAJORITY CURRENTLY PARTICIPATING IN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

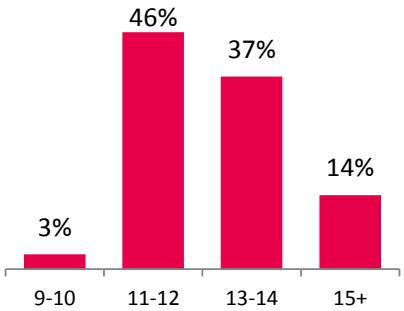
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILING | M8S

83%
Currently participate in Junior Rugby League

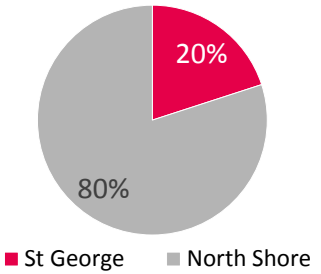
GENDER



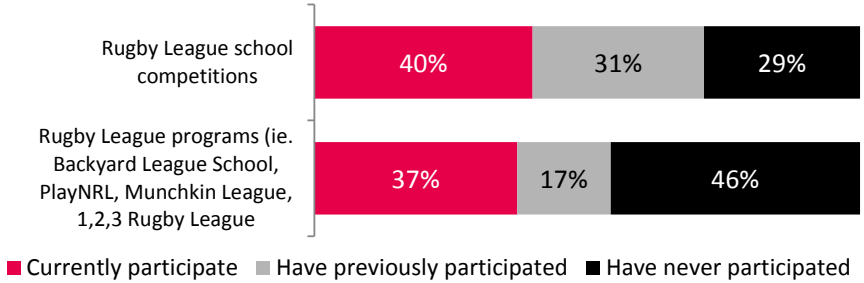
AGE



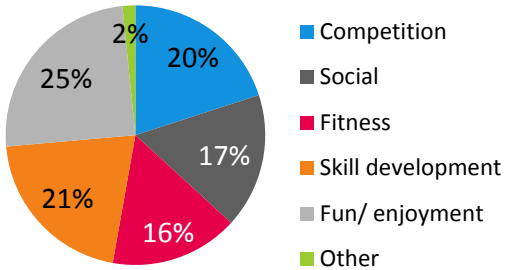
PARTICIPANT LOCATIONS



PARTICIPATION STATUS



GENERAL RUGBY LEAGUE PARTICIPATION MOTIVATIONS



Q: Are you male or female? Q: What is your age? Q: Do you currently or have you previously participated in Junior Rugby League Club Competition? Q: Outside Junior Rugby League and M8s, which of the following competitions or programs do you currently participate or have previously participated in? Q: Please indicate which of the following reasons motivate you to participate in Rugby League? Select all that apply.

Base: M8s Participants, n = 35

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THERE WAS A STRONG RATING FOR 'PLAYING WITH MATES', LEADING TO A HIGH RATING OF THE OVERALL PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

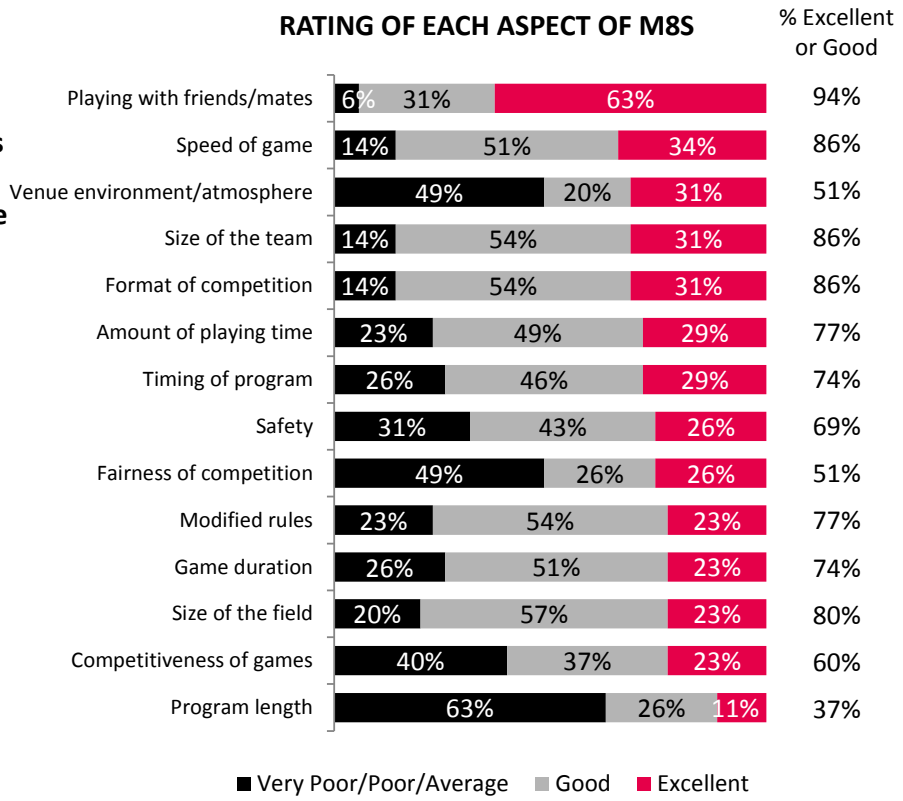
PROGRAM RATINGS | M8S

51%

Rate the experience with the M8s program as 'excellent' overall (a further 23% rate the experience as 'good')

69%

Enjoyed the M8s program 'a lot'



Q: Based on your experience so far, how would you rate the following aspects for M8s? Q: How would you rate your overall experience participating in M8s? Q: Overall, how much did you enjoy M8s?

Base: M8s Participants, n = 35

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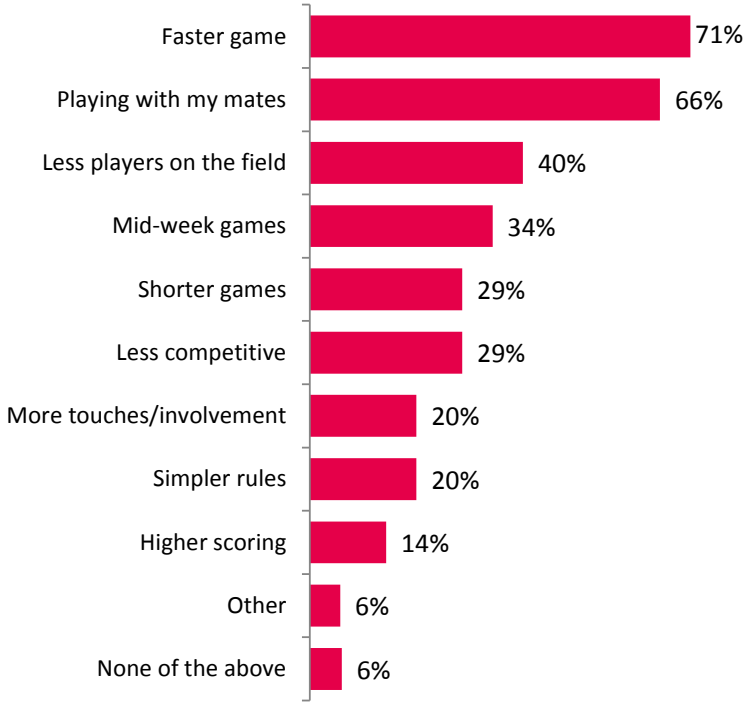
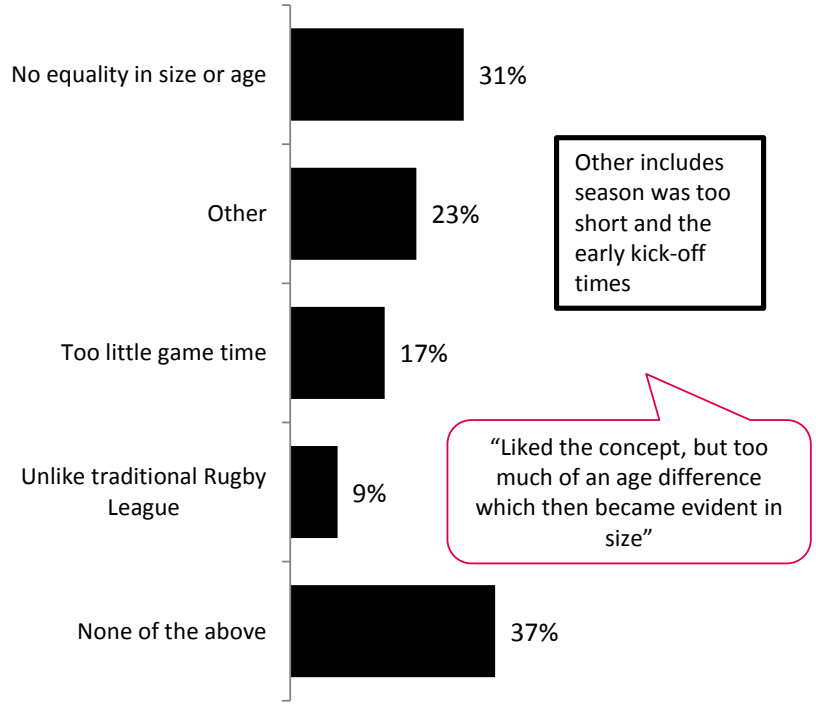
THE FASTER AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF M8S ARE APPEALING BUT A LACK OF CONTROL OVER SIZE EQUALITY WAS NOTED

APPEALING PROGRAM ELEMENTS | M8S

FAVOURITE ELEMENTS OF M8S



LEAST FAVOURITE ELEMENTS OF M8S



Q: What are your favourite elements of M8s? Q: What are your least favourite elements of M8s?

Base: M8s Participants, n = 35

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THE PREFERENCE IS FOR M8S TO BE HELD OUTSIDE OF JUNIOR RUGBY SEASON, PARTICULARLY PRE-SEASON

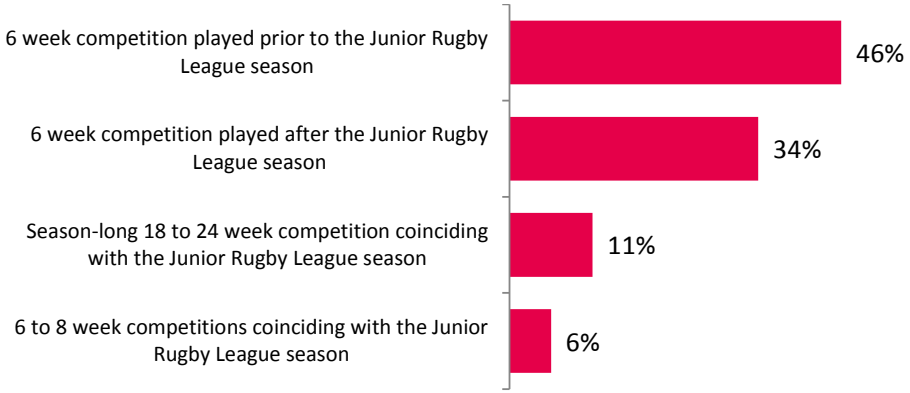
PROGRAM RETENTION | M8S

51%
Are very likely to participate in M8s again

31%
Are very open to paying to participate in M8s (29% are somewhat open)

$13
Is deemed to be a reasonable cost per session for M8s

PREFERRED FORMAT



PREFERRED SCHEDULING

57%
Would play M8s and Junior Rugby League at different times

23%
Would play M8s and Junior Rugby League in the same season

Q: Thinking about the program you are currently participating in, how likely are you to participate in it again? Q: Which of the following formats would be your most preferred to play M8s? Q: If you had the choice to play Junior Rugby League and M8s, which option would apply to you? Q: How open are you to pay to participate in M8s? Q: What is a reasonable cost for each session?

Base: M8s Participants, n = 35

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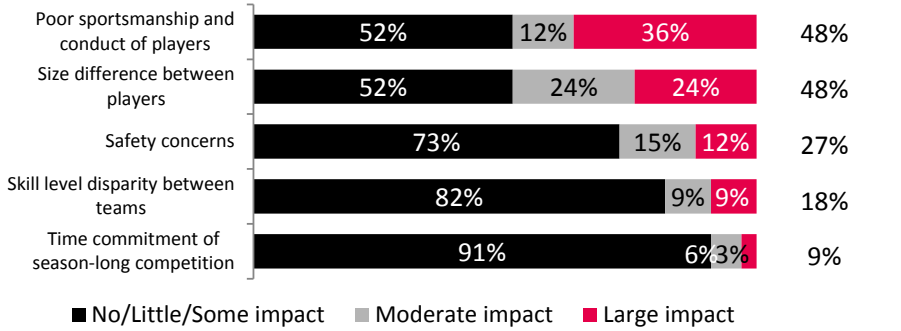
THE M8S PROGRAM HAS SIMILAR SATISFACTION TO JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE, IS ACKNOWLEDGED AS FUN, BUT DOESN'T ADDRESS SIZE ISSUES

COMPARISON TO JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE | M8S

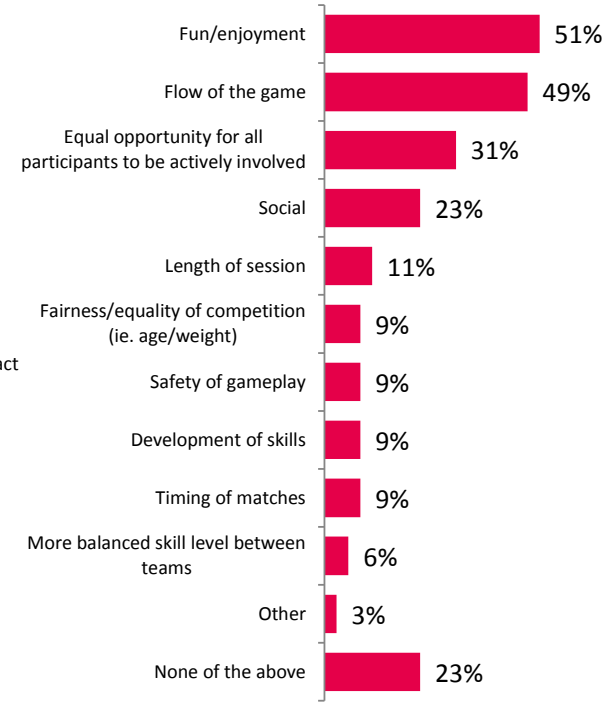
54%

Rate the experience with Junior Rugby League as 'excellent' overall (versus 51% for M8s)

IMPACT OF ELEMENTS ON RUGBY LEAGUE ENJOYMENT IN GENERAL



ELEMENTS OF M8S WHICH ARE BETTER THAN JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE



Q: To what extent do the following aspects impact your level of enjoyment of participating in Junior Rugby League? Q: How would you rate your overall experience participating in M8s? Q: How would you rate your overall experience participating in Junior Rugby League competition? Q: Which of the following aspects are better in M8s than Junior Rugby League competition? Q: How likely are you to considering joining a Junior Rugby League team because of M8s?

Base: M8s Participants, n = 35

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Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 9

NSW RUGBY LEAGUE

NEW FORMATS
2016 PILOT PROGRAM OUTLINE

Introduction

In 2015, the New South Wales Rugby League retained GEMBA, a sports and entertainment strategy and consultancy firm, to undertake a survey of all of our registered 2015 participants about their experience in Rugby League in 2015 and more importantly, their intentions for 2016.

We wanted to see who was leaving and who was returning.

Once we had that determined, we wanted to know why they were leaving so we could establish some programs to try and retain the players that we do have and bring back some of the players that we had lost.

Size difference between players and days of play were identified as two common themes with our respondents.

They also pointed to the massive gap between playing Touch or Tag versions of the game and then the commitment that is required when you sign up for a full Rugby League season.

To fill this void, the NSWRL has developed three new programs we intend to Pilot in 2016.

We are looking to offer versions of the game that are:

- Fun, Safe and Participant Inclusive
- Socially and culturally acceptable
- Family time friendly

w8s

Weight and Age programs were an immediate fit for the issue of size difference between players. With both age and weight restrictions players would be more evenly matched in size. A mid-week program that allows participants of smaller statures to complete in a contact version of the game.

m8s

Next, we wanted to establish a program for high school age players that was driven less by competition and more by participation. A program that offers a game with a smaller time commitment, as many children are overcommitted to a variety of different sports and activities both after school and on the weekend. This program will be age based, but can have the addition of weight restrictions where conditions allow and is viewed as a fast format of the game (i.e. in-play-out).

Friday Night 9s

Imagine what a festival of football would look like. DJ's, big screen with the NRL on, games played under lights with food trucks and entertainment for kids. All this alongside open age 9s competitive Rugby League. All games would be played at a single venue with a carnival atmosphere. Teams would play two games of 9 minutes each way per session. Short seasons that can be run any time of the year. The Rugby League version of Big Bash Cricket.

Proposed Pilot Program Timeline

April	Finalise Pilot Program details and Rules Document drafted
May	Planning visits to Leagues to ascertain level of interest and achieve buy in
	Budget finalised and approved by NSWRL
May	Program Marketing Design and planning of Social Media Campaign
June / July	Pilot Program launch and registrations commence
August	Pilot Programs commence in identified Leagues
October	Program debrief and evaluation
	Survey of participants
November	Findings to Leagues
	Discussion and agreement around Junior League Season dates
March	Pre-season Competitions in Districts used as recruitment and retention tools

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w8s

Identified Districts	Facilitator	Pilot Age Group
Western Suburbs	Drew Dalton	Under 11s / Under 13s
St George	Jodie Gatehouse	Under 9s / Under 11s
Parramatta	Martin Shanahan	Under 10s / Under 12s

2016 w8s Pilot Program Summary

- 6 week program
- Maximum 10 players per team
- 8 players on the field (maximum participation encouraged – player number matching to 10 v 10)
- Weight restricted enrolment as per the following guidelines
  - Under 9 – 30 kg
  - Under 10 – 34kg
  - Under 11 – 38kg
  - Under 12 – 43kg
  - Under 13 – 48kg
- Play across field (2 fields per ground)
- 2 x 10 min
- Each team plays 2 games per session
- Six weeks of 'competition'

- 6 week Pilot Program delivered by NSWRL within District boundaries open to teams from any District
- Teams nominated by local Clubs
- Players register with their Club via LeagueNet (District Competitions)
- Individuals can register via link to NSWRL who will accommodate individual players into teams

DRAFT

w8s Operational Overview

Provided by NSWRL

- Competition facilitation (online competition set up / draws / administration)
- Player weight information collection
- Field hire costs (if required)
- Lighting costs (if required)
- Ground Managers
- Referees
- 'Game Day' staff
- Pilot Program Team shirts (10 shirts per team)
- Promotional Material
- Footballs
- First Aid Staff at all games
- Games will be filmed for training and reporting purposes
- Medals for participants in finals

Provided by Host District

- Assistance with liaison with Council for access to fields where required

Provided by Club / Team

- Players
- Managers for each team
- Accredited coaches for each team

Post Pilot Actions

- All participants to be surveyed at the completion of the Pilot Program
- Participating Clubs to be surveyed at the completion of the Pilot Program
- Report compiled on the w8s Pilot Program and delivered to NSWRL and Junior League stakeholders for review

DRAFT

Rules – w8s

All matches are played as per the Rugby League Laws of the Game (International), National Safe Play Code and the NRL Code of Conduct, with the following exceptions:

1. Registrations will be both age and weight restricted
    a. Under 9 – 30 kg
    b. Under 10 – 34kg
    c. Under 11 – 38kg
    d. Under 12 – 43kg
    e. Under 13 – 48kg
2. Matches will be played on a maximum field size of 40m wide and no longer than 68m (i.e. across the width of an international size field)
3. Teams will be able to register a minimum of 8 players and a maximum of 10 players
4. The number of players on field will be regulation 8 v 8. If teams present to fixtures with +2 or -2 players, number of players on field will be matched by both teams to a minimum of 6 v 6 and a maximum of 10 v 10, +1 or –1 (e.g. 10 v 9 / 7 v 8).
5. All starts of play (i.e. kick offs) are replaced with tap offs
6. The 6 tackle rule will be replaced with a maximum of five (5) tackles before a changeover will be awarded
7. After a try, the team conceding the try taps off
8. No kicks for goal
9. No kicks for touch
10. Penalties will be a tap at the position awarded
11. Game duration – 2 x 10 minutes – centrally timed at venue
12. No half time break – straight turn around
13. No time off
14. No scrums – turnover and play the ball to replace scrums
15. Kicks in general play will be allowed but kicks cannot go higher than the shoulder height of players on the field
16. If a ball crosses the try line from a kick, the ball will be deemed ‘dead in goal’ and a 10m tap to the non-offending team will be awarded
17. All matches will be played under the 5mtr defensive line rule
18. All other situations not covered / rules will be at the discretion of the Ground Manager

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Identified Districts	Facilitator	Pilot Age Group
North Sydney	Stuart Stanton	Under 13s / Under 15s
South Sydney	Brent Pigram	Under 13s / Under 14s

2016 m8s Pilot Program Summary

- Age based recreational program
- Optional weight restriction
- 6 week program
- Maximum 10 players per team
- 8 players on the field (maximum participation encouraged – player number matching to 10 v 10)
- Play across field (2 fields per ground)
- 2 x 10 min
- Each team plays 2 games per session
- Six weeks of round robin

- 6 week Pilot Program delivered by NSWRL within District boundaries open to teams from any District
- Teams can be nominated by local Clubs
- Teams can also be created through individual registrations
- Players register via LeagueNet (District Competitions)
- Restricted to participants that have not been involved in District Representative programs

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m8s Operational Overview

Provided by NSWRL

- Competition facilitation (online competition set up / draws / administration)
- Field hire costs (if required)
- Lighting costs (if required)
- Ground Managers
- Referees
- 'Game Day' staff
- Pilot Program Team shirts (10 shirts per team)
- Promotional Material
- Footballs
- First Aid Staff at all games
- Games will be filmed for training and reporting purposes

Provided by Host District

- Assistance with liaison with Council for access to fields where required

Provided by Club / Team

- Players
- Managers for each team
- Accredited coaches for each team

Post Pilot Actions

- All participants to be surveyed at the completion of the Pilot Program
- Participating Clubs to be surveyed at the completion of the Pilot Program
- Report compiled on the w8s Pilot Program and delivered to NSWRL and Junior League stakeholders for review

DRAFT

Rules – m8s

All matches are played as per the Rugby League Laws of the Game (International), National Safe Play Code and the NRL Code of Conduct, with the following exceptions:

1. Registrations will be age restricted
    a. Under 13s
    b. Under 14s
    c. Under 15s
2. Matches will be played on a maximum field size of 40m wide and no longer than 68m (i.e. across the width of an international size field)
3. Teams will be able to register a minimum of 8 players and a maximum of 10 players
4. The number of players on field will be regulation 8 v 8. If teams present to fixtures with +2 or -2 players, number of players on field will be matched by both teams to a minimum of 6 v 6 and a maximum of 10 v 10, +1 or –1 (e.g. 10 v 9 / 7 v 8).
5. All starts of play (i.e. kick offs) are replaced with tap offs
6. The 6 tackle rule will be replaced with a maximum of four (4) tackles before a changeover will be awarded
7. After a try, the team conceding the try taps off
8. No kicks for goal
9. No kicks for touch
10. Penalties will be a tap at the position awarded
11. Game duration – 2 x 15 minutes – centrally timed at venue
12. No half time break – straight turn around
13. No time off
14. No scrums – turnover and play the ball to replace scrums
15. Kicks in general play will be allowed but kicks cannot go higher than the shoulder height of players on the field
16. If a ball crosses the try line from a kick, the ball will be deemed ‘dead in goal’ and a 10m tap to the non-offending team will be awarded
17. All matches will be played under the 5mtr defensive line rule
18. All other situations not covered / rules will be at the discretion of the Ground Manager

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Friday 9s Night

Identified Districts	Facilitator	Pilot Age Group
Manly	Danielle Kifooti	Under 18 / Open Age

2016 Friday Night 9s Pilot Program Summary

- Unlimited teams
- 6 week program
- 9 players on a full field
- Multiple grounds per venue
- Maximum 13 players registered per team
- 2 x 9 min – 2 min half time break
- Teams play two games per session
- Five weeks of competition
- Final week 1 v 2 in each group and then 'Champions Game' (Winner v Winner)
- 'Carnival of Football' concept – DJ at venue, food trucks / vendors, onsite entertainment
- Alcohol free event

- 6 week Pilot Program delivered by NSWRL with no District boundaries – team nominations accepted from across Sydney
- Teams can be nominated directly to NSWRL District Competitions on LeagueNet

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Friday Night 9s Operational Overview

Provided by NSWRL

- Competition facilitation (online competition set up / draws / administration)
- Field hire costs (if required)
- Lighting costs
- Ground Managers
- Referees
- 'Game Day' staff
- Pilot Program Team shirts (10 shirts per team)
- Promotional Material
- Footballs
- First Aid Staff at all games
- Entertainment at venue
- Games will be filmed for training and reporting purposes

Provided by Host District

- Assistance with liaison with Council for access to fields where required

Provided by Team

- Players
- Managers for each team

Post Pilot Actions

- All participants to be surveyed at the completion of the Pilot Program
- Participating Clubs to be surveyed at the completion of the Pilot Program
- Report compiled on the w8s Pilot Program and delivered to NSWRL and Junior League stakeholders for review

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Rules – Friday Night 9s

Subject to the modifications below, games will be played under the International Laws of Rugby League. All requirements governing the off-field conduct of matches and the behaviour of players (e.g. judiciary) will be outlined in the Competition Handbook.

1. Each match will be of eighteen (18) minutes duration and will be comprised of two halves of nine (9) minutes. There will be a half time period of no longer than three (3) minutes. Finals matches may be extended to be of twenty (20) minutes duration and may be comprised of two halves of ten (10) minutes with a half time period of no longer than five (5) minutes.
2. Teams will consist of no more than thirteen (13) players, with no more than nine (9) players on the field at any one time. Unlimited interchange may take place during the course of the match, using the five (5) pre-named substitutes. Players being replaced must cross the touch line before the new player enters the field of play as a replacement. The player entering the field of play as a replacement must do so from an on-side position. A player who has been replaced may, later in the game, act as a replacement.
3. Five (5) players only will form scrums.
4. All kicks for goal shall be taken by way of a drop kick.
5. There will be five (5) tackles per set
6. The re-start of play from the halfway line, after points have been scored, will be by a place kick with no requirement for the ball to travel ten (10) metres forward from that kick
7. After a try has been scored, both teams and the Referee will take up normal positions for the re-start of play. One Touch Judge will remain behind the goalposts to adjudicate on the kick for goal and play will be restarted immediately after the Touch Judge has given his decision, which shall be final, and the kicker has returned to an on-side position without delay.
8. If a substitution has been effected when a kick at goal is to be taken, i.e. after a try has been scored or a penalty kick has been awarded, the substitute player is not allowed to take the kick.
9. Periods of temporary suspension (sin bin) will be for three (3) minutes duration
10. Any period of temporary suspension expires at the end of the game
11. There will be no shoulder charging permitted in matches involving teams ages eighteen (18) years and under.

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by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 10

NSWRL PILOT PROGRAM RESEARCH STUDY

DRAFT QUESTIONNAIRE

5 October 2016

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INTRODUCTION

Hi!

Thank you for participating in (PROGRAM NAME). In order to continue to offer a variety of formats of Rugby League that meet the needs of players and parents, NSWRL would like your feedback on (PROGRAM NAME). We would appreciate you taking the time to complete this short survey.

DP NOTE: Programs

W8's – Weight for Age competition –Parramatta
M8s – Social competition – St George/ North Shore
Friday Night 9's - 9-a-side competition - Manly

SECTION A: BASIC PROFILING

Please complete this short survey from the perspective of the program participant.

ASK ALL

Q1. Are you male or female?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- Male ○ 01
- Female ○ 02

ASK ALL

Q2. What is your age?

SINGLE RESPONSE

ENTER YOUR AGE

ASK ALL

Q3. Which program and location did you participate in?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- W8's – Weight for Age competition –Parramatta ○ 01
- M8s – Social competition – St George ○ 02
- M8s – Social competition –North Shore ○ 03
- Friday Night 9's - 9-a-side competition - Manly ○ 04

ASK ALL

Q4. Besides (PROGRAM NAME), which of the following competitions or programs do you currently participate or have previously participated in?

SINGLE RESPONSE

	Currently participate in this competition/program	Have previously participated in this competition/program, but am not currently	Never participated in
Rugby League Junior Rugby League Club Competition	1	2	3
Rugby League School Competition (e.g. weekly competition)	1	2	3
Rugby League programs (ie. Backyard League School, PlayNRL, Munchkin League, 1,2,3 Rugby League)	1	2	3
Rugby League Senior Rugby League Club Competition	1	2	3
Other (please specify)	1	2	3

(NEW PARTICIPANTS = CODE 3 FOR ALL OPTIONS)

ASK IF Q4= CODE 1 OR 2 FOR JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE OR SENIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

Q5. To what extent do the following aspects impact your level of enjoyment of participating in Junior/Senior Rugby League?
SINGLE RESPONSE

	No impact at all	Little impact	Some impact	Moderate impact	Large impact
Size difference between players	1	2	3	4	5
Skill level disparity between teams	1	2	3	4	5
Poor sportsmanship and conduct of players	1	2	3	4	5
Safety concerns	1	2	3	4	5
Time commitment of season-long competition	1	2	3	4	5

ASK ALL

Q6. Please indicate which of the following reasons motivate **you to participate in Rugby League**? Select all that apply.

ROTATE LIST
MULTIPLE RESPONSE

Competition	1
Social	2
Fitness	3
Skill development	4
For fun/enjoyment	5
Other (please specify)	98

SECTION B: PILOT PROGRAM SATISFACTION

ASK ALL

Q7. Based on your experience so far, how would you rate the following aspects for [INSERT PROGRAM NAME]?
ROTATE LIST
SINGLE RESPONSE

	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Size of the field	1	2	3	4	5
Level of competition	1	2	3	4	5
Program length (time commitment)	1	2	3	4	5
Speed of game	1	2	3	4	5
Safety	1	2	3	4	5
Venue environment/atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
Amount of playing time	1	2	3	4	5
Fairness of competition (ie. size and ability)	1	2	3	4	5

OPTION FOR W8's

Modified rules (ie. tap offs, 5-tackle rule, no scrums)	1	2	3	4	5
Size of the team (ie. 8-a-side)	1	2	3	4	5
Game duration (ie. 10 minute halves – no break)	1	2	3	4	5
Timing of program (ie. midweek)	1	2	3	4	5
Format of competition (ie. 2 games per session (round-robin format))	1	2	3	4	5

OPTION FOR M8's

Modified rules (ie. tap offs, 4-tackle rule, no scrums)	1	2	3	4	5
Size of the team (ie. 8-a-side)	1	2	3	4	5
Game duration (ie. 10 minute halves – no break)	1	2	3	4	5
Timing of program (ie. midweek)	1	2	3	4	5
Format of competition (ie. 2 games per session (round-robin format))	1	2	3	4	5
Playing with friends/mates	1	2	3	4	5

OPTION FOR FRIDAY NIGHT 9's

Modified rules (ie. 5-player scrums, drop kicks, 5-tackle rule)	1	2	3	4	5
Size of the team (ie. 9–a-side)	1	2	3	4	5
Game duration (ie. 9 minute halves, short break)	1	2	3	4	5
Timing of program (ie. Friday night)	1	2	3	4	5
Format of competition (ie. 2 games per session (round-robin format) and champions game)	1	2	3	4	5
Post-match social activities	1	2	3	4	5
Playing with friends/mates	1	2	3	4	5

ASK ALL

Q8. How would you rate your overall experience participating in (PROGRAM NAME)?

SINGLE RESPONSE

Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

ASK IF Q3= CODE 1 FOR JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE OR SENIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

Q9. You mentioned that you currently or have previously played in Junior Rugby League/Senior Rugby League competition. How would you rate your overall experience participating in Junior Rugby League competition/ Senior Rugby League competition?

SINGLE RESPONSE

Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

ASK IF Q3= CODE 1 FOR JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE OR SENIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

Q10. Which of the following aspects are better in (PROGRAM NAME) than Junior Rugby League/Senior Rugby League competition?

MULTIPLE RESPONSE

- Social ○ 01
- Length of session ○ 02
- Fun/enjoyment ○ 03
- Fairness/equality of competition (ie. age/weight) ○ 04
- Flow of the game ○ 05
- Safety of gameplay ○ 06
- Equal opportunity for all participants to be actively involved ○ 07
- Sportsmanship and conduct of players ○ 08
- Development of skills ○ 09
- Timing of matches ○ 10
- More balanced skill level between teams ○ 11
- None of the above ○ 99

ASK ALL

Q11. What are your favourite elements of (PROGRAM NAME)?

MULTIPLE RESPONSE

SEE BELOW PER PROGRAM

INCLUDE NONE OF THE ABOVE AND OTHER IN EACH OPTION

OPTION FOR W8's

Shorter games
Less players on the field
Even-size opponents
Faster game
Simpler rules
Mid-week games
More touches/involvement
Higher scoring

OPTION FOR M8's

Playing with my mates
Less players on the field
Faster game
Simpler rules
Less competitive

Shorter games
Mid-week games
More touches/involvement
Higher scoring

OPTION FOR FRIDAY NIGHT 9's

Little time commitment
Better atmosphere
Faster game
Simpler rules
Less competitive
In competition social activities for families
Play with my mates
Friday night games

ASK ALL

Q12.	What are your least favourite elements of (PROGRAM NAME)? **MULTIPLE RESPONSE**	SEE BELOW PER PROGRAM INCLUDE NONE OF THE ABOVE AND OTHER IN EACH OPTION

OPTION FOR W8's

Too little game time
Not enough players on the field
Game too fast
Unlike traditional Rugby League
Not enough contact
Too many games in one session

OPTION FOR M8's

Too little game time
Not enough players on the field
Game too fast
Unlike traditional Rugby League
Not enough contact
Too many games in one session
No equality in size

OPTION FOR FRIDAY NIGHT 9's

Too little game time
Too many players on the field
Game too fast
Unlike traditional Rugby League
Too many games in one session
No equality in size or age

ASK ALL

Q13.	Overall, how much did you enjoy (PROGRAM NAME)? **SINGLE RESPONSE**	I enjoyed it a lot	○ 01
		I enjoyed it somewhat	○ 02
		Do not know/unsure	○ 03
		I did not enjoy it	○ 04
		I did not enjoy it at all	○ 05

ASK IF Q11=CODE 4-5

Q14.	You mentioned that you didn't enjoy (PROGRAM NAME). Why did you not enjoy it? **SINGLE RESPONSE**	OPEN RESPONSE

SECTION C: RETENTION & ADVOCACY

ASK ALL

Q15. How likely are you to play (PROGRAM NAME) again in the future?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- Very likely 01
- Likely 02
- Do not know/unsure 03
- Unlikely 04
- Very unlikely 05

ASK ALL

Q16. How likely would you be in playing a season-long version of (PROGRAM NAME)? This would run for 18 to 22 weeks.

SINGLE RESPONSE

- Very likely 01
- Likely 02
- Do not know/unsure 03
- Unlikely 04
- Very unlikely 05

ASK ALL

Q17. When would you prefer (PROGRAM NAME) to be run?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- Outside of regular season (i.e. October to March) 01
- During the Rugby League season (i.e. April to September) 02
- I do not have a preference 03

ASK ALL

Q18. How likely are you to considering joining a Junior Rugby League team/Senior Rugby League team because of (PROGRAM NAME)?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- Very likely 01
- Likely 02
- Do not know/unsure 03
- Unlikely 04
- Very unlikely 05

ASK ALL

Q19. Would you consider registering in a (PROGRAM NAME) competition, which runs at the same time as Junior Rugby League/Senior Rugby League club competition?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- Yes, I would play both 01
- Yes, I would only play (PROGRAM NAME) 02
- No, I think this competition is best played pre or post season 03
- No, I would prefer to play in the Junior Rugby League/Senior Rugby League club competition 04

ASK ALL

Q20. How likely are you to recommend (PROGRAM NAME) to your friends?

SINGLE RESPONSE

- Very likely 01
- Likely 02
- Do not know/unsure 03
- Unlikely 04
- Very unlikely 05

SECTION D: PRICING

ASK ALL

Q22.	How open are you to pay for a season-long (PROGRAM NAME)? That includes 18 to 22 weeks. **SINGLE RESPONSE**	Very open	01
		Somewhat open	02
		Do not know/unsure	03
		Unlikely	04
		Very unlikely	05

ASK IF Q22 = Code 1/2)

Q23.	What is a reasonable cost for each session? **OPEN RESPONSE**	$5-$10	01
		$11-$15	02
		$16-$20	03
		$21-$25	04
		$29-$30	05
		$31 or more	05

Thank you for your help in completing the survey.

NSWRL

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by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 11

Row Labels	Count of Family Name
2017 End Of season	
2017 Blues Tag U14 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	7
2017 Blues Tag U14G Penrith (Whalan Reseve)	9
2017 Blues Tag U16 Girls Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	17
2017 Blues Tag U18 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	7
2017 Blues Tag U18G Penrith (Whalan Reserve)	3
2017 FN9s Open Age Canterbury (Peter Hislop Park)	126
2017 FN9s U15 Southern (Scarborough Park)	7
2017 FN9s U16 Parramatta (New Era Stadium)	57
2017 FN9s U18 Parramatta (New Era Stadium)	48
2017 M8s U10 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	68
2017 M8s U10 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	59
2017 M8s U10 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	56
2017 M8s U11 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	86
2017 M8s U12 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	64
2017 M8s U12 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mitchell)	29
2017 M8s U12 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	41
2017 M8s U12 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	41
2017 M8s U12 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	29
2017 M8s U12 Wests (Hillier Oval)	43
2017 M8s U13 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	50
2017 M8s U14 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mtchell)	17
2017 M8s U14 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	54
2017 M8s U14 Wests (Benham Oval)	10
2017 M8s U16 Wests (Benham Oval)	1
2017 End Of season Total	**929**
2018 Pre season	
2017 FN9s Open Age (Norford Park)	53
2017 FN9s Open Womens Penrith (Hickeys Lane)	90
2017 FN9's Open's Manly (Millers Reserve)	41
2017 FN9's U17's Manly (Millers Reserve)	5
2017 FN9s U18G Penrith (Hickeys Lane)	26
2017 M8s U10 Gala Day (Riverwood Park)	61
2017 M8s U12 Gala Day (Riverwood Park	9
2018 FN9's Open Age Male Boystown Oval	159
2018 M8s U10 Canterbury - Smith Park	33
2018 M8's U10 Endeavour High School	10
2018 M8's U10 Manly (Nolans Reserve)	67
2018 M8s U10 Mascot	8
2018 M8's U10 Parramatta (Adams Park)	7
2018 M8s U10 Penrith (Waite Reserve)	6
2018 M8'S U10 Wests St Gregorys	20
2018 M8s U12 Canterbury - Smith Park	6
2018 M8's U12 Manly (Nolans Reserve)	133
2018 M8s U12 Mascot	19
2018 M8's U12 Parramatta (Adams Park)	17
2018 M8s U12 Penrith (Waite Reserve)	6
2018 M8'S U12 Wests St Gregorys	9
2018 Pre season Total	**785**
(blank)	
(blank)	
(blank) Total	
2017 pre season	
2016 Friday Night 9s Manly Open Mens	144
2016 Friday Night 9s Manly Under 17s	4
2016 M8's North Shore Under 12's	71
2016 M8's North Shore Under 14's	73
2016 M8's St George Region U13	51
2016 M8's St George Region U15	9
2016 W8's Campbelltown Under 11's	24
2016 W8's Campbelltown Under 9's	31
2016 W8's North Parramatta Under 10	55
2016 W8's North Parramatta Under 12	58
2017 M8s CRRL U10	54
2017 M8s CRRL U11	23
2017 M8s CRRL U12	21
2017 pre season Total	**618**
Grand Total	**2332**

Programs in 2017 end of Season I.e. Comp Start date between 1/7/2017-30/10/2017

Player Status in 2017 Season

When	2017 End Of season
Type	(Multiple Items)

Count of Family Name	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Continuing from previous season	Did not participate	New registration in season	Returning from seasons 2+ previously	Grand Total
2017 FN9s Open Age Canterbury (Peter Hislop Park)	50	60	4	12	126
2017 FN9s U15 Southern (Scarborough Park)	7				7
2017 FN9s U16 Parramatta (New Era Stadium)	47	6	1	3	57
2017 FN9s U18 Parramatta (New Era Stadium)	27	13	3	5	48
2017 M8s U10 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	52	13	2	1	68
2017 M8s U10 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	39	15	5		59
2017 M8s U10 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	35	12	6	3	56
2017 M8s U11 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	63	12	6	5	86
2017 M8s U12 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	53	3	5	3	64
2017 M8s U12 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mitchell)	19	5	3	2	29
2017 M8s U12 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	22	16	1	2	41
2017 M8s U12 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	25	13		3	41
2017 M8s U12 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	22	4	2	1	29
2017 M8s U12 Wests (Hillier Oval)	29	5	7	2	43
2017 M8s U13 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	37	6	2	5	50
2017 M8s U14 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mtchell)	7	7	1	2	17
2017 M8s U14 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	31	12	3	8	54
2017 M8s U14 Wests (Benham Oval)	5	4	1		10
2017 M8s U16 Wests (Benham Oval)	1				1
Grand Total	**571**	**206**	**52**	**57**	**886**

<- Represents Status in 2017 Season

Player Status in 2018 Season

When	2017 End Of season
Type	(Multiple Items)

Count of Family Name	Column Labels				
Row Labels	Did not participate	New	Returned from previous season	Returning after a break	Grand Total
2017 FN9s Open Age Canterbury (Peter Hislop Park)	70	1	48	7	126
2017 FN9s U15 Southern (Scarborough Park)	1		6		7
2017 FN9s U16 Parramatta (New Era Stadium)	18		36	3	57
2017 FN9s U18 Parramatta (New Era Stadium)	27		20	1	48
2017 M8s U10 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	17		50	1	68
2017 M8s U10 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	15		40	4	59
2017 M8s U10 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	16		37	3	56
2017 M8s U11 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	17		68	1	86
2017 M8s U12 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	12		52		64
2017 M8s U12 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mitchell)	4		24	1	29
2017 M8s U12 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	19		19	3	41
2017 M8s U12 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	16		23	2	41
2017 M8s U12 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	5		24		29
2017 M8s U12 Wests (Hillier Oval)	9		34		43
2017 M8s U13 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	11		38	1	50
2017 M8s U14 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mtchell)	10		7		17
2017 M8s U14 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	18		34	2	54
2017 M8s U14 Wests (Benham Oval)	5		5		10
2017 M8s U16 Wests (Benham Oval)			1		1
Grand Total	**290**	**1**	**566**	**29**	**886**

<- Represents Status in 2018 Season

Programs in 2018 Pre Season I.e. Comp Start dat

Player Status in 2017 Season

When	2018 Pre season
Type	(Multiple Items)

Count of Family Name	Column Labels		
Row Labels	**Continuing from previou**	**Did nc**	**New registration in season**
2017 FN9s Open Age (Norford Park)	17	31	1
2017 FN9s Open Womens Penrith (Hickeys Lane)	27	44	13
2017 FN9's Open's Manly (Millers Reserve)	20	19	
2017 FN9's U17's Manly (Millers Reserve)	3	1	
2017 FN9s U18G Penrith (Hickeys Lane)	9	12	3
2017 M8s U10 Gala Day (Riverwood Park)	40	14	3
2017 M8s U12 Gala Day (Riverwood Park	9		
2018 FN9's Open Age Male Boystown Oval	66	85	
2018 M8s U10 Canterbury - Smith Park	17	9	3
2018 M8's U10 Endeavour High School	7	1	2
2018 M8's U10 Manly (Nolans Reserve)	32	23	11
2018 M8s U10 Mascot	7	1	
2018 M8's U10 Parramatta (Adams Park)	3	3	1
2018 M8s U10 Penrith (Waite Reserve)	3	2	
2018 M8'S U10 Wests St Gregorys	15	4	1
2018 M8s U12 Canterbury - Smith Park	3	2	
2018 M8's U12 Manly (Nolans Reserve)	91	25	14
2018 M8s U12 Mascot	17	2	
2018 M8's U12 Parramatta (Adams Park)	11	5	1
2018 M8s U12 Penrith (Waite Reserve)	5	1	
2018 M8'S U12 Wests St Gregorys	7	2	
Grand Total	**409**	**286**	**53**

Player Status in 2018 Season

When	2018 Pre season

2017 Post Season Participant Tracking

Row Labels	Count of Family Name
2017 pre season	
2016 M8's North Shore Under 12's	71
2016 M8's North Shore Under 14's	73
2016 M8's St George Region U13	51
2016 M8's St George Region U15	9
2016 W8's Campbelltown Under 11's	24
2016 W8's Campbelltown Under 9's	31
2016 W8's North Parramatta Under 10	55
2016 W8's North Parramatta Under 12	58
2017 M8s CRRL U10	54
2017 M8s CRRL U11	23
2017 M8s CRRL U12	21
2017 pre season Total	**470**

		Status in 2017 season				
Row Labels	**Count of Family Name**	**Continuing from previous season**	**Did not participate**	**New registration in season**	**Returning from seasons 2+ previously**	**Grand Total**
2017 End Of season						
2017 M8s U10 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	68	52	13	2	1	68
2017 M8s U10 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	59	39	15	5		59
2017 M8s U10 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	56	35	12	6	3	56
2017 M8s U11 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	86	63	12	6	5	86
2017 M8s U12 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	64	53	3	5	3	64
2017 M8s U12 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mitchell)	29	19	5	3	2	29
2017 M8s U12 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	41	22	16	1	2	41
2017 M8s U12 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	41	25	13		3	41
2017 M8s U12 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	29	22	4	2	1	29
2017 M8s U12 Wests (Hillier Oval)	43	29	5	7	2	43
2017 M8s U13 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	50	37	6	2	5	50
2017 M8s U14 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mtchell)	17	7	7	1	2	17
2017 M8s U14 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	54	31	12	3	8	54
2017 M8s U14 Wests (Benham Oval)	10	5	4	1		10
2017 M8s U16 Wests (Benham Oval)	1	1				1
2017 End Of season Total	648	**440**	**127**	**44**	**37**	**648**

		Status of same participant in2018 season				
Row Labels	**Count of Family Name**	**Did not participate**	**New**	**Returned from previous season**	**Returning after a break**	**Grand Total**
2017 End Of season						
2017 M8s U10 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	68	17		50	1	68
2017 M8s U10 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	59	15		40	4	59
2017 M8s U10 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	56	16		37	3	56
2017 M8s U11 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	86	17		68	1	86
2017 M8s U12 Parramatta (Richie Benaud)	64	12		52		64
2017 M8s U12 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mitchell)	29	4		24	1	29
2017 M8s U12 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	41	19		19	3	41
2017 M8s U12 Gala Day (Brookvale Oval)	41	16		23	2	41
2017 M8s U12 Penrith (Exeter Farm)	29	5		24		29
2017 M8s U12 Wests (Hillier Oval)	43	9		34		43
2017 M8s U13 Canterbury-Bankstown (Smith Park)	50	11		38	1	50
2017 M8s U14 Balmain (Sir Thomas Mtchell)	17	10		7		17
2017 M8s U14 Canterbury-Bankstown (Clemton Park)	54	18		34	2	54
2017 M8s U14 Wests (Benham Oval)	10	5		5		10
2017 M8s U16 Wests (Benham Oval)	1			1		1
2017 End Of season Total	648	**174**	**0**	**456**	**18**	**648**

2018 Pre Season Participant Tracking

Row Labels	Count of Family Name	Player Status in 2017 Season				
2018 Pre season		**Continuing from previous season**	**Did not participate**	**New registration in season**	**Returning from seasons 2+ previously**	**Grand Total**
2017 M8s U10 Gala Day (Riverwood Park)	61	40	14	3	4	61
2017 M8s U12 Gala Day (Riverwood Park	9	9				9
2018 M8s U10 Canterbury - Smith Park	33	17	9	3	4	33
2018 M8's U10 Endeavour High School	10	7	1	2		10
2018 M8's U10 Manly (Nolans Reserve)	67	32	23	11	1	67
2018 M8s U10 Mascot	8	7	1			8
2018 M8's U10 Parramatta (Adams Park)	7	3	3	1		7
2018 M8s U10 Penrith (Waite Reserve)	6	3	2		1	6
2018 M8'S U10 Wests St Gregorys	20	15	4	1		20
2018 M8s U12 Canterbury - Smith Park	6	3	2		1	6
2018 M8's U12 Manly (Nolans Reserve)	133	91	25	14	3	133
2018 M8s U12 Mascot	19	17	2			19
2018 M8's U12 Parramatta (Adams Park)	17	11	5	1		17
2018 M8s U12 Penrith (Waite Reserve)	6	5	1			6
2018 M8'S U12 Wests St Gregorys	9	7	2			9
2018 Pre season Total	**411**	**267**	**94**	**36**	**14**	**411**

Row Labels	Count of Family Name	Player Status in 2018 Season				
2018 Pre season		**Did not participate**	**New**	**Returned from previous season**	**Returning after a break**	**Grand Total**
2017 M8s U10 Gala Day (Riverwood Park)	61	15	2	44		61
2017 M8s U12 Gala Day (Riverwood Park	9			9		9
2018 M8s U10 Canterbury - Smith Park	33	9	1	22	1	33
2018 M8's U10 Endeavour High School	10			9	1	10
2018 M8's U10 Manly (Nolans Reserve)	67	6	13	44	4	67
2018 M8s U10 Mascot	8	1		7		8
2018 M8's U10 Parramatta (Adams Park)	7	2	1	4		7
2018 M8s U10 Penrith (Waite Reserve)	6	1	1	4		6
2018 M8'S U10 Wests St Gregorys	20	4		16		20
2018 M8s U12 Canterbury - Smith Park	6	1		4	1	6
2018 M8's U12 Manly (Nolans Reserve)	133	11	12	104	6	133
2018 M8s U12 Mascot	19	1		17	1	19
2018 M8's U12 Parramatta (Adams Park)	17	3	3	10	1	17
2018 M8s U12 Penrith (Waite Reserve)	6		1	5		6
2018 M8'S U12 Wests St Gregorys	9	2		7		9
2018 Pre season Total	**411**	56	34	306	15	411

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 12

2.14 NSW RL Junior Rugby League Weight and Age Guidelines

Junior Rugby League Weight and Age Model

Upper Weight limit based on approximately 98th percentile Lower Weight limit based on approximately 15th percentile

- » U6 & U30kg
- » U7 & U35kg (players 21kg or under may play U6)
- » U8 & U42kg (players 23kg or under may play U7)
- » U9 & U48kg (players 26kg or under may play U8)
- » U10 & U56kg (players 29kg or under may play U9)
- » U11 & U64kg (players 33kg or under may play U10)
- » U12 & U72kg (players 37kg or under may play U11)
- » U13 & U79kg (players 42kg or under may play U12)
- » U14 & U86kg (players 48kg or under may play U13)
- » U15 & U93kg (players 53kg or under may play U14)
- » U16 & U97kg (players 55kg or under may play U15)

Note: A player may not be forced to play more than one year above his/her 'natural' age due to these weight restrictions

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 13

GOLD SHIELD
GUIDANCE BOOKLET
Governance and Administration

1.1 Club Constitution

- Registered Constitution and by-laws supplied

1.2 Affiliate Agreements between the NRL and SRL Clubs:

Brainstorming/design session with the joint Pathways Working Group for the creation of new Affiliation Agreements. A standard agreement will be created with subtle differences based on individual relationships (a table with specifics)

Operational elements:

- Coaches – recruitment processes, attraction and development
- Training requirements – facilities/players/welfare
- Availability of players – standards to be set, travel expectations
- Rehab/injury management and cost – medical minimum standard
- Reporting requirements - injury/incident/who/when/how do NRL/SRL report up and down
- Trial games – numbers, when, where
- Memorabilia – how many, signed etc
- Movement of players across clubs

Strategic elements:

- Design the number of SRL clubs signed to NRL clubs (this needs a strategy around it to include elements of fairness/equity, strong offers of support/partnership, affiliation structure)
- Communication approach and strategy (Junior Reps acknowledgement)
- Cash contribution
- KPI development – joint (NRL and SRL clubs)
- Accreditation is required for the agreement – Link to Gold Shield
- Sponsorship details – conflict/opportunities
- Event Management
- Media engagement
- Club Logo usage and branding guidelines
- Corporate support – tickets, boxes, people/roles, venues, presentations, awards nights
- Create conditions of partnership and 'bond' clubs to the agreement for a set timeframe
- Wellbeing and Education (50k) what will the services look like (same as NRL clubs – counselling and education. Integrated wellbeing and education program that is game specific)
- 'Joint' grassroots strategy with clear alignment and benefit for the clubs
- Termination clause for both parties to exit from relationships
- Consider contract law requirements
- Determine that the relevant insurances are in place – NRL Club and Affiliate Club
- Create contract/partnership review terms
- Ensure that the Affiliate agreement meets the participation agreement

KPI ideas:

- Junior participation actions
- Minimum number of players from the area
- Team performance (output of programs, coaches etc)
- Access to corporate database (opportunities for partnerships)
- Sponsorship requirements (apparel, wholesale opportunities, supplements and other access to products)
- Membership

Next steps:

- Design the template for the agreement
- Review and finalise the criteria
- Socialise with NRL/SRL clubs re: the criteria and identify specific club requirements
- Determine where the current affiliation agreements are at
- Decide the Affiliation structure (numbers/areas of SRL clubs affiliated with NRL Clubs)
- Finalise the agreements
- Implement the agreement into current Club operating models

1.3 Org Charts

- Not necessarily these titles or number of roles, people to fulfil these roles
- Pathway approach, not just ISP. This may necessitate a joint submission on related roles.
- Employed directly by ISP club or indirectly through Leagues Club or NRL affiliate. Identify that in submission. Any post employed through NRL club should be reflected in Affiliation Agreement
- Where multiple people are required for certain roles (eg. Trainers), list all along with their accreditation and qualifications. This will replace the previous procedure of nominating people for this role.
- All relevant job descriptions and accreditations should be listed in the submission.

Administration	Football	Sports Science	Wellbeing and Welfare	Medical
Chief Executive (group/club/leagues)	ISP Head Coach	Performance Manager	Pathways Welfare Officer	Team Doctor
Football Manager/ Football Operations	ISP Assistant Coach (x2)	S&C Coach	Nutritionist	ISP Physiotherapist
Recruitment/ Pathways Manager	20s Head Coach	ISP Trainer (Orange)	Mental Skills	Pathways Physio
Talent ID/Scouts	20s Assistant Coach (x2)	ISP Trainer (Blue)		Ass. Pathways Physio
	SG Ball Head Coach	ISP Trainer (Yellow)		
	SG Ball Assistant Coach (x2)	Pathways Trainer (Orange)		
	Harold Matts Head Coach	Pathways Trainer (Blue)		
	Harold matts Assistant Coach (x2)	Pathways Trainer (Yellow)		
		Performance Analyst		
Marketing	**Media**	**Finance**		
	Media Officer			

Date Created	
Last updated	

NEW SOUTH WALES RUGBY LEAGUE – RISK ASSESSMENT

Event/Activity:		Assessment Completed by:	
Date of Event/Activity:		Section / Extension:	
Chief Operating Officer Approval			
Approval by COO Required?	Yes	Signature:	
Date:	/ /	Comments:	

Item No.	Hazard / Issue What happens if no controls are in place	Risk What is the likely result if this risk is not mitigated	Inherent Risk			Controls to be implemented	Residual Risk			Area Responsible	Responsible Person Sign-Off
			Likelihood	Consequence	Risk		Likelihood	Consequence	Risk		
OPERATIONAL RISKS											
1			D	4	H		D	3	M		
2			D	4	H				M		
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
COMMUNICATION RISKS											
10											
11											
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT											
12											
13											
ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS											
14											
BROADCAST / MEDIA RISKS											
15											
16											

How to Prioritise the Risk Rating

Once the level of risk has been determined the following table may be of use in determining when to act to implement the control measures.

Extreme:
Must be managed by senior management. With detailed planning, allocation of implementation responsibilities and resources and regular monitoring of progress.

High:
Detailed planning and action at senior levels and with regular monitoring of progress. Senior management oversight and monitoring of progress with risk management action.

Moderate:
Identify management responsibilities and monitor progress with risk management action. Where consequence is major ensure effectiveness of contingency plans, perhaps through testing and/or independent review. If risk is likely to occur ensure effective mitigation either through self-assessment or independent review. Identify management responsibility. Monitor and review response action as necessary.

Low: Manage through existing processes and procedures.

This document can be used to identify the level of risk and will help to prioritise any control measures. The document is compliant with Australian and New Zealand Standard AS/NZ: ISO 31000:2009,

Consider the consequence and likelihood for each of the identified hazards and use the table to obtain the risk level.

GUIDANCE			CONSEQUENCES				
The detail contained in the light purple coloured cells is provided to assist in the interpretation of the consequences / likelihood assessments. It is to provide guidance to staff undertaking risk assessments and should not be taken literally.			1: Insignificant Dealt with in-house, first aid etc.	2: Minor Medical help needed treatment by medical professional/hospital outpatient, etc. Internal review required or minor mention in local media. Minor system failure, policy / procedural rule occasionally not met. Overall business not affected. 2.5% of budget or <$50,000	3: Moderate Significant non-permanent injury, overnight hospitalisation (inpatient). Scrutiny by internal committees or internal audit to prevent escalation or adverse media coverage. Moderate system failure, one or more key accountability requirements not met. >5% of budget or <$500,000	4: Major Extensive permanent injury requiring extended hospitalisation. Scrutiny by external committees, inquest or intense public, political or media scrutiny. Significant system failure, poor policy advice or non-compliance with legislation. Business significantly affected. >10% of budget or <$5m	5: Catastrophic Permanent disabling injury or death. Commission of inquiry or adverse national media. Critical system failure, bad policy advice or ongoing non-compliance with legislation. Business severely affected. >25% of budget or >$5m
LIKELIHOOD	A	Almost certain to occur in most circumstances	HIGH	HIGH	EXTREME	EXTREME	EXTREME
	B	Likely to occur frequently	MODERATE	HIGH	HIGH	EXTREME	EXTREME
	C	Possible and likely to occur at some time	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	EXTREME	EXTREME
	D	Unlikely to occur but could happen	LOW	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	EXTREME
	E	May occur but only in rare and exceptional circumstances	LOW	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	HIGH

Codes of Conduct:

- In addition to the existing NSWRL Code of Conduct (http://www.nswrl.com.au/seniors/code_of_conduct.html)
- Code of conduct for players and club officials

INFORMATION RELAY CHECKLIST

IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT PLEASE COLLECT AND REPORT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

PLEASE THINK!! WHO - WHAT - WHEN - WHERE - WHY

MATCH DETAILS	DATE:	GROUND:
	AGE:	TEAMS:

INCIDENT DETAILS

INJURY		BEHAVIOURAL	
IS VIDEO OF THE GAME AVAILABLE	☐ Yes ☐ No	IS VIDEO OF THE GAME AVAILABLE	☐ Yes ☐ No
NAME OF INJURED PERSON:		GROUND MANAGER IN ATTENDANCE	☐ Yes ☐ No
AGE:		GROUND MANAGER NAME:	
PARENT NAME (IF MINOR):		GROUND MANAGER PHONE NUMBER:	
PARENT PHONE NUMBER:		BRIEF DETAILS OF THE INCIDENT:	
AMBULANCE CALLED	☐ Yes ☐ No		
WAS FOUL PLAY INVOLVED	☐ Yes ☐ No		
IF YES WHAT ARE THE DETAILS:		PERSON ALLEGED TO BE AT FAULT: NAME: ..... CLUB: ..... POSITION: ☐ Coach ☐ Manager ☐ Trainer ☐ Player ☐ Club Official ☐ Spectator ☐ Other	
WAS THERE A SEND-OFF	☐ Yes ☐ No		
REFEREES REPORT OBTAINED	☐ Yes ☐ No		
GROUND MANAGER REPORT OBTAINED	☐ Yes ☐ No		
WITNESS REPORTS OBTAINED	☐ Yes ☐ No		
JUNIOR LEAGUE MANAGER CONTACTED	☐ Yes ☐ No	POLICE ATTENDED FROM LAC:	☐ Yes ☐ No
		OUTCOME OF POLICE ATTENDANCE: ☐ Arrest ☐ Caution ☐ No Action	
		WAS THE GAME ABANDONED	☐ Yes ☐ No
		REFEREES REPORT OBTAINED	☐ Yes ☐ No
		GROUND MANAGER REPORT OBTAINED	☐ Yes ☐ No
		WITNESS REPORTS OBTAINED	☐ Yes ☐ No
		JUNIOR LEAGUE CONTACTED	☐ Yes ☐ No
		WAS THE MATTER RESOLVED	☐ Yes ☐ No
		HAS THE MATTER BEEN ELEVATED TO THE JUNIOR LEAGUE MANAGER FOR RESOLUTION	☐ Yes ☐ No
		HAVE MEDIA OUTLETS CONTACTED YOU ABOUT THE INCIDENT	☐ Yes ☐ No

INFORM YOUR CLUB BOARD AND AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE WRITE AND SUBMIT AN INCIDENT REPORT AND SUBMIT TO JUNIOR LEAGUE MANAGER WITHIN 24 HRS

[redacted]

000

[redacted]

[redacted]

ONCE INFORMATION IS COMPILED CONTACT DISTRICT IMMEDIATELY TO REPORT INCIDENT

1.6. Strategic Plan

- Can be a strategic and operation plan for the club as a whole, or to the affiliation agreement and the relationship between two clubs in order to produce athletes for the pathway and increase the quality of the ISP Competition.

BUSINESS PLAN

Following Pages are an example of Club Business Plan

INSERT CLUB LOGO

[name]
Business Plan

[date]

INDEX

FOREWORD	3
BACKGROUND	4 & 5
PROPOSED CLUB OVERVIEW	6
STRATEGIC OVERVIEW	7,8,9,10
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW	11,12,13
PLANNING	14,15,16
ORGANISATIONAL CHART	17
BUSINESS PLAN SIGN OFF	18

FOREWORD
(from an identity/ambassador)

BACKGROUND TO THE BID

Examples for inclusion:

- **Geographical and demographical background**
- **Present position**
- **Need for Rugby League expansion**
- **Community aspirations**
- **Potential benefits to the region and the Game**

BACKGROUND CONTINUED

Our region combines strong socio economic data with a RL community that represents [x]% of participants in [x]

Regional Demographics

- X residents – the xth largest urban area in Australia and growing.
- Younger, family orientated demographic.
- Median Income [x], Median house price [x]
- Domestic migration and International migration shows [x], Any bias to RL?
- Almost x% of residents were born in Australia, in line with the Australian population.
- 8k+ businesses in local catchment area and 20k+ broader economic region.

Player Registrations

- [x] number of clubs, [x]k registered players ([x]% of [x]total).
- The catchment is likely to extend into [x] & [y] which have [x] combined registered players
- When compared to Brisbane and Sydney, the direct player catchment is greater than [x].
- [x]k of registered coaches and offices players ([x]% of [x] total).
- Historically have had [x] growth in player numbers

Why [x] region is important to the Pathway

- [x] number of NRL and State Cup players developed over the past [x] years
- [x] number of senior representative players developed over the past [x] year
- Key pathway in place for juniors currently through to [x] NRL clubs

Map of Catchment

Show map of QLD highlighting catchment area

EXAMPLE ONLY

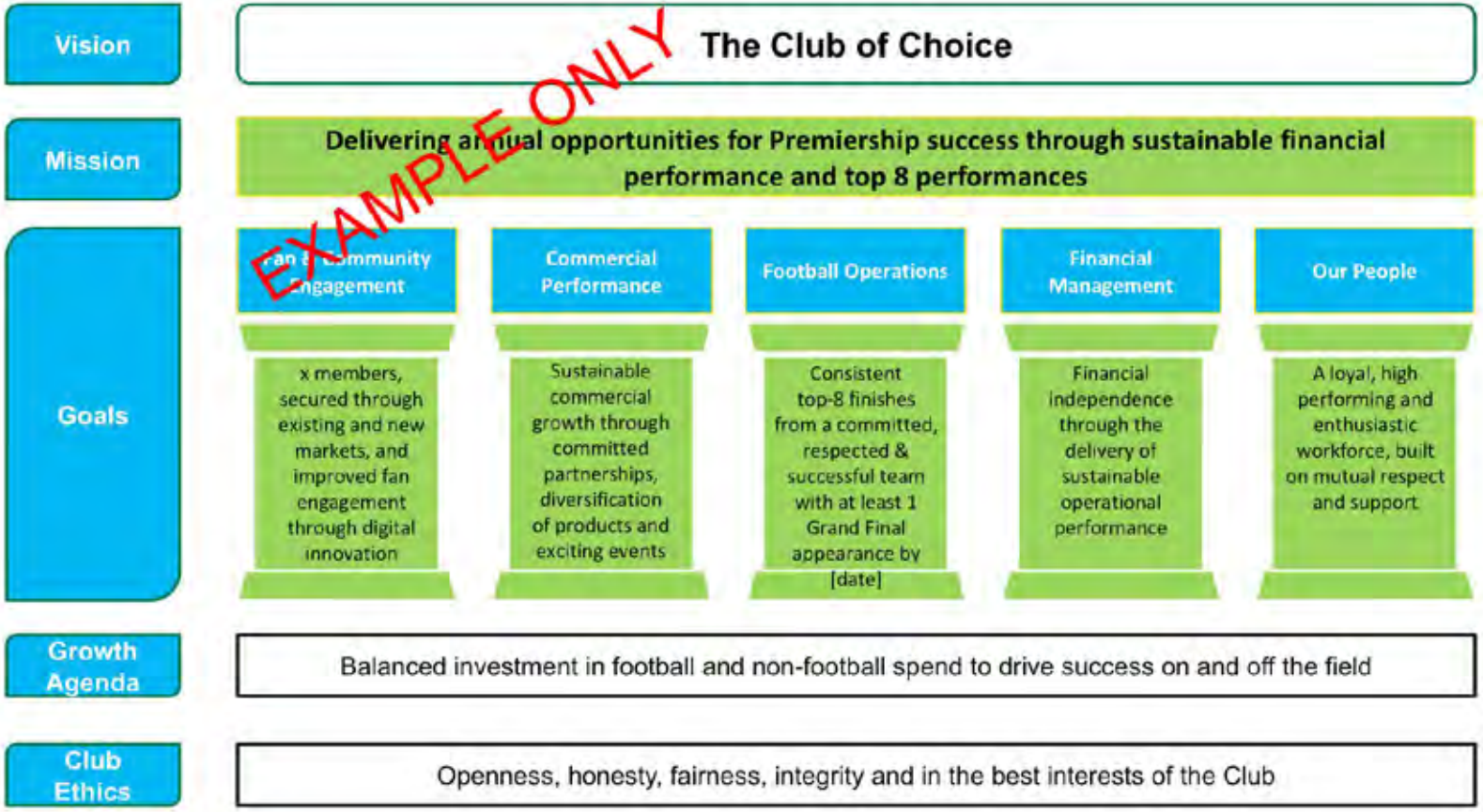
PROPOSED CLUB - OVERVIEW

- [name] was founded in [year], is based out of [name] and is owned by the [name]
  - *Home Ground(s) – [name] (Capacity – [insert no])*
  - *Training Facilities – [name]*
  - *Corporate Facilities – [name]*
  - *Members – [no]*
  - *Average Home Attendance – [no]*
  - *Major Sponsors – [name]*
  - *Financial Strength*

- Key achievements to date:
  - *Crowds [no]*
  - *Season performances [no]*
  - *Staffing [no]*
  - *Sponsors [names]*
  - *Memberships [no]*

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

To become the 'club of choice' by [date] we will need to realise our mission of on-field & off-field success through a focus on our goals



EXAMPLE ONLY

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW CONT

The club's vision is to be the club of choice for members, fans, the community, partners, players and staff

The Club of Choice

- Our three year vision is to become the Club of Choice: the place where the best people come to join our ongoing pursuit of success, commitment and enjoyment.
- We are striving to create an environment and culture for members, fans and our community, known for its unrivalled loyalty, pride, passion and commitment to its family values.
- For our players and coaches, we will be the professional destination for exceptional leadership, achievement, performance and development opportunities.
- Our corporate partners will recognise [name] as the right partner to strengthen their brand through strong community engagement, commercial growth and business to business opportunities.
- Our Board, staff and executive team will know us as the destination for personal empowerment, growth and unity.

EXAMPLE ONLY

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW CONT

The club will make rational investments to achieve our goals in order to become the 'club of choice'

Fan & Community Engagement

Our goal is to reach [no] members by [date] with $X net income p.a. realised through membership by:

Commercial Performance

Our goal is sustainable commercial growth and profitability, through:

Football Operations

Our goal is to finish each season in the ..... ladder position

Financial Management

Financial independence through the delivery of profitable football and non-football operations, including:

Our People

Our goal is to strengthen and support the [name]

EXAMPLE ONLY

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW CONT

To support us in achieving our goal we need to understand our competitive environment so we target the correct initiatives year on year to deliver sustainable success

Strength

- Strong growth in membership through conversion of match day attendees to club members
- Receive good support from the local community
- High quality training facility
- Board brings diversity of skills suitable for achievement of the Clubs strategic objectives
- Established Junior feeder set up in place
- On-field performance of the team with finals being reached in the past 2 years including 1 grand final appearance

EXAMPLE ONLY

Weaknesses

- Currently operating at a small loss
- Under investment in back office support systems
- Experience and capacity of current employees to take on additional work and support 'transformation' of [name]' – particularly our Finance and Marketing teams
- Financial strength of.....
- High level of membership churn

Opportunities

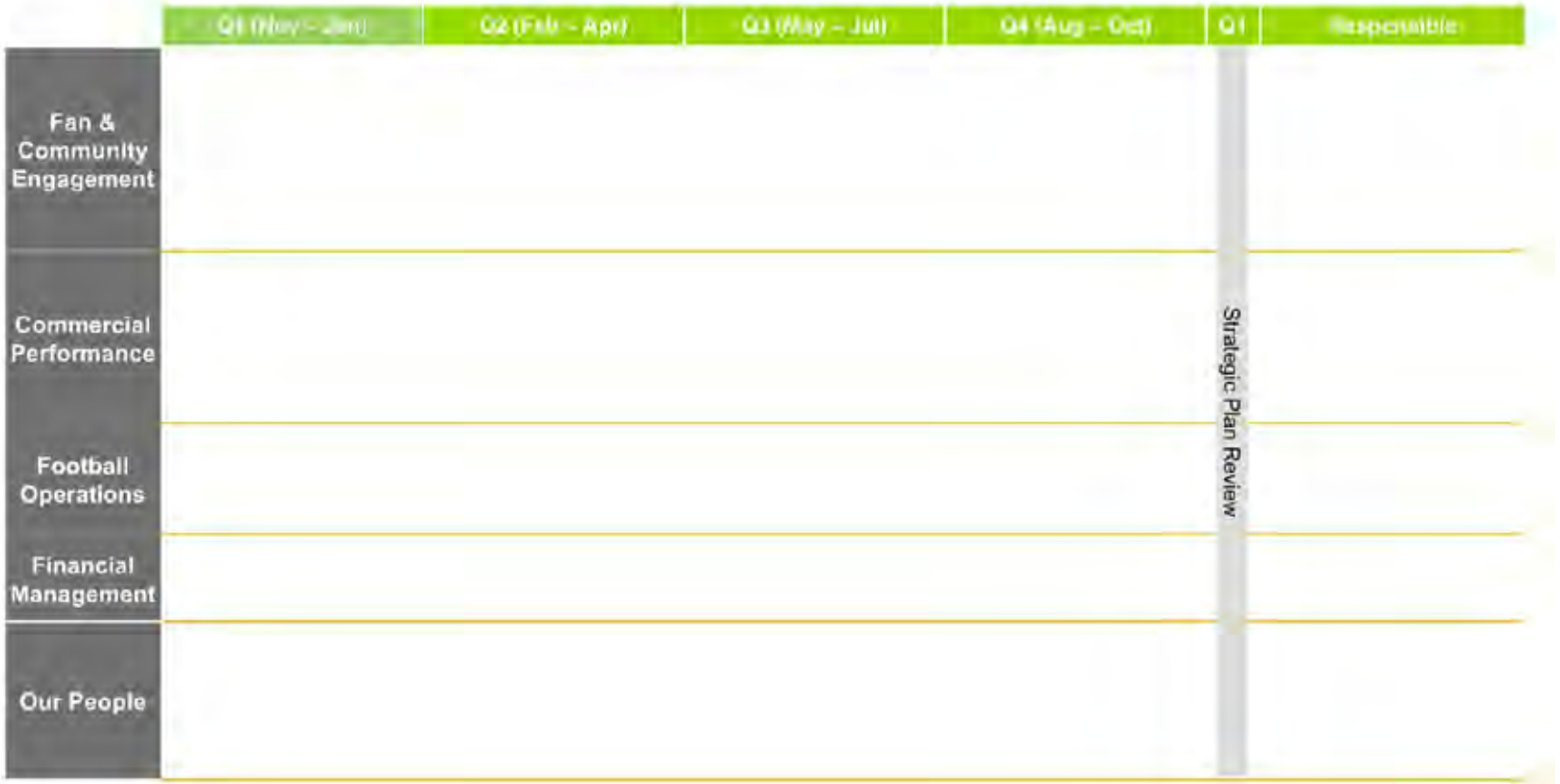
- Improved transition from juniors to elite football through a greater focus on long term player development, strengthening the scouting network and efforts to retain the 'top talent'
- Realise improved sponsorship terms and conditions through utilisation of new Board members
- Utilisation of marketing support from the governing body so we gain access to scale / additional funding

Threats

- Loss of talent to other Clubs and competing codes
- Loss of members and casual spectator to competing codes
- Escalating football related costs
- Decreasing financial support available from ..... to support short term capital management
- Weakening of club / code brand associated with game wide reputational issues.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

- To deliver our [date] vision the Club will complete a series of initiatives in FY[ ] which will lay the foundations for success



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

- The effectiveness of these initiatives and the ability of the club to deliver its [date] plan will be measured through the achievement of a series of KPIs

Commercial Performance

	[year] (actual)	[year] (target)	[year] (target)	[year] (target)
Sponsorship, Hospitality & Catering				
Revenue exc Contra ($000)				
Margin				
Membership				
Membership Numbers				
Revenue ($000)				
Margin				
Membership Churn				
Ticketing and Fan Development				
Average Game Attendance				
Gate Receipts ($000)				
Game day expenses ($000)				
Margin				
Merchandising				
Revenue ($000)				
Margin				

Football Operations

	[year] (actual)	[year] (target)	[year] (target)	[year] (target)
Football Expenses				
Player Salaries ($000)				
Other Football Department Expenses ($000)				
Football Expense as a proportion of Total Revenue (exc NRL Grants)				
Football Expense as a proportion of Total Revenue (inc NRL Grants)				
Player Development & Welfare				
Average age of top squad				
Juniors in top squad				
Games lost due to injury				

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

- Through delivery of the FY[ ] initiatives and subsequent initiatives in FY[ ] and FY[ ] the clubs financial position will be strengthened due to:
  - *Growth in commercial revenues and improved management of costs (forecast net commercial contribution expected to rise by X% between FY[ ] and FY[ ])*
  - *Effective management of overheads (forecast to increase at or below CPI)*
  - *Stronger control over football related expenses (player salaries and other football costs due to increase in line with Salary Cap and other football costs due to rise at X% year on year)*

Financial Outcomes:

- Commercial revenue increases by X% in the period to $X by [year]
- Operating profit/loss improves from $X in [year] to $X in [year] with breakeven budgeted for [year]
- The Club has a net asset position of $X on [date]
- Cash balance increase from an overdraft of $X in [date] to a positive cash balance of $X by [year]

PLANNING

Pre-Bid Period Planning Cycle

EXAMPLE ONLY

PLANNING CONT - YEAR PRIOR TO INCEPTION

Bid Period Planning Cycle

PLANNING CONT

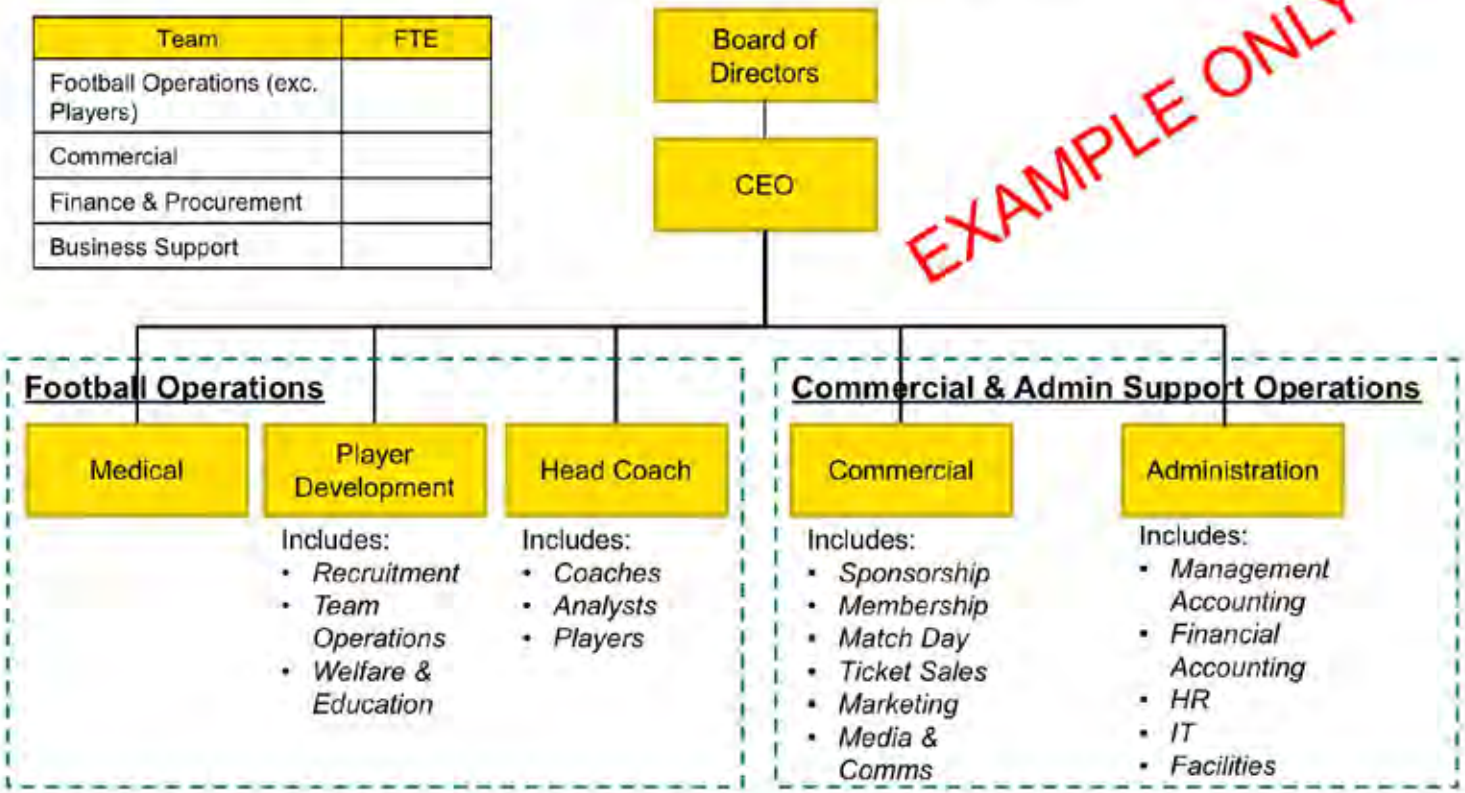
Inception year

CATEGORY	STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	PERFORMANCE TARGETS	COST
Governance						
Operational performance						
Stakeholder relations & partnerships						
Risk management						

ORGANISATIONAL CHART

- To deliver performance both on and off the field the team is split into business units focused on football operations, commercial activities, financial reporting and analysis and administrative / business support services

Team	FTE
Football Operations (exc. Players)	
Commercial	
Finance & Procurement	
Business Support	



BUSINESS PLAN SIGN OFF

- This business plan will play an integral role in managing activities of [name] and support the Club achieve its short and long term goals
- In signing below you, as a Board member of [name], acknowledge to the best of your understanding that the information presented in this business plan is a fair reflection of the current state and future goals of the Club, has been developed using the best available information and you agree to the content set out within

Board Member	Role	Signature	Date

END OF AN EXAMPLE of Club Business Plan

INSERT CLUB LOGO

1.7. Liquor Licence

- Where applicable, a state liquor licence approved by Service NSW is required
- Responsible Service of Alcohol qualification must also be submitted.

1.8. .Incorporation

- Incorporation certificate and ABN number

1.9. Insurance

- Up to date and valid cover notes/Insurance Certificates for Directors and Officers Insurance
- Up to date and valid cover notes/Insurance Certificates for Public Liability Insurance at training and playing venues.

2. Finance

.

2.1 Annual Budgets

- Approved budget for the coming season, signed and approved by the relevant board of directors
- Monthly P&L updates.

2.2 Audited Accounts

-Submission of the most recent audited financial report.

2.3 Accounting Systems

- Evidence of use of computerised accounting systems

2.4 Compliance Report

- Monthly compliance and risk reports, as provided to the board.

3. Media

3.1 Media Policy

- Submission of an approved media policy
- Communications strategy should link to crisis management and risk assessment documents submitted in section 1.3

<NAME> MEDIA POLICY

As at <DATE>

1. Overview

The <CLUB NAME> Media Policy details processes through which <CLUB NAME> staff and volunteers (including Board of Directors, Ambassadors, players, coaches and officials) are aware of the processes and understand their obligations when representing the organisation to any form of media in a variety of circumstances.
In accordance with this Policy, media agencies and those employed by media agencies should have an understanding of the processes which are designed to ensure the <CLUB NAME> and media agencies can collaborate effectively and efficiently.
The Media and Communications Officer of the <CLUB NAME> will ensure the organisation's media commitments, responsibilities and special requests are managed with equal consistency.

1.1 Purpose

The Media Policy ensures all internal and external (including media) parties are aware of the procedures of the <CLUB NAME> when it comes to making a request for public comment for television, radio, print and internet mediums.
It has been developed to ensure consistency and accuracy of the message/ information provided to the media; and to ensure all media requests are treated equitably and in a timely manner that allows deadlines to be met where possible.

2. Process

<CLUB NAME> intends to deliver desirable, streamlined outcomes for all parties by conducting all media liaison via a central point of contact.
Therefore, all media requests are to be directed to the Media and Communications Officer, which will recommend the appropriate spokesperson and manage the process.
The Media and Communications Officer reserves the right to refuse a request if the appropriate channels are not followed.

The Media and Communications Officer will be available to make comment on the following:

- General information
- Promotional activities
- <CLUB NAME> Events.

The Media and Communications Officer will also delegate media requests on the following issues where appropriate:

- Club/ State League matters
- Football – Competitions, Pathways Programs and Participation
- Commercial

3. Media Communication

3.1 Media Releases/ Updates

The <CLUB NAME> will issue media releases as required via the <CLUB NAME> email database.

3.2 Media Conferences

Media conferences are held as required. Notice will be given via the <CLUB NAME> email database.

3.3 Media Requests

All requests for interviews should go through the Media and Communications Department in the first instance.

3.4 Player Access

Requests for interviews should be directed to the <CLUB NAME> Media and Communications Officer.

3.5 Issues

All issues will be dealt with in a timely manner.

Please refer to the NSWRL Crisis Management documents for correct procedure and protocol.

4. Official <CLUB NAME> Spokespeople

The following people will be able to comment on behalf of <CLUB NAME> on subjects relevant to their position:

Chairman
- Major announcements
- Policy/ Board announcements and issues
- Responses to NSWRL issues, Board and Chairmen.

CEO
All administrative operational issues including:
- Business ventures
- Senior management/ staff appointments
- Issues raised by NSWRL CEO
- Sponsorship, membership, marketing and merchandise issues
- NSWRL competition structures
- Off-field incidents
- Expenditure and profit/ loss.

Head Coach
- Team selections and structure
- Team performance
- Player performances
- Preview and review matches
- Football operation issues.

General Manager – Football
- NSWRL competition structures
- Pathways Program
- Participation.

Head of Commercial
- Partnerships.

Head of Competitions
- Operational football competition matters.

Media and Communications Officer
- General information
- Promotional activities
- <CLUB NAME> Events.

5. Media Contacts

All media enquiries should be directed to:

<NAME>
Media and Communications Officer
Phone
Email

FACILITIES

Facility Requirements

4. Facilities

For full information, see NRL Facilities Guidelines 2014 document.

4.1 Facilities Audit. – Pavilion and Amenities

	Preferred minimum sizes (m^2)			Essential/ Non-essential	Comments and Specifications
Pavilion/Amenities	State	Regional	Local	State	
Changing Rooms	45m^2 x 4	45m^2 x 2	30m^2 x 2	Essential	At a State League level, 4 changing rooms (2 home team and 2 away team) should be provided. To offer flexibility, the changing room should be able to be configured in either 4 separate rooms or 2 large changing rooms. At a Regional and Local level, 2 changing rooms (1 home team and 1 away team) are essential.
Showers	20m^2 x 4	15m^2 x2	15m^2 x2	Essential	Each changing room requires its own wet area (showers) located as far as possible from changing room entrance and WC's. State League facilities should incorporate a minimum of 5 shower points, regional and local facilities should incorporate a minimum of 4 and 3 respectively. Showers on opposing walls should be spaced 2.5m apart to permit a central circulation route. To improve flexibility and to cater for mixed use, cubical showers can be provided.
Toilets	10m^2 x 4	10m^2 x2	10m^2 x2	Essential	The provision of toilet facilities should be based on the following minimum requirement:- Men: one WC, two urinals and two washbasins. Women: two WC's and two washbasins. To cater for mixed gender use, male urinals can be replaced by an additional WC.
Referee's Room (including shower and toilet)	15m^2	15m^2	15m^2	Essential	The pavilion should include a self-contained changing room for use by officials. Provide a room of 15m^2 with a shower, washbasins and bench space. Secure locker storage is required when the room is used by more than one official .If officials of both sexes use the pavilion at the same time, provide separate accommodation.
Scorer & Timekeeping Box	15m^2	15m^2	10m^2	Essential	The scorer and Timekeeping box needs to have a clear view of the playing field and ideally located in line with the centre line. Can be part of the main pavilion or a stand-alone structure, and must incorporate a siren.
Kitchen & Kiosk	40m^2	30m^2	20m^2	Essential	All areas must meet public health requirements
Social/Community Room	175m^2	125m^2	75m^2	Essential	This area can be used for post match gatherings or presentations and other events. Must have windows from which the game can be viewed and can include specialised bar facilities and or access to appropriate kiosk/kitchen servery.
Administration Area/ Competition Office	20m2	15m^2	15m^2	Essential	The room should include a desk/bench area and appropriate office storage.
Accessible Public Toilets	45m^2	35m^2	35m^2	Essential	These can either be part of the pavilion or stand alone. The size of the public toilets should be based on the crowd history and relevant planning/building codes.
Storage- Internal	15m^2	10m^2	10m^2	Essential	Adequate storage for club materials such as uniforms, merchandise and stock
Storage-External	15m^2	10m^2	10m^2	Essential	Adequate for sport related equipment (balls, tackle bags, goal post padding etc) and other necessary maintenance equipment (line marking, lawn mower etc)
Cleaner's Store	5m^2	5m^2	5m^2	Essential	A lockable cupboard for cleaning materials is minimum required. For multi-team pavilions, provide a store with shelving and a bucket sink adjacent to changing rooms
Utilities/Plant Room	5m^2	5m^2	5m^2	Essential	A separate utilities/plant room should be provided for essential services such as electrical switchboard.

4.2 Field of Play

Preferred minimum sizes (m^2)				Essential/ Non-essential	Comments and Specifications
Field of Play	State	Regional	Local	State	
Coaches Boxes	Elevated position for 4 people	Touchline seating for 4 people (separate to subs Bench)	Touchline seating for 4 people. (part of subs bench)	Essential	Separate Coaches boxes should be provided for the home and away teams, ideally on the western side of the ground, close to the halfway line.
Substitutes Bench	Seating for 8 people	Seating for 6 people	Seating for 4 people	Essential	Home and away team substitute benches provided, ideally as permanent shelters, close to Interchange box.
Goal Posts	Height: 16m Width: 5.5m Crossbar: 3m	Height: 16m Width: 5.5m Crossbar 3m	Height: 16m Width: 5.5m Crossbar 3m	Essential	At State League level, goal posts must be 16m in height, 5.5m apart with a cross bar at 3m from the ground. The bottom 2m of the uprights should be padded.
Playing Field Run-off	5m	4m	3m	Essential	There must be adequate run-off area between the field of play and perimeter fencing- where possible 5m should be allowed.
Playing Field Markings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Essential	Field width: 68m Length: Goal line to goal line- 100m. In Goal Areas to measure 68m x 8m Refer to section 18:Ground Markings & Dimension Guidelines in 'Rugby League Laws of the Game'
Playing Field Quality	High	High-Medium	Medium	Essential	State League playing surface must be of high quality including civil designed sub surface drainage and a high quality even coverage of turf with no obvious undulations, top dressed, aerated and fertilised each off season. Provide a planned maintenance program for upkeep of surface.
Playing Field Drainage	Excellent-Good	Excellent-Good	Good	Essential	Appropriate surface and sub-surface drainage and the development of an overall maintenance plan for drainage.
Scoreboard	Yes	Yes	Yes	Essential	Scoreboards should visible to players, coaches and spectators. Electronic scoreboard is essential
Ground Maintenance Store	Yes	Yes	Yes	Essential	Adequate storage for field maintenance equipment is required.
Emergency Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Essential	Access point for ambulance or other emergency vehicles.
Sports Floodlighting	Training: 100 Lux Competition: 200 Lux	Training: 50 Lux	Training 50 Lux	Essential	The Australian Standards (series 2560.2.3) contains recommendations and requirements specific to the lighting or Rugby League. Includes info on the maintained horizontal illuminance (lux) required for training and club competition.

4.3 Additional Facilities

Preferred minimum sizes (m^2)				Essential/ Non-essential	Comments and Specifications
Field of Play	State	Regional	Local	State	
Spectator Seating	Grandstand or tiered seating	Bench Seating	Bench Seating	Desired	At State League level, tiered spectator seating in a grandstand or similar structure is desired to cater for expected crowds.
Broadcast Area	Yes	N/A	N/A	Essential	Position should be elevated off ground level and have unobstructed view of the playing field, ideally undercover and close to the half way line.
PA System	Yes	N/A	N/A	Essential	
Time Clock	Visible time clock	Visible time clock	N/A	Essential	Match clock must be visible to spectators, players and officials.
Car Parking	In accordance with local gov't standards	In accordance with local gov't standards	In accordance with local gov't standards	Essential	Parking should cater for anticipated demand, no specific numbers prescribed. Parking should be off road, good lighting and incorporate safety and surveillance measures. Disabled parking bats as close to the main pavilion as possible and include accessible curbs and pathways.
Reserve Fencing	No specific standards	No specific standards	No specific standards	Essential	Appropriate fencing required to control crowd access to the field and allow for collection of entrance fees.

MANDATORY EQUIPMENT LIST

4.4 Mandatory Medical Equipment- See NSWRL MME Policy for further details.

	Equipment	Contents/Notes	Price
1	Spinal Board	Kemp spine Board with straps	$250
2	Scoop Stretcher	Aluminium Scoop- Ferno EXL Scoop	$1-3,000
3	Cervical Neck Collars		$500
4	Splints	Box splints preferred.	$300
5	Airways/Masks	Oropharyngeal Nasopharyngeal Pocket Mask Self-Inflating Valve	$600
6	Automated External Defibrillator (AED)	Range of product- appropriate one?	$2500
7	Oxygen- Lifeline Pro Kit		?
8	Portable Suction	$200 for manual unit, $1000 for automated	
9	Drug Box	- Adrenaline 1:1000 1ml vial - 2 vials Hydrocortisone - Piriton - Diazepam - Salbutamol - Aspirin - IV Fluids - Venflon - Needles	
10	Foil Blanket and Ambulance Blanket		$30
11	Sharps Bin and Clinical Waste bag		$50
12	Entonox	Nitrous Oxide	$400
13	Penlight torch.		$20
		Total	

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 14

Preferred Facility Guidelines

for Grassroots Rugby League 2014

NRL

1. Purpose & Background

Providing access to high quality Rugby League facilities is essential to facilitating participation, game development and supporting player pathways underpins the sustainability of grass roots Rugby League clubs everywhere.

The current provision of Rugby League facilities across Australia varies widely in quality and standards, which may limit the opportunities to grow and sustain participation in the game.

The National Rugby League (NRL) understands that in order to grow the game, improving the quality and access to appropriate facilities is required. A 'whole of game' and strategic approach to facility planning and development will ensure that investment is maximised and the overall quality of Rugby League facilities is improved.

As part of the NRL's National Facilities Policy, The Preferred Facility Guidelines has been developed as a guide and planning resource that will assist state bodies, association and clubs in the planning of new facilities and/or major refurbishment or redevelopment of existing facilities.

The Preferred Facility Guidelines will also assist local and state governments, schools and tertiary institutions, and other key stakeholders in the planning and development of Rugby League facilities.

The Preferred Facility Guidelines for Rugby League includes the following components:

- A Facility Hierarchy including State, Regional and Local facilities
- Facility Components to support participation and competitions
- Guidelines for each level of the facility hierarchy, including essential/non-essential or desired functional areas or items for each level
- Area Schedules for each level of facility

This resource is not intended to be a compliance document for auditing or critiquing the suitability of existing facilities for competitions.

The Preferred Facility Guidelines for Rugby League has been developed in consultation with local and state governments, Rugby League clubs and associations, and state bodies.

In addition to these guidelines, the NRL has also developed Rugby League Synthetic Sports Surface Standards, as a technical guide for the development of synthetic fields.

2. Facility Hierarchy

To support future planning and development of facilities, a Facility Hierarchy has been developed and includes three levels of facility: State, Regional and Local.

The Facility Hierarchy has been developed as part of the NRL's National Facilities Policy and aligns with Rugby League competition standards and requirements, pathway development and participation programs.

The Facility Hierarchy will be used to guide future facility planning and is a framework that can be used with reference to club and association size, membership, participation and facility demand within defined catchment areas.

It is intended that the Facility Hierarchy be utilised in the development of state-wide and regional facility plans and strategies, and will assist in identifying facility needs and gaps in current facility provision.

The three levels of the hierarchy are defined as follows.

2.1. State

A high standard premier facility that is used for major events and competitions below the NRL Premiership i.e. NSW Cup, QLD Cup or representative fixtures.

State facilities may also service the highest level of competition in the broader region and be a nominated venue for finals and/or marque games.

2.2. Regional

A facility that services a region including multiple suburbs or towns, often (not always) included as part of a broader sport and recreation precinct that incorporates facilities for multiple sports.

A regional facility may include multiple playing fields and pavilions. The facility will be capable of hosting finals for the upper divisions of regional competitions, and will be maintained at an appropriate standard for these levels of competition.

2.3. Local

A local facility caters for local level clubs and competitions, including junior clubs and associations. Local facilities also play a very important role in game development and supporting participation programs.

The facility will service the club of the local suburb or town, and be maintained at a level suitable for lower grade home and away matches.

3. Preferred Facility Guidelines

Preferred Facility Guidelines have been developed as an industry guide for the future planning of Rugby League facilities. These guidelines have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and are an important resource in the planning process.

The Preferred Facility Guidelines are not intended to replace standards established within building codes and legislation, local or state government planning controls or health and safety regulations.

Whilst functional areas are defined below, it is important to consider the functional relationships between each area and critical adjacencies that will enhance the practical use of the facilities. In some cases, functional areas could be combined to form integrated spaces that may be more functional. The involvement of clubs and associations in the planning and design process is critical in ensuring that the facility is designed in a way that best suits its functional needs.

4. Facility Components

There are three categories of Facility Components to support Rugby League competitions and participation programs.

4.1. Main Pavilion/Amenities Building

At all levels, the main pavilion/amenities building should be a community focussed facility. The design must be functional and cater for the needs of players, coaches, referees, officials, volunteers, and spectators, and where possible be multipurpose to cater for alternate uses. The building materials must be robust and durable, and be able to withstand high usage associated with sport to minimise repairs and maintenance costs.

Environmentally friendly design is encouraged including natural light and ventilation wherever possible, as well as water harvesting and energy saving initiatives.

The main pavilion/amenities building should be centrally located to allow for good viewing of the entire field (or fields), ideally on the western side.

4.2. Field of Play

A strong focus in the planning and development of the field of play is the quality of the surface, including drainage design and turf performance. Appropriate drainage design must be specific to the location and aimed at limiting cancellation of matches and field closures.

Ancillary facilities i.e. substitute benches are important functional elements to deliver competitions, and appropriate lighting will reduce localised turf damage as well as increase programming and participation opportunities.

4.3. Additional Facilities

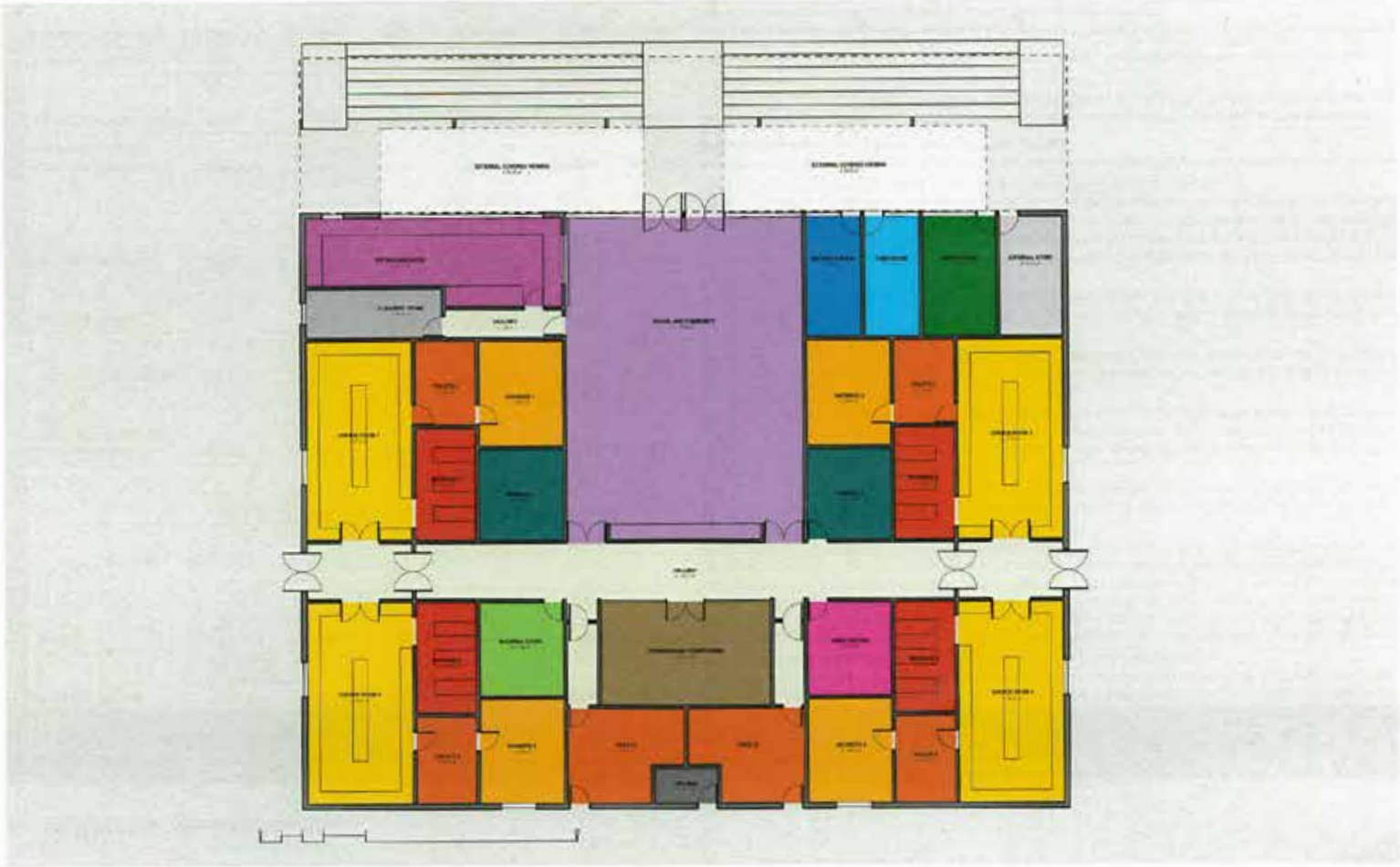
Additional facilities are often desirable to support both the functional requirements of the game as well as enhancing the player, coach or spectator experience at the facility.

In some cases, functional areas or other items not listed may be included in the planning and development of a facility however should be assessed on a case by case basis depending on need.

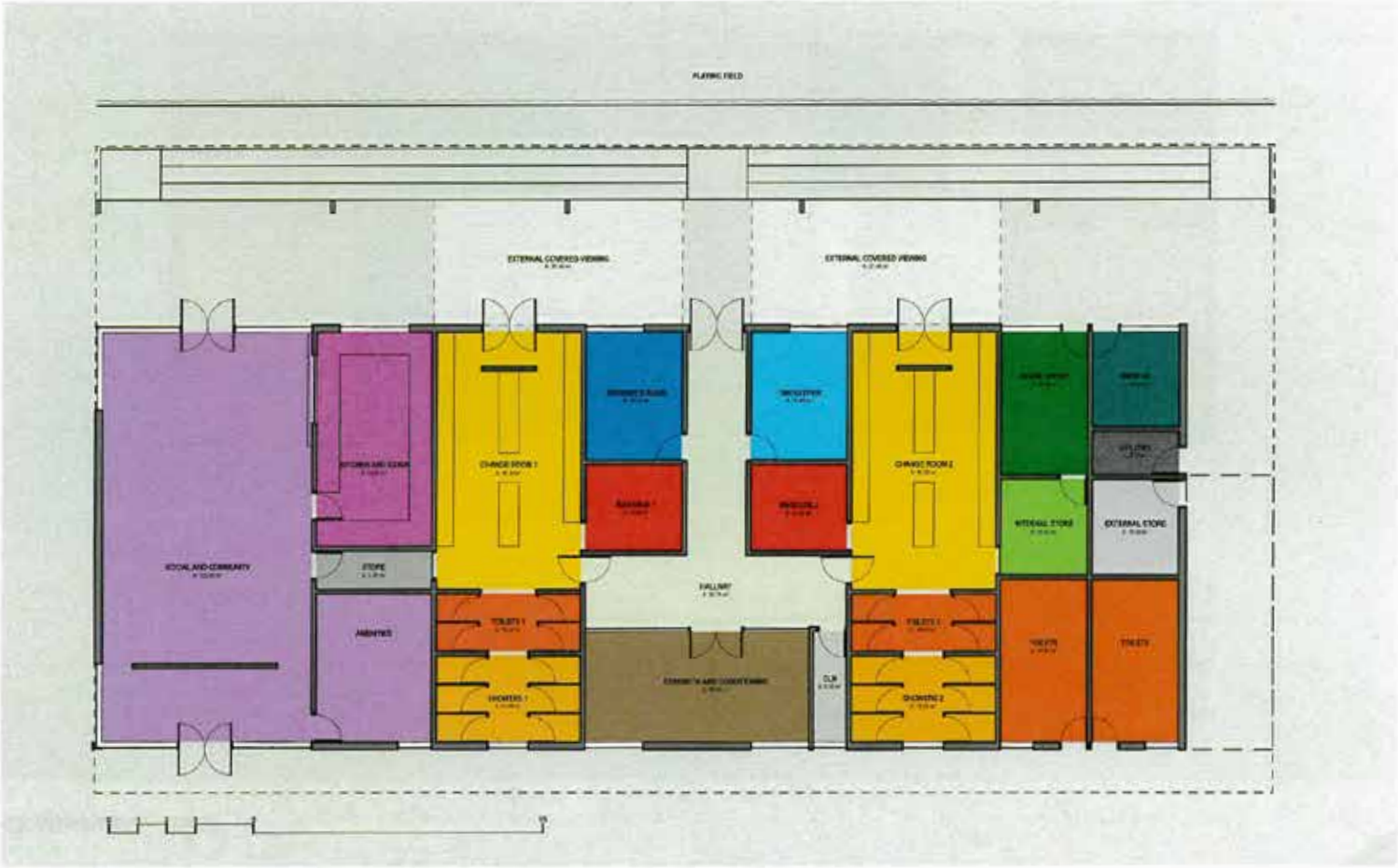
4.1. Main Pavilion /Amenities Building

	Preferred Minimum Sizes (m²)			Essential/Non-Essential or Desired Facility Component			Comments and Specifications
Pavilion / Amenities	State	Regional	Local	State	Regional	Local	
Changing Rooms	45m² x 4 (2 home team and 2 away	45m² x 2	30m² x 2	Essential	Essential	Essential	At a State League level, 4 changing rooms (2 home team and 2 away team) should be provided. To offer flexibility, the changing room should be able to be configured in either 4 separate changing rooms or 2 large changing rooms. At a Regional and Local level, 2 changing rooms (1 home team and 1 away team) are essential.
Showers	20m² x 4	15m² x 2	15m² x 2	Essential	Essential	Essential	Each changing room requires its own wet area (showers) located as far as possible from changing room entrance and WCs to minimise water migration and to separate mud and moisture from dry areas, and with no direct sights lines to adjoining areas. State League facilities should incorporate a minimum of 5 shower points, whereas Regional and Local facilities should incorporate a minimum of 4 and 3 respectively. Ideally, plan for one square metre for the shower area and the same for the drying area. To accommodate wheelchair access avoid raised thresholds. Showers on opposing walls should be spaced 2.5m apart to permit a central circulation route and will require a separate dry-off area to one end. To improve flexibility and to cater for mixed use, cubical showers can be provided.
Toilets	10m² x 4	10m² x 2	10m² x 2	Essential	Essential	Essential	The provision of toilet facilities should be based on the following minimum requirements: Men: one WC, two urinals and two washbasins. Women: two WCs and two washbasins. To better cater for mixed gender use, male urinals should be replaced by an additional WC.
Referee's Room (including shower and toilet)	15m²	15m²	15m²	Essential	Essential	Essential	The pavilion should include a self-contained changing room for use by officials. Provide a room of 15m² with a shower, washbasin and bench space. Secure locker storage is required when the room is used by more than one official. In rooms for five or more officials, include a WC. If officials of both sexes use the pavilion at the same time, provide separate accommodation.
Scorer & Timekeeping Box	15m²	15m²	10m²	Essential	Essential	Desired	The Scorer and Timekeeping box needs to have a clear view of the playing field and ideally located in line with or near the centre line. It can be incorporated in the main pavilion or separately as a stand-alone structure. The Timekeepers area must include a siren.
Kitchen & Kiosk	40m²	30m²	20m²	Essential	Essential	Essential	An appropriate standard kitchen and kiosk facility is required to support catering and food and beverage sales. These facilities are essential in supporting revenue generating opportunities and club sustainability. All areas must meet public health requirements.
Social/Community Room	175m²	125m²	75m²	Essential	Essential	Essential	The social/community room is an important element of the facility that will facilitate social interaction as well as provide a source of revenue and sustainability for the club. The area should be used for post-match gatherings or presentations, as well as club committee meetings or education/training courses. The social/community room should have large windows for viewing the game. Social areas may include specialised bar facilities and or access to appropriate kiosk/kitchen servery. Planning should consider the range of potential uses and flexibility of the space.
Administration Area / Competition Office	20m²	15m²	15m²	Essential	Essential	Essential	An administration area for the management of competitions and club administration and paperwork. The room should include a desk/bench area and appropriate office storage.
Accessible Public Toilets	45m²	35m²	35m²	Essential	Essential	Essential	Public toilets are a vital amenity to have when having large numbers attending training and weekend events. These can either be in the pavilion or stand alone. The size of public toilets should be based on crowd history and relevant planning and/or building codes.
Storage - Internal	15m²	10m²	10m²	Essential	Essential	Essential	Adequate internal (dry) storage is essential for club materials and equipment such as uniforms, merchandise and stock.
Storage - External	15m²	10m²	10m²	Essential	Essential	Essential	Adequate externally accessible storage is essential for sport related equipment (i.e. balls, tackle bags, goal post padding), and other necessary maintenance equipment (i.e. line marking machines).
Cleaners' Store	5m²	5m²	5m²	Essential	Essential	Non-essential	A lockable cupboard for cleaning materials is the minimum provision required. For multi-team pavilions, provide a store with shelving and a bucket sink adjacent to changing rooms.
Utilities/Plant Room	5m²	5m²	5m²	Essential	Essential	Non-essential	A separate utilities/plant room should be provided for any essential facility services such as electrical switchboard.

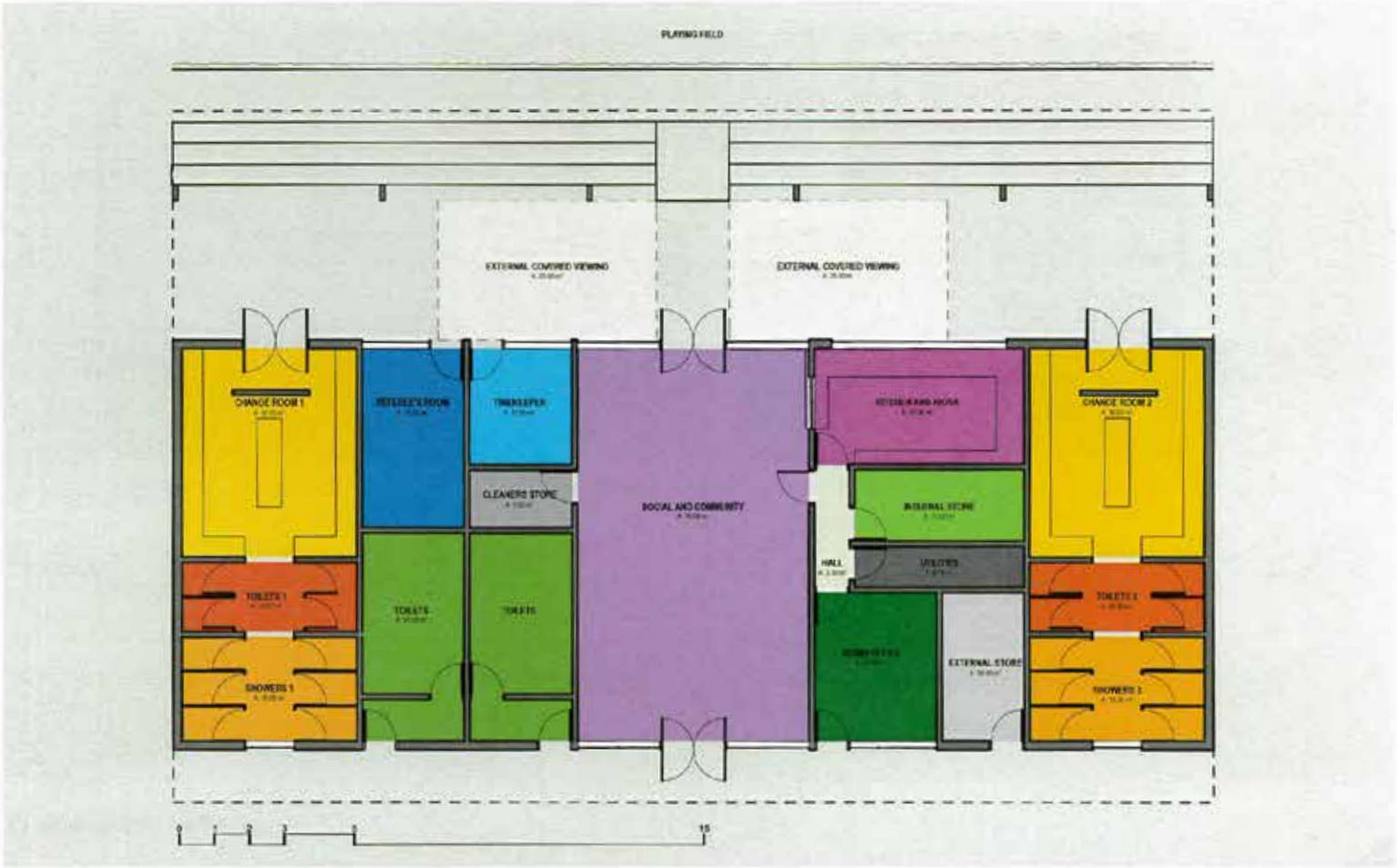
4.1. Main Pavilion – State



4.1. Main Pavilion – Regional



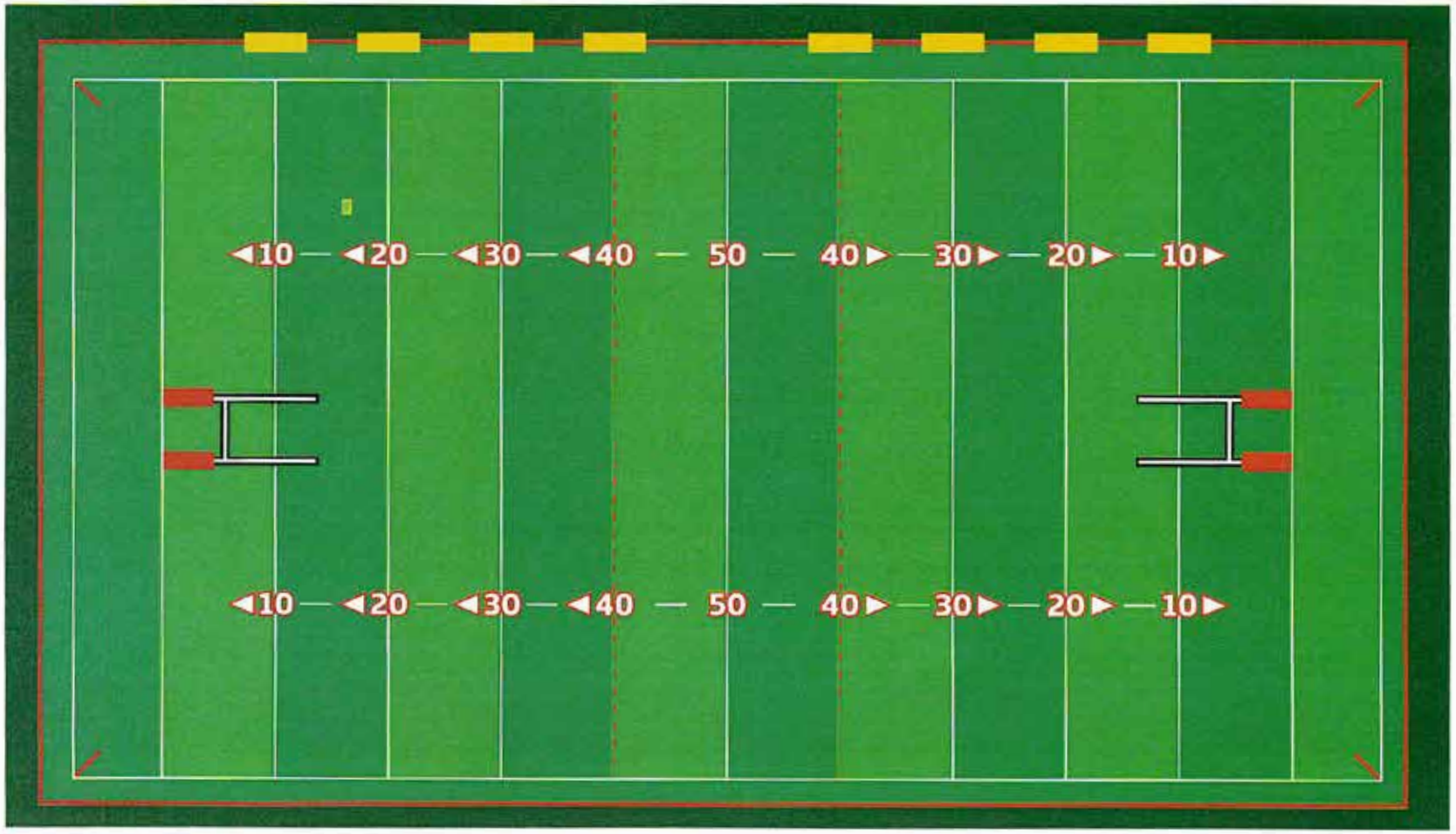
4.1. Main Pavilion – Local



4.2. Field of Play

	Preferred Minimum Sizes (m²)			Essential/Non-Essential or Desired Facility Component			Comments and Specifications
Field of Play	State	Regional	Local	State	Regional	Local	
Coaches Boxes	Elevated position for 4 people	Touchline seating for 4 people (separate to Substitutes Bench)	Touchline seating for 4 people (as part of Substitutes Bench)	Essential	Essential	Essential	Separate Coaches Boxes should be provided for the home and away teams, ideally on the western side of the ground close to the halfway line.
Substitutes Bench	Seating for 8 people	Seating for 6 people	Seating for 4 people	Essential	Essential	Essential	Home and away team substitute benches are to be provided, ideally as permanent shelters close to the Interchange Box.
Goal Posts	Height: 16m Width: 5.5m Crossbar: 3m	Height: 16m Width: 5.5m Crossbar: 3m	Height: 16m Width: 5.5m Crossbar: 3m	Essential	Essential	Essential	At a State League level, goal posts must be 16 m in height, 5.5 m apart with a crossbar at 3 m from the ground. The bottom 2 m of the uprights should be padded. At a Regional and Local level, a reduced goal post height is permissible, Mini League: 3.5m High and 3m wide, crossbar is located 2m above the ground.
Playing Field Run-off	5m	4m	3m	Essential	Essential	Essential	There must be adequate run-off area between the field of play and any perimeter fencing. Where possible, any new fields should aim for the highest run-off area (i.e. 5m).
Playing Field Markings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Essential	Essential	Essential	Field width: 68 m Length: Goal line to goal line - 100 m, in goal areas - to measure 68 m x 8 m Refer to Section 18: Ground Markings & Dimension Guidelines in 'Rugby League Laws of the Game'
Playing Field Quality	High	High - Medium	Medium	Essential	Essential	Essential	State League level playing surface must be of high quality including civil designed sub-surface drainage and a high quality even coverage of turf with no obvious undulations. At Regional and Local levels, high to medium standard playing surface is required including an even cover of turf and limited to no undulations. Each playing field should have a planned maintenance program relative to the standard of competition and should consider seasonal top-dressing, aeration, and fertilisation.
Playing Field Drainage	Excellent - Good	Excellent - Good	Good	Essential	Essential	Essential	Appropriately designed surface and sub-surface drainage and the development of a good overall maintenance plan for sports field drainage is critical in enhancing the participant experience and maximising the use of the facility (meaning fewer cancelled games). Installing sub-surface drainage systems in an existing playing fields may be required to improve surface quality, reduce cancellations and maximise use of existing facilities.
Scoreboard	Yes	Yes	Yes	Essential	Essential	Essential	Scoreboards should be positioned appropriately and visible to players, coaches and spectators. At a State League level, electronic scoreboards are encouraged but not essential.
Grounds Maintenance Store	Yes	Yes	Yes	Essential	Essential	Essential	Adequate storage for playing field maintenance equipment is required and may include storage for mowers, line marking equipment and other field of play maintenance materials.
Emergency Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Essential	Essential	Essential	The playing field must have an accessible point for ambulance or any related access in the event of an emergency.
Sports Floodlighting	Training: 100 Lux Competition: 200 Lux	Training: 50 Lux Competition: 150 Lux	Training: 50 Lux Competition: 100 Lux	Essential	Essential	Essential	Appropriate playing field lighting is essential in maximising facility use and therefore participation. High quality lighting will also reduce localised overuse of the playing field. Preferred minimum requirements for playing field lighting will vary depending on the level of competition and therefore facility. The Australian Standards (series 2560.2.3) contains recommendations and requirements specific to the lighting of Rugby League. The Standard contains information highlighting the maintained horizontal illuminance (lux) required for training and club competition at a recreational, amateur, semi professional and professional level.

4.2. Field of Play



4.3. Additional Facilities

	Preferred Minimum Sizes (m²)			Essential/Non-Essential or Desired Facility Component			Comments and Specifications
Additional Facilities	State	Regional	Local	State	Regional	Local	
Spectator Seating	Grandstand or tiered seating	Bench seating	Bench seating	Desired	Desired	Desired	At a State League level, tiered spectator seating in a grandstand or similar structure is desired to cater for expected crowds. At Regional and State level, the provision of bench seating around the field of play is desirable. Where seating is provided, some undercover seating is preferred. The total number of spectator seats should be determined on a case by case basis.
Broadcast Area	Yes	NA	NA	Essential	Non-essential	Non-essential	Broadcast facilities are required at the State League level. Position should be elevated off ground level and have an unobstructed view of the playing field, ideally undercover
PA System	Yes	NA	NA	Essential	Non-essential	Non-essential	State League facilities must include an appropriate Public Address system for ground announcements
Time Clock	Visible time clock	Visible time clock	NA	Essential	Desired	Non-essential	An approved match time clock that can be seen by spectators, players and officials shall be provide at all State League venues
Car Parking	In accordance with local gov't standards	In accordance with local gov't standards	In accordance with local gov't standards	Essential	Essential	Essential	Adequate car parking is required to support facility use. Although no specific car park numbers are prescribed, parking should cater for the anticipated regular daily demand. Off street parking is considered advantageous. Car park lighting is an important safety and surveillance measure. Car parking may be sealed or unsealed where appropriate. Disabled parking bays should be as close as possible to the main pavilion and include accessible curbs and pathways leading to the pavilion and spectator areas.
Reserve Fencing	No specific standards	No specific standards	No specific standards	Essential	Essential	Non-essential	Appropriate reserve fencing is required at State and Regional venues to control crowd access and management, including the collection of entrance fees.

5. Area Schedules

The following area schedules are to be used as a guide to inform the planning for new or redeveloped existing Rugby League facilities. At the beginning of the concept design and feasibility assessment process, the relevant area schedule can be used as a starting point in determining the facilities requirements.

5.1. State Facility Area Schedule

State League Facility Area Schedule	
Room Name	Size (m²)
Changing Room 1	45
Changing Room 2	45
Changing Room 3	45
Changing Room 4	45
Showers 1	20
Showers 2	20
Showers 3	20
Showers 4	20
Toilets 1	10
Toilets 2	10
Toilets 3	10
Toilets 4	10
Massage/Strapping Room 1	15
Massage/Strapping Room 2	15
Massage/Strapping Room 3	15
Massage/Strapping Room 4	15
Medical/Doctors Room 1	15
Medical/Doctors Room 2	15
Drug Testing Room	15
Strength & Conditioning area	40
Referee's Room (including shower and toilet)	15
Scorer & Timekeeping Box	15
Kitchen & Kiosk	40
Social/Community Room	175
Administration Area / Competition Office	20
External Covered Viewing Area	100
Accessible Public Toilets	45
Storage - Internal	15
Storage - External	15
Cleaners' Store	15
Utilities/Plant Room	5
Total Area	905

5.2. Regional Facility Area Schedule

Regional Facility Area Schedule	
Room Name	Size (m²)
Changing Room 1	45
Changing Room 2	45
Showers 1	15
Showers 2	15
Toilets 1	10
Toilets 2	10
Massage/Strapping Room 1 (Desired)	10
Massage/Strapping Room 2 (Desired)	10
Medical/Doctors Room	10
Strength & Conditioning area (Desired)	30
Referee's Room (including shower and toilet)	15
Scorer & Timekeeping Box	15
Kitchen & Kiosk	30
Social/Community Room	125
Administration Area / Competition Office	15
External Covered Viewing Area	75
Accessible Public Toilets	35
Storage - Internal	10
Storage - External	10
Cleaners' Store	5
Utilities/Plant Room	5
Total Area	540

5.3. Local Facility Area Schedule

Local Facility Area Schedule	
Room Name	Size (m²)
Changing Room 1	30
Changing Room 2	30
Showers 1	15
Showers 2	15
Toilets 1	10
Toilets 2	10
Massage/Strapping Room 1 (Non-essential)	10
Massage/Strapping Room 2 (Non-essential)	10
Medical/Doctors Room (Non-essential)	10
Strength & Conditioning area (Non-essential)	20
Referee's Room (including shower and toilet)	15
Scorer & Timekeeping Box	10
Kitchen & Kiosk	20
Social/Community Room	75
Administration Area / Competition Office	15
External Covered Viewing Area	50
Accessible Public Toilets	35
Storage - Internal	10
Storage - External	10
Cleaners' Store	5
Utilities/Plant Room	5
Total Area	410

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APPENDIX 15

NSWRL Blue Shield Club Development Program

AREAS OF COMPLIANCE	PERCENTAGE WEIGHTING
1. Governance and Administration	20%
2. Finance	15%
3. Media & Marketing	20%
4. Facilities	15%
5. Community and Welfare	10%
6. On-Field	20%

1. Governance and Administration (20%)	SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MEASUREMENT	50
Reviewed and updated Constitution and Regulations (By-Laws)	Evidence of the Constitution and Regulations (By-Laws)	• 0-5: Non-submission/outdated/incomplete • 6-10:Significant updates required • 11-15: Updates required • 16-29: Well written & implemented	10
Club Management Structure	Evidence of the Club Management structure at your club to include job descriptions	• 0-2: Not provided or inadequate • 3-4: Satisfactory evidence • 5: Comprehensive evidence	5
Align	Annually reviewed Risk Register submitted	• 0-2: Not provided or inadequate • 3-5: Well considered analysis of risks	5
Codes of Behaviour	Evidence of availability and promotion of NRL Code of Conduct	• 0-2: Little effort to make the Code available • 3-5: Code available through multiple media – website, social media, hard copies etc	5
Strategic Plan	Club Strategic Plan submitted or evidence of completion of AusSport Club Health Check and completed Club Action Plan	• 0-5: Non-submission/incomplete • 6-10: Significantly more detail required • 11-15: Completed but with more detail needed • 16-20: Comprehensive plan with demonstrated follow-up	10
Liquor Licence	Comply with all licensing laws if selling alcohol	Submission of licensing documentation or statutory declaration that no alcohol is sold at matches	5
Incorporation	Required documentation submitted to maintain Incorporation. Current certificate required	Current Incorporation certificate submitted	5
Insurance	Evidence of current Directors and Officers Insurance Evidence of Public Liability Insurance	Certificates of Currency provided	5

2. Finance (15%)	SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MEASUREMENT	40
Annual Budget	An adopted, written and approved annual budget to be submitted	• 0-5: Incomplete, unclear budget providing little financial direction for the club • 6-10: Satisfactory budget submitted which may lack some detail or link to existing situation • 11-15: Detailed, approved budget submitted which can be easily compared with the previous Financial Report	15
Audited Accounts	A copy of the Financial Report from the club's last financial year (Approved by committee at AGM or Audited if required by your District)	• 0-4: Report Not Submitted, Not Audited/Approved as required or showing poor Financial Position • 5-10: Suitably Approved Report submitted showing strong Financial Position	10
Funding Agreements / Future Funding/ Sponsorships	Evidence of sustainability through future funding opportunities/partnerships to be provided. Evidence of existing funding agreements in place. Evidence of a sponsorship database with tracking mechanisms Sponsorship plan available for the following season Sponsorship proposals/templates in place	• 0-2: Unable to provide evidence or details incomplete • 3-5: Funding agreements and partnerships in place to provide ongoing sustainability • 0-4: Little or no tracking or planning for sponsorship • 5-7: Database in use and some evidence of plans and templates • 8-10: Accurate database tracking and plans/templates in place	15

3. Media & Marketing (20%)	SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MEASUREMENT	35
Website & Social Media	Appointment of person to regularly update and maintain club website Appointed person to monitor and regularly update club social media platforms Compliance with NSW JLA Social Media Policy	• 3-5: Appointed person visible in Organisational Chart, Job Description provided and evidence of updated website and active social media platforms • 0-2: Social Media/Website lacking updated, relevant information OR non-compliance with Social Media Policy	10
Media & Communication Policy	Evidence of a developed and approved Media Plan Compliance with relevant Media Guidelines and Policies Evidence of a developed and approved Club Communication Policy	• 6-10: Approved policy/plan in place which is utilised and demonstrated compliance with guidelines and policies • 0-5: No plan in place, non-compliance with guidelines or insufficient detail provided	15
Marketing Strategy	Evidence of a Marketing Plan in place for the following season	• 0-2: No marketing plan in place or no demonstrated ability to implement the plan • 3-5: Marketing Plan in place which has been tailored to meet the needs of the club	5
Licensing Compliance	Utilising an approved licensee to provide on-field apparel Evidence of appropriate display of relevant logos	Submission of image of playing jersey showing the logos of the approved licensee and the NSWRL	5

4. Facilities (15%)	SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MEASUREMENT	45
Facilities Audit & Evacuation Plan	Club to complete Facilities Audit within required timeframe and submit evidence of Evacuation Plan	Submission v Non-Submission	10
Audit v Minimum Standard as per NRL Facilities document	None – Facilities audit will be compared to NRL Preferred Facilities Guidelines	Scoring as per the scale provided in Smartabase by comparison with the NRL Preferred Facilities Guidelines	30
Emergency Medical Equipment	Evidence of availability of Emergency Medical Equipment	5: Adequate Evidence 0-4: No evidence – some equipment missing	5

5. Community and Welfare (10%)	SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MEASUREMENT	25
Volunteer Management Plan	Evidence of a developed and approved Volunteer Management Plan in relation to recruitment, retention and activation An appointed Welfare Office in place. WWCC compliance	8-10: Suitably detailed plan approved which addresses club specific volunteer needs 4-7: Plan in place but lacking in detail 0-3: Little or no plan in place	10
Good Sports Accreditation	Evidence of achievement and maintenance within the program	5: Current Level 3 GoodSports Accreditation 4: Current Level 2 GoodSports Accreditation 2: Current Level 1 GoodSports Accreditation 0: No GoodSports Accreditation/Expired Accreditation	5
Alignment to NRL / NSWRL Inclusion Programs	Evidence of participation in an NRL / NSWRL or other inclusion program (Disability/disadvantaged programs)	4-5: Demonstration of an ongoing link to suitable inclusion program(s) 2-3: Short-term involvement or little engagement with inclusion programs 0-1: Little to no involvement in suitable inclusion programs	5
Alignment to Community Sport / School Programs	Demonstrated links to other community sport / school programs	4-5: Demonstrated links to other community sports or school programs with efforts to maximise benefits to club 2-3: Some involvement with other organisations but lacking demonstrated integration of goals 0-1: Little to no involvement in external programs	5

6. On-Field (20%)	SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MEASUREMENT	75
Qualified Coaches and Trainers	Written evidence at time of submission that all appointed personnel hold the required documented minimum qualifications (Accreditation report)	20: Coaches and Trainers are appointed to all teams and appropriately accredited 13-19:Small number of teams not allocated a coach or trainer or some staff not yet accredited 8-12: Most coaches/trainers appropriately accredited and allocated to teams 0-7: Significant number of coaches/trainers not accredited or not allocated to teams	20
Participation Pathway	Evidence of the provision of a suitable participation pathway through all ages	15:All ages U6 – Open Age, Multiple Mini-Mod, Girls 10-14: All ages U6 – Open Age 7-10:All Ages U6 – 12, no more than 1 year gap between Junior International age groups 0-6: Multiple gaps in the age groups of teams	15
Judiciary and Code of Conduct	Remaining below set limits of Judiciary & Code of Conduct suspensions for the season	*15: No club members suspended through Judiciary or Code of Conduct procedures during the preceding season* *10-14: Ratio of club members suspended to registered teams aged 13+ of between 0 and 0.25* *6-9: Between 0.25 and 0.5 suspended persons per team* *1-5: Between 0.5 and 1 suspended persons per team* *0: Ratio of 1 or more suspended person per team aged 13+*	15
Player Development	Evidence of club support and involvement in programs to provide additional skills and development for their players.	8-10: Quality, planned opportunities provided by the club for players in a range of age groups to develop their skills outside of their standard team training. 5-7: Club-based opportunities provided for players to develop their skills which may lack planning/detail 2-4: Minimal opportunities provided for players/details provided for external programs only 0-1: No evidence of a Club Player Development Program in place.	10
Referees	Evidence of club promotion and involvement in Rugby League Refereeing	5: 2 or more qualified and active referees shown to have come from the club who have played or coached for the club within the last 2 years. 3-4: 1 accredited and active referee or 2 who may not be entirely accredited/active. 1-2: 1 referee who may not be completely accredited/active 0: No evidence/those eligible outside last two seasons of participation	5

Coach Development	Evidence of club support and involvement in programs to develop their coaches.	8-10: Clear structure in place to provide support and development opportunities for coaches. A club-based program in place along with links to District/NRL-based activities. 5-7: Structure in place to provide some support for coaches. A club-based program in place which may not be linked to District/NRL-based activities. 2-4: Structure in place to provide some support for coaches. Little club-based support provided with reliance on District/NRL-based activities. 0-1: Little/no evidence of any program/structure in place to provide support.	10

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 16

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Governance and Admin			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
1.1	Consitution	✓	
1.2	Affiliation Agreement	✓	Not required due to being a nuclear club.
1.3	Management Structure	✓	Excellent submission. Additional information required regarding accreditation numbers for coach, assistant coach quals and trainer quals for Flegg, Matts and Ball competitions. Ideal submission would also include generic job descriptions for coaching and support staff roles, specific JD's for management and administration club roles. Include media, marketing roles where applicable. Area for future development
1.4	Risk Management	✓	Further evidence of identification of specific risks and management/alleviation strategies.
1.5	Code of Conduct	✓	
1.6	Strategic Plan	✓	Clear and concise. Add detail behind this in future submissions, where information is appropriate.
1.7	Liquor Licence	☒	Required by venue rather than the club?
1.8	Incorporation	✓	
1.9	Insurance Documents		Evidence of public liability and professional indemnity. No directors and officers insurance supplied. Issue over separation of ISP and NRL/confidentiality?

Reviewer Notes
A high quality submission form a well organised and operateed club. Outstanding issues are small and evidence required to resolve them can be easily updated over the coming weeks.

Section	Title	Info Provided
2.1	Draft Budget	✓
2.2	Audited Accounts	✓
2.3	Accounting Systems	✓
2.4	Compliance Report	✓

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Media			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
3.1	Media Policy	✓	Comprehensive and High Quality document
	Communications Policy	✓	Comprehensive and High Quality document

Reviewer Notes

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Venue Belmore Sports Ground

Facilities- Pavillion and Amenities Building			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
4.1	Changing Rooms		3 changing rooms only. Size and quality meet specification, require further imaging of existing rooms.
	Shower Rooms		3 shower rooms, number of showers per room meets specification. Further images required
	Toilet Facilities	✓	
	Referee Room	✓	NSWRL to visit re images.
	Scorers and Timekeeper	✓	NSWRL to visit re images.
	Kitchen and Kiosk		Number and size information required.
	Social/Community Room		Number and size information required.
	Administration Office		Number and size information required.
	Accessible Public toilets		Number and size and number of toilets info required.
	Storage		Internal, external storage, cleaner's store and utilities room all in existence, requires further info on size and imaging.

Reviewer Notes

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Venue- Belmore Sports Ground

Facilities- Field of Play			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
4.2	Coaches Box	☒	No coaches box
	Subs Bench	☒	Additional info on number of people accommodated, size
	Goal Post Criteria	☒	Meets criteria, measurements preferred.
	Field Run Off	☒	Measurement of run off area.
	Field Markings	☒	
	Field Quality	☒	Subjective - no issues from NSWRL
	Field Drainage	☒	Subjective Opinion- perhaps further info on drainage system and provision of an acceptable method from NSWRL Some issues over compliance in this area, area prone to flooding.
	Scoreboard	☒	
	Scoreboard Visibility	☒	
	Grounds Maintenance Store	☒	
	Emergency Access	☒	
	Floodlighting	☒	Appropriate sports floodlighting, LUX rating required.

Reviewer Notes
To be completed at site visit on Friday 6th October

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Venue- Belmore Sports Ground

Facilities- Additional			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
4.3	Spectator Seating	☒	Tiered seating, no cover for spectators
	Broadcast area	☒	
	DVN Connection	☒	Not a requirement, given cost. Does rule out use as a broadcast venue.
	PA System	☒	
	Time Clock	☒	
	Car Parking	☒	Limited off road parking, sufficient for teams, officials and some spectators.
	Fencing	☒	

Reviewer Notes
To be completed at site visit on 6th October.

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Venue- Belmore Sports Ground

Facilities- Emergency Medical Equipment			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
4.4	Spinal Board	☒	
	Scoop Stretcher	✓	
	Cervical Neck Collars	✓	
	Splints	✓	
	Airways/Masks	✓	
	Automated Defib.	✓	
	Oxygen- Lifeline Pro	✓	
	Portable Suction	✓	
	Drug Box	✓	
	Foil/Ambulance Blanket	☒	
	Sharps Bin	✓	
	Entonox	✓	
	Penlight Torch	✓	

Reviewer Notes
Condition of EME to be confirmed at a later date.

PART 2

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Governance and Admin			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
1.1	Consitution	✓	
1.2	Affiliation Agreement	✓	Not required due to being a nuclear club.
1.3	Management Structure	✓	Excellent submission. Additional information required regarding accreditation numbers for coach, assistant coach quals and trainer quals for Flegg, Matts and Ball competitions. Ideal submission would also include generic job descriptions for coaching and support staff roles, specific JD's for management and administration club roles. Include media, marketing roles where applicable. Area for future development
1.4	Risk Management	✓	Further evidence of identification of specific risks and management/alleviation strategies.
1.5	Code of Conduct	✓	
1.6	Strategic Plan	✓	Clear and concise. Add detail behind this in future submissions, where information is appropriate.
1.7	Liquor Licence	☒	Required by venue rather than the club?
1.8	Incorporation	✓	
1.9	Insurance Documents		Evidence of public liability and professional indemnity. No directors and officers insurance supplied. Issue over separation of ISP and NRL/confidentiality?

Reviewer Notes
A high quality submission form a well organised and operateed club. Outstanding issues are small and evidence required to resolve them can be easily updated over the coming weeks.

Section	Title	Info Provided
2.1	Draft Budget	✓
2.2	Audited Accounts	✓
2.3	Accounting Systems	✓
2.4	Compliance Report	✓

Section	Title	Info Provided
3.1	Media Policy	✓
	Communications Policy	✓

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Venue Belmore Sports Ground

Facilities- Pavillion and Amenities Building			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
4.1	Changing Rooms		3 changing rooms only. Size and quality meet specification, require further imaging of existing rooms.
	Shower Rooms		3 shower rooms, number of showers per room meets specification. Further images required
	Toilet Facilities	✓	
	Referee Room	✓	NSWRL to visit re images.
	Scorers and Timekeeper	✓	NSWRL to visit re images.
	Kitchen and Kiosk		Number and size information required.
	Social/Community Room		Number and size information required.
	Administration Office		Number and size information required.
	Accessible Public toilets		Number and size and number of toilets info required.
	Storage		Internal, external storage, cleaner's store and utilities room all in existence, requires further info on size and imaging.

Reviewer Notes

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Venue- Belmore Sports Ground

Facilities- Field of Play			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
4.2	Coaches Box	✓	
	Subs Bench	✓	
	Goal Post Criteria	✓	Meets criteria, measurements preferred.
	Field Run Off	✓	Measurement of run off area.
	Field Markings	✓	
	Field Quality	✓	Subjective - no issues from NSWRL
	Field Drainage	✓	Subjective Opinion- perhaps further info on drainage system and provision of an acceptable method from NSWRL Some issues over compliance in this area, area prone to flooding.
	Scoreboard	✓	
	Scoreboard Visibility	✓	
	Grounds Maintenance Store	✓	
	Emergency Access	✓	
	Floodlighting	✓	Appropriate sports floodlighting, LUX rating required.

Reviewer Notes

Canterbury Gold Shield Review

Venue- Belmore Sports Ground

Facilities- Additional			
Section	**Title**	**Info Provided**	**Status/Notes**
4.3	Spectator Seating	✓	Tiered seating, no cover for spectators
	Broadcast area	✓	
	DVN Connection	☒	OB can be brought in
	PA System	✓	
	Time Clock	✓	
	Car Parking	✓	Limited off road parking, sufficient for teams, officials and some spectators.
	Fencing	✓	

Reviewer Notes

Venue-

Section	Title	Info Provided
4.4	Spinal Board	✓
	Scoop Stretcher	✓
	Cervical Neck Collars	✓
	Splints	✓
	Airways/Masks	✓
	Automated Defib.	✓
	Oxygen- Lifeline Pro	✓
	Portable Suction	✓
	Drug Box	✓
	Foil/Ambulance Blanket	✓
	Sharps Bin	✓
	Entonox	✓
	Penlight Torch	✓

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APPENDIX 17

Pathways W&E Funding Criteria – 2018

Minimum Standard	Funding
Delivery of programs to the following; • Players with pre-existing NYC contracts • State Cup players • Jersey Flegg Players • Harvey Norman Women Premiership Players • SG Ball Players • Tarsha Gale Players • Harold Matthews Players	All funding is tied to the delivery of wellbeing & education to these players.
All Wellbeing Staff must have or be currently attaining; 1. Cert 4 in Elite Athlete Wellbeing 2. Mental Health First Aid Over time it would be recommended that Cert 4 in Career Development is added to this pre-requisite.	Min. Standard $5k Assessment: - Submission of qualifications to NSWRL Wellbeing Manager for club Wellbeing staff
Clubs must have a Wellbeing and Education Committee that includes a Senior Coach, Player, Wellbeing Manager, Senior Administrator; that oversees the mandatory Club Wellbeing programs and makes recommendations on additional programs.	Min. Standard $2k Assessment: - Submission of committee agenda and minutes following with Tri-annual Report
Clubs must report on a triannual basis the status of their completion of these recommended guidelines. This can be completed as one document with the NRL Senior Wellbeing Manager assessing the NRL status and the State Wellbeing Manager assessing the State teams status.	Min. Standard $5k Assessment: - Reports submitted by the following dates: ▪ March 15th ▪ June 15th ▪ September 15th
Relocation Assessments for players that are on NRL contracts, have relocated more than 100kms and are playing in ISP or Jersey Flegg	Min. Standard $2k Assessment:

	- Relocation assessment completed via Le Va report
All ISP and Flegg players are given the opportunity to complete an Individual Wellbeing Assessment. As listed below: 1. Life Story, 2. Flourishing Scale, 3. Wellbeing Wheel discussions (heat maps) 4. Signature strengths, 5. Gratitude journals.	Min. Standard $2k Assessment: - Records on NRL Wellbeing Database
All ISP players must be given the opportunity to develop an individual Wellbeing Plan and be supported in completing.	Min. Standard $6k Assessment: - Wellbeing plan is developed and recorded on NRL Wellbeing Database
All ISP and Flegg Players are provided the opportunity for career coaching and job opportunity support. This may include: 1. Resume writing, 2. Interview techniques, 3. Employment introductions. 4. Course and subject selection 5. Course Enrolment	Min. Standard $6k Assessment: - All player employment history is stored on NRL Wellbeing Database
1. ISP and Flegg Teams cannot have compulsory team training between the hours of 8am and 5pm on Monday to Friday and cannot train before the 1st of November.	Min Standard $2k Assessment: - All team training schedules are sent on a weekly/ monthly basis to the following email addresses: ▪ NSWRL: support@nswrl.com.au ▪ ASADA: national.testing@asada.gov.au

The following teams must complete a Wellbeing Orientation: 1. ISP 2. Jersey Flegg 3. Harvey Norman Women's 4. SG Ball 5. Tarsha Gale 6. Harold Matthews All team Wellbeing Orientations must be completed prior to competition start date and must also include references to and explanations of the following; 1. Anti-Doping policy 2. Supplements policy 3. Social media policy 4. Alcohol Management strategy 5. Vilification policy 6. Gambling policy In addition to this, all teams need to complete Compulsory and Compliance education during the orientation which is set and distributed to W&E managers prior to the start of pre-season training.	Min. Standard $10k Assessment: Orientation recorded on NRL Wellbeing Database and Player Compliance Education recorded on Velpic Database
1. All ISP and Jersey Flegg players and staff must be introduced to the NRL/RLPA free and confidential counselling service on a yearly basis. 2. All Junior Reps are provided information on who and how they can access school or public counselling services.	Min. Standard $2k Assessment: Recorded on NRL Wellbeing Database
All ISP & Jersey Flegg players are made aware of the RLPA individual Player Education Grants and the process involved in making claims. 1. $750 per year per player on enrolment. 2. Applicants must have completed career assessment with WEM 3. Applicants must have played min. games (2 games in the current season or 10 games in the previous season)	Min. Standard $2k Assessment: Recorded on NRL Wellbeing Database
All Clubs must provide the following Wellbeing and Education information for ALL players on NSWRL JRA's and State contracts on the NRL Wellbeing and Education database; 1. Player background	Min. Standard $6k

2. Workshop completions 3. Education completion or enrolment 4. Levels of Career Engagement 5. Career interviews 6. Wellbeing interviews 7. Heatmaps 8. Flourishing scales 9. Signature strengths Note: all private conversations are recorded as confidential in the database with only that Wellbeing manager having access.	Assessment: - All player information is up to date and valid on the NRL Wellbeing database

Staff Workload Allocations and Club Information Summary

Club Name		
W&E Staff Member	**Area of Focus and Percentage of Role**	**Pathways Workload Arrangement**
Staff Member 1 Current Relevant Qualifications:	**Example:** - NRL 50% - NSWRL Pathway 50%	**Example:** Attendance at ISP training on Monday – from 3pm-8pm Attendance at ISP training on Wednesday each week – from 4pm-8pm
Staff Member 2 Current Relevant Qualifications:	**Example:** - NRL 50% - NSWRL Pathway 50%	**Example:** Attendance at Flegg training on Monday each week from 4pm-8pm Attendance at Flegg training on Wednesday each week – from 4pm-8pm
Training Details	**ISP Training**	**Flegg Training**
	Example: **Monday, Wednesday, Friday (5-7pm)** **Ringrose Park**	**Example:** **Monday, Wednesday, Friday (5-7pm)** **Ringrose Park**
Wellbeing & Education Committee	**Committee Members**	**Scheduled Meeting Dates:**
	Senior Coach: **Senior Admin:** **Current Player:** **Wellbeing Manager:**	**Date 1:** **Date 2:** **Meeting Minutes are required with submission of each Bi-Annual Report**

2019 Bi-Annual Report (May/Sept)

	Description	Player Target	Time of Delivery	Report 1 (Due May)	Report 2 (Due September)

Compulsory Education	All players in NSWRL Elite Competitions must complete the assigned education components as per 'Compulsory Education 2019' Document. The Pathways Wellbeing Manager is responsible for facilitating and delivering the below, prior the competition start date. - Compulsory Education - Career Related Education Delivery details must be recorded on the RL Wellbeing Database, including; presenters, date, attendee's and topics.	**100%** of players in pre-season playing squads (all comps)	Nov-Mar	**Presenters:** Wellbeing Manager Name Wellbeing Manager Name Education Ambassador **Education Delivery Dates:** HM: Date 1 / Date 2 / Date 3 SGB: Date 1 / Date 2 / Date 3 TG: JF: HNP: ISP:	[redacted]
Benestar	It is the responsibility of the Pathways Wellbeing and Education Manager to introduce all players to: - Benestar appointed Mental Health Professional - Benestar App and Mobile services - Phone and Website contact details Delivery details must be recorded on the RL Wellbeing Database, including; presenters, date, attendee's.	**100%** of players in ISP & JF pre-season playing squad	Nov-Mar	**Presenters:** Wellbeing Manager Name Wellbeing Manager Name Benestar Delegate Name **Delivery Dates:** ISP: JF:	
Wellbeing Monitoring	It is the responsibility of the Pathways Wellbeing and Education Manager to ensure all contracted ISP & JF players: - Complete 1 Heatmap Survey (Nov -Dec) - Complete 4 Flourishing Surveys (1 / 90 days) Surveys must be completed on the RL Wellbeing Database.	**100%** of NSWRL contracted players in ISP & JF	Nov-Sept	Number of Heatmap Survey's Completed: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players Number of Flourishing Survey's Completed: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players **Comments:**	Number of Heatmap Survey's Completed: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players Number of Flourishing Survey's Completed: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players **Comments:**
Mental Health Intervention	It is the responsibility of Pathways Wellbeing and Education Manager to ensure all players who negatively flag in relation to their Flourishing Surveys, are followed up with: - Personal Wellbeing Plan - Referral and Introduction to Benestar (if applicable) Details must be privately entered on the RL Wellbeing Database.	**100%** of flagged players	Nov-Sept	Number of Interventions: **ISP:** Interventions / Total Players **JF:** Interventions / Total Players **Comments:**	Number of Interventions: **ISP:** Interventions / Total Players **JF:** Interventions / Total Players **Comments:**

Wellbeing Interviews	It is the responsibility of the Pathways Wellbeing and Education manager to meet with each ISP & JF player 3 times per season to discuss: - Flourishing Survey Results - Personal Circumstances Details of the Wellbeing Interviews must be entered on the RL Wellbeing and Education Database under 'Wellbeing'.	**100%** of NSWRL contracted players in ISP & JF	Nov-Sept	Number of Wellbeing Interviews: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players **Comments:**	Number of Wellbeing Interviews: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players **Comments:**
Career & Study Interviews	It is the responsibility of the Pathways Wellbeing and Education manager to meet with each ISP & JF player 1 time during March-May to discuss: - Employment Details - Study Details - Career Options Employment and Study details to be recorded on the RL Wellbeing and Education Database.	**100%** of NSWRL contracted players in ISP & JF	Mar-May	Number of Wellbeing Interviews: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players **Comments:**	[redacted]
Significant Injury Support	For ISP & JF players who have sustained an injury which will lead to 5 weeks or more on the sidelines, the Wellbeing Manager will: - Assist with income protection insurance application - Assist with management of employment & study - Implement Wellbeing Interview Injury Support details must be entered onto the RL Wellbeing Database under 'Wellbeing'.	**100%** of NSWRL contracted players in ISP & JF	Mar-Oct	Number of Injury Support Interventions: **ISP:** Number Completed **JF:** Number Completed Injured Player Names: - Player 1 - Player 2 **Comments:**	Number of Injury Support Interventions: **ISP:** Number Completed **JF:** Number Completed Injured Player Names: - Player 3 - Player 4 **Comments:**

TEA & RPLA Education Grants	Following on from the individual career and study interviews, all players who are eligible, must be encouraged and assisted in applying for: - Tertiary Education Allowance - RLPA Education Grant RLPA Education Grants must be applied for and documented on the RL Wellbeing and Education Database.	**100%** of eligible players	Mar-Sep	Number of player who have accessed TEA's: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players Number of players who have accessed RLPA ED Grants: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players	Number of player who have accessed TEA's: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players Number of players who have accessed RLPA ED Grants: **ISP:** No. Completed / Total players **JF:** No. Completed / Total players
No Work, No Study, No Play	It is the responsibility of the Pathways Wellbeing and Education manager to ensure all players competing in the Jersey Flegg competition are compliant with the 'No Work, No Study, No Play' rules of the competition. Compliance will be assessed on the RL Wellbeing and Education Database.	**100%** of contracted JF players	Mar-Nov	Number of players who have needed No Work, No Study, No Play interventions: Player Names: - Player 1 - Player 2 Percentage of Eligible players:	Number of players who have needed No Work, No Study, No Play interventions: Player Names: - Player 1 - Player 2 Percentage of Eligible players:

Staff Workload Allocations and Club Information Summary

Club Name		
W&E Staff Member	**Area of Focus and Percentage of Role**	**Pathways Workload Arrangement**
Staff Member 1 Current Relevant Qualifications:	**Example:** - NRL 50% - NSWRL Pathway 50%	**Example:** Attendance at ISP training on Monday – from 3pm-8pm Attendance at ISP training on Wednesday each week – from 4pm-8pm
Staff Member 2 Current Relevant Qualifications:	**Example:** - NRL 50% - NSWRL Pathway 50%	**Example:** Attendance at Flegg training on Monday each week from 4pm-8pm Attendance at Flegg training on Wednesday each week – from 4pm-8pm
Training Details	**ISP Training**	**Flegg Training**
	Example: **Monday, Wednesday, Friday (5-7pm)** **Ringrose Park**	**Example:** **Monday, Wednesday, Friday (5-7pm)** **Ringrose Park**
Wellbeing & Education Committee	**Committee Members**	**Scheduled Meeting Dates:**
	Senior Coach: **Senior Admin:** **Current Player:** **Wellbeing Manager:**	**Date 1:** **Date 2:** **Meeting Minutes are required with submission of each Bi-Annual Report**

2019 Bi-Annual Report (May/Sept)

	Description	Player Target	Time of Delivery	Report 1 (Due May)	Report 2 (Due September)

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 18

Discussion Paper- Minimum Standards Assessment and Funding

This paper is written to provide some suggestions and provoke discussion on how the funding allocated for Minimum Standards of delivery on the talent pathway could be allocated.

Ultimately, these standards will be defined by the Player Development Framework and the Coach Development Framework. These are long term projects that may not be completed prior to the 2018 development cycle commencing. For this reason, we will need criteria by which we can assess delivery and allocate funding accordingly.

Given current staffing levels, the measures need to be simple and easy to monitor, developmentally appropriate and ensure a high quality of delivery for all programs.
Process:-

1. Agree on best practice
2. Reward best practice
3. Freedom for clubs to ignore best practice, don't receive funding for that aspect.

With the potential funding allocation of $100,000 for minimum standards, it is suggested that this is split into two parts. Player Development Programs receive a potential allocation of $70,000 and coach development programs are allocated $30,000.

Player Development

The assessment process for this aspect of the funding can be fulfilled through an extension of the current ASADA monitoring process. Clubs are required to send training schedules for Matts and Ball squads with training times and venues each week to ASADA. Schedules can be sent to NSWRL at the

Player Development		
Area	Measure	Value
Contact Age	Development Squads from U14	$5,000
	Clubs conduct SPARQ testing as part of their Matts and Ball Program	$5,000
Contact Time	U16s Trials completed between September 15th – October 1st, 2017.	$10,000
	No training for U16s before 15th November, 2017	
	U18s Trials completed between September 15th – October 1st, 2017.	$10,000
	No training for U18s before 1st November, 2017	
	No training for U20 squad prior to 1st November, 2017	$10,000
Number of Contacts	U14 and U15 Development Squads- 90mins max per session.	$10,000
	Minimum of 25 athletes in each age group	
	Min of 15, Max of 20 sessions + 4 games per year with each age group	
	U16 Matts- 3 x 120 mins of on field & gym training per session per week, plus game	$10,000
	U18s- 3 x 120 mins sessions per week, plus game	$5,000
	U20s- 4 x 120 mins per week, plus game	$5,000
		$70,000

FOR DISCUSSION

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6 Herb Elliott Avenue
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Sydney Markets NSW 2129
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F +61 2 8756 7097
nswrl.com.au
ABN 11 002 704 761

same time and monitored through site visits from the NSWRL Development Department.

Coach Development

Coach Development		
Area	Measure	Value
Accreditation	Development Program (U14, U15, U17) Coaching staff accredited to required standard as per Operational Rules.	$5,000
	Development Program support staff (trainers, physio, S&C) accredited to required standard as per Operational Rules	$5,000
	Elite Pathway (U16, U18, U20) Coaching Staff accredited to required standard, as per Operational Rules	$5,000
	Elite Pathway support staff (trainers, physio, S&C) accredited to required standard as per Operational Rules	$5,000
Standards	Coach : Player Ratio of 1:8 – 1:10 for Elite Pathway Programs (U16, U18 and U20)	$5,000
	Coach : Player ratio of 1:10 – 1:12 for Development Programs (U14, U15, U16)	$5,000
		$30,000

FOR DISCUSSION

Minimum Standards Funding – 2019

Development Programs:

13 Years (Optional)	Measures
▪ Skill orientated development programs	Plan overview to be submitted
▪ 1 x 90min session (combined gym/field time) x 6-8 sessions	Advise NSWRL of Development sessions (venue, dates and times)
▪ Development squad games to be conducted on an intra-district basis ONLY	
▪ Local Junior League players ONLY	Squad lists to be submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Squads to include 20 - 25% of total JL registrations	Squad lists submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Development squad staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach – ASCA Level 1 (minimum standard)	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
▪ A minimum of 2 x 13s District Development Coaches to complete a NSWRL "Blues Way" coaching session	Attendance at session and/or online module successfully completed

14 Years	Measures
▪ Skill orientated development programs	Plan overview to be submitted
▪ 1 x 90min session (combined gym/field time) x 8-10 sessions	Advise NSWRL of Development sessions (venue, dates and times)
▪ Development squad games to be conducted on an intra-district basis ONLY	
▪ 1 x NSWRL conducted Development Gala Day	Participation in gala day
▪ Local Junior League players ONLY	Squad lists to be submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Squads to include 20 - 25% of total JL registrations	Squad lists submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Development squad staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach - ASCA Level 1 (minimum standard)	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
▪ A minimum of 2 x 14s District Development Coaches to complete a NSWRL "Blues Way" coaching session	Attendance at session and/or online module successfully completed
TOTAL FUNDING ALLOCATED	$15,000.000

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Minimum Standards Funding – 2019

Development Programs:

15 Years	Measures
▪ Skill orientated development programs	
▪ 1 x 90min session (combined gym/field time) x 12 sessions (maximum)	Advise NSWRL of Development sessions (venue, dates and times)
▪ Development squad games to be conducted on an intra-district basis ONLY	
▪ 1 x NSWRL conducted Development Gala Day	Participation in gala day
▪ A maximum of 3 additional NSWRL sanctioned games	
▪ Local Junior League players ONLY	
▪ Squads to include 20 - 25% of total JL registrations	Squad lists submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Development squad staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach - ASCA Level 1 (minimum standard)	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
▪ A minimum of 2 x 15s District Development Coaches to complete a NSWRL "Blues Way" coaching session	Attendance at session and/or online module successfully completed
TOTAL FUNDING ALLOCATED	$15,000.000

17 Years (optional)	Measures
▪ Skill orientated development programs	
▪ 1 x 90min session (combined gym/field time) x 12 sessions (maximum)	Advise NSWRL of Development sessions (venue, dates and times)
▪ Development squad games to be conducted on an intra-district basis ONLY	
▪ 1 x NSWRL conducted Development Gala Day	Participation in gala day
▪ A maximum of 3 additional NSWRL sanctioned games	
▪ Squads to be made up predominantly of local JL players	Squad lists submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Development squad staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach - ASCA Level 1 (minimum standard)	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
• A minimum of 2 x 17s District Development Coaches to complete a NSWRL "Blues Way" coaching session	Attendance at session and/or online module successfully completed

Junior Representatives programs:

Harold Matthews	Measures
▪ Harold Matthews Training Program to start no earlier than 19th November. Induction Day and Wellbeing and Education Sessions ONLY may be held before this date	
▪ 4 x 120 min sessions per week (combined gym/field time) in the pre-season OR ▪ 3 x 120 min sessions per week (combined gym/field time) in the pre-season plus a Trial Game	Training schedule submitted (ASADA requirement)

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▪ 3 x 120 min sessions per week (combined gym/field time) in season plus a game	
▪ Maximum of 4 x trials pre-competition - No trials on the weekend 8th/9th December - No trials on the weekend 2nd/3rd February	Trial sanction form submitted for approval in appropriate time frame
▪ Clubs are able to purchase equipment to conduct SPARQ testing as per the attached order form	Payment may come directly out of your NSWRL budget
▪ SPARQ testing completed between November 19th and 30th November (please inform NSWRL of your testing date, venue and time) - Option 1 Use existing equipment approved for use by NSWRL - Option 2 Purchase equipment using NSWRL order form - Option 3 NSWRL conduct testing (TBC% of funding is forfeited)	Data entered into Smartabase by 8th December
▪ SPARQ re-testing conducted anytime between 14th – 25th Jan (please inform NSWRL of your testing date, venue and time) - Option 1 Use existing equipment approved for use by NSWRL - Option 2 Purchase equipment using NSWRL order form - Option 3 NSWRL conduct testing (TBC% of funding is forfeited)	Data entered into Smartabase by 1st February
▪ Harold Matthews train-on squad's player names entered via LeagueNet before program starts ▪ A maximum of 40 players in train on squad by December 1st ▪ A maximum of 25 players in train on squad by February 1st	Names registered on LeagueNet prior to training commencing
▪ Junior Representative staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach – ASCA Level 2 (Or, Level 1 working towards Level 2) ▪ Staff to be submitted to NSWRL by 28th September	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
▪ All coaching, training and management staff to attend to attend compulsory training session on 8th/9th December	Staff attendance record
▪ Head Coach and Assistant Coaches must have completed a NSWRL "Blues Way" coaching session	Attendance at session and/or online module successfully completed
TOTAL FUNDING ALLOCATED	$20,000.000

Junior Representatives programs:

SG Ball	Measures
▪ SG Ball Training Program to start no earlier than 5th November. Induction Day and Wellbeing and Education Sessions ONLY may be held before this date	
▪ 4 x 120 min sessions per week (combined gym/field time) in the pre-season OR ▪ 3 x 120 min sessions per week (combined gym/field time) in the pre-season plus a Trial Game ▪ 3 x 120 min sessions per week (combined gym/field time) in season plus a game	Training schedule submitted (ASADA requirement)
▪ Maximum of 4 x trials pre-competition - No trials on the weekend 8th/9th December - No trials on the weekend 2nd/3rd February	Trial sanction form submitted for approval in appropriate time frame

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▪ Clubs are able to purchase equipment to conduct SPARQ testing as per the attached order form	Payment may come directly out of your NSWRL budget
▪ SPARQ testing completed between November 16th and 30th November (please inform NSWRL of your testing date, venue and time) - Option 1 Use existing equipment approved for use by NSWRL - Option 2 Purchase equipment using NSWRL order form - Option 3 NSWRL conduct testing (TBC% of funding is forfeited)	Data entered into Smartabase by 8th December
▪ SPARQ re-testing conducted anytime between 14th – 25th Jan (please inform NSWRL of your testing date, venue and time) - Option 1 Use existing equipment approved for use by NSWRL - Option 2 Purchase equipment using NSWRL order form - Option 3 NSWRL conduct testing (TBC% of funding is forfeited)	Data entered into Smartabase by 1st February
▪ SG Ball train-on squad's player names entered via LeagueNet before program starts ▪ A maximum of 40 players in train on squad by December 3rd ▪ A maximum of 25 players in train on squad by February 1st	Names registered on LeagueNet prior to training commencing
▪ Junior Representative staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach – ASCA Level 2 (Or, Level 1 working towards Level 2) ▪ Staff to be submitted to NSWRL by 28th September	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
▪ All coaching, training and team management staff to attend to attend compulsory training session on 8th/9th December	Staff attendance record
▪ Head Coach and Assistant Coaches must have completed a NSWRL "Blues Way" coaching session	Attendance at session and/or online module successfully completed
TOTAL FUNDING ALLOCATED	$20,000.000

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Junior Representatives programs:

Jersey Flegg	Measures
▪ Jersey Flegg Training Program to start no earlier than 5th November ▪ Players must have a minimum of 6 consecutive weeks break between seasons	Season plan submitted to NSWRL prior to training starting
▪ 5 x 120 min sessions per week (combined gym/field time) in the pre-season OR ▪ 4 x 120 min sessions per week (combined gym/field time) in the pre-season plus a Trial Game ▪ 4 x 120 min sessions per week (combined gym/field time) in season plus a game	Training schedule submitted (ASADA requirement)
▪ Clubs are to ensure players are given a minimum of 3 consecutive days off in the week of a bye. Where there are byes over a two-week period, players are to be given a minimum of 6 consecutive days off	Training schedules submitted

▪ Maximum of 4 x trials pre-competition - No trials on the weekend 8th/9th December -	Trial sanction form submitted for approval in appropriate time frame
▪ Clubs are able to purchase equipment to conduct SPARQ testing as per the attached order form	Payment may come directly out of your NSWRL budget
▪ SPARQ testing conducted anytime between 14th to 25th (please inform NSWRL of your testing date and time) and results entered 1st February - Option 1 Use existing equipment approved for use by NSWRL - Option 2 Purchase equipment using NSWRL order form - Option 3 NSWRL conduct testing (TBC% of funding is forfeited)	Data entered into Smartabase by 1st February
▪ Jersey Flegg train-on squads player names entered via LeagueNet before program starts	Names registered on LeagueNet prior to training commencing
▪ Jersey Flegg staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach – ASCA Level 2 (Or, Level 1 working towards Level 2) ▪ Staff to be submitted to NSWRL by 28th September	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
▪ All coaching, training and team management staff to attend to attend compulsory training session on 8th/9th December	Staff attendance record
▪ Head Coach and Assistant Coaches must have completed a NSWRL "Blues Way" coaching session	Attendance at session and/or online module successfully completed
▪ Full squad training sessions must be held outside 9am – 5pm to support No Work No Study No Play	Training schedules to stipulate full squad/ optional sessions
TOTAL FUNDING ALLOCATED	$30,000.000

ADDITIONAL FUNDING:

Tarsha Gale Cup	Measures
▪ Tarsha Gale Training Program to start no earlier than 19th November. Induction Day and Wellbeing and Education Sessions ONLY may be held before this date	
▪ Maximum of 4 x trials pre-competition - No trials on the weekend 8th/9th December - No trials on the weekend 2nd/3rd February	Trial sanction form submitted for approval in appropriate time frame
▪ Clubs are able to purchase equipment to conduct SPARQ testing as per the attached order form	Payment may come directly out of your NSWRL budget
▪ SPARQ re-testing conducted anytime between 14th – 25th Jan (please inform NSWRL of your testing date, venue and time) - Option 1 Use existing equipment approved for use by NSWRL - Option 2 Purchase equipment using NSWRL order form - Option 3 NSWRL conduct testing (TBC% of funding is forfeited)	Data entered into Smartabase by 1st February
▪ Tarsha Gale train-on squad's player names entered via LeagueNet before program starts ▪ A maximum of 40 players in train on squad by December 1st	Names registered on LeagueNet prior to training commencing

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▪ A maximum of 25 players in train on squad by February 1st	
▪ Tarsha Gale staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach – ASCA Level 2 (Or, Level 1 working towards Level 2) ▪ Staff to be submitted to NSWRL by 28th September	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
▪ All coaching, training and management staff to attend to attend compulsory training session on 8th/9th December	Staff attendance record
TOTAL FUNDING ALLOCATED	$2,000.000

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Minimum Standards Funding – 2019

Development Programs:

13 Years (Optional)	Measures
▪ Skill orientated development programs	Plan overview to be submitted
▪ 1 x 90min session (combined gym/field time) x 6-8 sessions	Advise NSWRL of Development sessions (venue, dates and times)
▪ Development squad games to be conducted on an intra-district basis ONLY	
▪ Local Junior League players ONLY	Squad lists to be submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Squads to include 20 - 25% of total JL registrations	Squad lists submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Development squad staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach – ASCA Level 1 (minimum standard)	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
▪ A minimum of 2 x 13s District Development Coaches to complete a NSWRL "Blues Way" coaching session	Attendance at session and/or online module successfully completed

14 Years	Measures
▪ Skill orientated development programs	Plan overview to be submitted
▪ 1 x 90min session (combined gym/field time) x 8-10 sessions	Advise NSWRL of Development sessions (venue, dates and times)
▪ Development squad games to be conducted on an intra-district basis ONLY	
▪ 1 x NSWRL conducted Development Gala Day	Participation in gala day
▪ Local Junior League players ONLY	Squad lists to be submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Squads to include 20 - 25% of total JL registrations	Squad lists submitted via LeagueNet
▪ Development squad staff to be accredited as follows: - Head Coach – SCC - Coach/ Assistant Coach – CC - Head Trainer – NRL Sports Trainer 2 - Assistant Trainers – NRL Sports Trainer 1 - Strength + Conditioning Coach - ASCA Level 1 (minimum standard)	Staff registered on LeagueNet and entered as part of Gold Shield compliance
▪ A minimum of 2 x 14s District Development Coaches to complete a NSWRL "Blues Way" coaching session	Attendance at session and/or online module successfully completed
TOTAL FUNDING ALLOCATED	$15,000.000

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Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 19

PROJECT BLINDSIDE TRAINING NIGHT

PRESENTATION BY

Brent Pigram

DATE

18/5/17

PROJECT BLINDSIDE

Forms part of the NSWRL Respect Campaign.

- Go Pro Imitative targeted at poor behaviour
- 2016 was used in the Sydney Combined Competition Referees (8 camera's)
- 2017 Aim is to deter off field behaviour with ground manager (26 camera's)
- What everyone is here for today and will be responsible for moving forward
- Success of the Respect Campaign and Project Blindside (Statistics)

STATISTICS – JUDICIARY AND CODE OF CONDUCT 2015 TO 2016 COMPARISON (SYDNEY COMBINED, PENRITH AND PARRAMATTA JRL'S)

Send Offs	SCC (3,805 participants)	Penrith (8,083 participants)	Parramatta (5,802 participants)
2015	137	113	91
2016	91	78	53
% Variance	- 33.58%	-30.97%	-41.76%
Code of Conduct Breaches	SCC	Penrith	Parramatta
2015	60	31	28
2016	72	33	52
% Variance	+ 16.67%	+6.06%	+46.15%

Variables to consider:
Increased reporting capacity in Canterbury JRL (SCC) for Code of Conducts
Team numbers decreased in SCC (however not by 33%)

CAMERA BASICS

POWER/MODE BUTTON – Front of Camera
POWER/MODE button turns camera on and off and works as a mode switching button once camera is on.

SHUTTER BUTTON - Top of Camera
Shutter button starts and stops video recording and photo capture. When in the SET menu of options the shutter button acts as a toggle button for changing settings.

CAMERA BASICS

Turn Camera On	**Quickly press the POWER/MODE button and camera will turn on. Camera will beep 3 times, indicating the camera is powering on.**
Turn Camera Off	Press and hold the POWER/MODE button for 2 seconds. Camera will beep 7 times, indicating the camera is shutting off.
Changing Modes	Once camera is on, quickly pressing the POWER/MODE button will change modes from video mode to self-timer, to photo mode, etc.

CAMERA BASICS

TO SHOOT VIDEO:

- Turn on camera by pressing POWER/MODE button.

- The camera will power on in VIDEO mode as the default mode.

- Press shutter button to begin recording video. Camera will beep once.

- Red LED light on front of the camera will blink while video is recording.

- Press shutter button to stop recording or camera will automatically stop recording when your SD card is full or your battery dies (approx 2.25 hours of battery)

CAMERA BASICS

TO ERASE VIDEOS OFF THE SD CARD:

After each day of use it is recommended that you wipe all recorded footage to ensure there is enough free space of the SD card for the next use.
ONLY DO THIS IF THERE ARE NO INCIDENTS ON THE DAY.

1. Turn the camera on.

2. Drag your finger across the screen from the far left-hand side to the right.
A new screen showing all recorded videos will now be visible.

3. Tap the down arrow in the top left-hand corner.

4. Use your finger to scroll down the list and select DELETE.

5. Tap the Square Box that appears in the blue bar at the top of the screen. A tick will appear in the box

6. Tap the Trash Bin icon on the top Right-Hand side of the screen & then tap DELETE.

7. The camera will process this and then beep once when complete.

PROCEDURE FOR FOOTAGE SUBMISSION – IF AN INCIDENT OCCURS

1. Remove SD Card from camera. Press down on the top of the card and it will pop up.
(this is located inside the battery compartments on the side wall of the camera)

2. Place SD Card in envelope or sealable bag & label with your details, venue name and date of incident.

3. Call district NSWRL Club Competition Co-Ordinator to advise of the incident & organize a time to hand over the SD card. (THIS HAND OVER MUST BE DONE PRIOR TO 5PM TUESDAY AFTERNOON FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT)

4. The Club Competition Co-ordinator will then organise to return the SD card to you prior to the next weekend's games.

Changing Grass Roots Culture in Australian Rugby League
by Barrie-Jon Mather

APPENDIX 20

NSWRL

2016 JUNIOR LEAGUE RESPECT CAMPAIGN

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OVERVIEW

In a bid to eliminate offensive behaviour on and off the field, the New South Wales Rugby League are implementing a Junior League 'Respect Campaign' across all 11 Districts in the Sydney region for 2016. To ensure all players, volunteers and parents act in a manner that displays the core values of the game, every Sydney Junior Rugby League competition, club and district will be involved in this great initiative through the entire season. From key off field messages like #letthemplay to on field coach armbands and player handshakes, all Junior Rugby League clubs and teams will have the opportunity to promote and be involved in this fantastic campaign.

RATIONALE

- 1 in 9 Rugby League Match Officials have been lost to the sport as a direct result of verbal and/or physical abuse
- 2015 saw an increase in the number of reported incidents on and off-field across all Junior Rugby League districts
- NSWRL Participation numbers were down in 2015 - identified through the Gemba "Junior League Participation Research" in some part due to poor sideline and on-field behaviour
- Coach and parent behaviour is a key driver of recruitment and retention of players, reflecting the poor retention rates in the NSWRL Junior Leagues

OBJECTIVES

- To improve the Junior Rugby League environment at a grass root level
- To compel participants, coaches, trainers, spectators and all club officials to take greater responsibility for their actions
- To promote the core values of Rugby League and to educate parents, coaches, players and officials on the true philosophies of grass roots footy
- To promote a greater level of compliance with the NRL Code of Conduct
- To recognise and reward junior league clubs which clearly demonstrate the highest standards of RESPECT and proper behaviour at matches

INITIATIVES

NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge

Across the months of April and May, all Junior League participants including players, coaches, trainers, managers, volunteers, match and club officials have the opportunity to take the "NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge". Each district is encouraged to share the below link with all involved in Rugby League and take the online pledge.

The NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge outlines the fundamentals of our great game, asking them to act in a manner that displays the core values of:

EXCELLENCE INCLUSIVENESS COURAGE TEAMWORK RESPECT

Junior Rugby League Districts will compete with each other for the opportunity to win a double pass to the State of Origin Game 1 held in Sydney on the 1st June 2016 at ANZ Stadium, the district with the highest percentage of pledges wins. A member of that district will be picked at random to receive the prize. Clubs with the highest percentage of pledges will be recognised with a NSWRL Junior League Respect Campaign certificate of appreciation and rewarded with Steeden gear vouchers (The percentages will be calculated by the total pledges per district/club divided by total number of members per district/club times 100).

Clubs with the most pledges will receive:

1. $1000 Steeden Voucher
2. $500 Steeden Voucher
3. $250 Steeden Voucher

Link to take the pledge:

NSWRL JL RESPECT PLEDGE CLICK HERE (Copy and Paste this Link and send!)

Main Points

- NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge runs from the 1st April 2016 to the 15th May 2016
- Pledges will be tallied on the 16th May 2016
- The district with the highest percentage of pledges will be announced at the NSW JLA General meeting on the 18th May 2016, including the winning pledgee and clubs
- The above link can be sent via email or SMS including shared on Facebook, website and twitter
- Start sharing and get the NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge out there!
- At the end of every communication either shared on social media or on a website including being sent via email or SMS, please ensure you finish the message with the hashtags **#letthemplay** and **#respect** as well as tagging the NSWRL on twitter using the handle @NSWRL or tagging our Facebook page in your post (NSWRL or NSW Blues)

NSWRL Junior League Respect Round

All involved in this great game need to demonstrate the highest levels of respect for those around them. The NSWRL Junior League Respect Round involves all coaches, referees and players demonstrating actions of "Respect" by wearing armbands and shaking hands before the start of matches during the NSWRL Junior League Respect Round (4th – 5th June 2016 – following State of Origin Game 1 in Sydney).

Coaches

During the NSWRL Junior League Respect Round (4th – 5th June 2016), all coaches of a team are required to meet on the field, with the players, and shake hands with the referee prior to kick off. In addition to this all coaches are to wear a "Respect" armband identifying them as the leader, demonstrating they believe in and display the core values as a coach. Being responsible for:

Coaches Pledge

- I pledge to put the well-being of the players in my care first and refuse to use fear or intimidation to "motivate" them
- I pledge to do my best to teach not only the skills of the game but also teamwork, sportsmanship and respect for others
- I will coach all players to play fair, always within the games rules, and respect the decisions of all Match Officials
- I pledge to always respect the rich history, traditions and spirt of rugby league
- I will encourage the parents and supporters of my players to exhibit positive behaviours and appreciate the efforts of both team

Players

Players across Sydney during the NSWRL Junior League Respect Round (4th – 5th June 2016), are required to meet on the field, line up opposite to each other and shake hands prior to kick off. By doing this the players are not only demonstrating their desire to adhere to and respect the game but display the following values:

Players Pledge

- I pledge to always display leadership, integrity, balance, respect and true sense of sportsmanship
- I pledge that I will always play within the rules and encourage my fellow players to do the same
- I pledge to respect the rich history, traditions and spirt of Rugby League
- I pledge to always respect the decision made by the match officials
- I pledge to display control and to respect opponents, coaches officials and spectators

Referees

During the NSWRL Junior League Respect Round (4th – 5th June 2016), all match officials and referees are required to meet on the field, alongside the players and shake hands with the coach prior to kick off. By doing this the referees and match officials are not only demonstrating their desire to adhere too and respect the game but display the following

values:

Referees Pledge

- I pledge to always display leadership, integrity, balance, respect and true sense of sportsmanship
- I pledge that I will always referee within the rules and not display any bias
- I pledge to respect the rich history, traditions and spirt of Rugby League
- I pledge to always respect the opinion of the captains and coaches
- I pledge to display control and to respect the players, coaches and spectators

Main Points

- Armbands to be provided by the NSWRL
- Armbands must be worn by all coaches, in all teams, across all games during the NSWRL Junior League Respect Round (4th – 5th June 2016)
- All coaches, referees and players will be emailed their pledge prior to the weekend in an EDM, thanking them in advance for their involvement in this round
- All players, coaches and referees must walk out onto the field prior to all games, line up opposite each other and shake hands during the NSWRL Junior League Respect Round (4th – 5th June 2016)
- Its encouraged for clubs, associations and districts to take as many photos as possible, sharing on their social media platforms promoting this great initiative
- At the end of every communication either shared on social media or on a website including being sent via email or SMS, please ensure you finish the message with the hashtags **#letthemplay** and **#respect** as well as tagging the NSWRL on twitter using the handle @NSWRL or tagging our Facebook page in your post (NSWRL or NSW Blues)

Online Junior League Messages and Resources (Videos, audio and digital flyer)
The following online resources will be used assist Junior League Districts and clubs when promoting the NSWRL Junior League Respect Campaign.

Video Messages
Three videos will be used throughout the 2016 season to emphasise the campaign.

Video One - is a shorter promotional version to be used and shared across all Junior League Dsitricts on Friday the 1st of April 2016 (anytime during the day), officially launching the NSWRL Junior League "Respect Campaign" (If the video won't upload directly use this link instead NSWRL #letthemplay video). All districts and clubs are encouraged to post this video, sharing on social media and websites. Forwarding onto all participants including all players, coaches, trainers, managers, volunteers, match and club officials creating a social media frenzy (we want the message to be loud and clear) on this date. Pushing social media tags #letthemplay and #respect with a focus on the message that the start of the Junior League season is coming soon/here this weekend.

Video Two – this focuses on the negative off field elements and how this impacts the kids. It's to be used on Friday the 29th April 2016 and is encouraged by all districts and clubs to post this video and share on their social media channels and websites forwarding on to all participants including all players, coaches, trainers, managers, volunteers, match and club officials creating a social media frenzy on this date. Pushing social media tags #letthemplay and #respect focusing on the message "have you taken the NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge??" (Attached the pledge link NSWRL JL RESPECT PLEDGE CLICK HERE).

Video Three – this emphasises the good times and enjoying moments of Junior Rugby League, promoting key positive messages. It's to be used on Friday the 3rd of June 2016(following origin game 1) and is encouraged by all districts and clubs to post this video and share on their social media and websites forwarding on to all participants including all players, coaches, trainers, managers, volunteers, match and club officials creating a social media frenzy on this date. Pushing social media tags #respect and #letthemplay with a focus on the message that the "NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge Round" is occurring this weekend. Remember your pledges to this great game.

Audio Message

The audio message is NSW Blues coach Laurie Daley talking about the concerns and issues around poor behaviour off the field. Encouraging all involved to act responsible at Junior League matches for the benefit of all. This audio message can be used and shared from the 8th of April 2016. Districts and Clubs are encouraged to share on social media along with their website and to use this audio message at their ground during Junior League matches throughout the season.

Digital Message

The digital message is a visual jpeg tile that can be used to promote the message of #letthemplay. A tile has been created for each district with individual logos included and can use at any time from the 1st of April 2016.

All online resources will be provided prior to the dates below via a drop box link to Junior League Administrators, this can be forwarded to clubs.

NSWRL Blindside Project

During season 2016 a trial will be conducted for the use of video cameras during games, operated by referees in the Sydney Combined Competition. The games will be videoed by the Central Referee in the Under 16 age group, covering all divisions. Approximately 50% of these games will be videoed each week for the first 10 rounds of the competition. Permission to use the video cameras will be asked of all players in the Under 16 age group competitions. Sandwich Boards will also be utilised at the grounds to advertise the cameras will be in use. District Referees Association involved include Balmain, St George and South Sydney.

RESOURCES

The NSWRL will be providing the following resources for Junior League districts and clubs across the course of the 2016 season. These will be provided over the coming month.
Armbands – for coaches during the NSWRL Junior League Respect Round
Sandwich boards and corflute messages – for all Junior League Clubs to use throughout the season (messages to be phased across certain time periods, more info to come)
Wrist Bands – for mod and junior internationals highlighting the campaign with key

messages #letthemplay and #respect
Posters – posters for clubs and teams in Junior Leagues
Grand Final Bollards – signage for all grand finals across the 11 Syd Junior League districts

KEY DATES TO REMEMBER

Initiatives	Dates	Requirements	Social Tags
NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge (For all in & around Rugby League)	1st April to the 15th May 2016	By sharing this link via email, SMS, website and social media NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge Competition for clubs and districts	#letthemplay #respect Tag NSWRL and VB NSW Blues
NSWRL Video Message (Video One)	1st April 2016	By uploading or sharing the video One – key message: start of junior league season (If the video wont upload use this link NSWRL #letthemplay video instead)	#letthemplay #respect Tag NSWRL and VB NSW Blues
NSWRL Audio and Digital Message	Can be used from the 8th April 2016	To be used at grounds and social media/website	#letthemplay #respect Tag NSWRL and VB NSW Blues
NSWRL Video Message (Video Two)	29th April 2016	By uploading or sharing video two – key message: have you taken the NSWRL Junior League Respect Pledge	#letthemplay #respect Tag NSWRL and VB NSW Blues
NSWRL Video Message (Video Three)	3rd of June 2016	By uploading or sharing video 3 – key message: NSWRL Junior League Respect Round is occurring this weekend	#letthemplay #respect Tag NSWRL and VB NSW Blues
NSWRL Junior League Respect Round (Coach)	Weekend of the 4th – 5th June 2016	Coaches to wear a "Respect" armband and shake hands with referees - Upload photos on social media	#letthemplay #respect Tag NSWRL and VB NSW Blues
NSWRL Junior League Respect Round (Player)	Weekend of the 4th – 5th June 2016	Players to shake hands on the field prior to kick off – Upload photos on social media	#letthemplay #respect Tag NSWRL and VB NSW Blues
NSWRL Junior League Respect Round (Referee)	Weekend of the 4th – 5th June 2016	Referees to shake hands with the coaches prior to kick off – upload photos on social media	#letthemplay #respect Tag NSWRL and VB NSW Blues