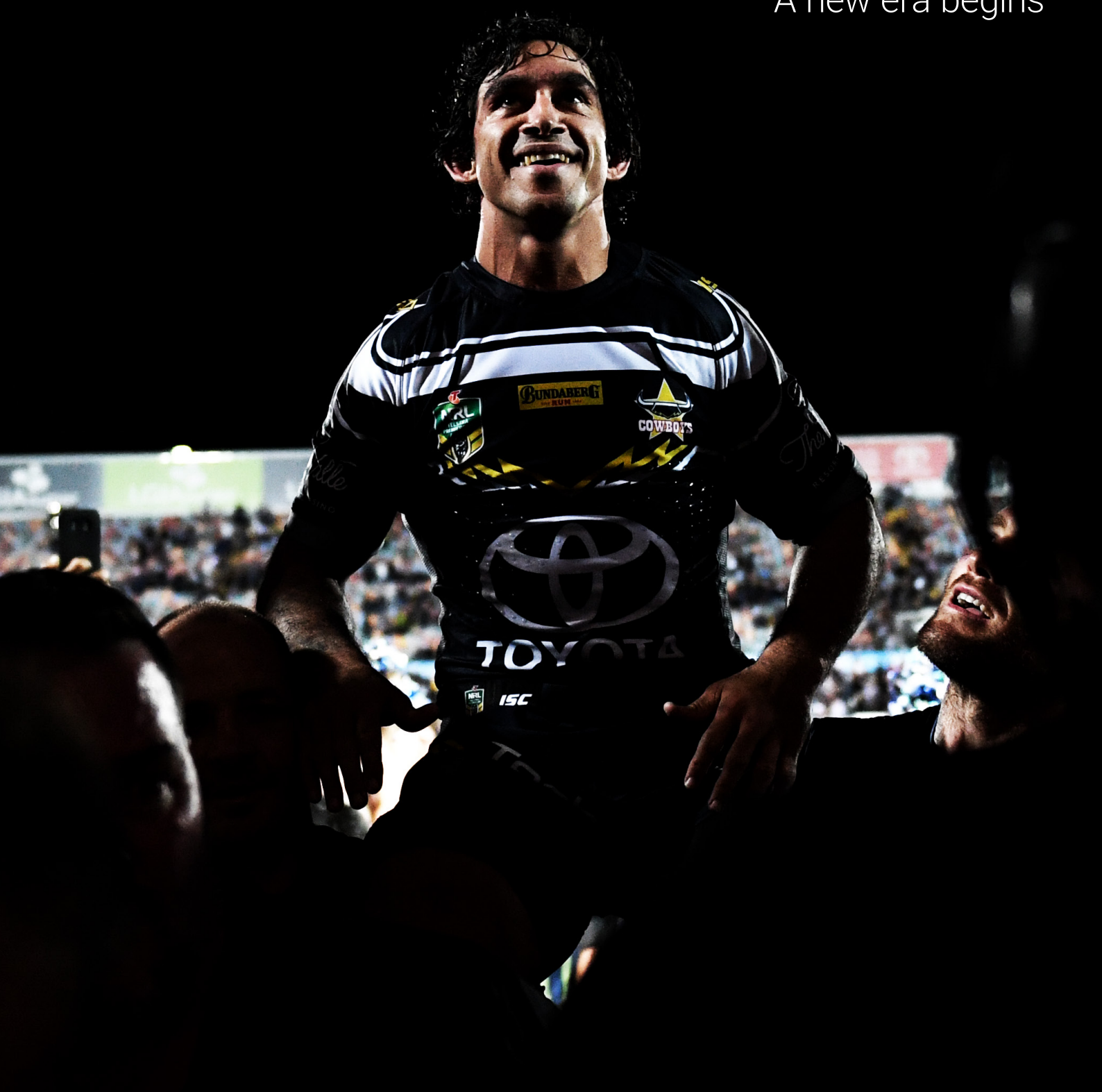




Annual Report 2018

A new era begins







Highlights



Roosters

win the NRL Telstra Premiership

Five

new immortals to go with revival of NRL Hall of Fame

Growth

of the International Game

Broncos

win the inaugural NRL Holden Women's Premiership

\$2.92m

raised for Mark Hughes Foundation during Beanies for Brain Cancer Round

Female participation rates

up 29%

Reconciliation Action Plan "Elevate" status

1st

national sporting organisation to reach this

National participation rates

up 3.6%

NRL Telstra Premiership

116,205,132

cumulative television audience across
NRL Telstra Premiership (Incl. Finals)

NRL Holden Women's Premiership

40

centrally contracted players

Holden State Of Origin

2018

most-watched TV event

3,252,238

total attendance for the
NRL Telstra Premiership

88

NRLW contracted players

9.57 million

viewers across Holden State
of Origin series

332,996

NRL Club Members; up 5%

Cumulative audience of

1.85m

for inaugural NRLW season

3.52 million

viewers watched Origin Game One
– Top Program in 2018

29%

of matches decided by four points
or fewer and only two points separating
first from eighth

67,948

Highest average audience of any
women's football code in 2018

Cumulative peak audience of more than

919,711

for inaugural Holden Women's
State of Origin



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Message from the Chairman



Peter Beattie

The ARL Commission has gone through significant change in 2018, which will set up the game for a strong future.

It was an honour to be elected as Chair of the Commission in February and my focus has been on putting the building blocks in place for long-term growth.

I'm pleased to report that, as we now stand, the game is better placed than any time in its history.

A key priority has been to ensure we attract the right people to be part of the Commission.

The appointment of Peter V'landys and Amanda Laing has given the Commission more commercial, marketing, digital and broadcasting expertise.

In February, former Australian and Queensland player Mark Coyne will join the Commission and he will provide further business and football acumen.

Naturally we are sorry to lose the services of Chris Sarra, who is not seeking reappointment. His contribution cannot be overstated and we thank him for his service.

The new-look Commission is working extremely well and is more involved than ever before in every part of the game's operations.

While the Commission is functioning effectively, we have made no secret of the fact that we want to broaden its membership to include the Clubs and States.

While the initial proposals for governance reform did not proceed, we will be revisiting the idea in the new year, as promised.

The administration of the game can only improve with the input of Club and State officials who are at the coalface and have a unique perspective of the game.





The game's finances have improved significantly over the last 12 months.

We have taken the game from a position where it was seeking a loan only 12 months ago to a healthy surplus of more than \$40 million this year.

The improvement is due to a number of factors, including the new broadcasting agreement, a strong increase in off-field revenues such as sponsorships and a tight control on expenditure.

Now that we have recorded a surplus, the Commission is determined to use it wisely to set up the game's long-term future.

It remains a source of embarrassment that the game still has no assets after more than 100 years of rugby league.

That is why we have set up an Investment Committee, headed by Commissioner Gary Weiss, to recommend how our funds should be invested. The Committee includes experts from the Commission and Clubs as well as George Kanaan from UBS who is one of the nation's premier investors.

The committee will look at all options, including the purchase of property, to ensure the game has assets to fall back on in hard times or to use as a financial base to ensure the game prospers in the future.

We have to expand the game and we are using the international game to achieve that goal.

The Test between Australia and Tonga was one of the highlights of the year and demonstrated the potential of the Pacific nations to successfully spread our game into new regions.

Ideally, we would like to see teams like Fiji play in the State Leagues to help their development while the new international calendar will ensure Tonga, Samoa and Papua New Guinea play more games at Test level.

The Commission held a two-day summit in the Blue Mountains in October where we looked at the ideal footprint for the game.

While many people have views on expansion, we have never conducted the due diligence needed to determine the best outcome for the game. So, the Commission has asked the NRL executive team to look at the implications on broadcasting, participation, finances and attendances of expansion and to come back with a recommendation for future growth.

While research is conducted into our future footprint, we will continue to promote the game vigorously on the domestic front.

In 2019, we will conduct a "Magic Round" where every game in Round 9 will be played at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane. We need to keep innovating and this will draw fans from around Australia and New Zealand for a weekend festival of football.

We continue to take games to regional areas wherever possible and we are staging a State of Origin match in Perth and Adelaide over the next two years.

We have the best sporting product in Australia – more people watched NRL than any other sport in 2018 – and we want to continue to establish new support bases around the country.

The NSW Rugby League and Country Rugby League deserve credit for the way they have approached our proposal for the two bodies to merge.

We believe a merger – which would see rugby league in NSW governed by one body for the first time in more than 80 years – is in the best interests of the game.

It would enable the two organisations to combine resources to efficiently to deliver rugby league programs and competitions across the State.

We are hopeful that the merger can be completed by November 1 2020.

It will be an historic move for the game and one which will further strengthen the game in metropolitan and country NSW.





Thanks to the Queensland and Australian governments, work is well underway on the new North Queensland Stadium, which will be ready for season 2020.

We have entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the NSW Government for a stadia program that will revolutionise rugby league in NSW.

Under our agreement, new stadia will be built at Parramatta and Moore Park with a major refurbishment of the existing stadium at Sydney Olympic Park.

We have already seen the benefits of new stadia in other States.

The Western Australian Government expects to recoup the money spent on its 60,000-seat Optus Stadium within 10 years. It is obvious that new facilities are going to drive more business into a venue. The new stadium at Adelaide is enjoying similar success.

Our view is that a Memorandum of Understanding should be honoured, no matter whether there is a change of government. The proposed stadia program should proceed, as it will deliver immense benefits for Sydney, and New South Wales more broadly.

The Commission made significant progress in 2018 but there is still a lot of work to be done.

Any year where attendances, ratings, memberships and finances all improve is a strong one. And that is how our game fared in 2018.

Much credit goes to CEO Todd Greenberg and his team and to my fellow Commissioners for their hard work.

We have put in place a strong team and the fundamentals are in place to grow the game.

Thank you to all those who played a role in our success this year. The Clubs, the States, the hard-working staff at Rugby League Central and offices around the country, the many volunteers and juniors and, most of all, the fans who make this great game so successful.



Australian
Rugby League
Commission
(ARLC)





Australian Rugby League Commission

The ARLC is the single controlling body and administrator of the game in Australia and its responsibilities are set out in its Constitution.

They are to:

- Foster, develop, extend and provide adequate funding for the game from the junior to elite levels and generally to act in the best interests of the game;
- Liaise with and delegate appropriate functions to governing bodies of the game in the States and Territories of Australia, including the NSWRL and QRL;
- Organise and conduct all State of Origin and Australian representative games, recognising that the selection and management of the State of Origin teams representing New South Wales and Queensland shall be undertaken in accordance with the ARLC Constitution;
- Organise and conduct the NRL Competition;
- Foster the NRL Competition;
- Liaise with the Rugby League International Federation Limited and organisations controlling the game in other countries in the fostering and control of the game of rugby league throughout the world;
- Promote and encourage either directly or indirectly the physical, cultural and intellectual welfare of young people in the community and, in particular, the rugby league community; and
- Promote and encourage either directly or indirectly sport and recreation, particularly rugby league football, in the interests of the social welfare of young persons.

Board committees

Risk, Investment and Audit Committee (RIAC)

The key responsibilities of RIAC include:

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

Committee members: Tony McGrath (Chair), Gary Weiss, Peter Beattie

People, Workplace Culture and Remuneration Committee (PWCRC)

The key responsibilities of PWCRC include:

- Overseeing the organisation's policies and strategies relating to people, including workplace health and safety, diversity and inclusion;
- Monitoring and reviewing the organisation's talent, remuneration, performance and reward framework; and
- CEO and executive management succession planning, including making recommendations to the Commission regarding recruitment and selection.

Committee members: Chris Sarra (Chair), Peter Beattie

Nominations Committee

The key responsibilities of the Nominations Committee include:

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

Committee members: Peter Beattie, Tony McGrath, Peter V'landys, Wayne Pearce

In addition, Wayne Pearce, Peter Beattie and Peter V'landys participate as members of the NRL Competition Committee.



Dr Gary Weiss

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

Wayne Pearce AM

Mr Pearce is a former Kangaroos representative who also Captained and coached the New South Wales State of Origin side. Mr Pearce is a business consultant and Director of Wayne Pearce Advantage.

Peter V'landys AM
(appointed 12 March 2018)

Mr V'landys is Chief Executive and board member with Racing NSW and former Chief Executive of the NSW Harness Racing Club. Mr V'landys holds an Order of Australia Medal for services to the Racing Industry and serves across a number of Boards associated with the thoroughbred racing industry.

Professor Megan Davis

Professor Davis is Pro Vice Chancellor UNSW, Acting Commissioner of the NSW Land and Environment Court and a member of the NSW Sentencing Council. Professor Davis is a constitutional law professor specialising in constitutional design and constitution-building and one of the nation's leading public constitutional lawyers.



The Hon Peter Beattie AC
Chairman

Mr Beattie is Director of the Medical Research Commercialisation Fund, Ambassador for Life Sciences Queensland, joint adjunct professor at the University of Queensland's Australian Institute for Bioengineering & Nanotechnology & Institute for Molecular Bioscience and former Chairman of GOLDOC. Mr Beattie served as the 36th Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade from 1998 to 2007 and Leader of the Australian Labor Party in that state from 1996 to 2007.

Tony McGrath

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

Amanda Laing
(appointed 12 March 2018)

Ms Laing is the Chief Commercial Officer of Foxtel and former Managing Director at Nine Entertainment Co. Ms Laing is a former board member of Australian News Channel (Sky News), Stan and Pedestrian Group.

Doctor Chris Sarra

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

John Grant retired from the Board on 21 February 2018.
Catherine Harris retired from the Board on 20 February 2018



CEO Report



Todd Greenberg

The 2018 season delivered strong results on and off the field for our game.

And it is fair to say it will be remembered as the year when our women's teams joined the men on centre stage.

There were many highlights during the year but few more memorable than the first women's State of Origin at North Sydney Oval and the launch of the first women's Premiership.

Those events made it clear that our women's teams are not only strong but they have a bright, long-term future.

On-field

Matches decided by <4 points

29%

The 2018 season was the closest in more than a decade.

The average margin of games across the season was 12.8, with 29 per cent of matches decided by four points or fewer. We saw some remarkable comebacks, which meant fans knew their team was always in the contest.

Congratulations to the Sydney Roosters who took the 2018 title with an exciting win over the Storm in the Grand Final.

The women's competition was also closely fought with the Broncos winning the inaugural competition.

Of course, there are always challenges and we are looking for ways to increase the time that the ball is in play to give our fans more game time.

Attendance

2018 aggregate attendance

2.2%

Total attendance

3.2m

Our aggregate attendance for 2018 rose by 2.2 per cent, which was a pleasing result given the wide choice families and fans have for leisure activities.

More than 3.2 million people attended Telstra Premiership games in 2018.

Attendances are affected by many things including weather, the closeness of the competition and which teams are competing for the Finals.

The best way of increasing crowds is by providing world-class facilities for supporters. That is why our Memorandum of Understanding with the NSW Government is so important. The opening of the Bankwest stadium at Parramatta will be a game changer. But we also need a new stadium at Moore Park and upgraded facilities at Sydney Olympic Park so that we have a network of stadia that will give fans a quality game-day experience.

Memberships also rose by 5 per cent in 2018. A total of 333,000 fans have now taken that extra step to become members of their clubs.

2018 membership

5%





Participation**Number of registered players** **3.6%**

One of the most pleasing aspects of 2018 was the increase in rugby league participation across NSW and Queensland.

The number of registered players rose by 3.6 per cent.

Importantly, the States did a great job in arresting the decline in junior male participation while the number of females playing the game continues to rise strongly.

There is still a challenge to keep teenage boys in the game.

The States are now working with the NRL on new programs to give juniors more choices on the style of game they want to play.

Television audiences**TV audience** **1.1%**

The number of people watching rugby league on television across Australia and New Zealand rose by 1.1 per cent in 2018 – a remarkable achievement in a tough environment.

Television audiences are generally on the decline. People have more recreational choices and reduced rates of viewership across the board are reflective of this. Indeed, most other sporting codes recorded significant declines in their television numbers this year.

Yet rugby league again achieved three of the top four programs of the year through the State of Origin games and the Grand Final.

The Commonwealth Games had an impact on audiences early in the season before a strong resurgence in the middle of the season.

Special mention should also be made of the women's State of Origin and Premiership which recorded strong figures in their inaugural year.

Cumulative TV audience**116m**

Immortals

New Immortals inducted in 2018

5

One of the highlights of the year was the revival of the Hall of Fame and the selection of five new Immortals.

A distinguished selection panel took the brave but correct decision to recognise three players from the pre-War era who had helped put our game on the map.

Dally Messenger, Frank Burge and Dave Brown were superstars of their eras. Now they have been recognised for their feats on the field – and the role they played in establishing rugby league in Australia.

If they had not been crowned as Immortals during this intake we may have missed forever the opportunity to honour them.

They are joined as Immortals by two of the greatest players from the modern era – Norm Provan and Mal Meninga.

Provan was the leader of the mighty St George side which won 11 straight Premierships and Meninga was a powerhouse of the game for the Raiders and Queensland during their golden eras.

Six players – Petero Civoniceva, Mark Graham, Steve Menzies, Ricky Stuart, Cliff Lyons, and Gorden Tallis were inducted into the Rugby League Hall of Fame.

We have neglected the history of our game and its stars for too long. That is now being rectified.

Hall of Fame inductees 2018

6

Chairman and Commission

A special thanks to the ARL Commission and its Chairman Peter Beattie for their support during 2018.

There is no doubt that the Commission has become more consultative and more effective over the past 12 months.

The addition of Peter V'landys and Amanda Laing has added a new perspective to the Commission and Mark Coyne will undoubtedly provide further expertise when he takes up his post in early 2019.

A big thank you to Professor Chris Sarra who has made an enormous contribution to the game during his term on the Commission.





Retiring players

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to two of the finest players our game has ever seen.

Johnathan Thurston and Billy Slater were not just superstars on the field but superb ambassadors for the game off it.

They will be missed greatly.

However, I am sure both Johnathan and Billy will continue to be involved in the game and pass on their knowledge and skill base to the next generation of stars.

A big thank you to you both from everyone in the game.

The future

I cannot remember a time when there has been so much excitement and anticipation for a season as there is for 2019.

The changes in coaching staff, the movement of players to new clubs and the emergence of a fresh breed of star players has set the scene for a great season.

We have some big events planned, notably the first Magic Round which will see all eight matches in Round 9 played at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium.

We are also taking State of Origin to Perth and it is already certain to be a sell-out – six months before kick-off!

And we will be tweaking some of the rules of the Telstra Premiership to ensure fans see more ball in play and more action on the field.

Thank you to everyone for your efforts and support in making 2018 so successful.

I think 2019 will be even better.

Todd Greenberg
NRL CEO




01



Playing
Our game





NRL Telstra Premiership

This is how we league.

The 2018 NRL Telstra Premiership again proved to be one of the closest sporting competitions in Australia, with 29 per cent of matches decided by four points or fewer and the tightest average margin in more than a decade (12.7 points).

For the first time in Premiership history, the top four teams finished on equal points. It took until the final day of the Premiership for the Top 8 to be determined.

Members, fans and families enjoyed a record number of double-headers and regional matches in 2018 with more Sunday blockbusters featured in the new-look season schedule.

Attendances rose by 2.2 per cent with 3.2 million fans flocking to matches in 2018.

The Grand Final had many storylines with Billy Slater (Storm) being cleared of a shoulder charge by the NRL judiciary, and his longtime friend Cooper Cronk (Roosters) taking a shoulder injury into the match.

In the end it was the Roosters who took out the Premiership with a 21-6 victory, their 20th Premiership.

Luke Keary (Roosters) won the Clive Churchill Medal as man of the match.

Women's Rugby League

2018 was a landmark year for women's rugby league.

Following the success of the Harvey Norman Jillaroos winning the 2017 Rugby League World Cup, the NRL announced an expansion of the women's rugby league calendar to include a Premiership competition and a stand-alone State of Origin match.

Both received huge support from players and fans alike. It contributed to a robust, year-round calendar of women's rugby league, including local and state competitions, as well as international fixtures. Female participation remains on an upwards trajectory – with record figures once again recorded in 2018. The number of women playing the game rose 29 per cent in 2018.

In addition, women continued to make their mark at all levels of the game. Professor Megan Davis and Amanda Laing sat on the Australian Rugby League Commission, and Katrina Fanning was announced as the Australian Rugby League Indigenous Council Chairwoman, taking over from the Honourable Linda Burney, MP.

The 2018 Dally M Female Player of the Year was awarded to Jillaroos and Broncos player Brittany Breayley. Breayley was a finalist for the award in 2017 and beat a strong field of women to claim this year's top prize for women's rugby league, awarded at the annual Dally M Awards ceremony in September.









NRL Holden Women's Premiership

The NRL Holden Women's Premiership (NRLW) kicked off its inaugural season with four teams competing for the title.

The Broncos, Dragons, Roosters and Warriors made up the Premiership sides, with the best talent from Australia and New Zealand spread across the teams to ensure a close competition. The NRLW competition captured the hearts of both new and existing fans from Australia and New Zealand who cheered on the best in the women's game live and in club colours.

Matches were played as double-headers to the men's Finals Series matches, providing maximum exposure and opportunity for the new competition. Over the four-week season, more than 100,000 fans witnessed matches live in stadia across Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, with more than a million fans tuning in to watch the games on television.

The Brisbane Broncos recorded a 34-12 victory in the Grand Final against the Sydney Roosters to become the inaugural premiers. Broncos half Kimiora Nati won the prestigious Karyn Murphy medal – awarded for the first time to the best player of the Grand Final.

ANZAC Round

The rugby league community once again came together to commemorate and thank both past and present service men and women for the sacrifices they have made in protecting countries and people at home and abroad.

The week-long commemoration allowed rugby league fans, players and clubs time to reflect on the shared beliefs of commitment, hard work and sacrifice that combine both sport and service.

The game paid tribute to two current serving Australian rugby league representatives in Jillaroos Talesha Quinn and Meg Ward, while the Australian Defence Force Rugby League team defeated their New Zealand counterparts 24-16 in the ANZAC Day clash curtain-raiser.

A record crowd of 41,142 packed into Sydney's Allianz Stadium to see the St George Illawarra Dragons beat the Sydney Roosters 24-8, while Melbourne Storm were at their best against Trans-Tasman rivals the New Zealand Warriors, posting an impressive 50-10 victory at AAMI Park.





Downer World Club Series

The Downer World Club Challenge between NRL Premiers Melbourne Storm and English Super League Champions Leeds Rhinos was the first time the fixture was played in Melbourne and only the fourth time in 41 years the match has been played in Australia.

The home advantage paid dividends for Melbourne who scored seven tries to one in a dominant 38-4 victory over Leeds.

The win returned the World Club Challenge trophy to Australian soil again with the fixture between Sydney Roosters and Wigan Warriors to return to the UK in February 2019.

Harvey Norman Women in League Round

Harvey Norman Women in League Round provided its annual opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the vital role women play at all levels of rugby league.

In 2018, the NRL in partnership with Harvey Norman, ran a Pathways Mentoring Program which enabled several women to be mentored by a successful rugby league figure in their chosen field.

Figures including the likes of Harvey Norman CEO Katie Page, Sydney Roosters Coach Trent Robinson, NRL Voice Against Violence Program Deliverer Alan Tongue and NRL Match Official Kasey Badger shared their knowledge, skills and experience with the women over a number of days.

Eight teams wore specially designed jerseys as part of the round's celebrations.



Beanie for Brain Cancer Round

The rugby league community rallied again in 2018 to raise \$2,920,000 for brain cancer research during the NRL's Beanie for Brain Cancer Round in partnership with the Mark Hughes Foundation.

The result surpassed the \$2 million target and exceeded the \$1.75 million raised in the inaugural round in 2017.

McDonald Jones Homes also gave up the naming rights of the Newcastle Knights stadium to allow it to be called Beanie for Brain Cancer Stadium for this round.

In 2018 we raised

\$2.9m







Indigenous Round

The NRL, through its Reconciliation Action Plan, is committed to greater promotion and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the Game.

The 2018 round was launched on the traditional lands of the Turrubal and Yuggera people at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane, and allowed the game to use its extensive reach to highlight significant social issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – including promoting respectful and positive behaviours across communities.

Welcome to Country ceremonies occurred at all matches, as well as pre-match cultural performances and gift exchanges between captains prior to kick-off.

The NRL, alongside Reconciliation Australia, also used the round to promote and facilitate respect, trust and positive relationships between the rugby league community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

For just the second time in Premiership games, every player and match official wore Indigenous-inspired jerseys.

“I’m proud to see the game continually using its positive influence to drive social change in Indigenous communities throughout Australia and beyond.”

Australian Rugby League
Indigenous Council Member,
Joshua Creamer

Holden State of Origin

The 2018 Holden State of Origin series marked a breakthrough for New South Wales and the departure of some of the finest players to represent Queensland.

More than 9.5 million viewers watched the three-match series on television, with thousands more streaming on devices at home and around the world.

The series opener headed south to the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground with 87,122 fans witnessing new coach Brad Fittler and a New South Wales side containing 11 debutants take out the match by 22-12.

Game Two saw the Blues survive a trademark Queensland fightback to claim just their second State of Origin series victory in 13 years with an 18-14 win in front of 82,223 fans at ANZ Stadium in Sydney.

Game Three saw the final Origin appearance of fullback Billy Slater at Suncorp Stadium. Slater and returning Daly Cherry-Evans were the Maroons' best in Queensland's 18-12 win. Slater became the first player in a series-losing team to win the Wally Lewis Medal since its inception in 2004.



Holden Women's State of Origin

State of Origin delivered its first women's match at North Sydney Oval on 22 June.

While an Interstate Challenge has been played between Queensland and New South Wales for the past 21 years, this was another breakthrough moment for the women's game, with both a men's and women's State of Origin match played in the same round for the first time.

Nearly 7,000 fans attended the match at North Sydney Oval to witness history, with more than a million watching on television and online devices.

The match went down to the wire, with New South Wales eventually winning 16-10 in a seesawing effort.

Isabelle Kelly was awarded the Nellie Doherty Medal as the player of the match. Kelly crossed for two tries, including the match-winning try, late in the game.



Harvey Norman National Championship

The Harvey Norman National Championship were held on the Gold Coast in June 2018, with more than 120 players competing across six teams.

The championship featured teams from city and country New South Wales and Queensland as well as an Affiliated States team and a team made up of Australian Defence Force players.

After three days of hard-fought matches, New South Wales Country won the championship with a 16-12 win over New South Wales City in the decider.

NRL Talent ID Day

The NRL held its first-ever Talent Identification Day at Runaway Bay on the Gold Coast in June.

The event provided an opportunity for more than 150 aspiring rugby league players to test themselves physically to see if they have what it takes to compete at the elite level of the game.

NRL club recruiters were on hand for the occasion and were impressed by the level of commitment and skill displayed across the board.

Muswellbrook's Brydie Parker created history when she became the first Talent ID participant to secure an NRL contract, signing for the Sydney Roosters in the inaugural NRL Holden Women's Premiership.





International game



Australian Kangaroos

A new-look Australian team – without legends Cameron Smith and Billy Slater – played two Tests against New Zealand and Tonga at the end of the 2018 season.

Premiership-winning Roosters Luke Keary, James Tedesco and Latrell Mitchell joined South Sydney's Damien Cook in donning the green and gold jersey for the first time, while Manly Warringah Sea Eagles halfback Daly Cherry-Evans earned his first call-up to the national team for more than four years.

Boyd Cordner became the first player from the Roosters to captain the Kangaroos since Brad Fittler in 2001 and the first New South Wales Captain since 2005.

While it was a new era for the Kangaroos, it was also a successful one for the Kiwis who beat the World Cup champion in the first Test at Mt Smart Stadium by 26-24.

A week later, the Kangaroos regrouped to defeat a spirited Tonga 34-16 in the first-ever match between the two nations.

More than 26,000 passionate Tongan fans draped in red descended on Mt Smart Stadium for the historic occasion. In a memorable moment for rugby league, the almost all-Tongan crowd delivered stirring renditions of both the Tongan and Australian national anthems.

James Tedesco won player of the match honours for his try, two line breaks and a try assist to round out a stellar season for the Roosters fullback.



Harvey Norman Jillaroos

The Harvey Norman Jillaroos continued their winning ways in 2018, with a hard-fought match against the New Zealand Ferns in Auckland.

Following a successful inaugural NRL Holden Women's Premiership, many of the Premiership players re-joined their respective national sides for the Test Match double-header, alongside the Kangaroos and Kiwis.

Australia recorded a thrilling 26-24 win at Mount Smart Stadium, with inaugural 2018 Golden Boot Female Player of the Year, Isabelle Kelly, crossing for the winning try with just five minutes to play.

Retiring Jillaroos stalwart, Heather Ballinger, produced a Test Match to remember, rallying her team-mates to an historic win and earning herself the player of the match.



Ox & Palm Pacific Test Invitational

Campbelltown Sports Stadium was turned red for the second consecutive year as Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and Papua New Guinea took part in the annual Ox & Palm Pacific Test Invitational double-header.

The first match saw Papua New Guinea cruise to a 26-14 over Fiji Bati. The Kumuls scored four tries in the opening half, including a double for debutant Junior Rau, in the nation's second consecutive win over the Bati.

A rendition of each nation's war cry had the crowd of predominantly Tongan supporters full of excitement before the second match of the evening.

They weren't let down as Tonga defeated Samoa 38-22.







Our players





02

Immortals

Norm Provan and Mal Meninga joined Dally Messenger, Frank Burge and Dave Brown as the next five rugby league Immortals in a surprising and memorable announcement at the Sydney Cricket Ground on 1 August.

Originally the selection panel was expected to add just two players to the Immortals line-up. But they decided that this was a unique opportunity to honour the past by including three pre-war pioneers – Messenger, Burge and Brown. Provan and Meninga were then announced as the 12th and 13th Immortals respectively.

Messenger, Brown, Burge, Provan and Meninga were given Immortal status by a panel that consisted of current Immortals Wally Lewis, Bob Fulton and Andrew Johns, along with Broncos coach Wayne Bennett, Phil Gould, Ray Warren, Steve Crawley and former Rugby League Week editors Ian Heads and Norm Tasker.

The judges recognised it as a one-off opportunity to acknowledge the pre-war players for fear the game could lose the chance to include these champions as Immortals.

Messenger was a pioneer of rugby league, touring with the first Kangaroos side and was known as 'The Master'. He played 163 first class games, including Tests for Australia and New Zealand, and the NRL's annual award for the game's best is named after him.

Brown, 'the Bradman of rugby league', was a dashing centre for Australia, New South Wales and Eastern Suburbs during the 1930s.

Burge was one of the game's first great try-scoring forwards with 146 tries in 154 games, while Provan helped St George to 11 Premierships from 1956 to 1966 and played in two World Cups.

Meninga was the youngest of the inductees, finishing his career with three Premierships and 74 tries in 166 games for Canberra to go with his 45 Tests and 42 State of Origins between 1982 and 1994.





Provan and Meninga were then announced as the 12th and 13th Immortals respectively.





Hall of Fame

Petero Civoniceva, Mark Graham, Cliff Lyons, Steve Menzies, Ricky Stuart and Gorden Tallis were the first players inducted into the NRL Hall of Fame for a decade in recognition of their playing achievements.

These players join the 100 players inducted into the Hall of Fame during the game's Centenary year in 2008, who form the Charter Class.

They were selected by a voting college of 25 judges after an exhaustive awards process, which began with a list of 100 names that was reduced to 25 nominees after an independent screening process.

The judges took into account the longevity of their careers and their achievements at representative level, while choosing a mixture of backs and forwards.

Between them, Civoniceva, Graham, Lyons, Menzies, Stuart and Tallis played 1,393 Premiership matches, 123 Tests, 90 State of Origins and won 12 Premierships.

Milestones

The record-breaking feats of Cameron Smith continued in 2018 when he broke Darren Lockyer's all-time finals appearances record (35) in the 2018 NRL Grand Final. A single conversion during the decider saw him become the first hooker in Premiership history to score more than 200 points in a season, beating his own record to do so.

Cowboys second-rower Gavin Cooper broke a 100-year-old Premiership record for consecutive try scoring by a forward in his team's clash with the Gold Coast at Cbus Super Stadium. Cooper scored a try in nine consecutive games for the Cowboys, breaking the record of recently inducted Immortal Frank Burge, who scored in eight consecutive games for Glebe in 1918.

Canberra captain Jarrod Croker passed a century of points for the ninth consecutive season and remains on track to become the seventh player, and the first under the age of 30, to score 2000 points at Premiership level.

Peter Wallace (Panthers and Broncos) and Matt Prior (Dragons and Sharks) became the 25th and 26th players to reach a century of games for two NRL Clubs.

Utility Mitch Aubusson became only the third Sydney Roosters player to appear in 250 games for the club (after Anthony Minichiello and Luke Ricketson), while his teammate Blake Ferguson recorded a century of tries at NRL level.

Wests Tigers hooker Robbie Farrah broke the Premiership record for most tries scored by a hooker (64), previously held by Luke Priddis (63).

Canterbury second-rower Rhyse Martin broke a Premiership record for most points scored by a player on a losing team when he contributed 24 of the Bulldogs' 28 points in their 32-28 loss to Canberra at Belmore Sports Ground.





300 Club

Seven players from the exclusive 300 Club farewelled the game in 2018.

They were Johnathan Thurston (North Queensland Cowboys), Luke Lewis (Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks), Simon Mannering (Warriors), Chris Heighington (Newcastle Knights), Sam Thaiday (Brisbane Broncos), Billy Slater and Ryan Hoffman (Melbourne Storm).

Only 34 players have played 300 or more games.

State of Origin

Queensland fullback Billy Slater became the 10th Maroons player to play 30 State of Origin matches. Slater also became the second oldest player to captain an Origin team in his final match at Suncorp Stadium.

Brothers Jake and Tom Trbojevic also became the eighth pair of siblings to represent the Blues at Origin level and just the fifth pair to line up together.

Both Women's State of Origin sides contained seven players from the Jillaroos World Cup-winning line-up, with Steph Hancock pulling on the Maroon jersey for the 14th time.

Coaches

During the 2018 season, Brisbane's Wayne Bennett coached his 800th game at Premiership level and 500th for the Brisbane Broncos.

Melbourne's Craig Bellamy became only the seventh coach to reach 400 games and only the second coach to oversee this mark for a single club.

Sydney Roosters coach Trent Robinson eclipsed the all-time record of pioneering player and coach Arthur 'Pony' Halloway for most games as Roosters' coach. Robinson also notched his 100th coaching win in the NRL Grand Final.

Dally M's

In 2018, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck was named Dally M Player of the Year becoming the first Warriors player to win the award and just the second Kiwi international. The Warriors captain was also awarded Fullback of the Year in the Dally M Team of the Year.

Queensland and Australian hooker Brittany Breayley claimed the 2018 Dally M Female Player of the Year. She became the second Queensland player to take out the award, with the award judged solely on performances during the inaugural NRLW Competition.

Steve "Slippery" Morris was also formally recognised as the inaugural winner of the Dally M from his stellar 1979 season. At the culmination of the 1979 season, Sydney's Daily Mirror newspaper conducted a player of year competition for which they named the Dally M medal. The following year was perceived by many to be the start of the Dally M awards and Morris was never recognised as the original recipient until this year's ceremony.





The Dally M Awards for 2018

Captain of the Year:

Cameron Smith (Melbourne Storm)

**Peter Moore Award
for Rookie of the Year:**

Jamayne Isaako (Brisbane Broncos)

Top Points Scorer:

Jamayne Isaako (Brisbane Broncos)

Top Try Scorer:

David Fusitu'a (New Zealand Warriors)

Try of the Year:

Jamayne Isaako (Brisbane Broncos)

Coach of the Year:

Anthony Seibold
(South Sydney Rabbitohs)

Peter Frilingos Headline Moment:

Holden Women's State of Origin

**Provan Summons People's
Choice Medal:**

Damien Cook
(South Sydney Rabbitohs)

Fullback of the Year:

Roger Tuivasa-Sheck
(New Zealand Warriors)

Winger of the Year:

Blake Ferguson (Sydney Roosters)

Centre of the Year:

Joseph Leilua (Canberra Raiders)

Five-eighth of the Year:

Cameron Munster (Melbourne Storm)

Halfback of the Year:

Luke Brooks (Wests Tigers)

Lock of the Year:

Jason Taumalolo
(North Queensland Cowboys)

Second-rower of the Year:

Josh Jackson
(Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs)

Prop of the Year:

Andrew Fifita
(Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks)

Hooker of the Year:

Damien Cook (South Sydney Rabbitohs)

Interchange Player of the Year:

Jazz Tevaga (New Zealand Warriors)

Ken Stephen Medal:

Ryan James (Gold Coast Titans)

Female Player of the Year:

Brittany Breayley (Brisbane Broncos)

Dally M Player of the Year:

Roger Tuivasa-Sheck
(New Zealand Warriors)

RLPA Awards

Players' Champion for 2018:

Kalyn Ponga (Newcastle Knights)

Dennis Tutty Award:

Jason Nightingale
(St George Illawarra Dragons)

Representative Player of the Year:

Jason Taumalolo
(North Queensland Cowboys)

Elite Women's Player of the Year:

Simaima Taufa (Sydney Roosters)

Rookie of the Year:

Victor Radley (Sydney Roosters)

NRL-RLPA Academic Male Player of the Year:

Dale Copley (Gold Coast Titans)

NRL-RLPA Academic Female Player of the Year:

Kody House (Brisbane Broncos)

Pasifika Leadership and Excellence Award:

Jason Nightingale
(St George Illawarra Dragons)

Indigenous Leadership and Excellence Award:

Johnathan Thurston
(North Queensland Cowboys)



2018 Retiring Class

The following players were recognised as the Official Retiring Class of 2018:

Jonathan Wright
(Manly Warringah Sea Eagles)

Peter Wallace (Penrith Panthers)

Tim Browne (Penrith Panthers)

Antonio Winterstein
(North Queensland Cowboys)

Beau Scott (Parramatta Eels)

Kirissime Auva'a (Parramatta Eels)

Jacob Lillyman (Newcastle Knights)

Joseph Paulo
(Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks)

Brenton Lawrence (Gold Coast Titans)

Jason Nightingale (St George Illawarra)

Frank-Paul Nuuausala (Sydney Roosters)

Jason Clark (South Sydney Rabbitohs)

Johnathan Thurston
(North Queensland Cowboys)

Luke Lewis (Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks)

Simon Mannering
(New Zealand Warriors)

Chris Heighington (Newcastle Knights)

Sam Thaiday (Brisbane Broncos)

Billy Slater (Melbourne Storm)

Ryan Hoffman (Melbourne Storm)

Players who retire after the season is concluded are recognised the following year. The fraternity of players who make up the NRL Official Retiring Class are duly recognised for their long service to the Premiership – 100 plus first grade matches, with the consideration also for representation at a state and/or international level.





Dale Copley
Gold Coast Titans
2018 NRL Academic Team of the Year



DALE COPLEY
Gold Coast Titans
2018 NRL Academic Team of the Year



Player wellbeing and education

In 2018, more than 4,000 players were supported by the NRL and Rugby League Players Association with career education, training and work placements.

The game increased resources available to all contracted NRL, State Cup and State U20s players in 2018 and provided access to tailored career coaching, wellbeing plans, education grants, financial health checks, career transition support and mentoring.

There were 60 wellbeing and education staff across the 16 Premiership clubs. The consistent and direct engagement with the playing group resulted in a 40 per cent reduction in behavioural indiscretions.

While the primary emphasis remained on the 576 contracted NRL players in 2018, the game continued to support the elite pathway system with the introduction of programs to elite junior players reaching to ensure a consistent message was delivered for all levels of the game.

By 2022 the NRL and RLPA aim to have 90 per cent of NRL, State Cup and State U20s contracted players career engaged and committed to an active wellbeing plan.

NRL stars Johnathan Thurston, Simon Mannering, Jason Nightingale, Dale Copley and Kody House were among a number of players recognised for their commitment to work, study and wellbeing during 2018 at the annual RLPA Awards in Sydney.

Dale Copley from the Gold Coast Titans was awarded Male Academic Player of the Year. Brisbane Broncos NRL Holden Women's Premiership player Kody House was awarded the Female Academic Player of the Year.

NRL Academic Team of the Year

Isaac Liu
(Sydney Roosters)

Aiden Tolman
(Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs)

Jayson Bukuya
(Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks)

Dunamis Lui
(Canberra Raiders)

Simon Mannering
(New Zealand Warriors)

Michael Morgan
(North Queensland Cowboys)

David Gower
(Parramatta Eels)

Dale Copley
(Gold Coast Titans)

Korbin Sims
(Brisbane Broncos)

Ryley Jacks
(Melbourne Storm)

Cameron Murray
(South Sydney Rabbitohs)

Euan Aitken
(St George Illawarra Dragons)

Kody House
(Brisbane Broncos NRLW)

Match Officials

A total of 19 NRL referees officiated in more than 200 men's and women's Premiership, Origin and International fixtures in 2018.

Retiring referee Matt Cecchin became just the seventh referee to reach the milestone of 300 NRL matches in 2018.

He reached 500 matches as an official in the very same match; 300 as referee, 166 as touch judge and 34 as a video referee.

Gerard Sutton and Ashley Klein were appointed the referees for the NRL Telstra Premiership Grand Final between the Sydney Roosters and Melbourne Storm. It was the fourth appearance for Sutton, and the first time for Klein as an on-field official at a Grand Final.

Jon Stone and Kasey Badger created history when they officiated the inaugural Holden Women's Premiership decider between the Brisbane Broncos and Sydney Roosters.

There were more than 4400 referees in the national network with 36 per cent located in regional New South Wales alone.

The NRL announced partnerships with educational providers CQUniversity and Country Universities Centre, as a way to retain and recruit as many referees as possible. Courses were specifically designed to improve pathways, resources and skills for match officials regardless of their location and support.

Milestones

300 Games

Matt Cecchin

250 Games

Ashley Klein

100 Games

Adam Gee

Grand Final Referees

Gerard Sutton

Ashley Klein

Nick Beashel & Brett Suttor

Steve Chiddy & Ben Galea

NRL Holden Women's Premiership

Jon Stone

Kasey Badger

Wyatt Raymond & Josh McGowan

Henry Perenara & Bryan Norrie

Col Pearce Medal

Gerard Sutton



2018 Vale

Pat Devery
(Balmain)

Laurie Moraschi
(Balmain, North Sydney)

Bob Honeysett
(South Sydney, North Sydney)

Fred Nelson
(South Sydney, Manly Warringah)

Cliff Watson
(Cronulla-Sutherland)

Lance Thompson
(St George, Cronulla-Sutherland)

Peter Diversi
(North Sydney, Manly Warringah)

Warren Chatfield
(North Sydney, Eastern Suburbs)

Kevin Roberts
(South Sydney)

Bob Abbott
(Official)

Merv Lees
(St George)

Jackie White
(Jillaroo)

Fonda Metassa
(South Sydney)

Darrell Eastlake
(Broadcaster)

Graeme Langlands
(St George)

Steve Folkes
(Canterbury-Bankstown)

Neville Hornery
(Western Suburbs,
Canterbury -Bankstown)

Alan Scott
(South Sydney, Manly Warringah)

Brian Norton
(North Sydney, St George)





Delivering
Our game





03



NRL Clubs

A major objective in 2018 was to work collaboratively with NRL Clubs to embed the new club funding model and improve their overall financial strength.

The financial health of our clubs remained a major focus, with measures introduced to help reduce costs and consolidate club debt in the first year of the game's new broadcast cycle.

Membership, marketing and event guidance and support were also given to clubs throughout the year, most notably during marquee rounds and major events.

There was also an increased level of research, analysis and communication provided to NRL Club and State football, commercial, finance, community and events departments to provide greater insight and transparency around trends and potential areas for growth.





Memberships

The NRL membership tally hit record numbers again in 2018, rising by 5.2 per cent to a total of 332,996.

In fact, 13 of the 16 NRL Clubs recorded an annual increase in membership figures.

Nine clubs posted record membership milestones in 2018: Brisbane Broncos, North Queensland Cowboys, St George Illawarra Dragons, Parramatta Eels, Canberra Raiders, Cronulla Sharks, Melbourne Storm, New Zealand Warriors and Wests Tigers.

The Newcastle Knights led the way with growth of 35 per cent, while Wests Tigers, Melbourne Storm and St George Illawarra Dragons also recorded double-digit growth.

The Brisbane Broncos is the largest supported club in the competition with a total membership of 36,420.

Club	2018	2017	Difference %
Broncos	36,420	36,298	0%
Bulldogs	19,570	18,833	4%
Cowboys	23,437	22,278	5%
Dragons	21,197	19,181	11%
Eels	25,145	24,501	3%
Knights	18,017	13,370	35%
Panthers	20,477	20,248	1%
Rabbitohs	29,189	30,220	(3%)
Raiders	20,055	19,091	5%
Roosters	16,044	16,001	0%
Sea Eagles	12,430	13,163	(6%)
Sharks	15,802	15,613	1%
Storm	25,105	20,507	22%
Titans	10,748	10,914	(3%)
Warriors	18,566	18,190	2%
Wests Tigers	20,794	18,074	15%
Total	332,996	316,482	5%



Commercial Partnerships

In the first year of a new broadcast rights cycle, the game again delivered strong results across television in Australia with the Nine Network's free-to-air coverage and FOX SPORTS' subscription service drawing large audiences each week.

This extended across our major events to include international matches, the finals series, grand final and State of Origin series which saw the highest rating television audience for a single sporting event for the year - State of Origin I (3,439,489). Sky NZ also continued to showcase the game across New Zealand which resulted in strong audience growth year on year.

The inaugural season of the NRL Holden Women's Premiership received amazing support from our television partners who telecast our NRL Holden Women's Premiership and NRL Holden Women's State of Origin match live nationally across the networks of Nine and FOX SPORTS. We would also like to recognise our four radio partners and their regional affiliates for another successful year of coverage – Southern Cross Austereo, Macquarie Media, Crocmedia and ABC Radio.

In 2018, NRL corporate partnerships grew 18 per cent as we renewed all major partners and welcomed several new brands to the game.

Long-standing Premiership naming rights partner Telstra saw streaming subscriptions for its flagship Live Pass product grow 61 per cent year on year.

Telstra used player performance data to create insightful fan content throughout the year, including Telstra Tracker, which delivered 1.5 million video views and an audience reach in excess of 5.5 million Facebook views.

Carlton & United Breweries saw similar success with its innovative Victoria Bitter (VB) Hard Earned Index.

The campaign reached almost one million Australians every Friday and connected with more than one million fans on NRL.com throughout the season.

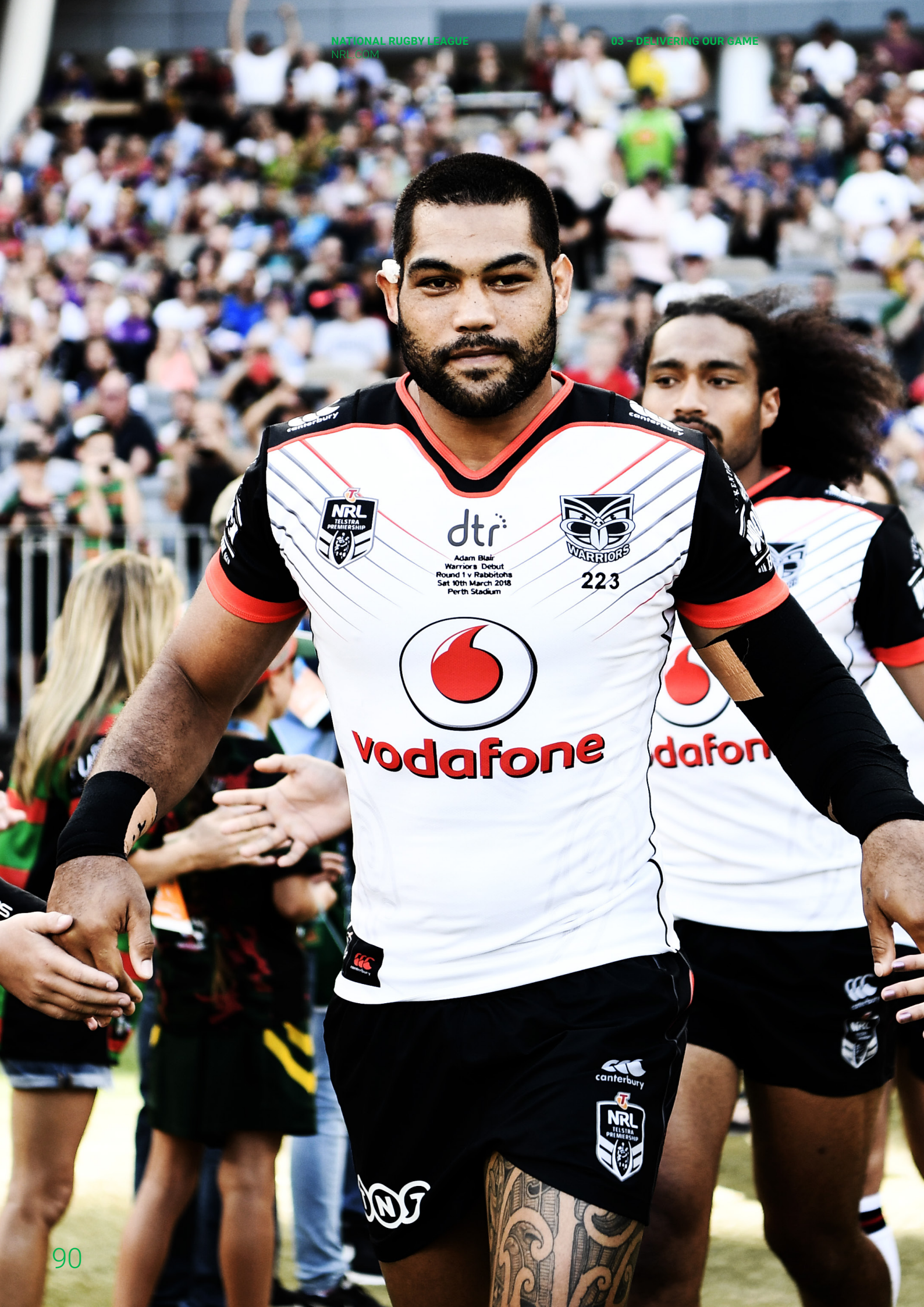
Our partnership with Australia's number one online wagering platform, Sportsbet, reached a more diverse and youthful fanbase through its continued production of award-winning online content.

Long-term partners Holden and Harvey Norman invested in our elite women's game with the introduction of new competitions, including the Harvey Norman Women's National Championship, Holden Women's State of Origin and NRL Holden Women's Premiership.

In 2018, the NRL welcomed Rebel Sport, Fitness First, DrinkWise, Chemist Warehouse, KARI and Finder.com.au to the partnership portfolio.

The NRL would like to acknowledge the important role our commercial and broadcast partners played in enabling the growth of the game at all levels in 2018.







Major Events

The year commenced in the west with more than 38,800 fans enjoying a double-header that featured South Sydney Rabbitohs and New Zealand Warriors, as well as the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs and the Melbourne Storm, at the new Perth Stadium.

The Ox & Palm Pacific Test Invitational cemented its place in the rugby league calendar with a passionate crowd of 17,802 packing Campbelltown Sports Stadium to see Tonga defeat Samoa, and Papua New Guinea prove too strong for Fiji.

The Holden State of Origin Series remains one of rugby league's true spectacles.

The first game held at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground saw a crowd of more than 87,000 enjoy a pre-game performance from Australian electronic duo Peking Duk. The Blues won the first match 22-12 – seen by more than 3.4 million viewers nationally.

The Blues wrapped up the Series in front of their home crowd at ANZ Stadium in Sydney before Queensland ensured Billy Slater was farewelled as an Origin winner in Game Three at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium.

The inaugural Holden Women's State of Origin match was one of the highlights of 2018. New South Wales recorded a 16-10 win over Queensland in front of a crowd of 6,824 at North Sydney Oval. In an unforgettable moment, thousands of fans rushed the field after the final whistle to get close to the game's newest and brightest stars.

The revival of the NRL Hall of Fame and Immortals rightfully restored a place in the game to recognise the best of the very best.

At a special ceremony at the Sydney Cricket Ground, Norm Provan and Mal Meninga joined Dally Messenger, Frank Burge and Dave Brown as the next five rugby league Immortals in a surprise but unanimously supported announcement.

Petero Civoniceva, Mark Graham, Cliff Lyons, Steve Menzies, Ricky Stuart and Gorden Tallis were also inducted into the NRL Hall of Fame that evening.

Grand Final day saw the Brisbane Broncos crowned champions of the inaugural NRL Holden Women's Premiership, before ARIA award-winners Gang of Youths rocked the 82,688 fans at ANZ Stadium as part of the annual pre-game entertainment.

The Telstra Premiership Grand Final was played between the Sydney Roosters and Melbourne Storm. The Roosters won their 20th Premiership in a dominant 21-6 victory.

The final highlight to the extensive major events calendar was the historic Test match between the Australian Kangaroos and Mate Ma'a Tonga in Auckland. A sell-out crowd of 26,214 turned Mt Smart Stadium into a sea of red. Australia proved too strong, winning the encounter 34-16.

The success of these events would not have been possible without the support of Tourism WA, Campbelltown City Council, Destination NSW, Visit Victoria and Auckland Tourism – Events and Economic Development, as well as our commercial and broadcast partners.

The NRL announced new and extended partnerships and future events placements that included the renewal with Visit Victoria for the 2019 All-Stars, International Test matches in 2022 and 2023, and Holden State of Origin games in 2021 and 2025 respectively.

Holden State of Origin was also confirmed to head to Adelaide for the first time in 2020, courtesy of support from the South Australia Tourism Commission. NRL Magic Round Brisbane for 2019 and beyond was secured in partnership with Tourism and Events, Queensland and Brisbane Marketing.





NRL TELSTRA
PREMIERSHIP

P





Brand **NRL TELSTRA PREMIERSHIP**

The NRL launched a bold new look in late 2018.

Aimed at modernising the Telstra Premiership brand to integrate more seamlessly with the 16 clubs, the new brand brought to focus the shield and the chevron – synonymous with rugby league since inception.

The refreshed simple and modern design is now more adaptive to digital environments, and designed to attract new, younger audiences.

Consumer Business

The NRL continued to create new ways for members and fans to engage with, and be entertained by, rugby league experiences and products in 2018.

There was a continued focus on creating lasting in-stadium memories for all fans, and in particular young families, with a number of key initiatives delivered throughout the season.

Official supporter bays, merchandise and experiences were available for all major events and allowed fans to purchase tickets to access the field and pre-game entertainment at both State of Origin in Melbourne and NRL Grand Final in Sydney.

An official Family Zone was created for the NRL Grand Final and saw more than 3,000 parents, partners and kids experience a NRL Grand Final among a young and exuberant crowd.

NRL Travel was launched in 2018 and provided fans a dedicated one-stop shop to book game tickets, experiences, flights and accommodation in one convenient place.

The program specialised in offering unique travel packages that delivered exclusive behind the scenes game-day experiences, stadium tours, access to current and former NRL legends and pre-match functions and entertainment.

The NRL worked closely with the RLPA to grant players greater ability to utilise their IP with registered licensees, allowing for the production of more consumer products in market for fans in 2018.

A refresh of the NRL's hospitality offerings provided new ways for fans to enjoy a premium experience at events.



Participation

Grassroots rugby league participation grew more than 3.6 per cent in 2018 with 36,900 people playing rugby league for the first time.

The figures reflect the unified effort the game and its stakeholders have placed in grassroots in recent years.

Registered female participation remained the strongest growth area for the game with a 29 per cent increase on 2017 figures. The number of women playing rugby league has now more than doubled since 2015.

The NRL, in partnership with the key stakeholders, worked on a number of key projects aimed at attracting and retaining participants, fostering personal development and creating new and improved ways to engage players, parents and officials with rugby league.

A Player Development Framework is currently being developed and will enter a testing phase in Victoria and South-East Queensland in 2019 with some concepts also adopted in targeted leagues across the country.

The NRL also expanded the partnership with Touch Football Australia with the introduction of the NRL Touch Premiership, as well as joint NRL and Touch Football Australia resourcing in Victoria and the establishment of new competitions aligned to rugby league clubs.

The NRL would like to thank the thousands of volunteers, as well as the State governing bodies throughout Australia, for their tireless work and support to grow rugby league.

The NRL will continue to work collaboratively with them in 2019 and beyond in developing new programs that give juniors more choices on the style of game they wish to play.

More than

100,000

participants in NSW for first time

5.5%

growth in NSWRL figures for the first time in five years

5.4%

growth for CRL

Growth in Queensland of

1.8%

16.7%

growth in Western Australia



Highlights



NSW

84,821

male participants in 2018 +1.38%
(all ages)

QLD

Female growth (all ages)

24%

WA

230

new female players in 2018 (all ages)

VIC

13%

male growth (aged 13-15 years)

NT

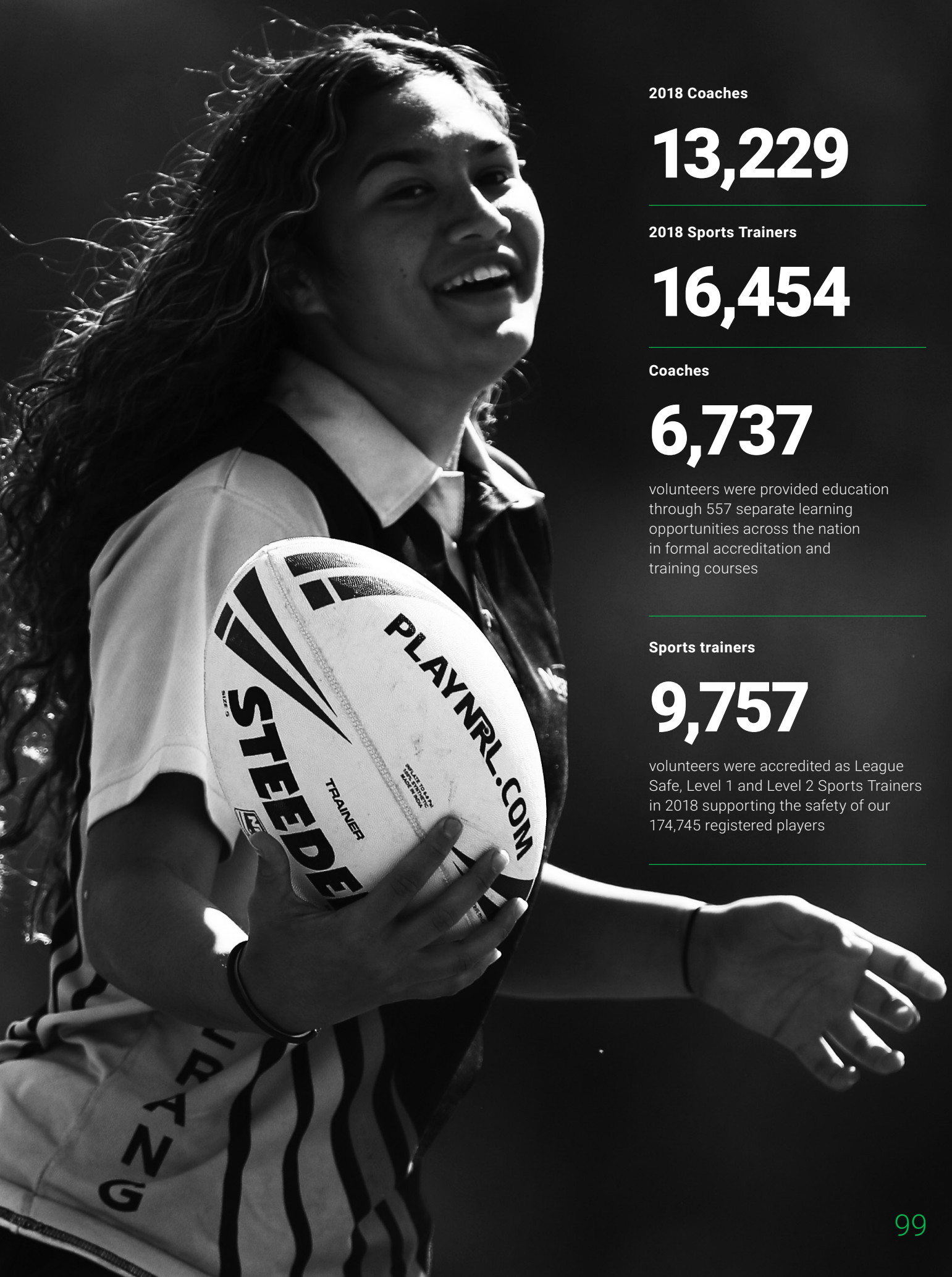
24%

growth in 19+ male and female
players in Central Australia

SA

12,000+

children participated in ball in hand
activities in 2018



2018 Coaches

13,229

2018 Sports Trainers

16,454

Coaches

6,737

volunteers were provided education through 557 separate learning opportunities across the nation in formal accreditation and training courses

Sports trainers

9,757

volunteers were accredited as League Safe, Level 1 and Level 2 Sports Trainers in 2018 supporting the safety of our 174,745 registered players

New South Wales Rugby League

The 2018 season was a period of resounding success for the NSWRL with the Bryden's Lawyers NSW Blues winning the Holden State of Origin series for the first time since 2014.

Newly appointed coach Brad Fittler brought a fresh approach to the series after blooding 11 debutants for the opening game and using 13 new faces over the course of the three games. The players quickly bought into his philosophies, which saw them wrap the series up after only two games to return the Shield to NSW.

The Harvey Norman NSW Women's team was just as impressive winning the inaugural Holden State of Origin at North Sydney Oval. The game was played before a vocal crowd and continued the good form shown by the women's team in recent years having now won the past three interstate contests.

On the pathways front, the Under 20s went down for the first time in seven years, however the Under 18s and Under 16s both won their respective matches.

There was great success at a grassroots level in 2018 with an increase being recorded in participation levels for the first time in five years. There are now more than 100,000 participants across the state and almost 42,000 in the Sydney metropolitan and NSWRL affiliated leagues alone. The jump in female participation was particularly impressive for the second consecutive year with an increase of 60 per cent being recorded from the 2017 season.

The ongoing commitment to grassroots was also reflected in the launch in November of the Monarch Blues Tag program, a version of League Tag which will run in conjunction with the rugby league season and offer participants a non-tackle version of the game.

The work on the multimillion-dollar Centre of Excellence was completed on budget in December. From 2019, the NSWRL will be housed in the state-of-the-art facility that will help develop the next generation of superstars across all Origin formats. The Centre of Excellence includes a fully equipped gymnasium, change rooms, recovery pool, medical treatment rooms and a 60-person theatre for presentations, media conferences and post-game team analysis.

The Intrust Super Premiership NSW also enjoyed a successful season after a combined two million viewers tuned in to watch the matches on free-to-air broadcaster Channel Nine and pay TV FOX SPORTS. This coverage helped expose the audience to the next generation of players in line to make their NRL debuts, with Rhyse Martin, Lachlan Lewis and Jordan Pereira among the success stories from ISP NSW in 2018. Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs claimed the ISP NSW Premiership before going on to defeat Redcliffe Dolphins in the Intrust Super State Championship on NRL Grand Final Day.

The NSWRL was also recognised as the Organisation of the Year at the prestigious NSW Sports Awards. The award considered the success the NSWRL enjoyed at State of Origin level for men's, women's and pathways teams, as well as its ongoing commitment to inclusion and diversity for all levels of the game, and the development, promotion and increase in participation of rugby league across the state of NSW.



Highlights:

- Hogs tours proved more important than ever after rides were scheduled to assist the drought-stricken farmers and the homeless, with the total raised since the initiative's inception in 2013 now almost \$700,000
- NSWRL SG Ball junior representative premiers Penrith Panthers claimed the National Junior Final against Queensland's Under 18s premiers Souths Logan Magpies
- True Blues greats Steve Rogers, Ken Irvine and Keith Holman were all inducted into the NSWRL Hall of Fame
- Intrust Super Premiership NSW Residents beat Queensland Residents in the State of Origin curtain-raiser at Sydney's ANZ Stadium
- NSW claimed their fourth consecutive Wheelchair Rugby League Interstate Challenge
- Almost 1,400 students from 99 schools across NSW competed at the 74th instalment of the NSWRL All Schools Carnival
- More than 500 schoolgirls from across NSW converged on Greater Western Sydney for the 2018 Female State Finals Day to celebrate women's rugby league
- More than 700 rugby league players representing 50 teams competed at the Blue Harmony Cup to celebrate multiculturalism, inclusion and diversity
- The NSW Blues launched the first-ever alternate jersey, to support the game's decision to take State of Origin to new frontiers with games in Perth and Adelaide in the next two years

Queensland Rugby League

Queenslanders paid tribute to two of the most celebrated Origin players, Maroons greats Cameron Smith and Billy Slater.

The two champions were acknowledged before the final game of the 2018 series at Suncorp Stadium, where Slater played a starring role in Queensland's superb victory.

While the dynamic duo's presence will be sorely missed by the Maroons, their legacy will inspire generations of young players in the years to come. With Slater at his brilliant best, Queensland denied the Blues a series clean sweep and in the process ensured the Maroons have a strong platform to launch from next year.

The same can be said for the Queensland women's team, which captured the hearts and minds of fans throughout the state with a stirring performance against NSW in the inaugural Origin clash.

Female pathways have never been stronger, with the increase in local league competitions now supported by the addition of the Harvey Norman Women's National Championships, the annual Origin match and NRL Holden Women's Premiership. Pleasingly, female club registrations in Queensland grew by 24 per cent in 2018.

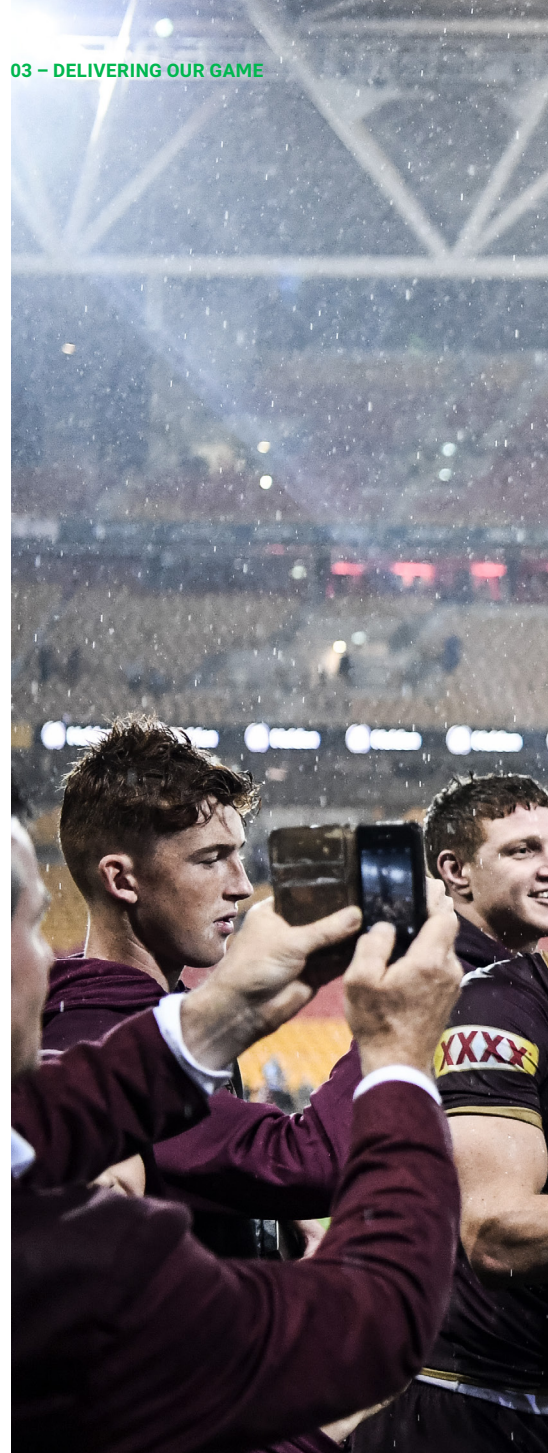
Almost 62,000 male and females registered to play club rugby league this year; and through the advent of the Player Development Framework, the Queensland Rugby League (QRL) is eager to improve retention rates among those who already play and to entice new participants to the sport.

QRL remains committed to providing opportunities for players with aspirations to play representative rugby league.

Underpinning the elite pathways is the support of the Queensland Academy of Sport and the annual camps for males and females. While for those in the bush, local competitions have more support than ever before with 25 Operations Managers spread throughout the state.

QRL partners, including XXXX, ISC Sport, Intrust Super, Hastings Deering Auswide Bank and Harvey Norman, continued to support and invest in the passion for the game, providing additional funding and resources throughout the year to support the Maroons and major statewide competitions.

Increased investment in digital resulted in QRL Digital reporting 13 million video views, while also ranking number one across the entire NRL Digital Network for users, sessions and page views.





Highlights:

- 61,963 male and female players registered to play rugby league
- 2018 female club registrations grew by 24 per cent
- Outback junior registrations within the Central Region have grown by 38 per cent between 2016 and 2018
- QRL recorded 13 million video views and was ranked No. 1 across the NRL Digital Network for users, sessions and page views
- The Maroon Membership program grew to 17,220 members, an increase of 22 per cent
- Six towns in rural and remote Queensland hosted Intrust Super Cup fixtures for the first time as part of 'Get in the Game' Country Week, generating enormous goodwill and revenue for local leagues and communities



Country Rugby League

An increase in senior males, new and returning players and the continual growth of female participation saw Country Rugby League record a 5.4 per cent increase in registered players in 2018; with more than 59,000 registered players representing almost 500 clubs across Regional NSW.

With one third of all nationally registered players participating in CRL competitions, the increase was spread evenly with three of six regions recording increases in male participation and all six regions recording growth in female participation – where a 28 per cent increase now sees 11,000-plus women competing in CRL competitions and accounting for 48 per cent of all nationally registered female players.

This season also saw the introduction of CRL's new junior representative competitions – the Andrew Johns and Laurie Daley Cups – which featured 11 teams competing in each division and eight franchises linked with NRL Clubs. The introduction of these competitions allows for young players from regional areas to be part of NRL club pathways, whilst remaining in their hometowns amongst family and support networks, and is one of the great achievements by CRL in recent years.

Further highlights included NSW Country winning the inaugural Women's National Championship, national recognition for our dedicated volunteers with Max and Lorna Dawes (Coffs Harbour) and Jessica Skinner (Trangie) taking out the CRL and National Volunteer of the Year and Women In League Achievement Awards, more than 2000 players given the opportunity to play representative football through CRL pathway initiatives, and a major increase in women's CRL Nines Competitions taking place across the state.

Highlights:

- Successful tours for CRL representative teams in both Papua New Guinea and the NSW North Coast
- 21 Country players representing victorious NSW men's and women's State of Origin teams
- The addition of partnerships with Gold Coast Titans, Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs and Parramatta Eels for CRL's representative pathways in 2019
- Rugby league participation exceeding 100,000 for the first time in NSW, with increased numbers of men, women, boys and girls playing the game in the country and city



Rugby league
across Australia
– Affiliated States

Victoria

Total participation in Victoria grew by 3.3 per cent in 2018 with 3953 participants. There was growth across the majority of age groups – a 12.8 per cent rise in male players aged 13-15 and a 33 per cent rise in female players aged 5 to 9 years.

The NRL received a \$12 million pledge from the Victorian Government for a new Victorian Rugby League State Centre in April. It will be delivered in partnership with the NRL, NRL Victoria and the Melbourne Storm.

The new Victorian Rugby League State Centre in Broadmeadows will house the administrative base for NRL Victoria, provide high-performance facilities and fields for training camps, state level matches and tournaments, and is set to host more than 10,000 players per year.

The NRL announced the appointment of Dr Amanda Green as Chairwoman of NRL Victoria in September.

Western Australia

Rugby league participation in Western Australia increased by 16.7 per cent in 2018. There was positive growth across all age groups with an 11.6 per cent growth in male rates and a 43.1 per cent increase in registered female participation.

NRL Western Australia worked tirelessly throughout the year to arrest the recent decline in male participation in particular, with increases across all age groups. The highlight was a 59.5 per cent growth in females 19 years and over.

The second annual Harmony Cup was held in Port Kennedy with 43 men's and women's teams taking part in the event. The event coincided with the first-ever NRL Voice Against Violence program delivered in Western Australia.

The new Perth Stadium hosted the NRL Round One double-header in front of a crowd of 38,824. The stadium will host the second Origin match in 2019.

Northern Territory

The number of Territorians playing rugby league remained steady in 2018. There was growth in the number of participants playing rugby league in Central Australia, up 7 per cent, as well as boys in the under seven age group.

The trend for growth in the women's game continued, with an increase of more than 11.0 per cent of females playing rugby league, including a 36.6 per cent growth in the open women's age group.

The Territory Government renewed its partnership with the NRL and Parramatta Eels until the end of the 2019 season.

The development of the new Warren Park Stadium is well under way and will be completed in 2019.

South Australia

It was announced in February that the Adelaide Oval will also host one fixture of the 2020 Holden State of Origin Series, which will help promote rugby league outside of the more established areas of the game.

A new management team at NRL South Australia was established in 2018 charged with implementing a number of programs developed to improve participation figures and community engagement throughout the state.

Tasmania

The NRL game development team delivered several programs throughout Tasmania in 2018. The team introduced primary school children to the fundamentals of rugby league, as well as the Backyard League program.



Touch Football Australia



The National Rugby League (NRL) and Touch Football Australia (TFA) alliance continued to work towards unlocking its full potential as a partnership which will drive more participation in the game.

A restructure to the business late in the year allowed TFA to refocus on its key strategic objective of being one of Australia's leading community sports by 2020, while continuing to provide a place on the field for everyone.

Touch Football was recognised as Australia's leading social sport by the Australian Sports Commission's AusPlay research initiative. It was also acknowledged as the best value for money sport for participants.

Of course, there are always challenges and we are looking for ways to increase the time that the ball is in play to give our fans more game time.

Highlights

- Local partnerships continued to grow across the NRL and Touch Football community, including formal collaborative agreements established with six NRL Clubs
- Joint NRL and Touch Football Australia resourcing commenced in Victoria, with five new touch competitions established aligned to rugby league clubs
- Australia achieved a series clean sweep in all divisions of the 2017 Youth and Open Trans-Tasman series, retaining the world number one ranking
- The Harvey Norman National Schools Cup was held for the first time
- Combined rugby league and touch football referee accreditation courses

Full active junior membership growth of

8.4%

Touch school delivered program growth of

22.3%

17

additional Touch Football locations added nationally

School-based programs and competitions increased

37%

in alliance states

Participation growth across

6 States

and Territories



Developing Our game



04

NRL Digital Network

It was an historic 2018 for the NRL with the launch and operation of its new digital network.

Working closely with digital partner Telstra as well as the Clubs and States, the NRL's new online operations experienced strong growth, underpinned by more news, enhanced coverage of the game as well as the evolution and rollout of improved digital products.

More than 830,000 fans signed up for an NRL Account in 2018 – the foundation for a tailored digital experience across the NRL network.

NRL Digital was engaged in continuous development – working with the Clubs and States to expand and refine the digital network throughout the year.

The network also expanded and refined the products on offer in real time. It engaged more than two million fans per week through the NRL App, NRL.com, the Club and State websites, as well as revamped Fantasy and Tipping products.

The number of NRL Telstra Live Pass subscribers also increased. Engagement and audience for the live stream of NRL Telstra Premiership matches in the NRL App grew tremendously.

In 2018, NRL.com ensured there was something for every rugby league fan.

From breaking news on the NRL Telstra Premiership, Holden State of Origin or in-depth player features, to match highlights, video reports, podcasts and statistics – the game was covered from every angle like never before.

Editorial and social media strategies were aligned to produce, and ultimately promote, the comprehensive rugby league coverage.

Who could forget the vision of Issac Luke leading an impromptu group haka to honour Roger Tuivasa-Sheck's 2018 Dally M Medal win – it was watched by more than three million people!

The addition of new activity drove double-digit growth across page views, sessions and unique views year on year, with fans' appetite for video on demand growing more than 50 per cent against the same period in 2017.

830k+

fans signed up for an NRL Account

Video on demand views up (YoY)

≈ 53%







Match streams via live pass grew (YoY)

89%
2.9m
**fans active and engaged across NRL
and NRLW social communities**

The interest in women's rugby league reached unprecedented levels this year, courtesy of the fledgling NRL Holden Women's Premiership and historic Holden Women's Origin. Increased resources were put into coverage, interviews, panel shows and social media content and this helped to drive awareness that saw several players shoot from relative obscurity into being household rugby league names.

Players such as Kelly, Breayley, Brander, Taufa, Briginshaw saw their fanbases soar, often working alongside the Digital team to amplify messages, stories and events focussed solely on the women's game.

The network also played a key role in promoting participation with more stories about grassroots rugby league, wellbeing and education and the NRL's inclusion programs.

Pleasingly, a survey of around 12,000 visitors to NRL.com, NRL apps and the NRL Clubs and States sites rated their user experience four out of a possible five.

However, the significant investment into the network by the Australian Rugby League Commission and its stakeholders means the game cannot stand still and must continue to innovate.

Innovations such as the 2018 Holden State of Origin Telstra Tracker, delivered in partnership with the States and Channel Nine, allowed our fans a richer insight and analysis into the game they love – live and free.

In 2019, the NRL Digital Network remains committed to producing more fun, engaging video and entertainment content. For the first time, fans will have the opportunity to go back in time to watch the very best matches from the NRL archive on demand, and completely free, via NRL TV.

There will be a renewed focus on working with the NRL Clubs and States and media partners to profile more of their content to drive audiences to stream content, live and on demand, throughout Australia, New Zealand and across the globe.



Integrity and Compliance

In 2018 the NRL continued in its absolute commitment to the integrity of our game, on the field of play and in the rugby league community.

The Integrity Unit is responsible for the development and delivery of the game's integrity policies, as well as investigating instances of non-compliance. Based within a secure area of Rugby League Central, the Unit draws upon a diverse skill base of legal, accounting, policing, criminal intelligence and sports administration personnel. The Unit's legal function provides support to the NRL's various domestic tribunals, while the management of the NRL Salary Cap is delivered through the Unit's accounting capability.

In 2018 the NRL's investment in the Unit continued with the addition of further personnel and expertise. The Unit's relationships with key law enforcement and regulatory bodies such as State and Federal Police and the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) were also strengthened.

The NRL was also a committed contributor to the Federal Government's National Review of Australia's Sports Integrity Arrangements (the Wood Review).



The NRL Rules

The Unit's work is underpinned by the NRL Rules – the game's governance framework which safeguards the fairness of our on-field contests and ensures integrity of the broader game.

The Rules do this through comprehensive anti-doping and anti-corruption programs, the competitive equalising influence of the NRL Salary Cap, and wide-ranging measures addressing areas such as behavioural standards, anti-vilification and the prohibition and monitoring of illicit and hazardous drug use.

In 2018 the NRL Rules were expanded to incorporate a new Football Department Cap regulating spending on coaching staff and equipment, and to welcome the inaugural year of the NRL Women's Premiership.

Wagering

The NRL's strong relationships with sports betting operators were enhanced by new Integrity and Product Fee Agreements, which delivered increased integrity information-sharing procedures between operators and the Integrity Unit.



Salary Cap

The first year of the new Collective Bargaining Agreement saw the NRL Salary Cap continue to play a vital role in delivering a thrillingly close NRL season.

Administered from within the Unit, the Salary Cap limits each club's player spending to \$9.4 million. During 2018 the Salary Cap team worked closely with clubs to review and improve areas of the Salary Cap Rules. At this writing, areas such as the management of third party agreements, player transfer windows and the provisioning of Playing Contracts are the subject of ongoing reviews.

Throughout the year the Unit conducts investigations and audits to test compliance with the Rules. The NRL's prosecution of the Manly Warringah Sea Eagles demonstrated the game's commitment to ensuring a fair competition by calling clubs to account for Salary Cap breaches.

Accredited Player Agents

2018 saw a significant development in the regulation of a key stakeholder in the game. As commercial representatives and personal advisers, Player Agents play an integral role in the delivery of the NRL's competitions.

The product of extensive consultation, the new NRL Accredited Player Agent Scheme represents the first time that Player Agents will be subject to the NRL Rules. The Scheme is operated jointly by NRL and the Rugby League Players Association and will deliver improved education and compliance amongst the agents operating in the game, and a higher level of service for their players.

Behavioural Standards, Anti-Doping and Illicit Drugs

The game continued its vigilant stance against the influence of performance enhancing and illicit drugs in our player population.

The NRL's illicit and hazardous drug testing program, delivered with the cooperation of the Rugby League Players Association, continues to provide a sport-leading response to the use of illegal drugs – combining strong penalties with comprehensive welfare and counselling programs. Continued investment in the game's WADA-compliant Anti-Doping programs, with a particular emphasis on the education of players to the risks of doping, have also seen further strengthened relationships with the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority and other partners in the fight against doping.



Our community



05





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

In 2018, the NRL continued to lead and inspire people to be the best they can be by providing pathways to live positive, respectful and healthy lives.

This year, the game broke new ground with the expansion of community-based initiatives reaching new areas within Australia and beyond.





Meet one of our
NRL community
champions:
Jessica Skinner



In 2018, Jessica Skinner was recognised for her incredible contribution to women's rugby league.

The Women In League Achievement Award is presented to someone who has acted as an exceptional advocate for the advancement and opportunity of women in rugby league. Through Jessica's hard work and dedication, women's rugby league in Western NSW reached new heights.

Jessica was involved as a volunteer at every level of the women's game in Western NSW. A teacher at Trangie Central School, she has coached for five years and pioneered the region's inaugural League Tag academy program, developing playing abilities for female youth across remote and rural communities in the Barwon Darling, Outback and Castlereagh leagues.

Jess travelled close to 12,000 km to assist and provide opportunities for women to be involved in the game in 2018.

“I want to be a role model for our girls and that's what the game offers as well, a chance not only to be the best player you can be but it teaches you to be resilient, to be strong and independent while building connections.”

Jessica Skinner.

Since 2007, the NRL Community Awards have celebrated and rewarded those who make a positive difference within the game. The Awards were taken back to the communities in 2018, with influential rugby league figures surprising the winners with their awards surrounded by those who know and appreciate their efforts. There were five winners across five categories, with winning nominations from Blackall to Bondi.

State of Mind

The NRL continued its support and promotion of positive mental health through its State of Mind program's face-to-face education sessions.

The program was designed to increase mental health literacy, reduce the stigma around mental illness, start positive conversations, and enable connections across communities.

In 2018, the NRL worked across Queensland with approximately 150 grassroots rugby league clubs from Coolangatta to the Torres Strait involved in the four-step program.

NRL State of Mind was rolled-out in Western Australia for the first time, with a commitment to deliver the program to every rugby league club throughout the state. The Willagee Bears kick-started the program and became the first club in Western Australia to complete all four steps of the program, setting a benchmark through the formation of a State of Mind Welfare team within their club.

The program also expanded into the Northern Territory, with sessions delivered to rugby league clubs in Darwin and the remote Gove Peninsula by former Australian international, David Shillington.

These programs would not be possible without the support of the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australian governments.



STATE OF MIND

GOOD
MENTAL
HEALTH



Road to Resilience

The Power for Change campaign continued into its second year with campaigns designed to inspire positive action from the wider rugby league community.

With the help of North Queensland Cowboys star Michael Morgan, the NRL launched Road to Resilience in July to coincide with the Holden State of Origin series.

The campaign encouraged the Australian public to join NRL players on their 21-day resilience journey. An accompanying journal was available to download that encouraged people to talk about and treat their mental health in the same way they do their physical health, in turn reducing the stigma around mental health and enabling people to develop help-seeking behaviours.

The digital element of Road to Resilience achieved more than 3.7 million impressions during the campaign period.

“The game has come a long way in that people are aware that help is available. As a whole, we’ve accepted that, mentally, it is a real challenge for players. They are encouraged to seek help, because it’s there.”

Michael Morgan.







School to Work

The NRL's School to Work program, which provides young Indigenous Australians with work experience, mentoring, and leadership opportunities, maintained its high success rate in 2018.

The program, funded by the Australian Government through the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, sees more than 500 students participate per annum. The program has a transition rate of students going into further study, training or meaningful employment of more than 95 per cent, thanks largely to the one-on-one support students receive from their Project Officers.

A new round of funding was secured in 2017, which resulted in the NRL and the 11 participating NRL Clubs continuing to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, from South East Queensland down to Victoria, until 2020.

During its 2018 graduation ceremony, the NRL also announced a new initiative – the School to Work "Leadership League" – an alumni program that enables graduates to reconnect with the program through mentoring and supporting current participants.



The program has a transition rate of students going into further study, training or meaningful employment of more than 95%



Voice Against Violence

The NRL's Voice Against Violence program empowers the rugby league community to stand up, speak out and take action to prevent violence against women and children. This year, supported by Holden, the program continued to expand both within Australia and the Pacific.

83

workshops delivered across
Australia and the Pacific

Participants taking part in the program

2,102

There was a strong focus on reaching regional communities in 2018 with programs taking place in the South Burnett, Northern Tablelands and, for the first time, South Australia. Even further afield and courtesy of partnerships with Rio Tinto, WorkPac and Goodline, the program was delivered in Weipa in Far North Queensland.

“The Voice Against Violence workshop uses that common language of sport to help people understand the issue of violence and the ways that we can shape the future to make it better for the next generation.”

Alan Tongue.

The NRL visited Tonga to address the Tongan Government and several local organisations eager to support the program. With the support of the Australian and Tongan governments, the NRL will deliver the program to the under-15 and under-17 players who compete in the Tonga Championships.

Pacific Youth Summit

Now in its third year, the annual Pacific Youth Summit is designed to empower Pasifika youth to become responsible leaders in their schools, rugby league clubs and communities. The program takes place in the lead-up to the annual Pacific Test fixtures.

In 2018, 60 Pasifika junior rugby league players from across Sydney took part in the three-day program designed to improve their cultural connections, with 24 participants from the group also chosen to be flag bearers for the four teams: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Samoa.

For the first time, the NRL engaged a team of 12 full-time Pasifika NRL employees to bring the 2018 program to life, thanks to the support of the Victorian and Australian governments.



In League In Harmony

69

programs delivered at high schools,
Juvenile Justice Centres and Intensive
English centres

Participants taking part in the program

2,204

The NRL's In League In Harmony program received a royal honour when it was hand-selected by The Duke and Duchess of Sussex to play a key role in the Royal tour.

In League in Harmony is a social inclusion program delivered via six school-based sessions that address issues including disengagement, racism, gender inequality and bullying.

“It is a great honour for one of our community programs to have been selected by The Duke and Duchess to participate in. Sport has a powerful ability to bind cultures, personalities and pursuits together for a common good and there is no better demonstration of this than our In League In Harmony program.”

NRL CEO Todd Greenberg.

The program continued to grow in New South Wales and, for the first time, was extended to Victoria and Queensland through the support of the Victorian and Australian governments.

Inclusion Framework

The NRL's vision is to be a game without barriers, one in which everyone can enjoy themselves as part of a safe, inclusive and respectful environment.

In 2018, the annual Harmony Day Festival in Sydney's West was used to formally announce two important programs for rugby league:

- » Inclusion Framework – why and how rugby league remains a safe, respectful and inclusive sport
- » Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Vilification Framework – one singular place for everyone involved in our sport to be aware of their legal and ethical rights and responsibilities

Pride in Sport

The NRL was honoured to be recognised as the highest-ranking national sporting organisation, according to the Pride in Sport Index, for our work in supporting the LGBTI community.

The NRL was the first Australian sporting code to join Pride in Diversity in 2014 and the first to endorse their Anti-Homophobia and Inclusion Framework. The NRL remains the only national sporting organisation to have a float during the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, with this year's float including the likes of Joel Thompson (Sea Eagles), Kezie Apps (Dragons and Jillaroos), and retired NRL stars Dene Halatau, Paul Langmack, Wendell Sailor and Ian Roberts.

Community Program Deliverers

A host of former NRL and current Jillaroos players were appointed as NRL Community Program Deliverers to assist with the State of Mind and Voice Against Violence programs in clubs across Australia.

The following were appointed as NRL Community Program Deliverers in 2018: Maddie Studdon, Sam Bremner, Ruan Sims, Renae Kunst, Nathan Hindmarsh, Brenton Lawrence, Preston Campbell, Dan Hunt, Matt Ballin, Nathan Friend, Clinton Toopi, Bronson Harrison, David Shillington, Alan Tongue, and Joe Galuvao.

They were complemented by a number of current NRL players who self-nominated as advocates for these programs, all committed to making a positive difference in their communities.

After training and guidance from our expert partners, these current and former players will use their profile and voice to amplify awareness of mental health and violence prevention among grassroots clubs.





Indigenous Strategy

The NRL continued its commitment to understanding, respecting and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and values in 2018.

This included a number of notable achievements:

- The participation rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players within grassroots rugby league has now reached 19 per cent
- Establishment of a working group focused on encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in sport alongside the Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports
- Extension of the annual Cultural Camps for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to now include female players with the advent of the NRL Women's Premiership
- Maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment above five per cent.

Indigenous Round

The NRL celebrated Indigenous Round during Round 10, with every player and match official wearing Indigenous-inspired jerseys for just the second time in NRL Telstra Premiership history.

Indigenous Round allows the game to celebrate and showcase First Nations culture, as well as highlight the significant social issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Welcome to Country ceremonies occurred across all matches, in addition to pre-match cultural performances and gift exchanges between captains prior to kick-off.

An acclaimed rendition of Advance Australia Fair by Indigenous Australian student Rebecca Hatch from Campbelltown Performing Arts High School was a highlight, sung first in Dharawal language, then English, backed by traditional Indigenous instruments.

Festival of Indigenous Rugby League

Through the support of the Australian Government, the Festival of Indigenous Rugby League provided an opportunity for non-NRL players to experience representative rugby league in an All Stars-like build up.

The festival included a week of activities involving the men's and women's Indigenous Australian and New Zealand Māori teams. The week began with a Welcome Ceremony held at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, followed by an historical tour of Redfern and an Employment and Wellbeing Expo. The week finished with three games held at Redfern Oval in front of more than 2,000 spectators.

The event ran concurrently with the Indigenous Youth Leadership Summit. Sixty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and four New Zealand Māori students were given the opportunity to take part in cultural and leadership workshops, as well as spending time with NRL players involved in the NRL Indigenous Players Cultural Camp.

Reconciliation Action Plan

2018 saw the Australian Rugby League Commission announce its fourth Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Through the development of this latest RAP, the NRL became the first national sporting body to reach "Elevate" status – the highest of four levels – awarded by Reconciliation Australia.

Rugby league was also the first national sport to develop a RAP, which commenced in 2008.

The key focus areas for the 2018-22 Elevate RAP include:

- » Celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and achievements through our NRL major events, resulting in a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and improved relationships between all Australians
- » Working with NRL Clubs and rugby league organisations on the development and delivery of RAPs so that rugby league organisations are actively contributing to reconciliation
- » Establishing a coordinated effort across the major sporting organisations in Australia to use sport as a tool to achieve reconciliation in Australia
- » Developing Indigenous leaders in the game through our Indigenous Players Camps, Senior Players Advisory Group, Youth Summit for young Indigenous leaders and ensuring the five per cent of our NRL staff who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander have tailored career development plans
- » The NRL achieved 73 out of 75 RAP targets in 2018 and has plans in place to address the two targets that were not achieved







Pacific
Outreach

The influence and role of rugby league throughout the Pacific continued to rise in 2018.

The success of the Pacific nations at the 2017 Rugby League World Cup saw an immediate impact on the uptake of marquee NRL programs delivered throughout the region.

More than 55,000 students in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Fiji, Samoa and Tonga took part in the League for Life program. Around 50 locally based staff educate boys and girls on the importance of education, health, gender equality, social cohesion and staying active.

Female staff now account for 75 per cent of all managerial positions within the region following the promotion of inaugural PNG Orchids captain, Cathy Neap, to NRL Manager PNG.

The NRL expanded the Voice Against Violence program to include Tonga for the first time. The grassroots initiative encourages men and boys to stand up, speak out and take action against domestic violence in their communities.

The annual Prime Minister's XIII (PM's XIII) fixture in PNG was strengthened with the addition of an official Australian PM's XIII women's side for the first time. A Jillaroos select side had participated in the event in 2017. Australian Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, also became the first sitting Prime Minister to formally announce the PM's XIII teams in September.

On the field, the Australian women's PM's XIII team scored a 40-4 win over the PNG Orchids. The men's side beat the PNG PM's XIII by 34-16.

Financial
Results 2018



06

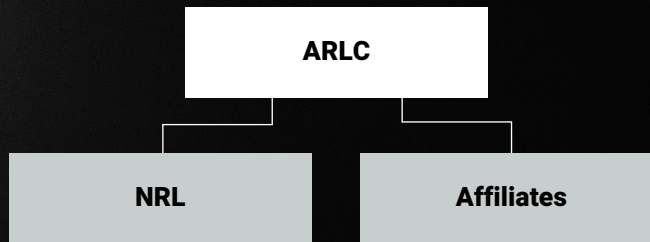


The following table reflects the change in corporate structure between 31 October 2017 and 31 October 2018.

The financial commentary separates the ARLC and NRL entities (“Controlling Body”) and the subsidiary entities (“controlled entities”), so a like-for-like comparison of financial results can be made.



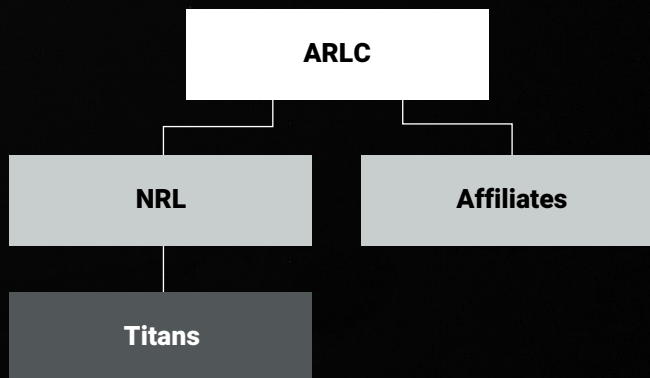
2018 – All 100% owned



The NRL completed the sale of 100% of its shares in Titans Rugby League Pty Ltd to a consortium lead by Darryl and Joanne Kelly and Rebecca and Brett Frizelle on 15 December 2017. The NRL relinquished control of Titans Rugby League Ltd on 15 December 2017 meaning the entity was disposed from the group at this date.

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

2017 – All 100% owned



The NRL completed the sale of 100% of its shares in Knights Rugby League Pty Ltd to Western Suburbs (N'cle) Leagues Club Ltd (WSL) on 31 October 2017. The NRL relinquished control of Knights Rugby League Pty Ltd on 31 August 2017 meaning the entity was disposed from the group at this date.

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



The following financial commentary relates to the underlying operations and results of the Controlling Body before consolidation and the impact of impairment or write back of club loans.



**Non-broadcast revenue
increased by**



\$30.9m

Revenue

- » Broadcast revenue: 2018 results reflect the first year of the 2018-22 broadcast deal and as such there was a large revenue uplift compared to prior year (2018: \$318.0m, 2017: \$206.2m). Under the adoption of new accounting standards in this cycle, broadcast revenue will increase by approximately 2% p.a, as opposed to the straight line methodology adopted in the last cycle, 2013-17.
- » Non-broadcast revenue: Increased by \$30.9m (21%) in 2018 to \$178.9m. The largest contributors to the uplift being corporate partnership revenues (+\$10.4m) and Digital rights (\$+14.7m). Game receipts were largely steady year on year, due to the favourable State of Origin on-field results offsetting a challenging Grand Final matchup. Other moves included small increases in non-game related government grants offset by lower Interest revenue due to reduced average cash holdings throughout the year.

**Event, Game and Sponsorship
expenditure increased to****\$83.8m**

Football expenditure increased by**\$1.8m**

Expenditure

- » Event, Game and Sponsorship expenditure: Increased \$8.9m to \$83.8m. The increase was largely attributable to NRL Digital (\$7.2m), as a result of the transfer of operation of the digital platform to the NRL. Servicing costs increased, most notably on headcount across content and editorial as well as technical capability. As well as operational expenditure there was an additional \$2.8m of spend on capital costs compared to last year. Total capital spend for the year was \$7.4m (\$2017: \$4.6m).
- » Football: Increased by \$1.8m to \$21.8m, largely relating to salary increases, with some additional investment in technology and injury surveillance monitoring.
- » Community and Player Welfare spend reduced by \$0.3m to \$16.0m. This was due to cost reductions during the year, primarily in headcount. These savings more than offset the impact of additional contributions to the Player Retirement Fund (increased by \$0.7m) and some increased spending on government-funded programs such as School to Work.
- » Integrity and Salary Cap spending remained largely in line with 2017 at \$3.8m.
- » Administration: Approximately \$1m of one-off termination costs were incurred as a result of a number of redundancies across the business at the start of 2018. Excluding this, administration costs slightly decreased to \$17.6m (2017: \$17.7m).
- » Insurance and Finance Costs: Whilst insurance premiums increased by \$0.7m, and an additional bad debt provision was booked against licensees as a result of some very challenging retail conditions, most of the increase was due to a new \$9.6m interest charge relating to advances on the 2018-22 broadcast rights which were received in advance of this broadcast cycle. This change arises due to the adoption of the new accounting standard AASB 1058.

Total funds available for distribution increased by

 **55%**
in 2018

Distributions to clubs increased by



\$65.8m

Distributions

As a result of the new Broadcast deal, strong Non-Broadcast performance, and cost management, total funds available for distribution increased by 55% in 2018 to \$338.8m. Actual distributions totalling \$296.0m reflect a \$73.4m uplift on 2017.

- » Clubs: Distributions to clubs increased by \$65.8m. This was largely due to the increase in participation payments of \$75.2m or \$4.7m per club increasing from \$8.4m to \$13.1m (included in the \$13.1m is \$0.6m advanced grant amortisation relating to the \$3m received in years 2016 and 2017). Offsetting this increase are movements in loan impairments of \$5.5m (charge of \$3.8m in 2017 compared to a write back of \$1.7m in 2018), a reduction of \$2.4m in prize money in the absence of the Auckland Nines tournament, and the abolishment of other variable funding arrangements such as marketing, community and development grants.
- » States: Distributions to States increased by \$5.3m. \$0.9m of this relates to a 4% uplift in State League Funding year on year. Funding to the 2nd Tier competition (\$6.5m) increased in 2018 with all 26 clubs now receiving \$350K each compared to \$100K in 2017. Partly offsetting this is the impact of lower NSWRL Centre of Excellence funding (2018: \$0.5m; 2017: \$1.9m) as well as some reduction in NZRL Funding.
- » Development: Distributions increased by \$2.3m; Investment in the women's game totalled \$3.5m in 2018, an uplift of \$2.6m. Net of women's rugby league development spend reduced year on year. This was in part due to delays on some spending while the game worked through its revised participation investment strategy.
- » Up to \$54m of additional investment, subject to the financial performance of the Controlling Body, will be available for grassroots initiatives for 2019 – 2022. Accordingly, it is expected Development and States spend will increase materially from 2019 onwards.



Consolidated surplus



\$46.0m

Consolidated Result

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

Total consolidated revenue (excluding contra) disclosed in the Financial Statements is \$499.9m (2017: \$377.0m) and Total Funds available for Distribution was \$338.2m (2017: \$202.5m). Total distributions on a consolidated basis totalled \$337.9m (2017: \$202.5m) with an overall surplus of \$46.0m (2017: -\$6.4m).

The difference between the consolidated surplus/deficit and the Controlling Body is \$3.1m (2017: -\$2.7m) and is due to;

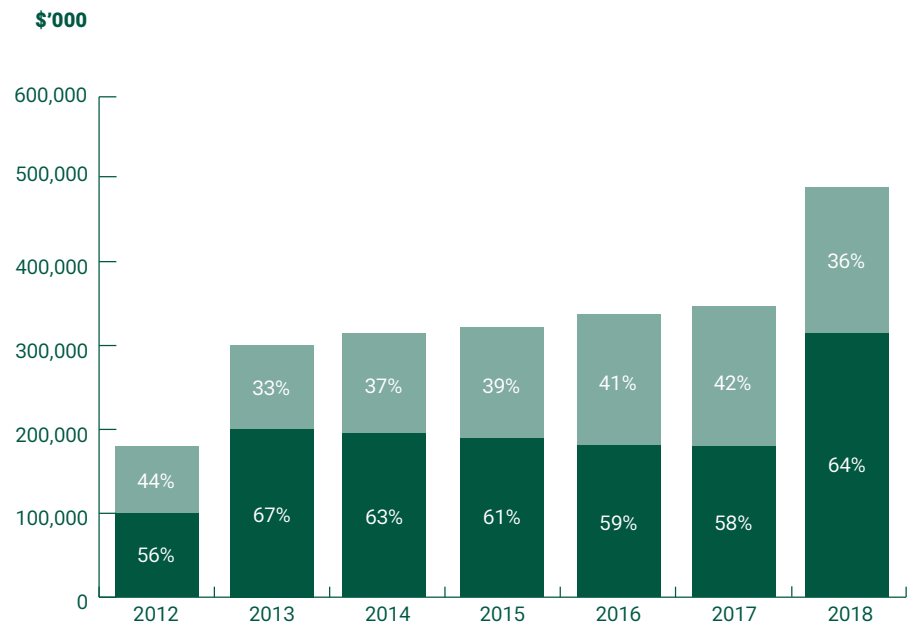
- Consolidated deficits of controlled entities of -\$0.3m (2017: -\$5.7m)
- Gains on the sale of previously owned entities of \$3.4m (2017: \$3.0m)



Non-Broadcast Revenue

 **20.9%**
on 2017 to \$179 million

Revenue

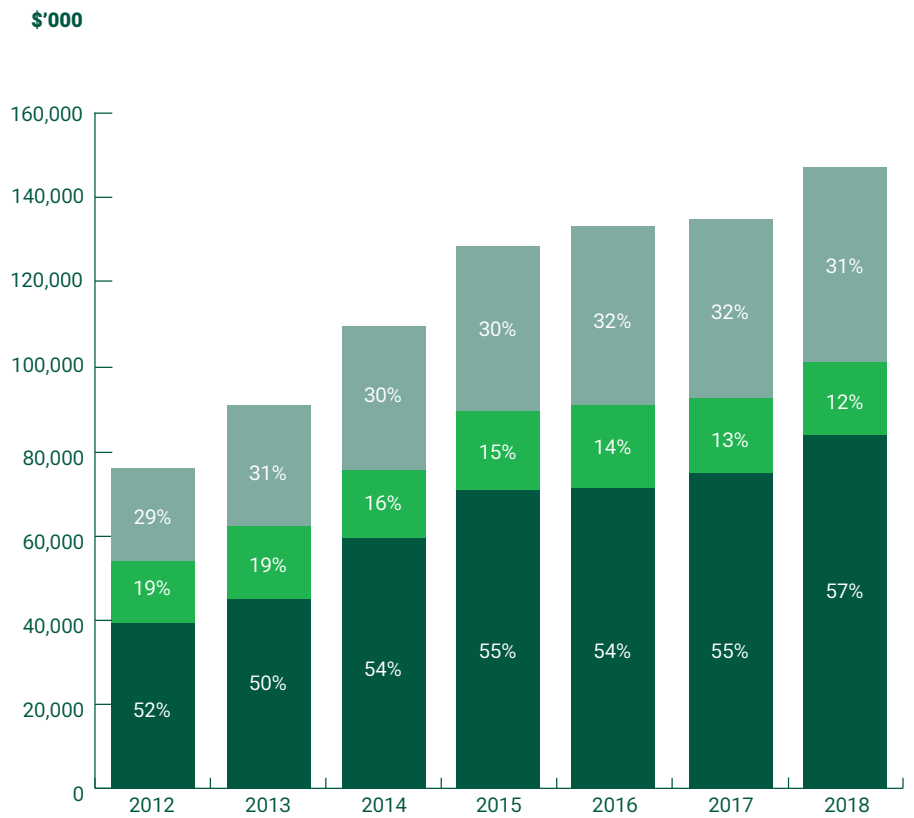


■ Non-Broadcast Revenue ■ Broadcast Revenue (excl. contra)

≥ **5.4%**

on 2017 to \$64 million*

Expenditure



- Event, Game, Sponsorship (ex contra)
- Administration
- Other overheads

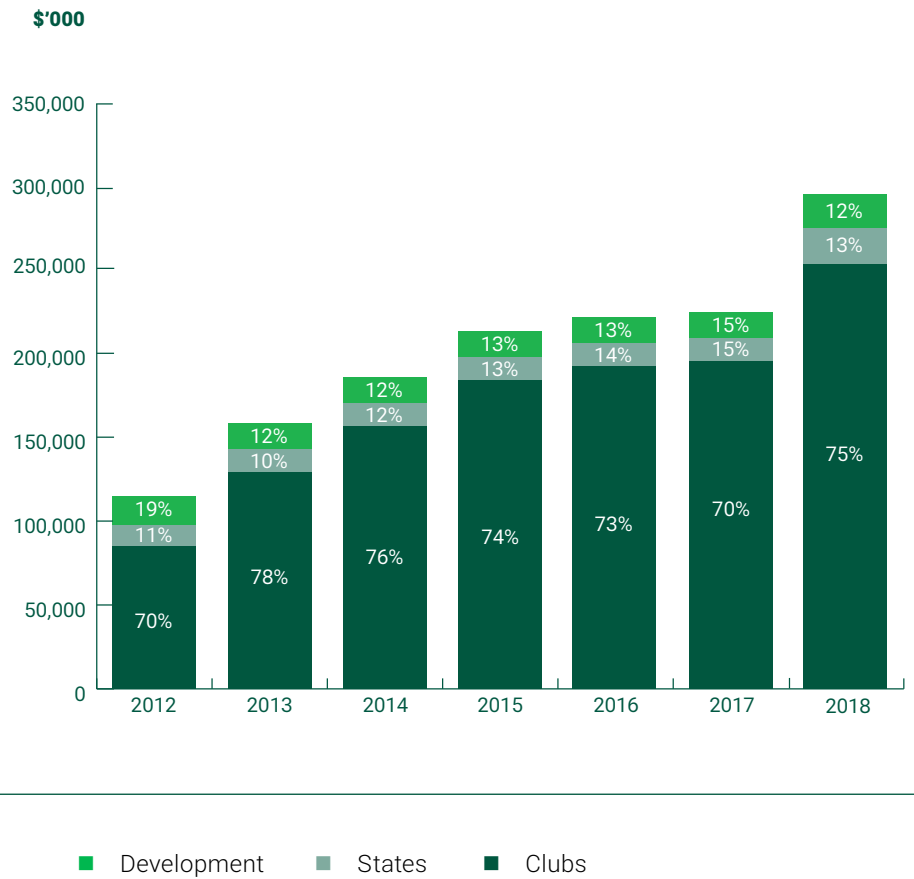
*Normalised Total Overheads excluding impact of one off termination costs and AASB1058 accounting adjustment





Distributions

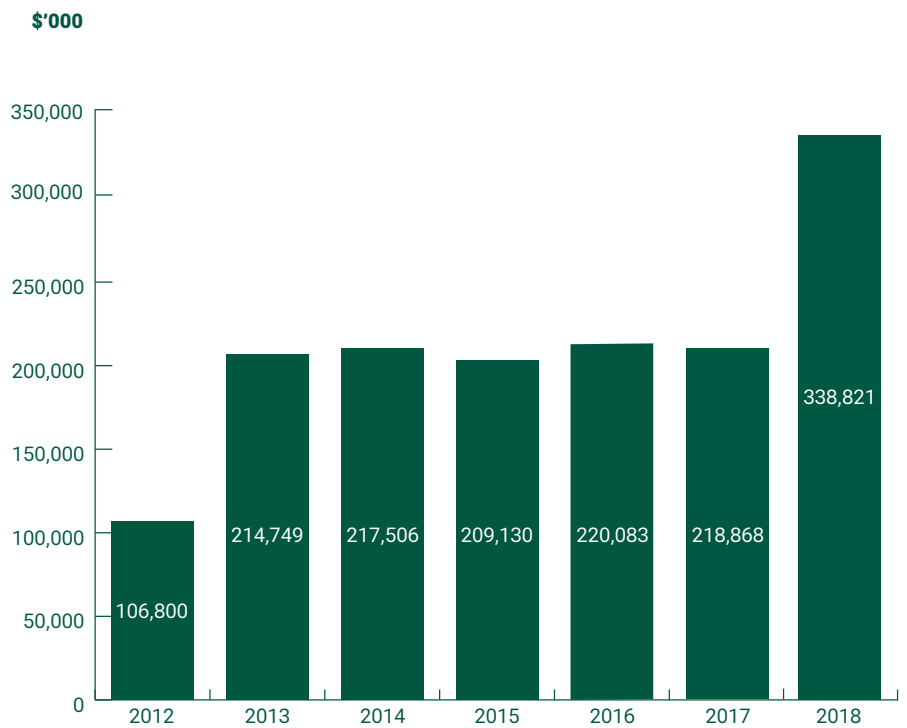
 **33.0%**
on 2017 to \$296 million



≥ **54.8%**

on 2017 to \$339 million

Available for distribution







The Controlling Body 2012–18

Underlying operating performance

Profit & loss (\$'000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2017	2017
								-18	-18
								▲	▲%
Broadcast Revenue (excl. contra)	101,600	204,345	205,000	204,735	206,345	206,198	317,992	111,794	54%
Non-Broadcast Revenue	80,000	99,030	119,024	129,270	144,160	147,946	178,850	30,904	21%
Total Revenue	181,600	303,375	324,024	334,005	350,505	354,144	496,842	142,698	40%
Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. contra)	(39,400)	(44,489)	(59,064)	(70,514)	(71,524)	(74,812)	(83,757)	(8,945)	(12%)
Football	(9,100)	(9,597)	(13,034)	(16,089)	(19,427)	(20,063)	(21,845)	(1,782)	(9%)
Community and Player Welfare	(11,500)	(14,474)	(14,907)	(16,726)	(16,860)	(16,350)	(16,010)	340	2%
Integrity and Salary Cap	(450)	(2,240)	(2,516)	(2,595)	(3,221)	(3,776)	(3,864)	(88)	(2%)
Administration	(13,373)	(15,550)	(16,995)	(18,951)	(19,390)	(17,714)	(18,559)	(845)	(5%)
Insurance and Finance Costs	(977)	(2,365)	(2,897)	(3,900)	(2,802)	(2,561)	(13,986)	(11,425)	(446%)
Funds Available for Distribution	106,800	214,660	214,611	205,232	217,281	218,868	338,821	119,953	55%
Clubs	(81,000)	(132,280)	(146,663)	(157,965)	(160,176)	(156,948)	(222,760)	(65,812)	(42%)
States & Affiliates	(13,500)	(16,300)	(22,914)	(27,847)	(30,473)	(32,784)	(38,111)	(5,327)	(16%)
Development	(21,700)	(20,739)	(23,192)	(27,516)	(29,276)	(32,850)	(35,125)	(2,275)	(7%)
UNDERLYING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(9,400)	45,341	21,842	(8,097)	(2,644)	(3,713)	42,825	46,538	1253%

BALANCE SHEET (\$'000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Assets	110,740	188,074	194,816	197,261	261,193	242,613	259,792
Total Liabilities	91,390	123,383	108,282	118,824	185,400	170,534	154,537
Net Assets	19,350	64,691	86,534	78,437	75,793	72,079	105,255

The Controlling Body and the Group

(Consolidated)

Profit & loss (\$'000)	2017		2018	
	Controlling Body ¹	Consolidated ²	Controlling Body ¹	Consolidated ²
Broadcast Revenue (excl. contra)	206,198	206,198	317,992	317,992
Non-Broadcast Revenue	147,946	170,807	178,850	181,947
Total Revenue	354,144	377,004	496,842	499,940
Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. contra)	(74,812)	(81,226)	(83,757)	(84,697)
Football	(20,063)	(45,781)	(21,845)	(23,701)
Community and Player Welfare	(16,350)	(16,450)	(16,010)	(16,010)
Integrity and Salary Cap	(3,776)	(3,776)	(3,864)	(3,864)
Administration ³	(17,714)	(24,176)	(18,559)	(18,973)
Insurance and Finance Costs ⁴	(2,561)	(3,110)	(13,986)	(14,463)
Funds Available for Distribution	218,868	202,485	338,821	338,231
Clubs	(156,948)	(142,473)	(222,760)	(218,196)
States & Affiliates	(32,784)	(31,838)	(38,111)	(37,239)
Development	(32,850)	(34,595)	(35,125)	(36,843)
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(3,713)	(6,421)	42,825	45,954

Note

In the above Profit and Loss table Depreciation, amortisation and interest is disclosed within the respective category it originates. This varies from the statutory accounts where these costs are disclosed separately on the face of the Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income.

The Controlling Body and the Group

(Consolidated)

BALANCE SHEET (\$'000)	2017		2018	
	Controlling Body ¹	Consolidated ²	Controlling Body ¹	Consolidated ²
Total Assets	242,613	226,786	259,792	246,630
Total Liabilities	170,534	175,708	154,537	159,248
Net Assets	72,079	51,078	105,255	87,382

Note

1. Controlling Body includes ARLC Ltd and NRL Ltd
2. Consolidated Group accounts represent the Controlling Body and its controlled entities being Knights Rugby League Pty Ltd (acquired 30 June 2014, sold 31 August 2017), Titans Rugby League Pty Ltd (acquired 24 February 2015, sold 15 December 2017), ARLC WA Ltd (acquired 8 June 2015), ARLC SA Ltd (acquired 30 June 2015), ARLC Vic Ltd (acquired 1 July 2015) and ARLC NT Ltd (acquired 6 July 2015)
3. Included in 2018 is approximately \$1m of termination costs
4. Included in 2018 is \$9,649 of interest expense relating to advanced Broadcast Funding



Financial Statistics 2012-18

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Broadcast/Total Revenue	56%	67%	63%	61%	59%	58%	64%
Non-Broadcast Margin	51%	55%	50%	45%	50%	49%	53%
Administration/Total Revenue	7%	5%	5%	6%	6%	5%	4%
Clubs/Total Revenue	45%	44%	45%	47%	46%	44%	45%
Distributions/Total Revenue	64%	56%	59%	64%	63%	63%	60%

Clubs and States

Clubs and States (\$'000)	2018		
	Base	Other	Total
Payments to Clubs	210,032	5,796	215,828
Benefits to Clubs			
Club Travel	-	2,531	2,531
Other Club Benefits ¹	-	1,401	1,401
Distressed Club Fund	-	3,000	3,000
Total Payments and Benefits to Clubs	210,032	12,728	222,760
Payments to States ²	22,158	15,953	38,111
Benefits to States	-	-	-
Total Payments and Benefits to States	22,158	15,953	38,111



Clubs and States

Clubs and States (\$'000)	2017		
	Base	Other	Total
Payments to Clubs	134,400	13,178	147,578
Benefits to Clubs			
Club Travel	-	4,482	4,482
Other Club Benefits ¹	-	4,889	4,889
Total Payments and Benefits to Clubs	134,400	22,548	156,948
Payments to States ²	22,804	8,603	31,407
Benefits to States	-	1,377	1,377
Total Payments and Benefits to States	22,804	9,979	32,784

Note

- 1 Other Club Benefits include Fans & Member Initiatives, Club Services, and APRA Music Fees.
- 2 Payments to States include 2nd Tier club payments, \$2.6m in 2017 (\$0.1m per 26 clubs) and \$9.1m (\$0.35m per 26 clubs).



Concise Financial Report





07

Directors' Report

The Directors present their report for the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited (“ARLC” or “the Company”) for the year ended 31 October 2018.

Directors

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

**The Hon. Peter Beattie AC
(Chairman)**

Mr Beattie is Chairman of GOLDOC, Director of the Medical Research Commercialisation Fund, Ambassador for Life Sciences Queensland, and joint adjunct professor at the University of Queensland's Australian Institute for Bioengineering & Nanotechnology & Institute for Molecular Bioscience. Mr Beattie served as the 36th Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade from 1998 to 2007 and Leader of the Australian Labor Party in that state from 1996 to 2007.

**John Grant
(retired 21 February 2018)**

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

Tony McGrath

Mr McGrath is a former partner at KPMG and is the co-founder of McGrathNicol. Mr McGrath is a Director of QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited and the National Foundation for Medical Research. Mr McGrath has also chaired the Risk, Investment and Audit Committee since 24 February 2017.

Dr Chris Sarra

Dr Sarra is the Director-General for the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships for the Queensland Government, and founding Chairman of the Stronger Smarter Institute. Dr Sarra chairs the People, Workplace Culture and Remuneration Committee.

Wayne Pearce OAM

Mr Pearce is a former Kangaroos representative who also Captained and coached the New South Wales State of Origin side. Mr Pearce is a business consultant and Director of Wayne Pearce Advantage.

Dr Gary Weiss

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

Professor Megan Davis

Professor Davis is Pro Vice Chancellor UNSW, Acting Commissioner of the NSW Land and Environment Court and a member of the NSW Sentencing Council. Professor Davis is a constitutional law professor specialising in constitutional design and constitution-building and one of the nation's leading public constitutional lawyers.

**Catherine Harris AO PSM
(retired 20 February 2018)**

Ms Harris is the Chairperson of Harris Farm Markets, and a Director of the Sport Australia Hall of Fame, The Australian Ballet, Tyro Payments Ltd and Consul General for Bhutan. Ms Harris is Chair of the Nominations Committee.

**Peter V'landys
(appointed 12 March 2018)**

Mr V'landys is Chief Executive and board member with Racing NSW and former Chief Executive of the NSW Harness Racing Club. Mr V'landys holds an Order of Australia Medal for services to the Racing Industry and serves across a number of Boards associated with the thoroughbred racing industry.

**Amanda Laing
(appointed 12 March 2018)**

Ms Laing was the Managing Director of Nine Entertainment Co. before starting her own media consultancy business in 2017. Ms Laing recently joined the board of Sport Australia and is a former board member of a number of media businesses including Australian News Channel (Sky News), Stan and Pedestrian Group.

Company secretary

Eleni North, General Counsel and Company Secretary. Ms North has been the Company Secretary of the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited and National Rugby League Limited since 13 August 2014.

Principal activity

The principal activity of the Company during the course of the financial year was the fostering and propagation of the game of Rugby League Football throughout the States and Territories of Australia and internationally.

The short and long term objectives of the Australian Rugby League Commission are to foster, develop, extend and adequately fund the game from grassroots to elite level; conduct State of Origin and Australian representative matches; organise, conduct and foster the National Rugby League ("NRL") competition; liaise with the Rugby League International Federation on the international game and to promote and encourage sport, recreation and the general welfare of young people in the community. The success of the Company's performance of these objectives is indicated by the growing awareness and participation in Rugby League.

Review of operations and financial results

Revenue generated for the year was \$523,562,341 (2017: \$400,090,909). The Group's current year operating surplus was \$50,250,026 (2017: operating deficit 6,420,672).

Dividends

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

Significant events after the year end

There has not arisen in the interval between the end of the financial period and the date of this report any other item, transaction or event of a material and unusual nature likely, in the opinion of the Directors of the organisation, to affect significantly the operations of the organisation and the state of affairs in future financial years.

Likely developments and future results

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

Environmental issues

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

Directors interests and benefits

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

Indemnification of officers

The Company paid an insurance premium of \$238,706 (2017: \$169,469) in respect of a contract insuring the Directors of the Company named earlier in this report and each executive officer, against liabilities and expenses arising as a result of work performed in their respective capacities, to the extent permitted by law, up to the policy limit.

Indemnification of auditors

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

Members' guarantee

The Company is a company limited by guarantee. If the Company is wound up, the Articles of Association state that each member is required to contribute a maximum of \$10 each towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the Company. At 31 October 2018, the number of members was 26 (2017: 26).

Board meetings

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

Directors	Board Meetings	
	Eligible to Attend	Attended
The Hon. Peter Beattie AC (Chairman)	13	13
John Grant (retired 21 February 2018)	5	5
Tony McGrath	13	11
Catherine Harris AO PSM (retired 20 February 2018)	5	5
Dr Chris Sarra	13	11
Wayne Pearce OAM	13	12
Dr Gary Weiss	13	10
Professor Megan Davis	13	11
Peter V'landys (appointed 12 March 2018)	8	8
Amanda Laing (appointed 12 March 2018)	8	8

Registered office

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

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

Corporate structure

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

The domicile of the Company is Sydney, Australia.

AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE COMMISSION LIMITED – CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT



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

As lead auditor for the audit of the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited for the financial year ended 31 October 2018, I declare to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

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

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

Ernst & Young

Christopher George
Partner

Sydney
6 February 2019

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

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Directors.

Peter Beattie
Chairman

Tony McGrath
Director

Sydney
6 February 2019

Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income Year ended 31 October 2018

Clubs and States (\$'000)	2018	2017
Revenue		
Broadcast	317,992	206,198
Broadcast contra	23,623	23,087
Game receipts	45,846	54,014
Sponsorship and wagering	78,908	73,006
Digital revenue	23,593	6,583
Other	33,600	37,203
	523,562	400,091
Revenue		
Event, game and sponsorship	(82,933)	(85,982)
Broadcast contra	(19,326)	(23,087)
Football	(23,540)	(45,271)
Community and player welfare	(16,000)	(16,459)
Administration	(25,217)	(28,266)
Clubs	(221,616)	(140,922)
States, Affiliates and New Zealand Rugby League	(37,239)	(31,838)
Development	(37,406)	(35,134)
Depreciation and amortisation	(3,955)	(2,491)
Finance costs	(9,500)	(87)
Gain on sale of investments	3,420	3,025
	(473,312)	(406,512)
Surplus / (deficit)	50,250	(6,421)
Income tax expense	-	-
Net surplus / (deficit)	50,250	(6,421)
Other comprehensive income for the period	-	-
Total comprehensive surplus / (deficit) for the period attributable to the members of ARLC limited	50,250	(6,421)

Discussion and analysis of the Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income

The Consolidated net deficit decreased by \$56.7m to a surplus of \$50.3m.

Consolidated revenue up by \$123.5m to \$523.6m due to:

- Consolidated broadcast revenue increased by \$111.8m due to new broadcast cycle
- Increased digital (\$17.0m) and sponsorship and wagering revenue (\$5.9m), partially offset by decreased revenue from merchandising royalties (-\$2.4m), game receipts (-\$8.2m) and interest income (-\$0.4m)

Consolidated expenditure increased by \$66.8m to \$473.3m due to:

- Increased expenditure in Clubs \$82.3m (primarily due to increased participation payments from new Club Funding cycle), States \$5.4m (4% increase on prior year grants), interest charges \$9.5m associated with the adoption of a new revenue recognition accounting standard, Development \$2.3m and Depreciation \$1.5m
- These increases were partially offset by decreased expenditure in Football \$21.7m, Administration \$3.0m and Event, game and sponsorship \$3.0m.

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

**Statement of Consolidated Financial Position
Year ended 31 October 2018**

Clubs and States (\$'000)	2018	2017
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	137,657	91,895
Trade receivables	12,299	21,977
Prepayments and other receivables	32,944	33,169
Total current assets	182,900	147,041
Non current assets		
Intangibles	10,373	6,380
Property, plant and equipment	18,639	18,880
Other receivables	39,015	54,485
Total non current assets	68,027	79,745
Total assets	250,927	226,786
Current liabilities		
Trade payables	27,405	19,179
Other payables	113,017	139,876
Provisions	5,287	5,127
Total current liabilities	145,709	164,182
Non current liabilities		
Other payables	12,159	10,345
Provisions	1,380	1,181
Total non current liabilities	13,539	11,526
Total liabilities	159,248	175,708
Net assets	91,679	51,078
Equity		
Reserves	2,228	2,228
Retained surplus	89,451	48,850
Total equity	91,679	51,078

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

Consolidated total assets increased by \$24.1m to \$250.9m due to:

- Increases in cash and cash equivalents (\$45.8m), intangibles (\$4.0m)
- Offset by decreases in trade receivables (\$9.7m) and prepayments & other receivables (\$16.0m)

Consolidated total liabilities decreased by \$16.5m to \$159.2m due to:

- A decrease in consolidated other payables of \$25.0m due primarily to a decrease in deferred revenue as a result of part of the \$100.0m advance payment received from the broadcasters in prior financial years recognised as income
- Partially offset by an increase in consolidated trade payables of \$8.2m

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

**Statement of Consolidated Changes in Equity
Year ended 31 October 2018**

	Reserves \$'000	Retained surplus \$'000	Total \$'000
As at 1 November 2017	2,228	48,850	51,078
New accounting standard ¹	–	(9,649)	(9,649)
As at 1 November 2017 (Restated)	2,228	39,201	41,429
New surplus for the year	–	50,250	50,250
As at 31 October 2018	2,228	89,451	91,679

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

	Reserves \$'000	Retained surplus \$'000	Total \$'000
As at 1 November 2016	2,228	55,271	57,499
New deficit for the year	–	(6,421)	(6,421)
As at 31 October 2017	2,228	48,850	51,078

Note

1 Refer to Note 1(b) for details of the accounting standard change.

Statement of Consolidated Cash Flows
Year ended 31 October 2018

	Notes	2018 \$'000	2017 \$'000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from ordinary operations	-	528,172	397,236
Payments to suppliers and employees	-	(274,973)	(287,394)
Payments to clubs	-	(205,955)	(155,194)
Interest received		1,129	1,509
Interest paid	-	46	87
Net cash flows from/(used in) operating activities		48,327	(43,930)

Cash flows from investing activities

Payments for property plant and equipment	-	(2,162)	(1,357)
Payments for intangibles	-	(6,221)	(4,159)
Issue of loans	-	-	(300)
Repayments of loans		5,818	7,329
Net cash flows from/(used in) investing activities		(2,565)	1,513

Statement of Consolidated Cash Flows
Year ended 31 October 2018 (cont).

Notes	2018 \$'000	2017 \$'000
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	45,762	(42,417)
Cash at the beginning of the period	91,895	134,312
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	137,657	91,895

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

There was a net increase in cash holdings of the consolidated entity totalling \$45.8m due to:

The major reasons for the increase in cash during the year were:

- +\$50m: P&L Surplus
- -\$20m: Difference between broadcast cash and revenue relating to \$100m advance
- +\$9m: Difference between club cash and revenue relating to advanced grants
- +\$6m: Players retirement fund for 2018 expensed but not paid.
- +\$6m: Repayment of Club loans
- -\$7m: Investment in Digital assets

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

**Notes to the Concise
Financial Statements**

Year ended 31 October 2018

1. Basis of preparation of the concise financial report

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

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

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

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

2. Revenue

	Notes	2018	2017
Broadcast revenue		317,992	206,198
Broadcast contra		23,623	23,087
Game receipts		45,846	54,014
Sponsorship and wagering		78,908	73,006
Digital revenue		23,593	6,583
Other income			
Merchandise royalties		11,440	13,831
Government income		13,053	11,545
Financing income		1,129	1,509
Sundry income		7,978	10,318
Total other income		33,600	37,203
Total revenue		523,562	400,091

3. Events subsequent to balance sheet date

There has not arisen in the interval between the end of the financial period and the date of this report any other item, transaction or event of a material and unusual nature likely, in the opinion of the Directors of the organisation, to affect significantly the operations of the organisation and the state of affairs in future financial years.

AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE COMMISSION LIMITED – CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT

Directors' Declaration

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

In the opinion of the Directors:

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

On behalf of the Board



Peter Beattie
Chairman



Tony McGrath
Director

Sydney
6 February 2019



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

Report on the concise financial report

OPINION

We have audited the concise financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited, which comprises the consolidated statement of financial position as at 31 October 2018 the consolidated statement of comprehensive income, consolidated statement of changes in equity and consolidated statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and related notes, derived from the financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited for the year ended 31 October 2018. The concise financial report also includes discussion and analysis and the directors' declaration. The concise financial report does not contain all the disclosures required by the Australian Accounting Standards.

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

BASIS FOR OPINION

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

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

CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT

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



THE FINANCIAL REPORT AND OUR REPORT THEREON

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the financial report in our report dated 31 January 2019.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DIRECTORS FOR THE CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT

The directors of the Company are responsible for the preparation of the concise financial report in accordance with Accounting Standard AASB 1039 *Concise Financial Reports*, and the *Corporations Act 2001*, and for such internal controls as the directors determine are necessary to enable the preparation of the concise financial report.

AUDITOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE AUDIT OF THE CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'EY + Tag'.

Ernst & Young

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christopher George'.

Christopher George

Partner
Sydney
6 February 2019



Message from Sport Australia

John Wylie AM

Chair
Sport Australia

It has been a watershed year for the Australian Sports Commission. We've launched a new public-facing brand – Sport Australia – with a renewed vision for Australia to be the world's most active sporting nation, known for its integrity, sporting success and world-leading sports industry.

This aligns with the Australian Government's long-term vision for sport in this country, outlined in Sport 2030, released in August 2018 by Minister for Sport, Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie. Sport Australia will be central to delivering the priorities outlined in this national sport plan.

At the fundamental level, Sport Australia's focus will be on getting Australians moving through sport and, more broadly, physical activity. We want to inspire and activate people across every age, race, gender, cultural background and physical ability. We will continue to build partnerships in the health and education sectors to ensure physical activity is a national priority.

We need to ensure sporting organisations are equipped to make the most of a renewed interest in physical activity, and so we will continue working with sports to improve the workforce capability, governance and partnerships. We want to help sports innovate, connect with existing and new participants in the digital era and provide products that meet current expectations.

Sport Australia is redefining its role too, leading a united and collaborative high-performance system for Australian sport. Success will be measured by Australians consistently winning medals

at major international events, but also in the national pride and inspiration generated by our athletes.

Working in partnerships, Sport Australia will be focussed on doing the big system-level things on the frontiers of ethical sporting performance that no other body is naturally positioned to do.

Sport Australia has launched a new Athlete Wellbeing and Engagement team, focused on supporting athletes to transition through their sporting careers and connect with their communities. We want sporting champions to be positive influences.

Australia enjoyed genuine sporting success in 2017-18. In challenging times, the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games helped restore Australia's faith in our sports and athletes.

Positions on the podium are wonderful to celebrate, but the narrative is incomplete without humility, generosity of spirit, confidence in what our athletes stand for and how they carry themselves. At the Gold Coast Games, we saw the very best in our athletes, and this display of spirit and integrity is sure to give them the best start to their preparation for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

We also had some outstanding performances at the PyeongChang Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. Australia equalled its most successful Winter Olympics haul of three medals in PyeongChang, two silvers and one bronze medal matching the result in Sochi 2014. It was also our best result at a Paralympic Winter Games in 16 years.

Sport integrity has justifiably gained additional focus in the past year, and is a very important priority for Sport Australia and for Australian sport more generally. We, and everyone involved in sport, owe it to the athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, fans and the public at large to ensure that Australian sport is fair and clean, and is seen to be fair and clean.

We thank all of our partners – including athletes, coaches, board members and administrators – for your effort and contribution to Australian sport, and your enthusiasm for building a more active Australia.

We look forward to continued success and progress together.

