



# NRL INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

RUGBY LEAGUE'S BLUEPRINT TO PROMOTE INCLUSION & REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF OUR COMMUNITY


Developed in partnership with



Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission

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Lives lost on NSW roads.  
Our goal is zero.  
TOWARDS ZERO

**The NRL acknowledges the traditional owners of the land upon which our sport occurs, their Ancestors and Elders.**

We are committed to understanding, respecting and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and values, with the belief that both we and the game will be better for doing so.

This Inclusion Framework is an initiative of the NRL in partnership with *Play by the Rules* and the Australian Human Rights Commission in consultation with State, Leagues and their affiliated organisations.

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@NRL 2017



*Rugby League brings people together  
and enriches their lives.*



# WELCOME



Welcome to the NRL's Inclusion Framework, which outlines how our game is working together to create a safer, more welcoming and inclusive sport.

As an organisation, we are committed to providing an environment for all participants, free from discrimination and promoting respectful and positive behaviour and values.

We are a sport proud of our efforts to develop self-respect and social responsibility as a means to encourage greater inclusion within our communities.

Our suite of community and wellbeing programs – including NRL Voice Against Violence; NRL In League In Harmony; NRL School To Work and NRL State Of Mind, are all helping achieve important and positive social wellbeing outcomes, both in Australia and abroad.

Now is the time to build upon our program of work and help our game and our members fully capitalise on the benefits that diversity and inclusion can bring. Not just throughout the rugby league community, but throughout all communities – fostering cultures that are non-discriminatory, respectful and inclusive.

As a result of a review conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission between 2016 - 17, our Inclusion Framework has been developed, bringing together our strategies, policies, programs and partnerships in one place and in a clear and coherent way.

This Framework outlines how we will continue to work to promote participation and engagement across a diverse range of people that make up our rugby league communities.

Our Framework also highlights ways for members and clubs to get further involved in promoting inclusion and diversity across all levels of the game.

As part of our review, we have also developed an Anti-Discrimination and Vilification Framework, bringing together all of our member protection policies and codes of conduct in one place and ensuring everyone involved in our sport is aware of their legal and ethical rights and responsibilities.

Rugby League's landscape has changed enormously over the last decade. Government and community expectations for best practice in governance and member protection means that providing a safe, fair and inclusive sporting environment for participants and volunteers is no longer an aspiration, but a necessity.

I'd like to thank all of our partners, including our expert community and mental health partners, together with our State Leagues, Clubs, players, members, fans and staff, for their ongoing support in helping ensure that everyone, irrespective of their cultural background, religion, sexual preference, gender or ability, continues to feel welcome and included in our game.



Todd Greenberg  
CEO  
National Rugby League



# FEDERAL RACE DISCRIMINATION COMMISSIONER STATEMENT



Sport is a powerful force in our society. This includes on human rights.

There have been times when sport has played a role in creating and maintaining division and exclusion. But, on other occasions, sport has been a positive force for change. That is when sport is at its best. As we all know, the meaning of what happens on the field is often felt beyond it.

It has been wonderful to have partnered with the NRL on this initiative on social inclusion. It builds on the relationship we have had, including through the 'Racism. It Stops with Me' campaign. The NRL has been a valued supporter of our anti-racism work.

In our multicultural society, it's important that we see our diversity better reflected. This applies to sport, as it does to business, politics, media and any other field of endeavour. We are yet to make the most of our multicultural talents.

This doesn't necessarily reflect a shortage of goodwill. But getting things right on diversity and inclusion isn't always easy. Success requires challenging the status quo. It may involve rethinking things, changing old habits, and experimenting with new methods.

I acknowledge the steps the NRL has taken to address discrimination and to promote inclusion. But the NRL and its members must strive to make the game the best that it can be – to guarantee the game is open and welcoming to everyone in our society.

The Australian Human Rights Commission and I are pleased to have worked with the NRL, and to see the introduction of this Social Inclusion Framework. I hope that it provides a benchmark to take the game from good to best practice.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'T. Soutphommasane'.

Dr Tim Soutphommasane  
Race Discrimination Commissioner  
Australian Human Rights Commission

# INCLUSION & DIVERSITY IN RUGBY LEAGUE



*“We encourage inclusion and help build cohesive communities. We speak up against bullying, violence, racism and any other form of discrimination.”*

## MISSION

Our mission is to bring people together for the best sports and entertainment experience. We lead and inspire people to be the best they can be by providing pathways and opportunities to live positive, respectful and healthy lives. True to our roots, we welcome everyone to Rugby League, regardless of race, colour, religion, ability, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, ancestry, or age. We proudly and publicly stand against intolerance and bigotry, and will actively campaign against it. We treat everyone fairly and equally.

## OUR BELIEFS

- » We are Inclusive
- » We are Positive
- » We are United
- » We are Disciplined

## OUR POLICIES

Our policies and codes ensure that everyone is aware of their rights and responsibilities, and provide procedures to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and other forms of inappropriate behaviour. These policies are governed by the NRL and should be adopted and promoted by all States, Leagues and their affiliated organisations.

The NRL Competition also has an Anti-Vilification Code under the NRL Rules which NRL Clubs, Club Officials and Players are subject to.

To ensure that our policies, codes and sanctions are clear and consistent we have developed a new Anti-Discrimination and Vilification Framework that forms part of this Inclusion Framework. All NRL policies are complemented by federal and state anti-discrimination laws that make forms of discrimination and harassment unlawful.

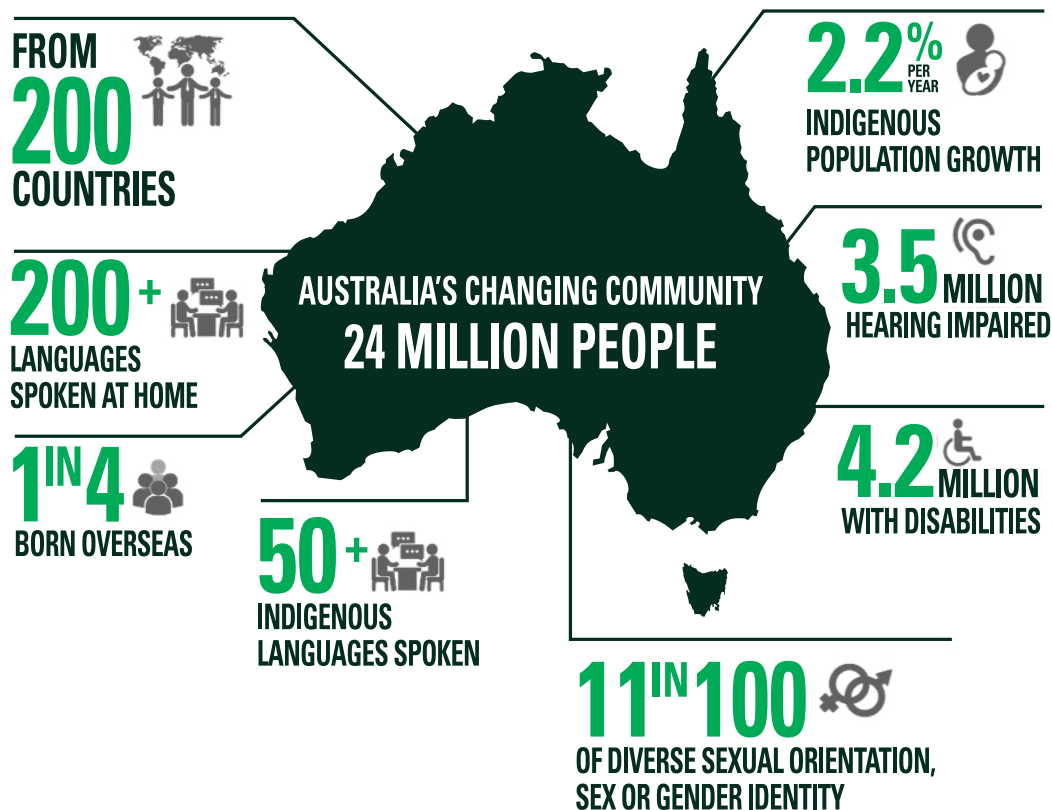
## OUR PARTNERS

We have strategically partnered with leading expert organisations in order to deliver best-in-class programs that leave a tangible impact across communities. Such partners include:





# WHY A NEW FRAMEWORK?



The demographic of the Australian communities in which Rugby League operates has changed dramatically and will continue to diversify. Future trends suggest that sport will play an important role in promoting inclusion, community well-being and non-discrimination.

Research reveals that 1 in 3 choose a sport based on how safe, fair and inclusive it is. The reality is our diverse communities are looking for sporting options that celebrate diversity, promote inclusion and most importantly, make people feel like they belong. This is not about excluding – it is about actively ‘including’. If sports don’t cater to diversity, people will choose a different sport.

## BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Research shows the barriers to participation in sport are likely to be greater for people from multicultural and/or Indigenous backgrounds, people with disability, people who live in single parent households, live in low socio-economic areas and/or are female. Barriers can include:

- » Negative attitudes to new people
- » Few role models/little diversity
- » High cost
- » Inflexible uniform requirements
- » Limited transport options to venues
- » Language barriers
- » Lack of knowledge of the game
- » Inflexible timetabling of activities
- » Emphasis on winning.

# WHY A NEW FRAMEWORK? (continued)



One major barrier that still exists in sport (as it does in the wider community) is discrimination. Discrimination can be a factor linked to key social and health issues such as depression, alcohol and substance abuse and peer violence.

While these challenges exist, they present Rugby League with an opportunity to be a leader in creating best-practice sporting environments that welcome everyone regardless of their background or ability.

## ‘FROM GOOD TO BEST PRACTICE’ REVIEW

In 2015/16, the NRL commissioned the Australian Human Rights Commission to conduct a review on inclusion and discrimination in Rugby League. The resulting report ‘From Good to Best Practice’ identified how Rugby League promotes a safe, inclusive sporting environment through a raft of strategies, programs, events, education, and policies. It also identified a range of opportunities to progress from good to best practice in this area, and cement our reputation as an accessible/respectful game that provides opportunities for everyone to participate. This Framework is the next step in achieving this goal.

## THE VALUE OF INCLUSION

Having an Inclusion Framework in place provides a range of community, business and growth opportunities that are tied to the NRL’s strategic objectives. These include:

- » Social benefits from wider community engagement and intercultural harmony.
- » Increased membership base and participation growth.
- » Increased talent pool.
- » Lifting the image and profile of the Rugby League in the community.
- » Sponsorships with a whole-of-community focus.
- » Increased revenue and funding opportunities.





# ABOUT THIS FRAMEWORK



The intent of this framework is to clearly outline how the Rugby League is working to create a more respectful, safer, non-discriminatory and inclusive sport. It also aims to highlight ways for everyone to get involved to promote inclusion and diversity across all levels of the game.

The framework brings together everything we do around inclusion and diversity. It outlines:

- » What we believe in (our Inclusion Statement)
- » Rights and responsibilities (our policies and codes)
- » What we do (our strategies and programs)
- » How to get involved and get inclusive
- » Measuring progress
- » Reference and Advisory Groups

The goals of the framework are to:

- » Provide our clearly articulated stance in relation to diversity and inclusion.
- » Assist us to use a human rights based approach to every decision and action we take.
- » Enable us to apply this framework to review or design all of our policies, practices, initiatives, offerings and communications,
- » Ensure that all people will feel welcome, included and empowered in our game.

Through this, our aim is that the NRL and Rugby League's reputation as a diverse, respectful code is enhanced and that our strong leadership and best practices set the standard across sporting codes.

## INCLUSION PHILOSOPHY

The Inclusion Framework uses the '7 Pillars of Inclusion' model developed by *Play by the Rules*/Australian Sports Commission as the overarching inclusion philosophy. The '7 Pillars' model provides a 'helicopter' view of inclusion and looks at the common elements that contribute to creating inclusive environments that reflect the diverse communities that we live in.

This model focuses on strategy, planning and programs for inclusion based around seven keys elements that are universally applicable to all target groups. The seven pillars are:

- |            |                 |                 |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| » Access   | » Partnerships  | » Policy        |
| » Attitude | » Communication | » Opportunities |
| » Choice   |                 |                 |

A range of instructive information, guides, templates, club assessment tools and videos have been developed to explain these seven elements, and how they can be used to promote inclusion across all groups in Rugby League.

## WHO IS THIS FRAMEWORK TARGETED AT?

Everyone in Rugby League has a role to play in ensuring that we continue to make our sport a benchmark in inclusive practices for people from all parts of our community. It is important that this framework continues to be developed collaboratively as a philosophical approach and guide that can be adopted and used by the broader Rugby League community.



# WHAT WE BELIEVE IN - INCLUSION STATEMENT



## INTRODUCTION

The NRL is committed to being an inclusive organisation that is open to all members of the Australian community regardless of age, race, religion, colour, descent, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, marital status, status as a parent, disability or HIV/AIDS status or other attributes that can lead to people feeling excluded or isolated.

## PRINCIPLES

The NRL are dedicated to providing a safe, welcoming environment for everyone who chooses to be part of Rugby League by actively promoting the principles of equality, fairness, social justice and community values. We define these principles as:

- i. **Equality** is about ensuring that any person who wants to participate in Rugby League is provided with that equal opportunity.
- ii. **Social justice** is about ensuring all people receive a “fair go” by addressing the needs of marginalised people and groups in the community.
- iii. **Community values** ensure we take a respectful approach to difference and diversity between people to ensure they are treated with dignity and courtesy.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this statement is to further promote inclusion and prevent and manage issues associated with exclusion. At all times, and in all situations, **the NRL are committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation in relation to an individual’s gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, cultural background, religious belief, and physical ability. We will take all reasonable steps to identify and eliminate unlawful direct, indirect, and systemic discrimination from our structures and practices and ensure that all members are afforded reasonable opportunities to participate in and gain access to our programs and services at all levels.**

## COMMITMENT

The NRL are committed to applying the Inclusion Framework and its principles to develop clear and consistent strategies, policies and programs to achieve inclusion and eliminate unlawful discrimination in our organisation and Affiliated State Leagues and their member organisations.

We are committed to pursuing strategies that increase participation in our sport to ensure our sport reflects the diversity of the broader Australian community.

We are committed to promoting a culture of inclusion by providing resources and tools to our respective organisations and members to achieve and maintain this goal.

Our framework and policies will be regularly evaluated and revised to maintain continuous improvement to our programs, policies and services for people from different backgrounds and abilities.



## COVERAGE

The NRL's Inclusion Framework and related Anti-Discrimination and Vilification Framework aim to ensure opportunities exist for the involvement of all Australians within Rugby League and that they are treated with respect and dignity within safe, supportive environments. These national frameworks and respective policies will be implemented by the NRL and through State, Leagues and their member organisations.

In addition to this statement, the NRL have a number of other policies which aim to provide safe and inclusive environments for members. These and all other policies can be found here at [Inclusion](#).



# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES – OUR POLICIES AND CODES



The NRL is committed to providing to all participants an environment that promotes respectful and positive behaviour and values. Our policies and codes ensure that everyone is aware of their legal and ethical rights and responsibilities, and provide the procedures to address discrimination, harassment, child protection issues and other forms of inappropriate behaviour. These policies are backed up by federal and state anti-discrimination laws that make discrimination and harassment unlawful.

The following policies and codes are an essential part of our organisation's proactive and preventative approach to tackling inappropriate and behavior that excludes. The policies are governed by the NRL and are adopted and promoted by all Affiliated State Leagues and their affiliated organisations.

- » [NRL Member Protection Policy](#)
- » [NRL National Code of Conduct](#)
- » [Risk management guide](#)

## CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

The NRL are committed to promoting a safe environment for all children and to assist staff, officials, players, coaches, members and volunteers to recognise child protection issues and safeguarding procedures. As a sport, we must always place the safety and welfare of children above all other considerations.

The NRL has developed a strong position on Child Safety as outlined in the Member Protection Policy. The protection and welfare of our junior participants is paramount to the organization. We support the rights of the child and will act at all times to ensure that a child-safe environment is maintained. The NRL's risk of harm identification and analysis, and the selection, training and support of suitable employees and volunteers aim to ensure a safe, fair and inclusive environment for all participants.

## COMPLAINTS AND MEMBER SUPPORT

Rugby League is a place where you can enjoy yourself, develop friendships and have fun competing at whatever level you like. It is not a place where you should be subjected to discrimination, harassment, bullying or abuse. If inappropriate behaviour occurs, you have every right to make an informal or formal complaint.

All complaints should be dealt with promptly, seriously, sensitively and confidentially. Details on the complaints procedure and mediation, tribunals and disciplinary measures are outlined in the [NRL Member Protection Policy](#).

Member Protection Information Officers (MPIO) are an important contact point in Rugby League clubs and associations and provide impartial information about the rights, responsibilities and options available to an individual making a complaint or raising a concern. If you need to contact an MPIO you should enquire at your club, association or visit the NRL Inclusion site to find relevant details.



# WHAT WE DO – OUR STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS



Rugby League is a veritable mixing pot of inclusion and diversity:

- » NRL club players listed 116 nations as their place of birth, while their parents and grandparents were born in 144 overseas countries.
- » Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) involvement in Rugby League far exceeds the national average for participation in sport. More than 12% of NRL players and almost 17% of grassroots players in Australia hail from ATSI backgrounds.
- » 45% of NRL players have a Pacific heritage.
- » Women's Rugby League is currently the fastest growing sector of the game with over 180,000 girls and women playing across Australia in schools and clubs. 2017 saw a larger growth in the women's game than at any other time in Rugby League's history. Female participation increased 33% compared with 2016. At the grassroots level, more than 66, 376 women participated in events and gala days.

## OUR STRATEGIES

There are a range of NRL strategies and plans to foster inclusion, reduce discrimination and actively engage and contribute to challenging social issues that affect our members and the wider community. These include our NRL Game and Community strategies, plus specific Pasifika Strategy, and ARLIC/Reconciliation Action Plan.

The NRL's community initiatives use the power of Rugby League to lead and inspire people to be the best they can be, whether they are young, male or female or from Indigenous or diverse backgrounds. Each year, the NRL delivers extensive programs designed to create positive social change across three core pillars: Health, Learn and **Respect**.

## NRL RESPECT

The NRL has developed and implemented a range of initiatives, programs and resources to promote inclusion and diversity in the game under the banner of 'NRL Respect'. These activities have contributed to enhancing social networks within the community and building further awareness of health and social issues. This includes delivering programs on racism, bullying, domestic violence and inclusiveness.

The NRL works with expert partners such as the Full Stop Foundation, Our Watch and White Ribbon, to take action to prevent violence against women and children. The NRL Voice Against Violence program is and will be delivered to hundreds of high-risk rural and regional communities. The message is simple – violence in any form is unacceptable, especially against women and children.

The NRL's In League In Harmony program is aimed at helping young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds develop both their Rugby League and personal skills. In 2017, more than 1500 students from 44 schools took part in the program.

The NRL has also signed up as a Racism. It Stops With Me partner and has promoted the initiative online through Community Service Announcements and at the NRL All Stars game.

The NRL has established a diverse range of events and awards to celebrate Indigenous and multicultural participation in Rugby League, which also provide education opportunities for players at all levels. These include the prestigious NRL Indigenous Round and Harmony day events.

## WHAT WE DO – OUR STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS (CONTINUED)



Work is also undertaken at the League and club level to increase opportunities for people with a disability to participate in all aspects of the game, including supporting International Day of People with Disability events and Multi Sports Days.

The NRL has partnered with the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Human Rights Commission on the Pride in Sport Index to benchmark progress in assessing inclusion of LGBTI people in Rugby League. The NRL also has a float in the annual Sydney Mardi Gras.

### GRASSROOTS CHAMPIONS

Our community work starts from within – with the support of our clubs and states. Together, we all make a difference by supporting members of the Rugby League family and local communities. Whether it is Roosters Against Racism or NRL Wellbeing in Alice Springs, we achieve a sense of inclusiveness as one community team, right across the country. Of course, the real champions in our game are the ones who work at the grassroots level - the thousands of people who volunteer to coach a team, teach in schools, referee a junior game, work in the canteen or take charge of the barbecue. These people are the lifeblood of our game.





**Know me for my Abilities  
Not my Disabilities!!**



# HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND GET INCLUSIVE



This Inclusion Framework brings together some core elements to advancing diversity and inclusion in Rugby League - whatever your level or role in the game. These include general information about inclusion, a self-assessment survey to measure your progress and a guide to plan your inclusion programs, plus tools and resources to help reach your goals.

## DISCOVER 7 PILLARS OF INCLUSION

Find out about [7 Pillars of Inclusion](#) a new way of looking at inclusion that has been developed by *Play by the Rules* and the Australian Sports Commission that will help you with ideas and actions to support all disadvantaged and diverse groups in league.

## SURVEY YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

After you've learned more about 7 Pillars of Inclusion, you can Survey your strengths and weaknesses by doing the short, free Survey to see how your Club or Association is progressing across the different pillar areas.

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Want to know more about what an inclusive club looks like and how you can make it happen? Look through our practical inclusion [tools and resources](#) to help you achieve your inclusion goals. Also check out the [Play by the Rules resources and education courses](#) to help make your club safe, fair and inclusive.

## EDUCATE YOURSELF

There are plenty of ways to educate yourself and they are all free and easily accessible. Access the [Play by the Rules online courses](#) including '[Discrimination & Harassment](#)' and '[Child Protection](#)'.



# MEASURING PROGRESS



## OUR SOCIAL IMPACT

In 2015, the NRL undertook its first Social Impact Report outlining the work we do and measuring the impact we have throughout our communities. The primary objective in measuring our work in the community is to effectively articulate the social, economic and environmental value that our community programs contribute year to year. Being accountable through this evaluation will ensure that we better understand and strive to improve our practices to achieve better outcomes for our community.

Review the [Social Impact Reports here](#).

## MEASURING PROGRESS

Progress on the inclusion activities across Rugby League will continue to be measured and reported in several ways:

- » Regular social impact reporting.
- » Goals and outcomes highlighted in each NRL Annual Report.
- » Clubs tracking their inclusion progress using the free online survey.
- » Ongoing consultation and research.
- » Ongoing monitoring and evaluation.



# REFERENCE AND ADVISORY GROUPS



The NRL consults with a range of organisations, groups and individuals to help facilitate inclusive practices in our strategies, policies and programs and remove any barriers to participation.

There are a several NRL committees who provide expert advice and strategic knowledge to these areas, including:

- » Australian Human Rights Commission (*Racism. It Stops With Me* program).
- » Australian Rugby League Indigenous Council.
- » Respectful Relationships Committee.
- » Pasifika Council.

## INCLUSION ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

A new Social Inclusion Advisory Group comprising of a member of each of the above NRL committees (i.e. Pasifika Council, ARL Indigenous Council, Respectful Relationships Committee) and State Leagues' representatives has been established. This group will provide expert advice from their respective areas into the inclusion work of the NRL and ensure cross-sharing of information across the various groups.

## CONTACTS

For details about this Inclusion Framework contact: [feedback@nrl.com.au](mailto:feedback@nrl.com.au)







**CONTACT US**

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**NRL.COM/COMMUNITY**