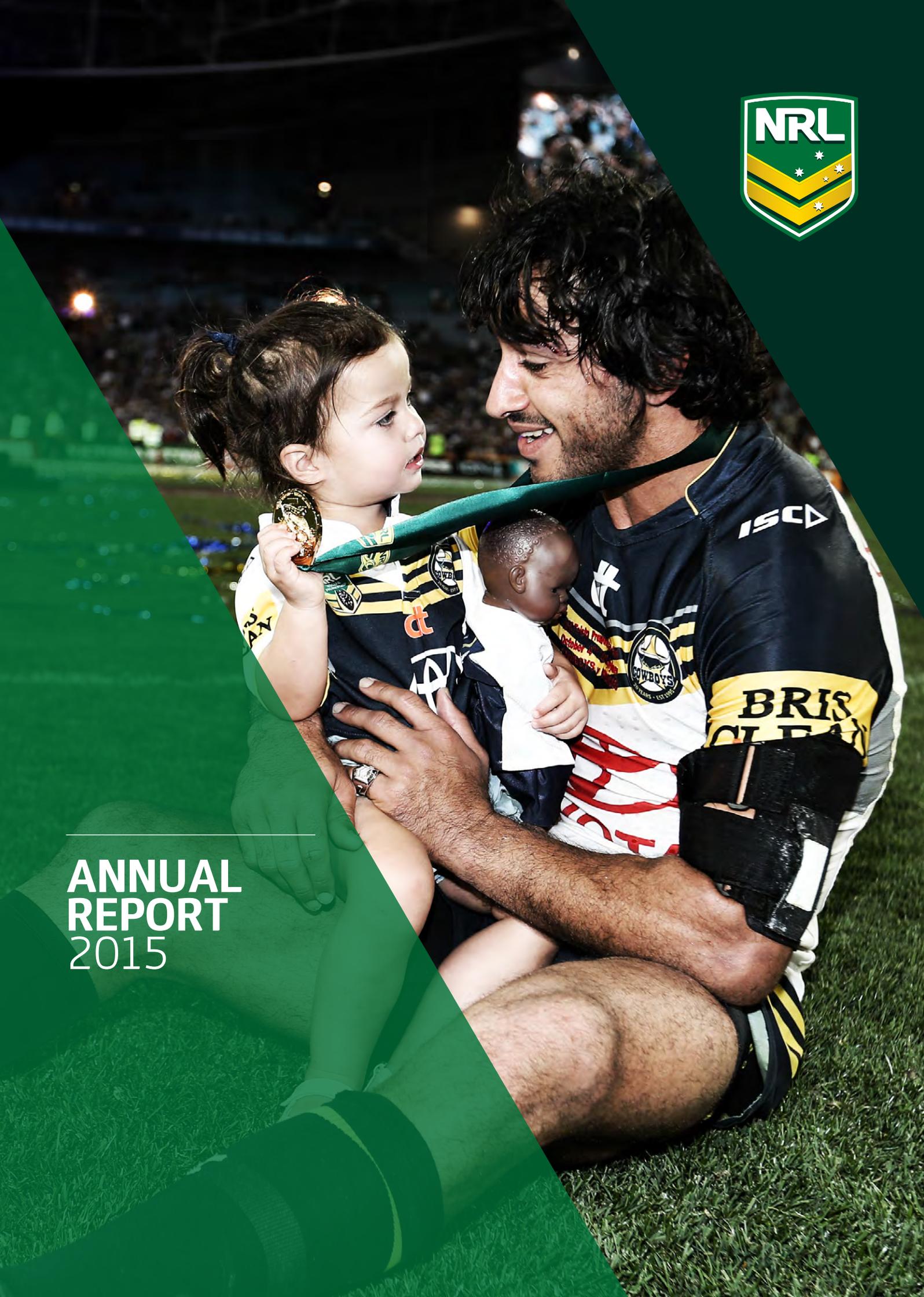




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**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2015**



## TOP 3 TV PROGRAMS

Australia's premium entertainment product

### \$1.8B

Record domestic media rights deal

### 9 MILLION

Record number of fans tune-in to content from NRL's official Facebook account on the day of the 2015 Grand Final

### \$1.6B

Announced investment from governments for new stadia

### 294,000 MEMBERS

More than ever before

### RECORD ATTENDANCE

At State of Origin Series and Finals Series

### 6% INCREASE

In participants to 1.4m

### \$218.7M

Record distributions to Clubs, States and Game Development



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**\$1.8B**

DOMESTIC MEDIA RIGHTS DEAL

**\$1.6B**ANNOUNCED INVESTMENT  
FROM GOVERNMENTS FOR  
NEW STADIA

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

2015 will go down as a landmark year for the Australian Rugby League Commission ("ARLC") – delivering a lucrative new broadcast rights deal, the announcement of massive investment in stadia, record State of Origin and Finals Series attendances and one of the most memorable Grand Finals in the game's history.

### Football

Again in 2015, Rugby League delivered outstanding entertainment to its fans.

The NRL Auckland Nines continued to prove the popularity of this format played by the stars of the game, and the expanded World Club Series – featuring three Club teams from Australia – built on the success of previous years and will now become a regular part of the Rugby League calendar.

Our Jillaroos reached new heights using their appearances at the Auckland Nines and as the curtain-raiser to our Kangaroos' Test matches to demonstrate their skill and appeal, particularly to television audiences.

The State of Origin Series drew a record series attendance with Game II at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground drawing over 91,500 fans.

No one could have been in any doubt that Origin had arrived in Melbourne.

A new attendance record was also set for the Telstra Premiership Finals Series which culminated in the match of the year and one of the greatest matches of all time, the 2015 Telstra Premiership Grand Final. People will always remember exactly where they were when Johnathan Thurston kicked the field goal that gave the North Queensland Cowboys their first and historic premiership. A better script could not have been written – a golden moment which capped off a highly successful season.

Once again the Grand Final and the State of Origin Series provided the three most watched shows on Australian television. This sustained success, together with many 'edge of the seat' moments that our game is known for, allowed the ARLC to secure \$1.8b for the game's free to air, subscription, mobile and digital rights in Australia with the Nine Network, Fox Sports and Telstra for five years from 2018. The sale of international and radio rights is still to come.

We're delighted and excited by the personal commitment from our partners' leading executives.

“Nine has always placed enormous value on its strong media partnership with Rugby League and that will only grow over the next seven years.”

**Hugh Marks**

CEO of Nine Entertainment Co.

“This is a big win for the fans and a big win for the clubs.”

**Peter Tonagh**

CEO of News Corp Australia

“Only Telstra can bring the sport experience and technology together and we are very excited to give fans digital access to NRL Nation.”

**Andrew Penn**

CEO of Telstra

“This is the best deal for the game, for the fans and for Foxtel subscribers. This breakthrough deal will ensure fans get to see their NRL team live in action every week up to the Grand Final on Fox Sports without ad breaks during play and in high definition.”

**Patrick Delany**

CEO of Fox Sports

In the international Rugby League arena, it was disappointing to see our Kangaroos lose their spot as the number one ranked international team.

As a result we moved to revamp the entire Kangaroos' strategy. Mal Meninga has accepted a dedicated role as National Coach. In addition to his duties as coach of the Kangaroos, Mal will also be charged with ensuring our elite player pathways deliver ongoing and long-term success for our national team. He will also be working with the Jillaroos, PM's XIII, the Junior Kangaroos and other international teams to help Australia succeed at every level. To support him, increased funding will see the appointment of additional high performance and statistics staff.

During the year, the ARLC also approved several changes to the rules for the 2016 season aimed at making our great game even better. The introduction of a shot clock and reduced interchanges in 2016 is anticipated to reward fitness and provide even more opportunities for the smaller, faster players in our game. Rugby League is a game that is constantly evolving and we want to ensure our traditions and the essence of our game are protected with rules which reflect modern developments of athletes and coaching practices.

We are also investing in a 'Bunker' for video referee decisions. Its leading edge technology will mean faster, more accurate and more consistent decision making – something our fans deserve.

The ARLC also endorsed a new Elite Pathways Strategy to be operational by 2018. This strategy will see two new senior competitions (Platinum League) administered by the QRL in the northern region and the NSWRL/CRL in the southern region.

These will build on the Qld and NSW open age State Cups and will see the NYC replaced by 'local' under 20 competitions also under the administration of the QRL and NSWRL/CRL.

It will also introduce new age-based contracting rules that will see young players unable to be contracted by an NRL Club until October of their 18th year, no player under the age of 18 paid, and NRL squads boosted to 36 including three new 'rookies' each year.

This combination is intended to keep our young men playing in their local areas and within the new pathways where Platinum League teams will be centred in regional communities, minimise 'stockpiling' of young players by the wealthier Clubs, and minimise the opportunity for these young men being exposed to welfare issues.

The announcement of \$1.6b by the NSW Government to fund a world-class rectangular stadia network in Sydney is a once in a generation opportunity. We, along with other sporting codes which use rectangular fields, support the Government's proposed investment in Moore Park, Homebush and Parramatta. Sydney has been deprived of investment in world-class rectangular sporting stadia for more than a generation so it is vitally important we bring this announcement to reality. The ARLC will be working closely with our Sydney-based NRL Clubs to pull out all stops to do so.

Outside of Sydney, we worked with Federal, State and Local Governments to deliver better facilities in other regions, particularly in Townsville and Canberra.

Solid progress has been made towards delivering a new stadium in Townsville CBD, with the new Queensland Government already committing \$100m and Townsville City Council is in the process of acquiring the land needed for the new facility.

The Federal Government is now considering requests for funding towards the new stadium, as part of an integrated facility that could ultimately include convention facilities and an entertainment centre. The local community, North Queensland Cowboys and NRL are all hopeful of a positive outcome by the end of 2016.

We also worked with the Canberra Raiders and the ACT Government on a new stadium in the heart of Canberra as part of the Government's City to the Lake Plan. The work is in its early stages and focussed on exploring potential funding opportunities to bring this exciting project to life.

## Operations

The game set itself ambitious targets across a broad landscape for 2015. The demanding quest to improve game day attendances, broadcast share and ratings, participation, non-broadcast revenues, the on field game, officiating and to further develop the capacity and capability of the organisation within the context of a tight budget saw some hits and misses on those targets.

## Non-Financial Results

In terms of our non-financial metrics, we saw solid growth in NRL Club memberships (up 5%), attendances at State of Origin (up 21%) and the Finals Series (up 9%). But we were disappointed at the 5% decline to 15,078 in NRL average season attendances.

There are a variety of reasons for the decline, but we will continue to work with the NRL Clubs and players, transport authorities and stadia operators to make our game more attractive for fans to attend games. Investment in our stadia is critically important in this respect.

Television share of audience increased over the previous year while ratings were mixed predominantly due to a sharp decline in line with the overall trend in free to air television in regional areas. Again work will be done in 2016 with our broadcasters to understand and to address this trend.

Total participation numbers, across both NRL and Touch Football, increased 6% from 1.3m to 1.4m. Notably we saw very strong growth of 26% in women playing a form of our game. However male participation was flat and more will be done in 2016 to understand the dynamics behind this.

## Financial Results

In presenting the financial results for the year, there are three aspects that are key to gaining an informed view.

Firstly, transition to a new distribution based financial model.

In 2013 and 2014, the game's financial performance was presented in an NRL centric gross operating profit model more aligned to a for-profit company. It confused many of our stakeholders, even given the ARLC has never wavered from its core belief that, as a not-for-profit entity, its purpose is to generate financial reserves from commercial activities to apply and distribute in furtherance of the broad mandate to foster, grow and develop the game.

Other major Australian sports report on a distribution basis and the ARLC has resolved to align its reporting with this practice. The change has been adopted for 2015 onwards and is in line with the purpose of the ARLC.

Secondly, transition from accumulation to distribution over the five-year cycle of broadcast revenues.

Our current strategic plan, The Game Plan 2013-17, envisaged accumulating financial reserves in the early years of the cycle and progressively and increasingly distributing these reserves towards sustainability and growth over the full cycle.

2015 represented the third year of the current five-year broadcast agreements. In 2013 and 2014, accumulated reserves exceeded distributions. In 2015, distributions, as planned, exceeded accumulated reserves.

Over the full cycle, the ARLC has also been mindful of improving the game's balance sheet including financial reserves to levels that balance the need to provide a buffer against unexpected events and increasing distributions to grow the game. The financial reserves include the Sustainability Fund which currently has over \$50m invested by the ARLC's investment managers.

And thirdly, the concept of Controlling Body and Controlled Entities.

The ARLC directly operates the NRL, together they are the "Controlling Body".

It also has a number of entities it owns – the Knights Rugby League and the Titans Rugby League and the Affiliate States – the "Controlled Entities". (It is appropriate to restate that the ARLC does not intend being a long-term owner of NRL Clubs).

**\$219M****RECORD DISTRIBUTIONS TO CLUBS, STATES AND GAME DEVELOPMENT**

In 2015, revenues and expenditure of the 100% owned Clubs are aggregated into one ARLC consolidated result under the relevant accounting standards. In 2014, this consolidation only included the Knights Rugby League for a part of the year.

During the year the ARLC undertook the important reform of reconstituting the pre-existing Rugby League peak bodies in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia to form part of the ARLC structure. This structural reform positions the game for growth beyond the foundation states of NSW and Queensland by establishing ARLC NT Ltd, ARLC SA Ltd, ARLC VIC Ltd and ARLC WA Ltd. These new entities have also been aggregated into the consolidated statutory accounts, with their revenues and expenditures forming part of the ARLC Consolidated Statutory Financial Result. In 2014 these entities did not exist and hence were not included in the consolidated results.

The upshot is the ARLC is now a very different organisation to the entity it was in 2014, and the ARLC Consolidated Financials reflect these changes and record an \$18.7m deficit for the 2015 financial year (\$20.2m surplus in 2014).

**294K****MEMBERSHIP RECORD**

This result includes the net operating loss from the Controlled Entities of \$6.2m including a charge of \$4.2m relating to establishing the new Titans Rugby League entity (\$2.4m) and a write-down of goodwill (\$1.8m).

However, the Consolidated Financials do not provide an 'apples for apples' comparison of the ARLC's performance as a governing body. To provide this, the Financial Summary shows the Controlling Body results separately.

In 2015 total Controlling Body revenue reached \$354.3m compared to \$344.8m in 2014. Non-broadcast revenue was \$129.3m (up 9% on 2014) and in line with The Game Plan's target of doubling non-broadcast revenue by 2017. Flat sponsorship and digital revenues were offset by strong growth in product fees and merchandising royalties.

Overall Controlling Body operating expenditure totalled \$127.8m (up 17% from \$109.2m in 2014) thus providing funds available for distribution to Clubs, States and development of \$206.2m (down 4% from \$214.8m in 2014). This fell short of our targets primarily due to a one-off impairment charge of \$4.4m against loans to Clubs, higher relative costs for major events (up 21% or \$12.4m) and additional elite football expenditure (up 18% or \$3.2m).

**224K****RECORD STATE OF ORIGIN SERIES ATTENDANCE**

The Controlling Body's Administration costs increased 6% to \$23.3m primarily due to increased staff costs and additional investment in human resource systems and information technology licence fees.

With the transition from accumulation to distribution, distributions increased substantially to \$218.7m up 13% from \$193m in 2014 – Clubs up \$15.7m (11%), States and Affiliates up \$5.8m (25%) and development up \$4.2m (18%).

With the decision to fund these additional distributions in 2015, the overall Controlling Body position for the financial year was a deficit of \$12.5m (surplus of \$21.8m in 2014) and a net asset position at the end of 2015 of \$74.1m (\$86.5m in 2014).

**Looking ahead**

On the field, the game in 2016 looks very exciting. The rule changes for interchanges and the shot clock and the much anticipated 'Bunker' will introduce an element of the unknown.

The impact of the retirement of State of Origin's most successful coach, Mal Meninga, will keep us guessing until the final game is over and the Four Nations in England at the end of the season provides an opportunity for the Kangaroos to reclaim their international number one ranking.

And to ensure our game is played in world-class facilities, we will work constructively and proactively with the NRL Clubs and our government stakeholders to convert the announced stadia investment to reality.

Under the new broadcast agreements from 2018 to 2022, every NRL game will be shown live across the nation, and in High Definition.

The Nine Network will televise Thursday and Friday night matches and a Sunday afternoon game. Fox Sports will televise all eight matches every round – including five exclusive games. Telstra Premiership matches will be held five days a week in 2016 – from Thursday to Monday inclusive – before reverting to four days a week in 2017. From 2017, Monday night games will be moved to Friday at 6pm.

For the first time, Fox Sports will run a dedicated Rugby League channel from 2017 providing previews, commentary, more magazine-style shows, matches and analysis.

Also under the agreement, News Corporation will use its local and worldwide resources to promote the game.

Telstra will continue as naming rights partner of the NRL and will show the game digitally on its mobile network. The partnership between the NRL and Telstra is one of the longest in Australian sports history, spanning 17 years. The new agreement will extend this partnership to 22 years.

Importantly, these agreements can secure the next stage of our game's development and growth. A high level, in-principle agreement with the NRL Clubs will see an additional \$100m a year flow to the Clubs to reward their players and invest in financial sustainability, growth and governance.

An additional \$100m a year will also flow to strengthen the competition pathways from the grassroots to the State Cups in both city and regional areas and support the efforts of the game's parents, volunteers and officials.

Having established a solid financial basis and secured our major future revenue streams through to 2022, the game is well placed to deliver increased distributions over the balance of this investment cycle. This transfer of funding will be undertaken prudently and still result in the ARLC's net asset position being materially above its starting position in 2012 upon the ARLC's formation.

We have approached 2016 as a year in which we will consolidate the gains made in 2013-2015. Consequently, the Controlling Body budget has seen considerable cost taken out compared with 2015. We have also restructured the business to ensure control and accountability is clear and we are driving cultural change with excellence and service to stakeholders as the priorities.

Away from the elite game, Rugby League is facing increased competition from alternative recreational activities and sports than ever before and we will be working with the Clubs and States to implement the Elite Pathways Strategy and a new participation strategy to ensure our game offers the best athletes a well-structured and clear pathway to the top and support for our grassroots to grow participation.

While the on-field entertainment will remain a source of inspiration, a continuation of off-field dramas and consequent negative media headlines risk disenfranchising both loyal and potential fans. If our game is to reach its potential, it will only do so if the interests and intent of all stakeholders are aligned for the good of the game, and our behaviours are guided by the game's core values – courage, inclusiveness, teamwork and excellence.

**In closing**

I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Dave Smith, who stood down as Chief Executive Officer in late 2015 after nearly three years in the role. Dave took on one of the toughest tasks in Australian sport, implementing major changes to a game which has been around for more than a century.

**He leaves the game in strong shape and we thank him for his untiring efforts.**

We now look forward to 2016 which will see the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer, a renewed focus on grassroots Rugby League, greater financial autonomy for our Clubs and hopefully, an even more exciting season of football than we had this year.

## COMMISSIONERS

**Tony McGrath**

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

**Ian Elliot**

Mr Elliot is the previous CEO and Chairman of George Patterson Advertising. He is currently a Director of Salmat Limited, Hills Limited and McMillan Shakespeare Group Ltd and Chairman of The Dry July Foundation.

**Jeremy Sutcliffe**

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

**John Grant**

Chairman

Mr Grant is Chairman of Discovery Technology Pty Ltd and former Managing Director of Data#3 Limited and a former Director of the Australian Information Industry Association.

**Wayne Pearce OAM**

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

**Catherine Harris AO PSM**

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

**Graeme Samuel AC**

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

**Dr Chris Sarra**

Dr Sarra is Founding Chairman of the Stronger Smarter Institute. Dr Sarra is the Chairman of the People, Workplace Culture and Remuneration Committee.

**THE ARL COMMISSION**

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

- » Foster, develop, extend and provide adequate funding for the game from the junior to elite levels and generally to act in the best interests of the game;
- » Liaise with and delegate appropriate functions to governing bodies of the game in the States and Territories of Australia, including the NSWRL and QRL;
- » Organise and conduct all State of Origin and Australian representative games, recognising that the selection and management of the State of Origin teams representing New South Wales and Queensland shall be undertaken in accordance with the ARLC Constitution;
- » Organise and conduct the NRL Competition;
- » Foster the NRL Competition;
- » Liaise with the Rugby League International Federation Limited (or any succeeding body) 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;
- » Monitor and review of internal audit systems and controls; and
- » Monitoring and reviewing the independence, objectivity and effectiveness of external auditors.

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

**People, Workplace Culture and Remuneration Committee (PWCRC)**

The key responsibilities of PWCRC include:

- » Overseeing the organisation's policies and strategies relating to people, including workplace health and safety, diversity and inclusion;
- » Monitoring and reviewing the organisation's talent, remuneration, performance and reward framework;
- » Making recommendations to the Commission regarding the adoption of an NRL balanced scorecard;
- » Monitoring compliance with applicable legislation, including superannuation; and

- » CEO and executive management succession planning, including making recommendations to the Commission regarding recruitment and selection.

Committee members: Chris Sarra (Chairman), Cathy Harris, Ian Elliot, John Grant.

**Nominations Committee**

The key responsibilities of the Nominations Committee include:

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

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

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



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# FOOTBALL

## THE ELITE COMPETITIONS

The 2015 NRL Telstra Premiership will be remembered as a season of close games, improved player wellbeing, a stunning Holden State of Origin Series, the best attendances for a Finals Series ever, and a remarkable and memorable Grand Final.

### AUCKLAND NINES

The season kicked off with another successful NRL Auckland Nines.

The Nines concept continues to provide fast and entertaining Rugby League – and it gives the fans a chance to see all 16 Clubs plus the best Australian and New Zealand women's teams on the same day.

Thousands of fans travel to Auckland from Australia and other parts of New Zealand for the season opener.

In the 2015 tournament, the South Sydney Rabbitohs won the title, beating the Cronulla Sharks in golden try extra time.

### WORLD CLUB SERIES

An expanded World Club Series was held in the United Kingdom in 2015 featuring six teams – three from Australia and three from England – over three days.

The three Australian teams, the Rabbitohs, Broncos and Dragons all won their matches.

The Rabbitohs stamped themselves as the number one Club team in the world with an emphatic 39-0 win over English champions St Helens.

“Not only did we have great crowds, especially the sell-out World Club Challenge at St Helens, we also had over two million people watch the World Club Series matches and highlights on Sky Sports and the BBC,” said Blake Solly, Super League General Manager.

### HARVEY NORMAN RUGBY LEAGUE ALL STARS

Two of the game's biggest names, Greg Inglis and Johnathan Thurston helped make the All Stars match one of the best on record when they starred for the Indigenous team.

More than 23,000 fans turned up to see the All Stars match on the Gold Coast, with the Indigenous team running out winners 20-6.

Both Inglis and Thurston scored tries, proving again why they are among the most popular players in the game.

A highlight of the All Stars match in 2015 was the unveiling of a 'war cry' devised and performed by the playing group.

The war cry, which is expected to become a permanent feature of the game, is a dance to welcome people to country and respect the Indigenous culture.

In 2016, the Indigenous team will take on a World All Stars, boasting some of the biggest names from all over the globe.

## NRL TELSTRA PREMIERSHIP

The 2015 NRL Telstra Premiership was one of the closest on record, with almost one in three matches decided by four points or less.

In fact, the season featured the equal most number of golden point games of any season on record.

This was also reflected in the competition table which saw early contenders fade and a slow starter go all the way.

The match-ups to commence the Finals Series were not determined until the last premiership round. It is not surprising, therefore, that a new attendance record was set for the Finals Series.

The eight teams in the finals comprised five from Sydney, two from Queensland and one from Melbourne.

For the first time, two Queensland teams – the Broncos and the Cowboys – played in the NRL Telstra Premiership Grand Final. It attracted a crowd of more than 82,000 fans to ANZ Stadium – and produced one of the greatest Grand Finals of all time.

The match went into extra time before the mercurial Johnathan Thurston kicked a field goal to secure the Cowboys their first premiership.



More than **82,000**  
attendance for the Grand Final



## HOLDEN STATE OF ORIGIN SERIES

It was one of the most anticipated State of Origin Series in years.

The Queensland Maroons were determined to recapture the Origin title they had held for eight years before the NSW Blues broke the sequence in 2014.

The series started in typical style with a Cooper Cronk field goal giving Queensland a late win in SOO I, held at ANZ Stadium in Sydney.

SOO II was always going to be a special night, with Origin being taken to the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground for the first time since 1997.

The night lived up to all expectations.

In front of a crowd of more than 91,000 fans, the NSW Blues pulled off a spectacular 26-18 win to set up a series decider.

Queensland showed why the current team will go down as one of the greatest ever with a stunning 52-6 win in front of their home crowd at Suncorp Stadium.

The team was unstoppable.

And they sent out their long-serving centre, Justin Hodges, on the best note possible. Hodges capped off a remarkable Origin career by kicking the final goal of the match.

The series drew a record Origin attendance of more than 220,000 fans to the three games.



More than **91,000**  
attendance for SOO II at the MCG





## MAL MENINGA APPOINTED KANGAROOS COACH

Queensland great Mal Meninga has agreed to be coach of the Australian Kangaroos until the end of 2019.

Meninga is one of the most successful elite coaches in recent Rugby League history.

He has coached the Queensland Maroons to nine series wins in the last 10 years – including a record-breaking eight series in succession.

Under the new Kangaroos strategy, Meninga will be dedicated solely to the Kangaroos – which means he will not coach any Club or State team.

He will also work with the development of the Junior Kangaroos,

Australian Schoolboys and Australian Jillaroos programs, as well as other national high-performance pathways.

And he will be an Ambassador for the game wherever he travels.

The Commission has set a target for Australia to regain its number one ranking in international Rugby League – and win the World Cup in 2017.

It also wants to ensure that playing for the Kangaroos is the pinnacle of every player's career.

“I couldn't think of a coach more suited to this role, given Mal's achievements as a former Kangaroos captain and his understanding of what representing Australia means.”

**Cameron Smith**  
Australian Captain

## KANGAROOS

The ARL Commission has approved a package of measures aimed at restoring the Kangaroos as the number one ranked team in international football.

Interest in the international game has never been higher – and the top nations have never been so competitive.

New Zealand are currently ranked the number one nation ahead of Australia and Great Britain. The Pacific nations – Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Papua New Guinea – are improving rapidly.

The Commission has determined that new high-performance measures should be provided to help the Kangaroos regain the number one ranking. A succession plan will also be developed to prepare players for promotion to the Australian team.

“We are determined to make sure the Kangaroos are given every chance to win the Four Nations tournament next year and, ultimately, the World Cup in 2017.”

**John Grant**  
ARL Commission Chairman



# No.1

To make the Kangaroos  
the best in the world again



More than

400,000

female participants now playing  
Touch, Tag or Tackle

## WOMEN'S RUGBY LEAGUE - HARVEY NORMAN JILLAROOS

The women's game in Australia has never been stronger.

In 2015, female participation in Club Rugby League rose by 26 per cent. There are now 400,000 females playing a form of Rugby League, whether it is tackle, tag or touch.

Importantly, more than 170,000 of these are schoolgirls who are developing an interest in the various forms of Rugby League giving them an introduction to our game which will hopefully lead to a continued interest for years to come.

At the elite level, the national Jillaroos team made huge strides in 2015.

The team attracted big audiences at the ground and on television as they played a starring role at the Auckland Nines event and in the curtain raiser to the Anzac Test. More than 500,000 people watched the Jillaroos play either at the ground or on television in 2015.

The NRL has recognised the growing interest in the women's game by including a Female Player of the Year trophy in the Dally M Awards - the most prestigious awards ceremony of the year. This year's winner was Jenni-Sue Hoepper.

## PREMIERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

### ANZAC DAY

The NRL has always had strong links with Australia's defence forces.

But those links were strengthened this year when the NRL worked with the Australian and New Zealand Defence Forces, the RSL and the Australian War Memorial on a 10-day Anzac Centenary commemorative program – so we could play our part in honouring servicemen and women.

This year on Anzac Day, we saw the biggest day of Rugby League in the game's history – with five games in five cities across New Zealand, New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. And, at each of those matches, there were commemorative services to reflect on the true meaning of the day.

The 10-day commemorative program also included the Anzac Test between Australia and New Zealand, with both the men and women playing, and a Pacific double-header featuring Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. At each game we acknowledged the contribution of the Pacific nations – as well as Australia and New Zealand – to our military efforts.

Importantly we entered into a new partnership with the Australian War Memorial to ensure the Anzac Centenary is respectfully commemorated into the future. The two groups will work together on initiatives to enhance the community's understanding of the sacrifices made by servicemen and women in that time.

“I have played in a number of Anzac Day matches and there is always so much pride on show by any teams which take part. Equally there is enormous pride from the defence force personnel who are present. It is one of the most significant days for Australians and New Zealanders and I am humbled to play such a role in it.”

**Aiden Guerra**  
Sydney Roosters



## INDIGENOUS ROUND

The NRL Indigenous Round highlights the significant contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to the game of Rugby League both on and off the field.

The Indigenous Round provided an opportunity for the game to celebrate this contribution and recognise our First Peoples' status in the community and throughout Rugby League.

Key to this is the game's partnership with RECOGNISE, a campaign which aims to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's constitution and ensure there's no place for racial discrimination.

The RECOGNISE logo was displayed on the 40 metre line of all games played during this round, as well as on referees' jerseys.

The NRL is one of the only major sporting codes that has a Reconciliation Action Plan, which is a demonstration of its commitment to our Indigenous Australians.

“Such a display of support from the NRL would fill players and the public with hope of a successful referendum.

It would be a pretty special moment, I think, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be recognised, and for everyone to come together as one and stand side by side.”

**Nathan Merritt**

Former Rabbitoh, NSW and Indigenous All Stars representative.

## MEN OF LEAGUE HERITAGE ROUND

The NRL's Men of League Heritage Round was held in partnership with the Men of League Foundation in 2015.

In this round, the NRL celebrated the rich history and heritage of the game, while raising awareness for Men of League and the invaluable support they provide to past and present players and the broader Rugby League community.

It also provided a platform for the NRL to launch its whole-of-game NRL Foundation to provide practical, emotional and financial assistance to players who sustain catastrophic injuries. A partnership with Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) was also announced. The Men of League Foundation and the NRL are committed to an even stronger relationship for the benefit of the Rugby League community.

## WOMEN IN LEAGUE ROUND

The Harvey Norman Women in League program celebrates and acknowledges the role women play at all levels and in all areas of the Rugby League community.

But the Women In League program is more than just acknowledgement in one NRL round. In 2015, seven workshops were held across Australia and New Zealand for female volunteers in the game and a mentoring program commenced to support women in their leadership aspirations.

The NRL hosted three corporate engagement events as part of our Women In League program, highlighting the State of Mind program with our expert partners and Ambassadors, sponsored by PwC.

The 10-year anniversary of Harvey Norman's involvement in Women in League occurs in 2016.

This provides an exciting opportunity to celebrate and promote the initiative as well as extend the reach and scope of the Women In League program.



## OUR PLAYERS

Our players are the game's biggest asset.

Every week, millions of fans – either at the ground or on television – watch the world's best Rugby League players competing for the NRL Telstra Premiership.

The players are getting bigger, faster, stronger and more skillful.

So it is important that the NRL works with the Rugby League Players Association (RLPA) to recognise, reward and protect players – and to help prepare them for life after Rugby League.

The NRL is working closely with the RLPA and the Clubs on the best ways to protect player welfare, while meeting the commitments to the broadcasters and sponsors who help fund the game and pay the salaries of our elite players.

As a first step, the NRL agreed to a request to provide one week of additional annual leave in 2015 to help players rest and recover after the end of the season.

At the annual RLPA Awards, Cowboys captain, Johnathan Thurston, received the peer-voted Players' Player Medal for an unprecedented fourth time.

This was followed by his Dally M Award as Player of the Year.

The prestigious Dennis Tutty Award was presented to Manly's Tom Symonds for his commitment and determination to champion the rights of his fellow players.

“Leadership, guidance, honesty, integrity and transparency are the qualities that underpin our Association and we want to lead by example in those areas.”

**Clint Newton**  
Chair & General President,  
Rugby League Players Association

### PLAYER WELLBEING

Steps were taken during 2015 to continue to improve player safety both on and off the field.

A new Chief Medical Officer, Dr Paul Bloomfield, was appointed with a mandate to help develop and implement key policies relating to player wellbeing.

The NRL's concussion policy was strengthened by new rules and technology designed to assist medical staff to recognise and remove players from the field for testing and treatment.

During the year the game continued to review its approach in areas including prescription and illicit drug use, Club doctor responsibilities, cardiac screening and the development of paramedic trainers and game day paramedic policy.

The shoulder charge rules were tightened to better protect players carrying the ball. This comes on top of the tougher stance taken against crusher and wrestling related tackles, which has significantly reduced the number of dangerous tackles in the game.

The NRL also set up a Medical Advisory Panel and formalised the Rugby League Research Board to support the strategic direction of player safety and Rugby League research initiatives across the whole of game.



## WELFARE AND EDUCATION

The NRL's Welfare and Education programs aim to help players develop their potential in every aspect of their lives, making them better for being part of our game.

Not just in football, but at work, at home and in the community.

The NRL wants young people to be proud to be part of Rugby League and to adopt a balanced life so they are ready for a career when they stop playing.

### CharacterWise

The CharacterWise program has been designed to support players to become good teammates on the field and ethical decision makers off it.

It helps to make players great ambassadors for their Club and for Rugby League.

In 2015, more than 9000 players, staff, officials and parents across Australia and New Zealand took part in a range of educational experiences to help them make better decisions.

This includes leadership programs which can be used in every area of their life: personal, community and career.

Participants also engaged in a range of social responsibility programs relating to alcohol management, respectful relationships, illicit drugs and making better choices.

### HealthWise

The HealthWise program helps guide players towards retirement with support in key areas of their lives, including physical and mental wellbeing, finances, career and social engagement.

In 2015, 14 per cent of NRL players and staff used the game's counselling services – double the usage in 2014. This highlights that the messages being delivered to our elite players by their peers is positively changing perceptions and that it is “not weak to speak up and ask for help”.

The NRL's State of Mind ambassadors, who include Darius Boyd, Dan Hunt, Sam Tagatese, Preston Campbell and Michael Morgan, have been instrumental in changing the perception and stigma of mental illness.

### CareerWise

The CareerWise program is designed to help young footballers perform better on the field – and off the field in work, school and further education.

In 2015, more than 80 per cent of NRL contracted players were engaged in some form of vocational development.

There are now more than 2500 under 16 and under 18 junior representative players throughout the country who have taken part in workshops on the importance of having an education and sport balance.

In addition, more than 200 NRL and NYC players were enrolled in 32 university campuses in Australia and New Zealand, studying a range of degrees including commerce, social sciences, engineering and law.

The NRL's Graduates of League program encourages players to complete further education with the current pass rate at 87 per cent.

For those who do not want to pursue a university or VET program, the NRL has a 'Trade Up' program to encourage players to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship. More than 360 players have taken part in this program over the past two years.

“I was very impressed with the Country Rugby League academy selection trials today at Lake Ainsworth. A very well organised day with varied content. I was most impressed with the emphasis on careers and the importance of scholastic and tertiary education. My son has come away with a changed view of his schooling efforts and enthusiasm to do better. Well done to all involved.”

**Northern NSW U/16 year old player's parent**



# 80%

of NRL contracted players were engaged in some form of vocational development

## TOUCH FOOTBALL

There is a place on the field for everyone in our game.

That's why our partnership with Touch Football Australia (TFA) is so important. Not only does Touch Football give everyone a chance to play our game but it provides an alternative parallel pathway for those who want to graduate to play Rugby League at the senior level.

There are currently more than 670,000 people playing organised Touch Football competitions.

Many of them are women and juniors – who we encourage to be an active group in our Rugby League community.

The highlight of the year was Australia hosting the Touch Football World Cup at Coffs Harbour over five days from April 29. The Australian teams won eight of the nine divisions, including retaining the Opens and Masters World Cup trophies.

### The Touch Football partnership grew in 2015 with highlights including:

- » Harvey Norman coming on board as naming rights sponsor
- » The 2015 Touch Football World Cup finals were screened on Channel 9 as curtain raisers to the Sunday NRL telecasts. This gave the game unprecedented exposure to potential new players

- » Touch Football was included in the NRL All Stars program
- » Numerous activations and relationships were established with NRL Clubs, State bodies and local leagues, including the Sharks hosting the Trans-Tasman Youth Series at Shark Park.

The partnership with TFA continues to generate interest in Rugby League among participants who were previously not involved in the game.

In the process it is helping the NRL move closer towards its goal of becoming Australia's largest sporting community.

## MATCH OFFICIALS

In the 2015 season, 72 match officials (referees and touch judges) officiated 402 NRL Telstra Premiership and National Youth Competition (NYC) matches.

For the first time in 2015, NRL Referees Elite Performance Manager Tony Archer performed a weekly interview analysing and clarifying the toughest calls, right or wrong, from the previous round's matches.

Women's involvement in Rugby League officiating continued to make progress this year as referee Kasey Badger became the second woman to officiate an NRL first grade match.

Throughout the season, six other officials made their NRL debut, including Tim Roby and Kena Waikai, who both entered the Emerging Referee squad from the English Super League and New Zealand respectively. Majority of NYC officials are now part of our Emerging Referees Program that has been established in both New South Wales and Queensland, with a satellite program in New Zealand to help develop referees of the future.



More than **670,000**  
people currently playing organised  
Touch Football competitions



## MILESTONES

### INDUCTEES TO THE "300 CLUB"

Only 24 players have achieved the feat of playing 300 games in one of the toughest competitions in the world.

Some of those in the elite club include Darren Lockyer, Terry Lamb, Brad Fittler, Anthony Minichiello and Nathan Hindmarsh.

Three of the best and most resilient players in Rugby League joined the exclusive "300 club" in 2015.

**This year's inductees were:**

**Corey Parker**

Brisbane Broncos

**Cameron Smith**

Melbourne Storm

**Anthony Watmough**

Manly Sea Eagles

Northern Eagles

Parramatta Eels

### NRL COACH MILESTONES

» **Des Hasler** brought up his 300th game as first grade coach when the Bulldogs played Penrith at ANZ Stadium in Round 15

» **Ivan Cleary** reached the milestone of 250 games as first grade coach when the Panthers met St. George Illawarra at WIN Stadium in Round 24.



## 2015 DALLY M AWARD WINNERS

### » Player of the Year

Johnathan Thurston  
(Cowboys)

### » Lock of the Year

Jason Taumalolo  
(Cowboys)

### » Second-Rower of the Year

Josh Jackson  
(Bulldogs)

### » Hooker of the Year

Michael Ennis  
(Sharks)

### » Prop of the Year

Aaron Woods  
(Wests Tigers)

### » Halfback of the Year

Johnathan Thurston  
(Cowboys)

### » Five-Eighth of the Year

Blake Austin  
(Raiders)

### » Winger of the Year

Semi Radradra  
(Eels)

### » Centre of the Year

James Roberts  
(Titans)

### » Fullback of the Year

Roger Tuivasa-Sheck  
(Roosters)

### » Top Points-Scorer

Jarrold Croker  
(Raiders)

### » Top Try-Scorer

Semi Radradra  
(Eels)

### » Female Player of the Year

Jenni-Sue Hoepper  
(Queensland/Australia)

### » Peter Frilingos Headline

**Moment of the Year**  
Nathan Friend 'Scissor Kick'  
(Warriors)

### » Holden Cup Player of the Year

Ashley Taylor  
(Broncos)

### » Representative Player of the Year

Corey Parker  
(Broncos)

### » Provan Summons People's Choice Medal

Johnathan Thurston  
(Cowboys)

### » Ken Stephens Medal

Luke Douglas  
(Titans)

### » Captain of the Year

Matt Scott and Johnathan Thurston  
(Cowboys)

### » Rookie of the Year

Jack Bird  
(Sharks)

### » Coach of the Year

Wayne Bennett  
(Broncos)

## 2015 RETIRING CLASS

### Broncos

David Stagg  
Justin Hodges



### Panthers

Nigel Plum  
Sika Manu  
Brent Kite  
Nathan Smith  
David Simmons



### Bulldogs

Frank Pritchard  
Reni Maitua  
Krisnan Inu



### Raiders

Terry Campese  
Dane Tilse



### Cowboys

Glenn Hall



### Sharks

Bryce Gibbs



### Dragons

Bronson Harrison  
Dan Hunt



### Rabbitohs

Glenn Stewart  
Ben Lowe  
Lote Tuqiri



### Eels

Richard Fa-aoso  
Matt Keating  
Beau Champion



### Storm

Bryan Norrie  
Tom Learoyd-Lahrs



### Knights

Kurt Gidley  
David Fa'alogo  
Timana Tahu  
Clint Newton



### Tigers

Matthew Bell  
Keith Galloway



### Sea Eagles

David Williams



### Titans

Brad Tighe  
David Taylor



### Warriors

Sam Rapira

## 2015 VALE

### **KEL O'SHEA** (1933- 2015)

A tough and mobile second-rower, O'Shea formed one of Australia's most revered back row partnerships with St. George giant Norm Provan during the 1950s. During their prime the duo was affectionately referred to as 'Sticks' (Provan) and 'Twigs' (O'Shea) as they took on the might of the British and French packs of the era. O'Shea played 20 Test matches, all between the years 1954 and 1958.

He represented Queensland and Australia before heading to Sydney's Western Suburbs in 1956. His efforts to win a premiership with the Magpies were invariably thwarted by his great mate, Provan. O'Shea played 111 first grade games for Wests and was honoured in the Magpies' and Wests Tigers' Teams of the Century (2003), the NRL's Team of the 1950s (2007) and as one of the 100 Australian Rugby League Players of the Century (2008). He died at Redland Bay on January 22, aged 81.

### **RAY RITCHIE** (1936- 2015)

Ray Ritchie was a NSW and Australian representative who excelled both as a player and coach. Ray played 49 matches for Manly Warringah (including one Grand Final) between 1955 and 1959, two matches for NSW in 1957 and one match for Australia in the same year. Manly made the finals both years he coached the team, including the Grand Final in 1982.

### **TERRY FEARNLEY** (1933- 2015)

Terry Fearnley's first association with Rugby League was as a tough and resilient front-rower with Eastern Suburbs, where he played 139 first grade games over 10 seasons (1954-64). It was as a coach that he would make his greatest mark on the game. A former teammate of Jack Gibson, the pair remained close after retirement.

After assisting Gibson at Newtown and Easts, Fearnley took on the Parramatta first grade role in 1976 and steered the Eels to their first Grand Final the same season. A loss to Manly was followed by further heartache in 1977 when Fearnley's Eels drew the Grand Final with St George before going down in a controversial replay a week later. Fearnley coached New South Wales to their first State of Origin Series victory in 1985 and steered Australia to a 2-1 series win over New Zealand the same year. Fearnley died at Lilli Pilli on March 4, aged 81.

### **ALAN CLARKSON** (1930- 2015)

Alan Clarkson was a highly respected journalist for the Sydney Morning Herald in a career that spanned 40 years. He was a popular member of the Controversy Corner panel on Rex Mossop's sports program on Channel Seven. He died in Sydney on August 25, aged 85.

### **Dr KEN CRICHTON** (1955- 2015)

An inaugural and devoted member of the NRL Medical Advisory Panel, previous NRL Club doctor and was a founding member of the Australasian College of Sports Physicians (ACSP) and a past President.

### **STEVE HANSON** (1961- 2015)

Steve Hanson was a front-rower for North Sydney (1985-90) and Eastern Suburbs (1992-93) in 110 first grade games and also played in one State of Origin game for New South Wales in 1988. He suffered a heart attack while on holiday in Thailand and died at Concord on November 4, aged 54.

### **MIKE GIBSON** (1940- 2015)

Mike Gibson was one of Australia's foremost presenters and journalists who had a special love of Rugby League. Gibson excelled in all three forms of mainstream media – radio, television and print. He is probably best remembered for his role as host of the Wide World of Sports on Channel 9 during the 1980s. Mike was a fanatical North Sydney Bears fan.

## JAMES ACKERMAN (1990- 2015)

One of the most tragic events of the year was the death of Sunshine Coast Falcons player James Ackerman.

James died after collapsing in an Intrust Super Cup match in Brisbane.

Hundreds of mourners, including some of the biggest names in the game, attended his funeral at Sunshine Coast Stadium where he played his last game.

The entire Rugby League community extends its sympathies to James' friends and family, particularly his wife Saraa and two young children Olliver and Milly.



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## OUR CLUBS AND STATES



### FRMC CASE STUDY PARRAMATTA EELS MEMBERSHIP

# \$80,000

## IN 11 WEEKS

FRMC Senior Sales Consultant, Mark Muirhead, generated an additional \$80,000 for the Parramatta Eels in only 11 weeks. This revenue was generated through many different membership campaigns; the most notable was the single seat campaign. Mark would contact fans beside an open seat and see if they were interested in purchasing an additional membership for a friend or family member. This campaign generated over \$13,000 in just one week.

## OUR NRL CLUBS

The 16 NRL Clubs are the cornerstone of the game's success.

And, in 2015, they combined to make the NRL Telstra Premiership one of the closest and most competitive on record.

All 16 teams were genuine contenders for the finals at different stages of the competition.

The North Queensland Cowboys celebrated their 20th year in the competition by winning their first Premiership.

The Bulldogs also marked their 80th anniversary by taking two home games back to their famous home ground at Belmore. Both matches attracted huge crowds.

The NRL continued to work with the Clubs throughout 2015 to make them financially stronger with more members than ever before. An in-principle agreement on Club funding has been reached to give the Clubs even more financial security into the future.

### MEMBERSHIP

A new membership record was set across the game in 2015.

Our fans' appetite to be avid members of their Clubs and States grew by nearly 30,000 in 12 months to reach 294,206.

The South Sydney Rabbitohs continued to lead the way, signing more than 35,000 members in 2015.

The Clubs recording the biggest increases in memberships were the Titans (31 per cent), Panthers (23 per cent) and Raiders (22 per cent).

### Fan Relationship Management Centre

A key driver of the increase in memberships this year was the NRL-funded initiative to establish a Fan Relationship Management Centre (FRMC).

In its first 12 months of operation, the FRMC signed up more than 12,000 members, driving increased revenue to Clubs in 2015.

### NRL Business Academy

As part of an initiative to grow Club memberships, the NRL also created the Business Academy.

For the first time, a team of interns was trained and then deployed to the Clubs to provide expertise and additional capacity to help them drive membership.

In all, 30 students from eight universities across Australia and New Zealand took part in the program.

A by-product of the Academy is that it has created an entry level opportunity for these young people to pursue a career in NRL, NRL Clubs and State bodies. Many have already been offered employment in the game.

## MEMBERSHIPS

MEMBERS		2014	2015	% CHANGE
	Broncos	28,964	28,556	(1%)
	Bulldogs	16,515	18,240	10%
	Cowboys	12,020	14,330	19%
	Dragons	19,619	18,117	(8%)
	Eels	20,312	22,824	12%
	Knights	15,606	14,021	(10%)
	Panthers	16,204	19,884	23%
	Rabbitohs	30,504	35,311	16%
	Raiders	8,225	10,025	22%
	Roosters	16,815	16,682	(1%)
	Sea Eagles	12,941	12,265	(5%)
	Sharks	11,293	10,610	(6%)
	Storm	15,475	14,788	(4%)
	Titans	8,795	11,508	31%
	Warriors	10,483	10,962	5%
	Wests Tigers	9,853	9,342	(5%)
	NSWRL & QRL	14,238	26,741	123%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>267,862</b>	<b>294,206</b>	

Note: 2014 Club total only was 253,624



## SUPPORTING CLUBS, STATES AND AFFILIATES

The NRL competition requires 16 viable NRL Clubs. In 2015, in line with the NRL's strategic objective to strengthen Clubs so they are sustainable and resourced to perform and grow; four Clubs are in receipt of loans.

A full review of the recoverability of the loan portfolio was undertaken in 2015.

### Clubs

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

### Affiliates

In 2015, a restructure of the Affiliates was undertaken. Existing entities were restructured and new entities constituted under the Australian Rugby League Commission were established. Loans to Affiliates of \$400,000 were written-off as part of this process – providing each entity with a clean slate for the future.

Clubs, States and Affiliates Loan Portfolio as at 31 October 2015

	Clubs	States	Affiliates	Total
<b>NO. OF LOANS</b>	4	0	2	6
<b>Value of Loans (\$m)</b>				
Total Loans	30.1	–	0.4	30.5
Gross Drawn Loans	21.7	–	0.4	22.1
Loan Impairment	(8.6)	–	–	(8.6)
Loan Write-down	–	–	(0.4)	(0.4)
<b>Net Drawn Loans</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>13.1</b>
<b>Undrawn Loans</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>8.4</b>

### Key terms

#### Term:

At call to 7 years

#### Security:

Unsecured (intercompany) and secured

#### Interest:

Arm's length/market-based

### Loan recipients at 31 October 2015

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

### Note:

Additional to the loans are participation grants which have been issued in advance as at 31 October 2015. These have been reflected separately in Prepayments and Other Receivables (Current) in the Financial Statements.



## NSW COUNTRY RUGBY LEAGUE

Rugby League continues to grow in country NSW – with women participants leading the way.

2015 saw another increase in participation in the number of people playing Rugby League across regional NSW. Around 53,000 players took to the field each weekend for almost 500 clubs.

But it was in the women's game, mainly League Tag, in which the popularity of the game really surged.

Women's participation has grown an astonishing 86% over the last two seasons, with more than 5500 players taking part in competitions in almost every group across NSW.

A further highlight of 2015 was another successful Country versus City clash, held at Wagga Wagga.

A sell-out crowd packed McDonald's Park to see Country claim their fourth victory in six years over City with a 34-22 victory. Thousands of fans made their way on to the field at the end of the game to shake hands and spend time with their heroes.

### Additional highpoints of 2015 included:

- » Country Under-16s and Under-18s sides won three out of four games in New Zealand and the Country Bulls defeated the Northern Territory Titans in Darwin
- » Country Firsts took on the Fijian Residents in two matches, winning both games in Suva and Sigatoka
- » The AAMI Country Championships Finals, held in Mudgee, culminated in Illawarra claiming their seventh title in nine seasons.

As always, the CRL reserves its biggest accolades for the hundreds of volunteers and officials – the backbone of the game – who ensured matches were held successfully and safely throughout regional NSW in 2015.

Key Figures	2014	2015
Players	53,682	<b>53,778</b>
Teams	3,213	<b>3,324</b>
Clubs	537	<b>494</b>



## NSW RUGBY LEAGUE

2015 will be remembered as a game-changer for Rugby League in New South Wales following the State Government's approval of a new, \$20 million Centre of Excellence.

The Centre, to be developed at Sydney Olympic Park over the next two years, will become the new home of the NSW Blues.

It will include a full size training field, support facilities and administration offices – as well as a tunnel providing direct access to ANZ Stadium.

The Centre will be integral to the progression of emerging talent moving from junior representative sides through to the NSW State of Origin team, as well as women's teams and referees.

While the NSW VB Blues surrendered their Holden State of Origin title this year to Queensland, the NSW Rugby League (NSWRL) had many highlights including:

- » More than 80,000 fans at Origin I at ANZ Stadium, the home of the NSW VB Blues
- » The NSWRL's 'Hogs for the Homeless' program raised almost \$60,000 for Father Chris Riley's 'Youth Off The Streets' organisation; while almost \$22,000 was raised for the Starlight Children's Foundation 'Wish Foundation' through NSW competitions

- » 650 guests attended the Brad Fittler Medal, a spectacular function at The Star, with Josh Dugan claiming the major award
- » The 'Unite for Kurt' round held across all NSWRL competitions and other activities by the NSWRL family have raised almost \$300,000 for Cabramatta's Kurt Drysdale who suffered a serious spinal injury
- » The NSWRL was honoured at Kari Aboriginal Resources Incorporated's (KARI) inaugural Thanking Our Partners event, being named the KARI Partner of the Year 2015. The partnership sees KARI support the City Origin side as well as the Under-16s Indigenous side and the Young Achievers Tour of Europe
- » Newcastle Knights captain Clint Newton finished his VB NSW Cup career in the finest fashion with his team's 20-10 premiership win over Wyong
- » The NSWRL Pathways Programs continue to pave the way forward for the state's most promising junior players, with the Under-16s and Under-18s narrowly defeated by Queensland in their pre-Origin clashes in Sydney and Melbourne
- » The Under-20s continue to be the success story of the NSWRL Pathways Programs with their fourth consecutive win over Queensland, a 32-16 victory prior to Origin III in Brisbane.

### Competitions

More than 40,000 players registered to take part in the NSWRL's 11 Junior League competitions in 2015.

More than 3000 games were managed by the NSWRL – with support and assistance provided for a further 2000 games.

Importantly, 4000 children from almost 200 schools in Western Sydney attended Australia's biggest junior Rugby League carnival, the annual All Schools event at St Marys.

Key Figures	2014	2015
Players	42,536	<b>40,874</b>
Teams	2,549	<b>2,354</b>
Clubs	179	<b>180</b>



## QLD RUGBY LEAGUE

The 2015 Rugby League season will go down as a memorable one for Queenslanders.

After relinquishing the Holden State of Origin title to NSW in 2014 after eight successive series wins, the XXXX Maroons were desperate to be champions again.

They achieved that goal in emphatic style.

Queensland won the deciding match at Suncorp Stadium by a record 52-6 margin, enabling Mal Meninga's team to raise the Origin shield for the ninth time in 10 years.

But there was more to come.

For the first time, two Queensland teams – the Broncos and the Cowboys – played in the Grand Final of the NRL Telstra Premiership.

It was one of the great Grand Finals of recent years and, fittingly, it was decided by a Johnathan Thurston field gold in extra time to give the Cowboys their first title.

### Other highlights of the year included:

- » The Ipswich Jets won the Intrust Super Cup premiership – and went on to win the NRL State Championship with a victory over the Newcastle Knights
- » Queensland recorded victories in the Under-16s and Under-18s interstate representative games
- » The popularity of the women's game continued to grow with participation rates rising 95% across Queensland
- » The Queensland women's team lifted the Nellie Doherty Shield for a 17th consecutive year after a hard-fought draw against the NSW Blues.

Key Figures	2014	2015
Players	61,828	<b>72,811</b>
Teams	3,974	<b>3,470</b>
Clubs	455	<b>403</b>



## NRL ACROSS AUSTRALIA

A restructure of the Affiliated States was carried out in 2015 to make the game stronger across Australia.

After an extensive governance review, the game established ARL Commission structures to assist in growing the game across Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory, Victoria and Tasmania.

The new entities have local leadership and central support to ensure that frontline resources can be directed to growing the game.

During 2015, more than 129,000 people had Rugby League experiences across the non-member States and a further 10,477 players were registered in Clubs.

### Northern Territory

There were a total of 15,934 Rugby League experiences in the Northern Territory. There are now 2276 players registered in the region.

Darwin hosted another successful game between the Parramatta Eels and Canberra Raiders and a trial was held between the Parramatta Eels and Wests Tigers in Alice Springs. Darwin also hosted the 2015 Affiliated States Championships.

### South Australia

In 2015, more than 33,000 people had a Rugby League experience in South Australia – 987 of whom were Club players. The Adelaide metropolitan competition had another successful year and the game continues to grow in key areas such as Mt Gambier.

### Victoria

A record 3640 players registered for Club Rugby League in Victoria in 2015. This resulted in a seven per cent growth in the size of the metropolitan competition and more than 56,000 Rugby League experiences in the State. Key growth areas, Sunraysia and Wodonga also held successful competitions. Victoria won the Under-18s competition at the Affiliated States Championships.

Tasmania is now being supported by NRL Victoria with the focus on developing junior programs and competitions through the school system. An Operations Manager, with joint responsibilities for both Rugby League and Touch Football, is based in Hobart.

### Western Australia

Western Australia had its best ever year with 35,477 Rugby League experiences. Of those 3574 were registered Club players. The Perth metropolitan competition had a standout year with six per cent growth. Western Australia won the senior title at the annual Championships for a record 12th time – including the last six in a row.

The Combined Affiliated States senior team toured Tonga, winning both games and conducting a series of clinics for school children as well as local coaches and referees.

For the first time, a senior women's tackle competition between the States was held at the annual Championships and it was won by Western Australia.

“On behalf of the Tonga National Rugby League, I would like to thank you, NRL and the Combined Affiliated States team and officials, for choosing Tonga to visit this year. We do value your continuous support in the development of the Tonga Rugby League and we also hope this effort will be beneficial for both of us in the years ahead.”

**Stan Moheloa**  
President of the Tonga National Rugby League





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# DEVELOPING OUR GAME



## GAME DEVELOPMENT

One of the NRL's most significant projects in 2015 was to draw up a blueprint for Rugby League for the next 10 years.

The plan is designed to improve player welfare and pathways, upgrade and strengthen the second tier and assist in protecting elite players from burnout.

The strategy is aimed at helping control costs for the NRL Clubs, further growing the game outside the current reach and providing a new level of awareness regarding the welfare of players as they progress through the elite pathway.

The NRL believes the strategy provides an opportunity for the game to extend its reach beyond its current footholds to country Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

**The proposed recommendations include:**

- » Introducing rookie contracts for the start of the 2018 season with each Club allowed to sign three rookies each year on two-year contracts
- » Restricting players from making their NRL debuts until the year they turn 19. No player is to be signed with an agent until he is 17 – and contracts for these players should be for a maximum three-year term

- » Increasing the size of NRL squads to 36 players – including six rookies
- » Restructuring the National Youth Competition into State-based competitions
- » Revamping and upgrading the State League into a “Platinum League” to spread the footprint of the competition
- » Improving player welfare by considering additional leave, creating a formal International window over an eight-year period and reducing the number of five-day turnarounds.

Stakeholders across the game – including the Clubs, States, Country Rugby League and the New Zealand Rugby League – have been engaged in the review.

The consultation period will continue into 2016 before the Commission considers the final proposals.

### INTEGRITY & GOVERNANCE

The powers of the NRL's Integrity Unit were strengthened in 2015 as it works to protect the players and enhance the image and integrity of the game.

**Changes were made to:**

- » Further restrict the involvement of players or officials with gambling operators
- » Limit comment by players or officials on the decision-making of referees
- » Place additional reporting obligations on Clubs and officials.

### Drug Testing

2015 was the first full year of the strengthened illicit-drug testing program. The program conducts testing across the NRL and NYC competitions and replaced the previous testing programs undertaken by each individual Club.

Players returning positive tests for illicit drugs are required to undergo professional support and treatment to overcome the potential effects on their health.

In addition to compulsory support and treatment, a first positive test results in the player receiving a suspended fine.

Players that record a second contravention will serve a 12-match ban, the prospect of contract termination and further treatment and monitoring. Third-time offenders would be referred to the CEO or Chief Operating Officer of the NRL for them to determine an appropriate sanction.

Each year, more than 5000 people across the game receive face-to-face education programs on anti-doping, illicit drugs, alcohol, gambling, responsible use of social media, alcohol and respectful relationships.

In addition to illicit-drug testing, the NRL tests players for specified classes of prescription drugs. This testing is welfare-focussed and is designed to identify the misuse of prescription drugs by players.

The NRL and RLPA will continue to monitor the results of prescription drug testing to determine if additional measures need to be introduced to address the risks of prescription drug abuse.

### Salary Cap

The salary cap operates to ensure that playing talent is more evenly spread across the 16 NRL Clubs. It is one of the key reasons why the NRL Telstra Premiership is so close and competitive.

The cap also operates to limit the tendency of Clubs to spend more money than they can afford on player payments to remain competitive.

In 2015 the majority of NRL Clubs met their obligations under the salary cap rules, with only two Clubs penalised for breaching the cap rules. The Parramatta Eels were fined \$465,000 and four competition points were deducted from the Club's 2016 NRL premiership campaign. The Eels have an opportunity to have the points penalty suspended if the Club satisfies a number of governance-related conditions before the start of the 2016 NRL Telstra Premiership.

The Roosters were also fined for a less serious salary cap breach relating to educational allowances to National Youth Competition players.

## NRL DIGITAL NETWORK AND APPS

In 2015, the NRL continued its successful partnership with Telstra across its NRL Digital Media business with the team providing infrastructure, digital expertise and day-to-day management across the NRL Digital Network.

The ever-growing suite of digital services includes the NRL Official App, NRL.com and NRL Digital Pass – the live subscription service offering live games to fans on the go. Other products and services include the Club and State digital network, including representative websites and apps, as well as popular games of NRL Fantasy and NRL Tipping.

With increased content and behind the scenes access to Clubs and players, the NRL Digital Network, including each Club digital offering, generated a unique audience of over 26 million visiting in 2015.

On the back of this continually growing audience and an increase in video content production, our fans also generated over 28 million video streams.

Adding to the NRL Digital Network in 2015, the NRL and Telstra were also part of an exclusive number of worldwide brands to release the NRL Official App for the Apple Watch on the day of its release.

New innovations are constantly being implemented for fans in the digital environment with 2015 seeing the launch of the official Auckland Nines mobile event app, complete with iBeacon technology, allowing the delivery of customised content directly to fans' handsets, based on which team they support. The rollout of iBeacon technology continued for Clubs throughout the 2015 finals with the NRL and Telstra dedicated to continuing to innovate to provide Clubs and fans with the latest in technology and fan engagement.

A unique audience of over

# 26M

visiting the NRL Digital Network in 2015

Over

# 28M

video streams on the NRL Network in 2015



The NRL and Telstra were part of an exclusive number of brands in the world invited to release our app, the NRL Official App, on the Apple Watch the day of its release.



## NRL DIGITAL AND SOCIAL

The game's social media audience grew by 22% in 2015, with more than nine million followers of NRL, State of Origin, the NRL Clubs and State Leagues on social media.

That means more Australians follow the NRL on Facebook than any other global sporting code or team. Highlights of the NRL's social media program in 2015 include:

- » More than eight million unique fans tuned in to content from NRL's official Facebook channels in a single day during 2015 State of Origin – a new single-day record at the time
- » This record was eclipsed during the 2015 Grand Final when more than nine million unique fans tuned in to content from NRL's official Facebook channels in a single day
- » Celebrating State of Origin, more than 250,000 virtual jerseys were created by fans over a 12-month period
- » More than 60 million video views across NRL's official Facebook page in 2015.

In 2015, the NRL launched a new online junior pass program, known as Play NRL Rewards. The program aims to thank junior players (aged 4-15), coaches and volunteers for their involvement and support by offering them each one free ticket per round of the NRL Telstra Premiership.

Over the course of the season more than 25,000 junior players, coaches and volunteers used the program to redeem more than 60,000 tickets.

The online program also enables clubs to see how many Play NRL Rewards tickets have been redeemed in pre-sales and it provides them with valuable data so they can contact junior players and volunteers to make them aware of special offers.

In 2016 the program will be upgraded further, enabling fans to download tickets on to mobile phones and devices with the intention of making the user experience as seamless as possible.

Social media has become one of the key drivers of memberships, attendances and connections with fans.

The photo of Johnathan Thurston and his daughter on the cover of this report broke the record for the most popular social media photo in the game's history.

The photo, which was taken by NRL photographer Grant Trouville, was taken immediately after the Cowboys Grand Final win and reached more than **8.7 million users on Facebook alone.**



MORE THAN **60 MILLION** VIDEO VIEWS GENERATED ACROSS NRL'S OFFICIAL FACEBOOK ACCOUNT IN 2015



MORE THAN **8 MILLION** UNIQUE FANS TUNED-IN TO CONTENT FROM NRL'S OFFICIAL FACEBOOK CHANNELS IN A SINGLE DAY DURING 2015 ORIGIN



MORE THAN **9 MILLION** UNIQUE FANS TUNED-IN TO CONTENT FROM NRL'S OFFICIAL FACEBOOK CHANNELS ON GRAND FINAL DAY

THE NRL RAN A NUMBER OF NEW AND UNIQUE PHOTO AND CONTENT SERIES IN 2015 INCLUDING BLACK AND WHITE PLAYER PORTRAITS





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## OUR COMMUNITY

## COMMUNITY

Our communities are the foundations upon which our game draws its strength.

The NRL is committed to leaving a lasting and positive impact on the communities in which we operate – on the fans, on the families and on all the people we interact with.

We do this through education, outreach programs in rural and remote areas and by encouraging health and wellbeing through a balanced lifestyle.

Today our programs extend across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

They reach more than 300,000 children each year – and a further nine million through social media.

Our community programs are focussed on three key pillars: NRL Health, NRL Learn and NRL Respect.

The NRL's Community department also released the code's first social impact report.

The report measures the success of the work undertaken in the community by the NRL. It will be used to further improve the social, economic and environmental impact of the game's community programs.

### NRL RESPECT

Some of the game's most rewarding work comes from delivering programs on racism, bullying, domestic violence and inclusiveness.

Our Voice Against Violence program has already been made available to more than 1500 junior Clubs and delivered to 100 high-risk rural and regional communities.

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

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

In 2015, more than 1000 students from 30 schools took part in the program. More than 300 students took part in the Harmony Day walk.

### NRL LEARN

The NRL runs a range of programs aimed at encouraging young people to pursue an education and, more importantly, pursue their dreams.

There were 72 visits made by more than 1700 students to Rugby League Central as part of our Learning with League program in 2015. Here, students are encouraged to develop their decision making and problem solving skills.

The NRL's School 2 Work program uses the profile of Rugby League to encourage Indigenous Australians to stay at school, and through a network of Project Officers, support their transition from school into further education, training or employment.

Of all participants that took part in the program in 2015, 94 per cent attained their Year 12 certificate and 98 per cent successfully made the transition into further education or employment.

### NRL HEALTH

The NRL has teamed up with four expert partners – the Black Dog Institute, Kids Helpline, Headspace and Lifeline – to extend wellbeing programs across the whole of the game.

Our NRL State of Mind campaign, targeting mental health issues, is reaching more people in the Rugby League community than ever before.

During the Holden State of Origin campaign more than half a million people connected with the campaign.

The aim of the campaign is to start conversations on this important issue and help remove the stigma around mental illness, encouraging our players, fans and everyone in the Rugby League family to connect within their community.

Additionally, the NRL partnered with The Gut Foundation, Cancer Council New South Wales and Bowel Cancer Australia to build awareness around Australia's second biggest cancer killer – bowel cancer.

The campaign, which included promotional activities at NRL games, saw more than 15,000 Australians take a simple, online test that provided an indication as to risk levels. Some of those fans were alerted to possible problems and were able to seek early medical advice and treatment.

The NRL's Community programs were nominated for the following prestigious awards in 2015:

Beyond Sport Awards 'Sport Federation or Governing Body of the Year'. The NRL was the only Australian sport to be shortlisted for this international award. The nomination was based on two youth programs, NRL School 2 Work and NRL In League In Harmony.

The NRL was also shortlisted for the Australian Human Rights Commission Business Award for its work on the Reconciliation Action Plan.

FOR EVERY \$1 WE INVESTED  
IN NRL IN LEAGUE IN  
HARMONY WE CREATED

 **\$5.44**  
SROI

OF SOCIAL VALUE

FOR EVERY \$1 WE INVESTED  
IN NRL SCHOOL 2 WORK  
WE CREATED

 **\$5.35**  
SROI

OF SOCIAL VALUE

FOR EVERY \$1 WE INVESTED  
IN NRL STATE OF MIND  
WE CREATED

 **\$2.73**  
SROI

OF SOCIAL VALUE

## NRL AMBASSADORS 2015

Some of Rugby League's best known players over the last decade are giving back to the sport and helping to improve lives through their roles as NRL Ambassadors.

The NRL Ambassador Program enlists former first grade players who are passionate about using their profile and building their expertise outside of football to create a positive difference in the community.

With a strong focus on regional and remote areas, ambassadors deliver programs to promote health and wellbeing, respect, responsibility, inclusiveness and education.

The Ambassadors come from a range of Clubs and backgrounds and make up to 400 public appearances a year.

This year, for the first time, the NRL appointed its first female and New Zealand Ambassadors, with Jillaroo Ruan Sims, sister of NRL players Tariq and Korbin, joining the team along with Jerome Ropati. Other female ambassadors include Renae Kunst, Karyn Murphy and Tallisha Harden.

### During 2015 NRL Ambassadors:

- » Reached more than 133,000 children with their wellbeing programs
- » Spent more than 1900 hours in the community
- » Completed more than 400 appearances delivering health and education messages.

"I'm hoping to use my role as an ambassador to shine the light on women in Rugby League – not just the mums in canteens or washing jerseys on the sideline, but the women who are players, Club presidents, administrators and referees."

### Ruan Sims

Female Ambassador,  
Harvey Norman Jillaroo

"This game has given me everything and I feel very lucky to have been involved with this game for over 20 years. Community work and assisting others is something within my DNA. I understand that we are considered role models by the community, and for this reason I work as an NRL Ambassador."

### Brett Kimmorley

NRL Community Ambassador

## 2015 AMBASSADORS

Luke Bailey

Danny Buderus

Petero Civoniceva

Matt Cooper

Michael Crocker

Hazem El Masri

Mario Fenech

Joe Galuvao

Tallisha Harden

Nathan Hindmarsh

Dallas Johnson

Robbie Kearns

Brett Kimmorley

Matt King

Renae Kunst

Adam MacDougall

Nathan Merritt

Anthony Minichiello

Karyn Murphy

Bryan Norrie

Luke O'Donnell

David Peachey

Josh Perry

Anthony Quinn

Jerome Ropati

Ben Ross

Andrew Ryan

Ruan Sims

Brent Tate

Shaun Timmins

Alan Tongue

Steve Turner

Mick Vella

Dean Widders

## PACIFIC OUTREACH

The NRL is continuing to work with Pacific nations to help them become Rugby League strongholds – and to improve lives off the field.

The key Pacific nations – Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Cook Islands and Papua New Guinea – along with New Zealand already provide 42 per cent of players in the NRL.

Their influence on the game has never been stronger after producing some of the biggest names in the game including Marika Koroibete and leading try scorer in the NRL in 2015, Semi Radradra.

“Sport can be a bridge between nations and cultures. It can build stronger communities through participation in healthy activities, and be a positive force for good. The Australian Government is pleased to support the NRL Pacific Strategy which helps the people of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga to be more resilient through a love of Sport.”

**The Hon. Julie Bishop, MP**  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

But it is off the field that Rugby League is making a real difference.

**In 2015, the Pacific Strategy focussed on three areas:**

- » Encouraging education both inside and outside the classroom with positive social messages
- » Empowering females of all ages in the Pacific through employment and training
- » Support increased organisational and management capacity of Rugby League in the Pacific.

In 2015, the Australian Government embraced the program by providing more than \$1.5 million to support these initiatives through Australian Aid and Sport Diplomacy funding streams.

This enabled the NRL to provide more than 75,000 program experiences across the four nations – Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Papua New Guinea – including a cross section of activities in schools, the community and through the Rugby League landscape.

**75,000** program experiences



## MEN OF LEAGUE

The NRL is strengthening and formalising its relationship with the Men of League Foundation, the organisation set up to support members of the Rugby League community experiencing tough times.

The two bodies will work even more closely together in the future following the establishment of the game's first NRL Foundation in 2015, which will be managed by the Men of League Foundation.

The NRL Foundation was established to provide immediate financial and emotional support to Rugby League players at all levels of the game who suffer a catastrophic or potentially catastrophic spinal injury. The NRL will take the lead in offering support during hospitalisation with the Men of League Foundation providing an ongoing support role.

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) has also agreed to be a partner in the operations of the NRL Foundation to provide the expertise needed in the rare cases where serious injuries occur.

In 2015, the Men of League Heritage Round was held to enable fans to celebrate both the history of the game and the mateship and support that the game embodies.

The round was used to raise funds for the NRL Foundation and the RiseForAlex Fund, with the game donating \$1 for every fan who attended an NRL Telstra Premiership game during Round 19, resulting in \$118,312 being raised.

In 2016 the standalone Men of League Foundation Round (Round 19) will raise funds for Men of League and the NRL Foundation.

“SCIA is delighted to join forces with the NRL to assist players and their families. We are committed to sharing our expertise and helping injured players to maximise their independence, so they can take control of their own lives again.”

**Peter Perry**

CEO Spinal Cord Injuries Australia on the new partnership



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





  
**GREEN  
OPTIONS**  


05

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LOOKING  
FORWARD  
TO 2016

## ON THE FIELD

### MAKING THE GAME EVEN BETTER

While the quality of Rugby League in the NRL Telstra Premiership has never been better, our aim is to improve even further in 2016.

Three significant changes are being made to give fans more continuous and free-flowing football – and ultimately a more exciting product on the field.

The number of player interchanges will be reduced from 10 to eight. This move is expected to reward endurance and open up the game, creating a bigger role for smaller, fitter and faster players while making the game safer for players.

To complement the interchange reduction, a shot clock will be used for scrums and drop outs. This is expected to tighten stoppages and delays in the game.

The NRL has invested in building the 'Bunker' where video referee decisions will be made. The state-of-the-art centre is an Australian-first initiative and is aimed at improving accuracy, consistency, efficiency and transparency in video reviews.

“We want the best football to be played by the best footballers and all our research points to these changes having a significant impact on the quality of games every week.”

**Todd Greenberg**  
NRL Head of Football

### A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

The blueprint for the future of our game's elite pathways developed in 2015 will provide the platform for a range of reforms to be introduced in 2016 and beyond. These will ensure the game's development pathways are clearly defined and accessible to more of the game's participants than ever before.

As part of these reforms, new arrangements for rookie players in our NRL Clubs will be a priority for the NRL in 2016.

Participation from the grassroots up will be the subject of a comprehensive strategic review that will commence in 2016.

### PLAYERS

With new leadership at both the Rugby League Players' Association and at Men of League, the NRL will be working closely with both organisations to ensure the central role our players have (past and present) is recognised in the game.



8

Reduced player interchanges from 10 to promote continuous play



## OFF THE FIELD

### TAKING THE NRL TO THE WORLD

With a record domestic media rights deal now locked away, the focus for 2016 will be on securing new arrangements for the distribution of NRL content in other countries.

New Zealand is a significant market for the NRL and will be a priority, along with ensuring that the game is given strong exposure in other important markets. The NRL will be looking to take advantage of new technologies to ensure NRL content is available globally.

As the world's best Rugby League competition, we want fans to be able to see the NRL from every corner of the globe.

### THE YEAR AHEAD – CROWDS AND TV AUDIENCES

The introduction of live televised Rugby League matches five days a week in 2016 will give our game greater potential to reach more fans than ever before.

Under our new broadcast agreements, Channel 9 will telecast a record 18 Thursday night matches during the NRL Telstra Premiership in 2016.

Given Thursday Night Football's proven track record of popularity, fans are predicted to show strong support for live coverage of Thursday night as a regular part of our weekly schedule.

Naturally, we expect there to be an impact on overall crowd numbers as a result of this change.

Next year we will regularly have games on two weeknights – Mondays and Thursdays – and this is forecast to affect attendances but the overall impact of our schedule changes will be positive for the game overall.

From 2017 the NRL will no longer host Monday nights as part of the regular season schedule.

### SECURING THE NRL'S COMMERCIAL FUTURE

The NRL operates on a not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the whole game. To meet its charter, the game needs to be commercially strong so that the funds generated can be distributed to help grow and sustain the game across the country, and at every level.

With a record media rights agreement in place, opportunities exist to focus on further growth in non-broadcast revenue.

With new leadership in place, the NRL will be reviewing its commercial operations – including sponsorship and major events strategy. The objective is to deliver appropriate and sustainable financial returns for reinvestment back into the game.

Stakeholder, staff and corporate engagement will be a priority in 2016 as the NRL focusses on ensuring the administration of the game is well placed to deliver on the opportunity to continue the game's growth.

### NEW CLUB AND STATES FUNDING MODEL

The NRL and the 16 NRL Clubs have reached an in-principle funding agreement to secure the future of the game at every level.

The proposed arrangements will deliver more than \$100 million extra per year to the 16 Clubs from 2018 until 2022.

At the same time, the NRL will set aside another \$100 million a year to invest in growing the game, with a strong focus on grassroots and non-elite areas of the game.

The agreement was made possible by the \$1.8 billion media rights deal secured by the ARL Commission.

The media agreements provide the funds to secure the financial stability of the Clubs and the opportunity to invest in their businesses to make them financially stronger.

As part of the proposed future arrangements, Clubs will be granted a perpetual licence – giving fans certainty that their team will continue to play in the NRL competition.

#### The key elements of the funding package include:

- » A base grant of 130% of total player payments from 2018 to 2022 – the only major Australian sporting code to fully cover player costs
- » Payments to all Clubs of an additional \$1.5m each year from 2016 to 2022 to be directed to improving their operational capability and driving commercial revenues.

While there remains work to do to finalise the agreement, the ARL Commission and all 16 NRL Clubs are aligned – paving the way for a new era of success for both the NRL competition and the Clubs.

“I cannot stress how firmly I believe today is a landmark day.”

**Bart Campbell**  
Club Chair spokesman

“This is a unique opportunity for Rugby League and we are going to work together to make the most of it. This funding allows us to achieve our ambition of making the game stronger at every level – from the grassroots through to the elite levels.”

**John Grant**  
ARL Commission Chairman





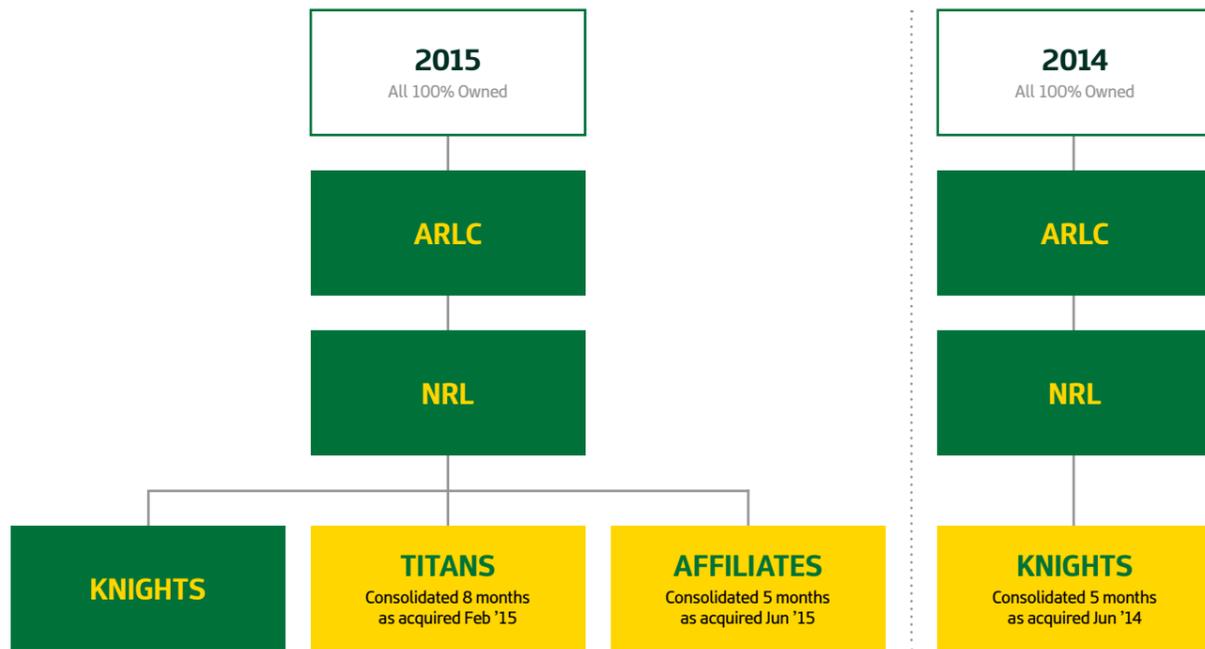
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# INVESTING

## FINANCIAL RESULTS 2015

### Overview

The following table reflects the change in corporate structure between 2014 and 2015 and illustrates what is consolidated into the statutory financial statements. The financial commentary separates the ARLC and NRL entities (“Controlling Body”) and the subsidiary entities (“Controlled Entities”) so a like-for-like comparison of financial results can be made.



The detailed financial commentary in this section relates to the operations and results of the Controlling Body before consolidation.

Notes: 1. Controlling Body includes ARLC and NRL Ltd



# FINANCIAL RESULTS 2015

## Revenue

» **Broadcast Revenue:** 2015 is the third year of the five-year broadcast deal and set broadcast revenue levels for 2013-17. The revenue (excluding contra) for 2015 was \$204.7m, in line with the revenue for the previous year

» **Non-Broadcast Revenue:** revenue generated from non-broadcast streams increased by \$10.2m (9%) to \$129.3m. Key drivers of non-broadcast revenue are major events with gate receipts up 3% to \$50.4m, sponsorship partnerships in line with last year at \$27.4m and commercialisation of our intellectual property (including product fees). Investment income was above the targeted return.

## Expenditure

» **Event, Game and Sponsorship expenditure:** an increase of \$12.4m (21%) from increased investment in major events, one-off costs to secure the new media rights agreements, and costs payable to the other participating nations for the Four Nations tournament held during the 2015 financial year. Adjusting for these one-off costs, expenditure increased 10.6% and margin on non-broadcast revenue declined slightly from 37% to 35%

» **Football:** an increase of \$3.2m (18%) supported a range of new initiatives including the shot clock and Bunker, along with additional investment in referees' training and medical support

» **Community and Player Welfare:** an increase of \$1.7m (16%) included increased payments to player retirement accounts in accordance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and to player welfare programs

» **Administration:** an increase of \$1.4m (6%) primarily due to increased staff costs and additional investment in human resource systems and information technology licence fees.

## Distributions

The ARLC has a broad mandate to invest in the development of the whole game of Rugby League.

The game's strategic plan, The Game Plan 2013-17, envisaged building up financial reserves to strengthen the game's overall financial sustainability and also to invest in areas of strategic priority.

The net effect of revenue and expenditure created total funds available for distribution of \$206.2m, down 4% on 2014.

» **Clubs:** funding to NRL Clubs increased by \$15.7m reflecting an increase in the participation payment to all Clubs (\$7.55m in 2014 to \$7.87m in 2015) to cover the rise in each Club's salary cap of \$0.32m, \$4.5m in revenue incentive payments and other financial benefits

» **States:** distributions to the States increased by \$5.7m to support a range of initiatives and to reflect an adjustment to arrangements relating to State of Origin merchandise

» **Development:** funding to support game development increased by \$4.2m (17%) which included support for the Touch Football Australia alliance as well as the Pacific Strategy.

Total distributions in 2015 were \$218.7m – a 13% increase on the prior year.

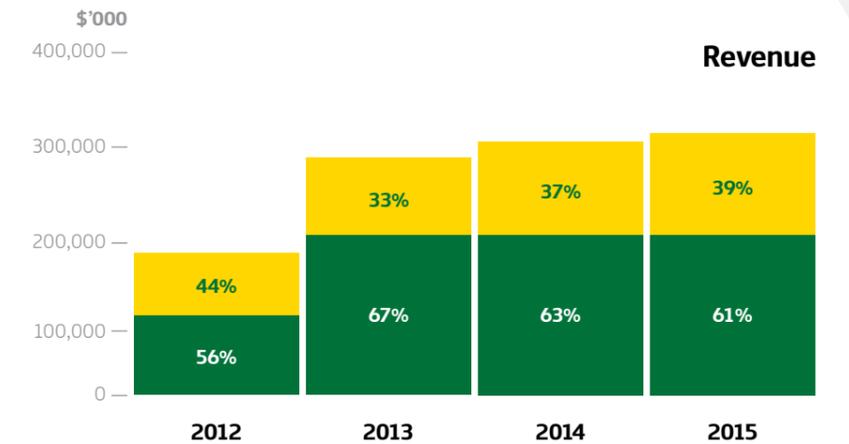
The total distributions in 2015 (\$218.7m) exceeded the funds available (\$206.2m) in the financial year with the \$12.5m funding gap financed by financial reserves.

## KEY FINANCIAL INDICATORS (Controlling Body)

↑ 9%

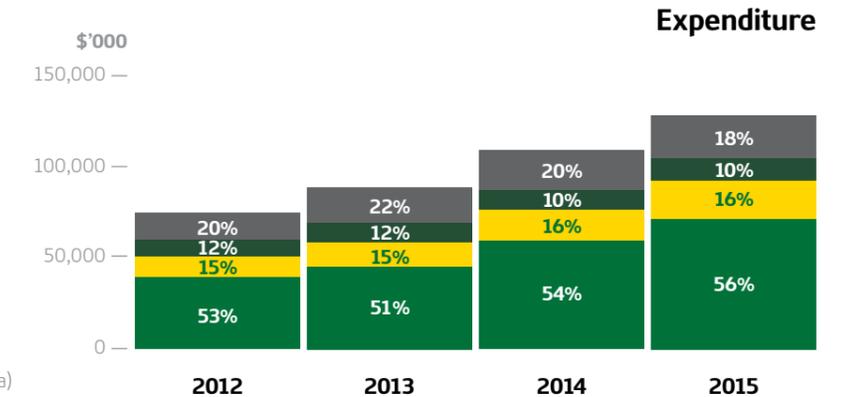
on 2014 to \$129m

Non-Broadcast Revenue



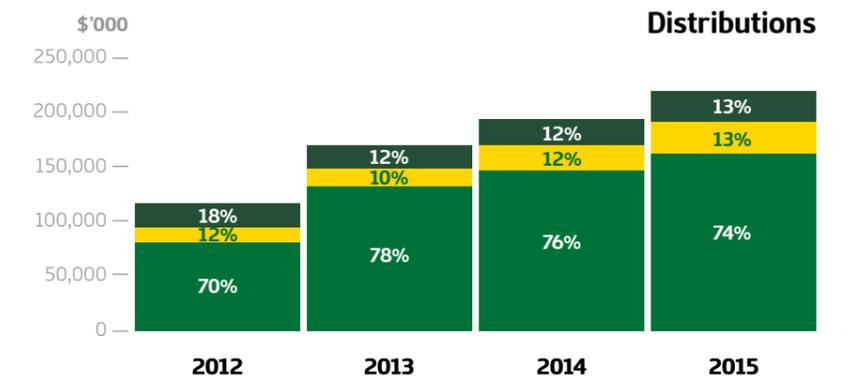
↑ 17%

on 2014 to \$128m



↑ 13%

on 2014 to \$219m



**Consolidated Result**

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

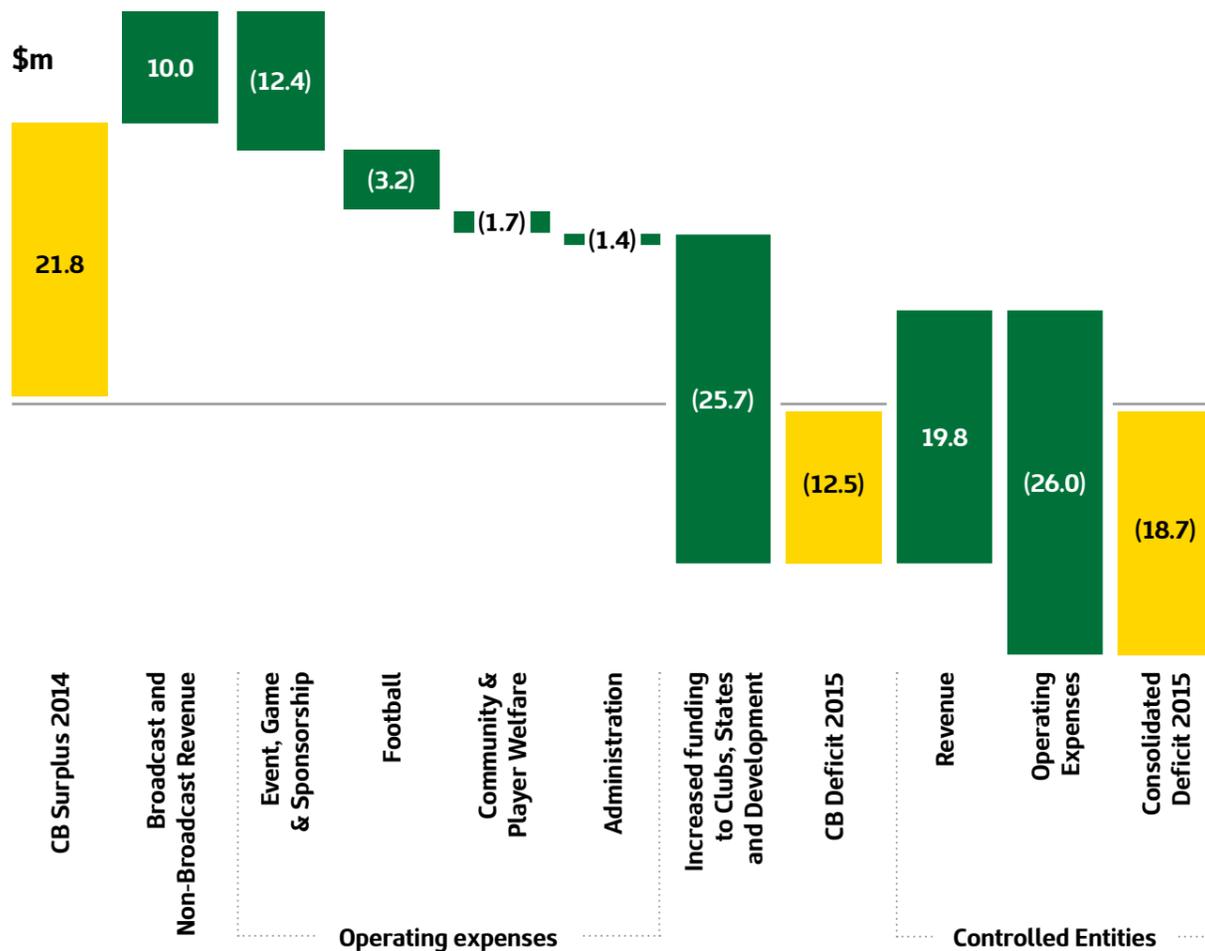
Total consolidated revenue (excluding contra) disclosed in the Financial Statements was \$353.8m (2014: \$334.0m) and the total funds available for distribution was \$186.4m (2014: \$210.8m). Total distributions on a consolidated basis totalled \$205.1m (2014: \$190.5m) with an overall deficit of \$18.7m (2014: surplus \$20.2m).

Controlled Entity revenue of \$19.8m in the form of game day receipts, sponsorships, memberships and retail sales less expenditure of \$26.0m contributed a net deficit of \$6.2m. This represents the difference between the Controlling Body's deficit of \$12.5m and the consolidated deficit of \$18.7m.

**SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) BRIDGE 2014-15**

**Controlling Body ("CB") 2014-2015**

**2015: CB to Consolidated**



**Sustainability Fund**

The Sustainability Fund valuation was \$52.8m as at 31 October 2015 with returns of 5.4% exceeding the defined benchmark returns of CPI + 3%. The investment profile is conservative however the fund is subject to market volatility.

**Strategic Investment Priorities**

In 2015 the ARLC provided increased funding support to Clubs and States and other strategic initiatives. The increased distribution of funds and investment in strategic projects in this financial year is reflected in the statutory result for 2015.

Of the funds allocated to strategic priorities, investment highlights are set out below:

- » **Clubs** – the financial sustainability of the NRL Clubs remained the dominant strategic priority and this is reflected in an increase in allocation of \$15.7m (11%). The need for this investment to be locked-in to future planning underpins the high-level agreement reached by the Clubs and the ARLC. Other funding support to Clubs was also provided beyond the participation grant increase
- » **States** – additional funding of \$5.8m (25%) supported the State Cups (year 2 of three-year commitment) as well as a range of other initiatives and funds to restructure the governance of the Affiliated States with the establishment of an ARLC structure in Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory

- » **Digital, Bunker & NRL Statistics** – to complement our partnership with Telstra, the ARLC is also investing in the game's future digital capability – in new technology, new content and social media and the official NRL Statistics. Work also commenced on building the new Bunker facility in 2015. Total revenues directly derived from this group of activities amounted to \$1.7m in 2015

- » **Touch Football** – the investment in Touch Football Australia is creating a new pathway for many fans to join the Rugby League family. The alliance also facilitated new sponsorship revenue of \$0.7m which was applied in full to support the NRL-Touch Football partnership

- » **Membership** – the NRL led investment in the Fan Relationship Management Centre and NRL Business Academy to support Club membership and group ticket sales. The investment helped drive increased revenue to Clubs in 2015 as well as identifying and training potential recruits for NRL Clubs' businesses

- » **Welfare and Education initiatives** – continued funding of Club welfare and education programs, Men of League, seed funding of NRL Foundation and other support for injured players

- » **Stadia and Infrastructure** – work to secure funding for new stadia in Sydney and in other locations as well as allocations to support new grassroots facilities were made in 2015.

Other allocations included funding towards the Pacific Strategy endorsed by the ARLC in recognition of the elite player pathway from Pacific nations and funding to support development of the new pathways blueprint.

The project to secure the \$1.8b NRL media rights deal was also funded in 2015 with further work to continue in 2016. A number of other allocations in support of the financial sustainability of NRL Clubs were also authorised in 2015.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

### THE CONTROLLING BODY 2012-2015

PROFIT & LOSS (\$'000)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2014-15 \$	2014-15 %
Broadcast Revenue (excl. contra)	101,600	204,345	205,000	204,735	(265)	—
Non-Broadcast Revenue	80,000	99,030	119,024	129,270	10,246	9%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>181,600</b>	<b>303,375</b>	<b>324,024</b>	<b>334,005</b>	<b>9,981</b>	<b>3%</b>
Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. contra)	(39,400)	(45,121)	(59,345)	(71,728)	(12,383)	(21%)
Football	(11,600)	(13,700)	(17,376)	(20,566)	(3,190)	(18%)
Community and Player Welfare	(9,000)	(10,378)	(10,566)	(12,250)	(1,684)	(16%)
Administration	(14,800)	(19,427)	(21,909)	(23,277)	(1,368)	(6%)
<b>Funds Available for Distribution</b>	<b>106,800</b>	<b>214,749</b>	<b>214,828</b>	<b>206,184</b>	<b>(8,644)</b>	<b>(4%)</b>
Clubs	(81,000)	(132,300)	(146,663)	(162,333)	(15,670)	(11%)
States & Affiliates	(13,500)	(16,300)	(22,914)	(28,667)	(5,753)	(25%)
Development	(21,700)	(20,808)	(23,410)	(27,650)	(4,240)	(18%)
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>(9,400)</b>	<b>45,341</b>	<b>21,841</b>	<b>(12,466)</b>	<b>(34,307)</b>	<b>(157%)</b>

BALANCE SHEET (\$'000)	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total Assets	110,740	188,074	194,816	195,113
Total Liabilities	91,390	123,383	108,282	121,045
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>19,350</b>	<b>64,691</b>	<b>86,534</b>	<b>74,068</b>

SUSTAINABILITY FUND <sup>1</sup> (\$'000)	2012	2013	2014	2015
Financial Assets	—	—	38,967	52,220
Cash Invested	—	—	11,411	547
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>50,378</b>	<b>52,767</b>

Note:

- The Sustainability Fund is included as part of the Total Assets in the Balance Sheet.

### THE CONTROLLING BODY AND THE CONSOLIDATED ENTITIES

PROFIT & LOSS (\$'000)	2014		2015	
	Controlling Body <sup>1</sup>	Consolidated <sup>2</sup>	Controlling Body <sup>1</sup>	Consolidated <sup>2</sup>
Broadcast Revenue (excl. contra)	205,000	205,000	204,735	204,691
Non-Broadcast Revenue	119,024	125,084	129,270	149,151
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>324,024</b>	<b>330,084</b>	<b>334,005</b>	<b>353,842</b>
Event, Game and Sponsorship (excl. contra)	(59,345)	(59,936)	(71,728)	(80,769)
Football	(17,376)	(24,453)	(20,566)	(42,601)
Community and Player Welfare	(10,566)	(11,022)	(12,250)	(12,302)
Administration	(21,909)	(23,910)	(23,277)	(31,786)
<b>Funds Available for Distribution</b>	<b>214,828</b>	<b>210,763</b>	<b>206,184</b>	<b>186,384</b>
Clubs	(146,663)	(143,705)	(162,333)	(148,086)
States & Affiliates	(22,914)	(22,914)	(28,667)	(28,511)
Development	(23,410)	(23,913)	(27,650)	(28,442)
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>21,841</b>	<b>20,231</b>	<b>(12,466)</b>	<b>(18,655)</b>

BALANCE SHEET (\$'000)	2014		2015	
Total Assets	194,816	199,600	195,113	196,520
Total Liabilities	108,282	114,677	121,045	130,252
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>86,534</b>	<b>84,923</b>	<b>74,068</b>	<b>66,268</b>

Notes:

- Controlling Body includes ARLC Ltd and NRL Ltd.
- Consolidated represents the Controlling Body and its Controlled Entities Knights Rugby League Pty Ltd (acquired 30 June 2014), Titans Rugby League Pty Ltd (acquired 24 February 2015), ARLC WA Ltd (acquired 8 June 2015), ARLC SA Ltd (acquired 30 June 2015), ARLC VIC Ltd (acquired 1 July 2015) and ARLC NT Ltd (acquired 6 July 2015).
- Included within Administration in the 2015 Consolidated result is a one-off write-down of goodwill of \$1,754,000 (2014: \$Nil). This is disclosed separately on the face of the Statement of Consolidated Comprehensive Income in the statutory financial statements.

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

## GAME STATISTICS

	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>FINANCIAL STATISTICS</b>				
Broadcast/Total Revenue	56%	67%	63%	61%
Event, Game and Sponsorship/Total Revenue	22%	15%	18%	21%
Administration/Total Revenue	8%	6%	7%	7%
Clubs Distributions/Total Revenue	45%	44%	45%	49%
Distributions/Total Revenue	64%	56%	60%	65%
<b>ATTENDANCE STATISTICS</b>				
NRL Season Attendance	3,151,660	3,060,421	3,053,880	2,894,944
NRL Season Average Attendance	16,415	15,940	15,906	15,078
NRL Final Series Attendance	333,352	284,717	322,666	353,087
NRL Final Series Average Attendance	37,039	31,635	35,852	39,232
<b>MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS<sup>1</sup></b>				
Total of Club and State Members	204,772	228,384	267,862	294,206
Average No. of Members per entity	12,798	14,274	14,881	16,345
<b>PARTICIPATION<sup>2</sup></b>				
Number of participants	536,522	555,266	1,319,885	1,398,158
<b>RATINGS – AUDIENCE</b>				
Premiership avg FTA	994,056	962,259	918,421	882,021
Premiership avg STV <sup>3</sup>	252,207	233,485	214,523	220,502
State of Origin avg	3,979,199	3,984,312	3,882,122	3,647,662
Grand Final	3,941,309	3,325,225	3,965,113	3,710,218
<b>RATINGS – SHARE</b>				
Premiership FTA Sydney	26%	27%	26%	28%
Premiership FTA Brisbane	23%	22%	20%	22%
National STV	10%	10%	10%	10%

Notes:

1. Periods prior to 2014 do not include NSWRL and QRL.

2. Increase in 2014 participation numbers is a result of the strategic partnership signed in 2014 between TFA and NRL; and a re-class of some Game Development Officer delivered programs from “engagement” programs to “participation” programs.

3. Exclusive matches only.

## CLUBS AND STATES

CLUBS & STATE FUNDING (\$'000)	2015		
	Base	Other	Total
Payments to Clubs	125,920	26,027	151,947
<b>Benefits to Clubs</b>			
Club Travel	—	5,330	5,330
Club Fans & Members Initiatives	—	2,961	2,961
Club Services	—	2,095	2,095
<b>Total Payments and Benefits to Clubs</b>	<b>125,920</b>	<b>36,413</b>	<b>162,333</b>
Payments to States	18,256	9,194	27,450
Benefits to States	—	1,217	1,217
<b>Total Payments and Benefits to States</b>	<b>18,256</b>	<b>10,411</b>	<b>28,667</b>

CLUBS & STATE FUNDING (\$'000)	2014		
	Base	Other	Total
Payments to Clubs	120,800	14,756	135,556
<b>Benefits to Clubs</b>			
Club Travel	—	4,685	4,685
Club Fans & Members Initiatives	—	4,500	4,500
Club Services	—	1,922	1,922
<b>Total Payments and Benefits to Clubs</b>	<b>120,800</b>	<b>25,863</b>	<b>146,663</b>
Payments to States	17,311	5,053	22,364
Benefits to States	—	550	550
<b>Total Payments and Benefits to States</b>	<b>17,311</b>	<b>5,603</b>	<b>22,914</b>



Australian Rugby League Commission Limited

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# CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT

## DIRECTORS' REPORT

The Directors present their report for the Australian Rugby League Commission Limited ("ARLC" or "the Company") for the year ended 31 October 2015.

### DIRECTORS

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

#### John Grant (Chairman)

Mr Grant is Chairman of Discovery Technology Pty Ltd and former Managing Director of Data#3 Limited and a former Director of the Australian Information Industry Association.

#### Catherine Harris AO PSM

Ms Harris is the Chairperson of Harris Farm Markets, Director of the Sport Australia Hall Of Fame, The Australian Ballet, Tyro Payments Ltd, UNSW Foundation, and Governor University of Notre Dame.

#### Dr Chris Sarra

Dr Sarra is Founding Chairman of the Stronger Smarter Institute. Dr Sarra is the Chairman of the People, Workplace Culture and Remuneration Committee.

#### Ian Elliot

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

#### Jeremy Sutcliffe

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

#### Wayne Pearce OAM

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

#### Graeme Samuel AC

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

#### Tony McGrath

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

### 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 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 \$374,142,025 (2014: \$350,902,617). The Group's current year operating deficit was \$18,655,006 (2014: operating surplus \$20,232,617).

### DIVIDENDS

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

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AFTER THE YEAR END

On 27 November 2015, the Australian Rugby League Commission, Nine Network, News Corp Australia, Fox Sports and Telstra signed agreements to provide free to air television, pay television and mobile coverage of Rugby League for five years from 2018. The deal is worth \$1.8 billion to the National Rugby League.

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 Group paid an insurance premium of \$145,499 (2014: \$94,069) in respect of a contract insuring the Directors of the Company named earlier in this report and each full-time 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 2015 the number of members was 26 (2014: 26).

## BOARD MEETINGS

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

DIRECTORS	BOARD MEETINGS	
	Eligible to Attend	Attended
John Grant (Chairman)	9	8
Catherine Harris AO PSM	9	9
Dr Chris Sarra	9	9
Ian Elliot	9	9
Jeremy Sutcliffe	9	8
Wayne Pearce OAM	9	8
Graeme Samuel	9	8
Tony McGrath	9	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.



Ernst & Young  
680 George Street  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia  
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### Auditor's Independence Declaration to the Directors of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited

In relation to our audit of the concise financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited for the financial year ended 31 October 2015, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of any applicable code of professional conduct.

Ernst & Young

Christopher George  
Partner  
Sydney  
5 February 2016

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Directors.

John Grant  
Chairman

Graeme Samuel  
Director

Sydney  
5 February 2016

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED  
COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2015	2015 (\$'000)	2014 (\$'000)
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Broadcast	224,991	225,818
Other (note 2)	149,151	125,084
	<b>374,142</b>	<b>350,902</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>		
Event, Game and Sponsorship	(101,095)	(78,832)
Football	(42,401)	(24,453)
Community and Player Welfare	(12,301)	(11,022)
Administration	(28,207)	(23,910)
Clubs	(148,086)	(143,705)
States	(28,511)	(22,913)
Development	(28,442)	(23,914)
Depreciation and Amortisation	(1,944)	(2,199)
Finance Costs	(56)	(95)
Gain on acquisition	—	373
Goodwill impairment	(1,754)	—
	<b>(392,797)</b>	<b>(330,670)</b>
<b>SURPLUS/DEFICIT</b>	<b>(18,655)</b>	<b>20,232</b>
Income tax expense	—	—
<b>NET SURPLUS/DEFICIT</b>	<b>(18,655)</b>	<b>20,232</b>
Other comprehensive income for the period	—	—
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE MEMBERS OF ARLC LIMITED</b>	<b>(18,655)</b>	<b>20,232</b>

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE STATEMENT  
OF CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOWS

Consolidated net surplus decreased \$38.9m to a deficit of \$18.7m.

**CONSOLIDATED REVENUE UP BY \$23.2M TO \$374.1M DUE TO:**

Consolidated Other revenue \$24.1m primarily made up of the following:

- » An increase in consolidated Sponsorship totalling \$7.4m
- » An increase in consolidated Game receipts totalling \$5.7m
- » An increase in consolidated Product fees totalling \$5.4m
- » An increase in consolidated Merchandise royalties totalling \$2.3m
- » An increase in consolidated Club membership and retail totalling \$2.1m
- » Offset by a decrease in consolidated Broadcast revenue of \$0.8m due to contra utilisation

**CONSOLIDATED EXPENDITURE INCREASED BY \$62.1M TO \$392.8M. THE MAIN REASONS FOR THIS WERE:**

- » An increase in consolidated Event, Game and Sponsorship of \$22.3m
- » An increase in consolidated Football of \$17.9m
- » An increase in consolidated States of \$5.6m
- » An increase in consolidated Development of \$4.5m
- » An increase in consolidated Clubs of \$4.4m
- » An increase in consolidated Administration of \$4.3m

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

STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED  
FINANCIAL POSITION

YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2015	2015 (\$'000)	2014 (\$'000)
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	44,387	66,348
Trade receivables	16,253	19,163
Financial assets	52,220	38,967
Prepayments and other receivables	39,361	35,497
Inventory	305	119
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>152,526</b>	<b>160,094</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Intangibles	1,134	1,072
Property, plant and equipment	20,172	20,142
Other receivables	22,688	18,292
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>43,994</b>	<b>39,506</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>196,520</b>	<b>199,600</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade payables	11,423	8,339
Other payables	100,300	87,089
Provisions	4,843	5,017
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>116,566</b>	<b>100,445</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Other payables	12,779	13,492
Provisions	907	740
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>13,686</b>	<b>14,232</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>130,252</b>	<b>114,677</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>66,268</b>	<b>84,923</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Reserves	2,228	2,228
Retained funds	64,040	82,695
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>66,268</b>	<b>84,923</b>

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE STATEMENT  
OF CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL POSITION

Consolidated total assets decreased by \$3.1m to \$196.5m. The movement in total assets principally comprised:

- » A decrease in consolidated cash and cash equivalents of \$22.0m
- » A decrease in consolidated trade receivables of \$2.9m
- » An increase in consolidated financial assets of \$13.3m
- » An increase in consolidated other receivables \$4.4m
- » An increase in consolidated prepayments and other receivables of \$3.9m

**CONSOLIDATED TOTAL LIABILITIES INCREASED BY \$15.6M TO \$130.3M. THE MOVEMENT IN TOTAL LIABILITIES PRINCIPALLY COMPRISED:**

- » An increase in consolidated other payables of \$12.5m
- » An increase in consolidated trade payables of \$3.1m

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

## STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOWS

YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2015	2015 (\$'000)	2014 (\$'000)
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Receipts from ordinary operations	393,360	333,995
Payments to suppliers and employees	(257,122)	(187,113)
Payments to Clubs	(141,280)	(160,283)
Interest received	3,306	2,845
<b>NET CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>(1,736)</b>	<b>(10,556)</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Payments for property plant and equipment	(1,754)	(557)
Payments for intangibles	(485)	(841)
Issue of loans and cash advances	(3,977)	(7,880)
Investment in financial instruments	(14,009)	(38,211)
Cash transferred on acquisition of subsidiary	—	7,327
<b>NET CASH FLOWS USED IN INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>(20,225)</b>	<b>(40,162)</b>
NET DECREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	(21,961)	(50,718)
CASH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PERIOD	66,348	117,066
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE PERIOD</b>	<b>44,387</b>	<b>66,348</b>

### DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOWS

There was a net decrease in cash holdings of the consolidated entity, during the year, totalling \$22.0m.

#### THE MAJOR REASON FOR THE DECREASE IN CASH DURING THE YEAR WAS:

- » Payments to Clubs \$141.3m
- » Investment in financial instruments \$14.0m
- » Issue of loans and cash advances \$4.0m
- » Payments for property plant and equipment \$1.4m
- » Payments for intangibles \$0.5m

#### OFFSETTING THIS WAS RECEIPTS DURING THE YEAR BEING:

- » Funds provided by ordinary operations less payment to suppliers and employees totalling \$135.9m
- » Interest received \$3.3m

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

## STATEMENT OF CONSOLIDATED CHANGES IN EQUITY

	Reserves (\$'000)	Funds Retained (\$'000)	Total (\$'000)
<b>As at 1 November 2014</b>	2,228	82,695	84,923
Net funds retained for distribution	—	(18,655)	(18,655)
<b>As at 31 October 2015</b>	<b>2,228</b>	<b>64,040</b>	<b>66,268</b>

	Reserves (\$'000)	Funds Retained (\$'000)	Total (\$'000)
<b>As at 1 November 2013</b>	2,228	62,463	64,691
Net funds retained for distribution	—	20,232	20,232
<b>As at 31 October 2014</b>	<b>2,228</b>	<b>82,695</b>	<b>84,923</b>

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

## NOTES TO CONCISE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### Year ended 31 October 2015

#### 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 free of charge, upon request to the Company.

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

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

## 2. REVENUE

YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2015	2015 (\$'000)	2014 (\$'000)
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Broadcast Revenue	224,991	225,818
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>		
Game Receipts	57,077	51,390
Sponsorship	36,105	28,678
Merchandise Royalties	15,327	13,039
Government Incentives	11,449	10,906
Product Fees	10,844	5,459
Digital Revenue	4,983	5,008
Club Membership and Retail	4,342	2,200
Financing Income	3,306	2,845
Sundry Income	5,718	5,559
<b>TOTAL OTHER INCOME</b>	<b>149,151</b>	<b>125,084</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>374,142</b>	<b>350,902</b>

## 3. EVENTS SUBSEQUENT TO BALANCE SHEET DATE

On 27 November 2015, the Australian Rugby League Commission, Nine Network, News Corp Australia, Fox Sports and Telstra signed agreements to provide free to air television, pay television and mobile coverage of Rugby League for five years from 2018. The deal is worth \$1.8 billion to the National Rugby League.

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

## Directors' Declaration

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

In the opinion of the Directors:

(a) the financial statements and notes of the consolidated entity has been prepared in accordance with AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports; and

(b) there are reasonable grounds to believe that the consolidated entity will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

On behalf of the Board



John Grant  
Chairman



Graeme Samuel  
Director

Sydney  
5 February 2016



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

### Report on the concise financial report

We have audited the accompanying concise financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited which comprises the statement of consolidated financial position as at 31 October 2015, the statement of consolidated comprehensive income, the statement of consolidated changes in equity and the statement of consolidated cash flows for the year then ended and related notes, derived from the audited financial report of Australian Rugby League Limited for the year ended 31 October 2015. The concise financial report also includes discussion and analysis and the directors' declaration. The concise financial report does not contain all the disclosures required by the Australian Accounting Standards.

### Directors' responsibility for the concise financial report

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

### Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the concise financial report based on our audit procedures which were conducted in accordance with ASA 810 *Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements*. We have conducted an independent audit, in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, of the financial report of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited for the year ended 31 October 2015. We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the financial report in our report dated 5 February 2016. The Australian Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report for the year is free from material misstatement.

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



### Independence

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

### Opinion

In our opinion, the concise financial report (including the discussion and analysis and the directors' declaration) of Australian Rugby League Commission Limited for the year ended 31 October 2015 complies with Accounting Standard AASB 1039 *Concise Financial Reports*.

Ernst & Young

Christopher George  
Partner  
Sydney  
5 February 2016

## MESSAGE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION

The past year has seen considerable success and progress for Australian sport, as the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and national sporting organisations (NSOs) continue to build on our nation's proud sporting tradition.

The Government's 2014–15 investment of nearly \$120 million into Australian sport continues to be refined to ensure funding is aligned to sports with the greatest potential to contribute to Australia's Winning Edge 2012–2022 targets, and drive greater participation outcomes for sport.

The sporting landscape has changed rapidly in recent years, as have the options for people's scarce leisure time. More than ever before, sport faces tough competition for our attention from electronic media and other sedentary pursuits.

In March the Commission launched Play.Sport.Australia. – our plan to help NSOs build participation in sport and make sure all Australians enjoy its benefits. Sports have the opportunity to attract more than 4.5 million Australians into their communities.

It's important that we work together to ensure that more Australians, particularly young Australians, participate in sport more often and that we have strong sporting organisations that deliver the products and opportunities Australians want.

### Other highlights in 2014–15 included:

- » The transition to Sporting Schools and the development of its website – the main portal for sporting organisations, schools, coaches and parents to access this \$100 million program which aims to reach more than 850,000 children
- » The development of the AusPlay survey – The ASC has committed to introducing a new national survey to better understand how Australians engage with, and play, sport. Good decisions require good data and this initiative by the ASC is critical.

And through Australia's Winning Edge we will continue to give our athletes the best chances at international success.

So now, more than ever, we have a clear plan to make sure all Australians enjoy sport and maximise our chances of success. On behalf of the ASC I thank you for your hard work in helping us achieve these goals and I look forward to working with you in to the future.

### John Wylie AM

Chair  
Australian Sports Commission





