

27 February 2023



Dear League Administrator and Referees Associations,

I am writing to clarify the New South Wales Rugby League position in relation to implementing the National Player Development Framework across all community competitions.

The NRL Player Development Framework has been many years in the making. It was developed by the NRL Projects and Strategy team led by Luke Ellis and James Hinchey with input (by way of participation on a steering committee) from some of the most qualified rugby league minds which exist in our country including David Maiden (QRL), Robert Lowrie (then CRL), Brad Donald (NRL), Keith Onslow (then CRL), Barry-John Mather (then NSWRL), Ben Ikin (then QRL/Fox Sports), Ivan Cleary (Penrith Panthers), Matthew Cameron (Penrith Panthers), Paul Dyer (Brisbane Broncos), the late Peter Mulholland (then Canberra Raiders), Greg Brentnall (then Melbourne Storm) and Gareth Holmes (then NRL). They were guided by the University of Queensland and in particular Professor Cliff Mallett and Bob Crudgington. Specific aspects of the Framework were informed by contributions from Neil Henry and Mal Meninga.

The Framework was adopted by the NRL and was implemented fully in Queensland and some areas of regional New South Wales. There has been extensive consultation/advice to all community leagues over a number of years. In relation to consultation and in response to recent media publications, the NSWRL has been advised by the NRL that it supports the continuation of a phased in approach in NSW and would continue to offer education to promote the benefits and support our journey to full implementation.

By way of background, in August 2022 the NSWRL Board confirmed its endorsement of the NRL Framework and reaffirmed its support at its meetings in January this year and again on 17 February our Board endorsed this communication. Additionally, the NSWRL Board approved the updates of our NSWRL policies and procedures, that mirror the phased in implementation strategy, agreed to by the Community Rugby League Association and NRL, as communicated in October to all 2022 participants and all Leagues.

To remove doubt the NSWRL remains fully committed to state-wide application of all initiatives relating to the NRL Player Development Framework including but not limited to:

- Tag Rugby League format for all Under 6s games, all season
- Tag Rugby League format for all Under 7s games until at least June
- Tackle Ready program for all Under 7s teams operating in conjunction with Tag Rugby League
- Development competitions from Under 6s to Under 12s
- The NRL Development Officers are advanced in planning for delivery of the tackle Ready program in Under 7s.

Additionally, we emphasise the safety benefits of the National framework including Tag Rugby League and Development competitions - key changes to improve the environment for young children who play Rugby League. Significantly, the Tag Rugby League format operating in Under 6s and Under 7s along with the Tackle Ready program in Under 7s are key factors of the NRL submission for the Senate Inquiry into Concussions and repeated head trauma in contact sports. The NSWRL fully supports the NRL submission and will continue to carefully consider recommendations from the inquiry and medical experts to prioritise the prevention of concussion.

Please refer to page 87 of the 2023 Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual relevant update for the upcoming 2023 season <https://www.nswrl.com.au/siteassets/community/2023-policies-and-documents/nswrl-community-rugby-league-policies--procedures-manual-2023-final-2-feb.pdf>. Leagues are reminded as an affiliate and member of the Rugby League family there are commitments and obligations to uphold rules and regulations. Additionally, the NSWRL clarifies that various Leagues across Regional and Metropolitan NSW are advanced in the application of Development Competitions and fully supports the continuation of this initiative.

As per 2022, NSWRL will be supplying Tags for Clubs to assist in the implementation of Tag Rugby League in Under 6s and Under 7s competitions. Licensed suppliers were contacted in October advising of these changes and requirement for velcro on shorts in Under 6s and Under 7s.

Further information relating to the Framework is available here <https://www.playrugbyleague.com/framework/>.

Yours sincerely

Peter Clarke

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Clarke', written in a cursive style.

NSW Community Rugby League Manager