



CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



www.raiders.com.au/crrl/

14 Torrens St,
Braddon ACT 2612



The Canberra Region Rugby League would like to thank all their partners for the 2024 season.



Canberra Raiders respect and honour the Traditional Custodians of the land and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the lands we meet, gather and play on.



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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The rugby league landscape continues to evolve, and the 2024 season was highlighted by the success of two programs: wheelchair rugby league and the implementation of the Tackle Ready program, along with the graduation of Under 7s players from League Tag to tackle.

Wheelchair Rugby League



The Entice Travel Rolling Raiders won the NSWRL Wheelchair premiership in their debut year. This achievement followed several years of program development, which included purchasing equipment, finding suitable venues, conducting development days in Canberra and the region, and recruiting players to establish this new team in the competition.

The Wheelchair Rugby League space is continuing to expand and become more organised. The CRRL will soon affiliate with Wheelchair Rugby League Australia Limited (WRLA) and, after discussions with WRLA, will continue to service all of southern NSW as we work to establish hubs in Griffith, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst, and Albury-Wodonga.

I would also like to congratulate Steve Hewson on being awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for his services to rugby league, especially in wheelchair rugby league. Apart from being Monaro and Queanbeyan Blues royalty, Steve has coached the Australian Wheelaroos, the NSW team at the interstate carnival, and is also an international referee. It was Steve who came to Canberra to meet with myself and our General Manager, Mark Vergano, and convinced us to get involved in wheelchair rugby league. With his usual passion and energy, he played a key role in helping us establish the program.



Figure 1 - Steve Hewson

Further congratulations to Toby Popple on being selected for the Australian Wheelaroos and for participating in the interstate matches against Queensland, as well as to Zac Carl for his selection in the New South Wales team.



Additionally, congratulations to Kale Popple for being appointed as head referee for the Wheelaroos vs New Zealand test matches alongside Steve Hewson.

As the Wheelchair program continues to grow, the support of Matt and Amy Hewson through Entice Travel, along with Kale Popple at Zatoma Transport, greatly enhances our ability to cover costs such as wheelchair repairs, travel, and the maintenance of the trailer that carries our equipment. The CRRL also wishes to highlight our strengthened relationship with Invictus as we reach out to athletes to join our program.

The CRRL is in negotiations with WRLA for Canberra to potentially host the touring Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby League team, which would play against a Canberra Rugby League Invitation team. This would be a significant recognition of the strength and administration of our wheelchair program.

Tackle Ready Program

The Tackle Ready program has been successfully rolled out, and I'd like to congratulate all the clubs, coaches, development officers, and CRRL staff involved. While any change associated with a new program can be challenging, we believe this initiative offers the best opportunity to enhance player skills in a supportive educational environment. It prepares children to learn to run, pass, and kick through the league tag component, separate to learning how to tackle, brace, and land.



The Tackle Ready Graduation Days at Curtin and Goulburn where all the Under 7 players transitioned from League Tag to tackle were an outstanding success, with NSWRL CEO Dave Trodden in attendance at Curtin. This type of ceremony will likely be rolled out in a similar fashion across the state.

I proposed a Tackle Ready-style program to the NSWCRRL Board, and we'll be forwarding our recommendations to the NRL to implement it through Development Officers. This strategy responds to rising injury rates in the women's game and essentially aims to teach players how to tackle and be tackled safely - skills foundational in the boys' game.

Community Support

We extend our gratitude to the club volunteers and administrators who helped register 431 teams, facilitating around 195 matches each weekend. With over 6,500 participants, we are proud to be the fourth-largest competition in NSW.

The CRRL wishes to register its appreciation for the continued support of Blumers Lawyers as the competition’s major sponsor. Mark Blumer and Ian Burchell continue to support rugby league and have always had a great interest in the development of female rugby league. We thank them for their support.



Figure 2 - James "Sully" Sullivan

Thank you to Bar TV and James “Sully” Sullivan for professionally showcasing our senior competitions, filming all senior games with Sully’s entertaining commentary. We also appreciate Bar TV’s flexibility in covering regional George Tooke Shield matches and our Junior Grand Finals.

The Raiders Group of clubs and the Canberra District Rugby League continue to support both juniors and seniors’ clubs, as well as the administration program undertaken by the CRRL. A special thanks to the Mawson Club for facilitating our AGM.

These supporters cover all referee fees for the junior competitions, as well as Friday night rugby league venue costs, saving around \$20 per junior registration. Our gratitude goes to the Queanbeyan Leagues Club, The Mawson Club, Raiders Weston, Raiders Belconnen, and the Canberra District Rugby League board.

The CRRL maintains a strong relationship with Capital Region Community Services and Everyman and, with community engagement now under CRRL, aims to expand partnerships with more organisations. This will enhance access to expertise in various social areas for players and clubs.

Last year, we received a \$25,000 community grant from IMB to purchase portable defibrillators from St John’s Ambulance for junior clubs, and I’m pleased to share that CRRL contributed an additional \$5,000 to ensure every junior club received one for their Head Trainer. This initiative by IMB highlights rugby league’s commitment to player safety through our exceptional first aid trainer system. Thanks to our skilled personnel and CRRL staff, we were invited to present on Concussion Protocols at the NSWRL Annual Conference.



Figure 3 - Defibrillator Presentation Event

NSWRL and Judiciary

The NSWRL continues to support the CRRL, and our relationship is evolving with increased cooperation in various areas. Access to the NSWRL HQ in Bruce has greatly benefited the Belconnen Sharks, our referees, and representative teams.



Ongoing collaboration between CRRL and NSWRL focuses on Judiciary matters and developing a unified strategy for the regions. We appreciate our relationship with CEO Dave Trodden, CFO Dean Webster, Facilities Manager Ben Jessimar, Regional Manager Dave Skinner, and Monaro representative Jake McDonald.

I have been fortunate to continue in my role as a director of the NSW Community Rugby League Board which is focused on increasing resources and participation at community level.

This year, the CRRL Judiciary has expanded its role in partnership with the NSWRL, now hearing cases for Group 20, Group 16, Group 9 (as applicable), and Touch Football ACT, while also contributing to the overall system's development. We extend our gratitude to Co-Chairs Chris Gribble and Bwalya Chifuntwe, along with Sarah Rodrigues, Appeals Chair Jonathan Hanton, and the entire Judiciary panel, including Geoff Milczuk, Phil Stuart, Danny Roper, John Cooper, Papunya Connors, Rob Scott, and Bernard Powderly. A special thanks to Glyn Sargent, Head of the Match Review Committee, for his unwavering commitment to this demanding role throughout the season.

Referees

Our referees continue to be the unsung heroes of the CRRL. With growing participation numbers, they often officiate matches across all three days of the weekend or manage multiple junior games in a single day, sometimes traveling between venues to cover as many matches as possible. This places significant pressure on them, and we urge coaches, managers, spectators, and supporters to nurture and support our referees, many of whom referee for 3-4 hours straight. We thank the Canberra District Rugby League Referees Association for their ongoing collaboration with CRRL administration and look forward to maintaining our close relationship.



Closing Remarks

The CRRL Committee continues to oversee the competitions professionally and have been a tremendous support to me as Chairman. We welcomed Michelle Jopling and Ian Gorman to the committee, and they have transitioned seamlessly into their new roles. We thank them for their valuable contributions.

The CRRL operations staff continues to excel in the delivery of rugby league in the region and beyond. I thank them for their continued professionalism and the relationships they have developed with the clubs and with the NSWRL.



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

Thank you to Don Furner and the Raiders staff for your ongoing support of community rugby league. Your commitment provides us access to GIO game day activities, visits from Raiders men's and women's players to clubs, and significant investment in rugby league throughout the region and southern NSW.

It has been a privilege to once again serve the game we all love as Chairman of the CRRL, and I look forward to an even more successful 2025.

I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.

Gary Green
Chairman
CRRL



COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Chairman** Gary Green
- Executive Officer** Mark Vergano (non-voting)
- Senior Club Representative** Ian Gorman
Steven Troth
Phillip Watts
- George Tooke Shield Representative** Tony Rayner
- Junior Club Representatives** Michelle Jopling
Danny Roper
Greg Bell
- Appointed Members** Chris Nightingale (Referees)
Jon Tucker (ACT Schools)
Yvette Croft (Women's RL)

CRJRL COMMITTEE - Attendance at nine Committee Meetings held in 2024.

NAME	ATTENDED	APOLOGIES
GARY GREEN	9	0
MICHELLE JOPLING	7	2
DANNY ROPER	9	0
CHRIS NIGHTINGALE	9	0
JON TUCKER	7	2
TONY RAYNER	8	1
GREG BELL	6	3
YVETTE CROFT	7	2
IAN GORMAN	9	0
PHIL WATTS	7	2
STEVE TROTH	7	2
MARK VERGANO	9	0

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The 2024 season was another one of success and expansion for the CRRL.

- An increase in participation of 6.13% overall
- An increase in male participation of 4.4%
- An increase in female participation of 13.75%
- Remained the 4th largest rugby league region in the NSWRL.
- The Rolling Raiders won the NSW Wheelchair Tier 1 competition on debut.
- Monaro was successful in winning the Laurie Daley Cup competition.
- The Canberra Representative League Tag team won the NSW carnival.
- Monaro Open Men's finishing runners up to Newcastle in the Country Championships.
- The George Tooke Shield representative teams won both the Men's and League Tag matches against the Woodbridge Cup representative teams.
- Katrina Fanning was inducted into the NRL & ACT Sports Hall of Fame.
- All Raiders Cup clubs had a Katrina Fanning Shield team for the first time.
- Acknowledged as one of the leaders in concussion management and reporting in the state.

This is just a snapshot of the more high-profile successes that the organisation has achieved this year but as always, there is still much work to be done to ensure the health of the game and that our participants have a place to play.

Facilities

The CRRL was extremely disappointed with the state of the grounds at the conclusion of the rugby league season whereby the junior preliminary finals were transferred to Freebody Oval due to the poor condition of Gungahlin, Greenway and Boomanulla Ovals. The ACT Government has been made aware of rugby league's dissatisfaction with the condition of the ovals notwithstanding that they were at the end of a long season. The CRRL would expect a response with better facilities for the 2025 season.

We thank our volunteers and trainers for bringing the poor conditions to our attention and for your care towards our players.

On a more positive note, the Phillip District Oval redevelopment has commenced; there have been improvements to Melba and the new Stromlo grounds have been commissioned with two rectangular synthetic fields and a rectangular turf field to be part of the complex.



Figure 4 - Phillip District Oval Commencement



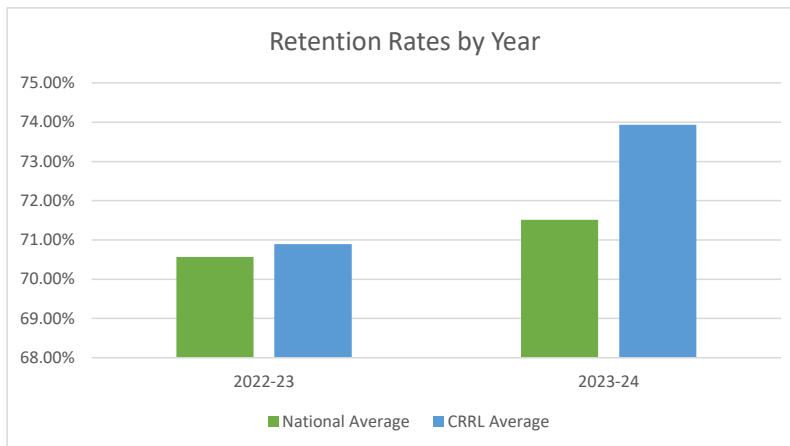
During the season, the CRRL provided the ACT Government with its priority list of ground development and projects to be undertaken. In support of this, the CRRL also produced an election manifesto highlighting projects that would need to be undertaken in each electorate, and this was distributed to the three major parties and followed up with meetings. With the re-election of the ALP-Greens coalition the CRRL will be following up with the new Ministry as to the projects we will attempt to get funding for. As previous, the development of Taylor remains our priority to assist the full re-location of the Gungahlin Bulls seniors and juniors.

Participation & Retention Statistics

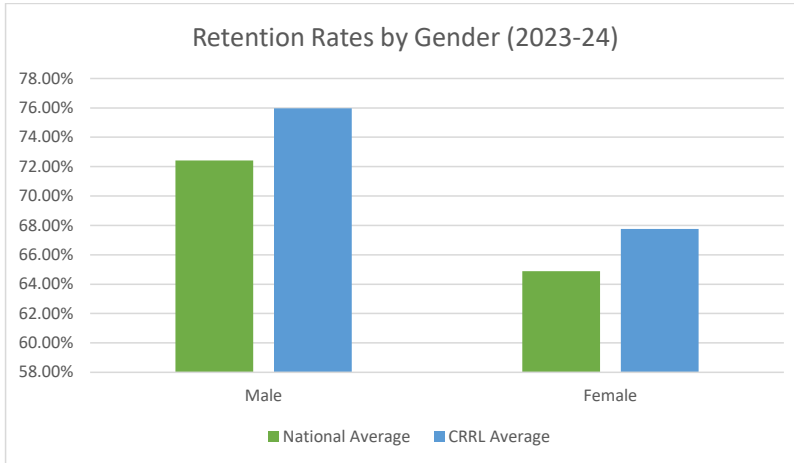
It was gratifying to see the increase in participation and the first year of the Tackle Ready Program leading to the Under 7 Graduation Day's at Curtin and Goulburn where the group transitioned from their league tag introductory phase into the tackle phase.

We have been pleased with the consistent growth in the game as illustrated by the accompanying graphs supplied in this publication. Whilst we were pleased with the growth and engagement with the girls league tag and seeing the girls Under 15 tackle competition flourish, we were exceptionally pleased to see growth in the boys area. This will still require a focus and an understanding of how we still bring boys through to the game. (Refer to "Junior Competition Statistics" page for details.)

One of the important pieces of data that the CRRL staff has been compiling is that of retention rates. It was pleasing to see that the CRRL was above the national average for retention rates in 2024. The national average was 70.89% and for the CRRL it was 73.93%. Compared to 2023, this was an improvement for the CRRL which rose from 71.51%.



Again, the numbers are instructive and highlight areas we must work on. Male averages were 72.42% nationally, whilst the CRRL was 75.96%. Again, an improvement in this category. However, whilst the CRRL female retention rate was above the national average at 67.76% compared to 64.89%, female retention was down 8% compared to male retention.



These numbers simply indicate that as a game, we still must make the female experience better to increase retention. Overall, we need to understand the participants' experience and ensure we give everyone as positive an experience as possible.

Concussion Management

Concussion remains an existential threat to the game of rugby league and without a concerted and all-of-game approach to protecting our players, the game could be imperilled. We all have a role to play whether it's how we teach children to tackle; the application of the rules under the Safe Play code; the understanding of our responsibility in removing players from the field if they take a knock.



The CRRL operations wishes to praise all our trainers and first aid people for their diligence in protecting our players with their diagnoses and then recording the injuries. Due to the efforts of our trainers and the CRRL staff, the NSWRL recognised that the Canberra Region has the best reporting rates of any area in NSW. To that end, the CRRL staff presented to the NSWRL Regional Managers and Development Officers initially online and then at the NSWRL State Conference. The ability of our trainers to come together as a cohort and look at collective action, plus supporting each other, has built an inclusive environment in which our players are the beneficiaries.

Competitions

The competition aspect of the CRRL being the Canberra Raiders Cup, Katrina Fanning Shield, George Tooke Shield, the Junior competitions and the representative teams were once again strong and well managed by the CRRL staff and the volunteer administrators from our clubs.

The Queanbeyan Kangaroos made it back-to-back premierships with a hard-fought win over the resurgent Queanbeyan Blues who reconfigured the club after its "*annus horribilis*" from 2023.

Yass continued to be the club of the Katrina Fanning Shield avenging a Grand Final loss from the previous year and Woden once again dominated the League Tag for three consecutive premierships.



Figure 5 - Queanbeyan Kangaroos Premiers



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

There is a trend for a number of Canberra based players to move from the Katrina Fanning Shield to teams in the Harvey Norman Premiership (HNP). Players view this route as being able to be identified by other NRLW clubs. Mt Pritchard, Wentworthville and Cronulla had multiple Canberra players in their ranks. This attests to the quality of the women players being produced through the Katrina Fanning Shield and the CRRL still has the aim of making the KFS competition the best outside of Sydney. The Raiders NRLW staff and the CRRL are working together to service the local teams and talent.



A major change for the Canberra Raiders Cup this year was the introduction of a player draft for the allocation of Canberra Raiders SG Ball and Jersey Flegg contracted players to local Raiders Cup clubs. This first year of the player draft system was well received by clubs and will become more formalised over the next few seasons.

It was pleasing to see that every Raiders Cup club had a Katrina Fanning Shield team (Kangaroos and Bungendore joined forces), and eight of the nine Raiders Cup clubs had an Under 19s team.

The George Tooke Shield saw Harden in both finals. The Harden Hawkettes maintained their dominance to make it a threepeat and Bungendore claimed their first title since 2015 in defeating Harden.

The representative program had a number of highlights, with the Rolling Raiders claiming the premiership in their debut NSW Wheelchair competition season, defeating the St George Illawarra Dragons 50-36 in the Grand Final, with Zac Carl earning Player of the Match honours.

The strength of League Tag in the region was demonstrated with Canberra winning the NSW Blues Tag State Championships on the Central Coast going through undefeated and beating Newcastle in a tight final 12-6. Harden's Clare Smith was player of the carnival.



Figure 6 - Monaro LDC Winners

Both George Tooke representative sides were victorious against Woodbridge Cup, claiming a dominant 42-18 win in the League Tag, followed by a tight 18-10 victory from the Men's team.

The Monaro Laurie Daley Cup team was triumphant for the first time in their history with a 28-18 win over the Northern Rivers in the final. Outstanding matches by Mitchell Brophy and Jonah Anderson got the Colts home.

The Open Men's Monaro team came close but ran into a strong Newcastle outfit going down 20-4 in the Country Championship Grand Final.

The junior competitions were well conducted, with a key change this season as the Under 11 age group transitioned to a non-competitive format. This aligns with the CRRL's ongoing shift to make Under 12 non-premiership, while international-grade rugby league from Under 13 and above will serve as the premiership grades, in line with the Player Development Framework agreement with NSWRL.

One of the well-received programs this year was having the availability of NRLW and State of Origin stars Sophie Holyman and Grace Kemp to visit local clubs on their training nights. This was a terrific promotion for female rugby league and the players certainly embraced having Grace and Sophie run around with them.

A new concept this year was a "Magic Round" for the Boys Under 14 and Under 15 competitions. The purpose of the Magic Rounds was to allow the Raiders pathway coaches to view all players together in one place as they looked to formulate their development squads. The Under 15s were held at Melba and the Under 14s at Curtin.

One noticeable change this season was the increase in insurance costs for players and clubs. The CRRL was forced to raise its fee per player for the first time in 10 years from \$20 to \$25. Whilst the rise wasn't welcomed, the fact that we have been able to keep the fee per player at a similar rate for 10 years shows the strength of the centralised insurance system.

The CRRL in partnership with Group 16 once again held the Monaro-Bateman's Bay Knockout for the second time at McKay Park, Bateman's Bay. There were an increased number of teams in this year's carnival and the tournament was well supported by good crowds. Binalong league tag team won their Cup division defeating Eden 22-10 in the final and Eden men were too strong for the Molong Bulls 28-0 in their final.



Figure 7 - Sophie Holyman (left), Grace Kemp (right)

Administration

A major piece of work undertaken this year was the categorisation process for the ACT Government’s Sport & Recreation Department. This program sees a number of compliance and best practice measures being adopted by local sports organisations. This compliance then leads to a categorisation which in the case of the CRRL/Raiders was an \$85,000 grant for a project that must be topped up with another 25% investment from the organisation.

The project that the CRRL/Raiders committed to undertake is the employment of a Coach Developer, primarily focussed on assisting club coach coordinators and junior coaches at the “coalface”. We view this role as helping to establish standards but also being a resource for those coaches in our younger age groups that take on this demanding role.



Figure 8 - Dave Tronc (Woden KFS Coach)

The Junior clubs this season had coach, manager and trainer sessions conducted as part of their education and in-servicing. These were conducted by Juniors’ coordinator, Stacey Studholme, along with the Raiders pathway coaches. The coach developer will be on hand in a full-time capacity in their new role to build on this initiative.

Judiciary

The CRRL conducted judiciary education sessions for all clubs across the Juniors, Raiders Cup and George Tooke Shield competitions. These sessions were to assist clubs in nominating a person to understand the whole range of procedures in both the judiciary and disciplinary areas, as well as how hearings are conducted. The CRRL seeks to have the best prepared clubs, although we do not want too many appearances for anyone!



Overall, player behaviour this season was commendable with few melees and matches generally played in good spirits. This was the first year of having a reporting system for all senior grades, and whilst the workload of citings increased, as would be expected, the referees were conscious of their responsibilities and utilised the operation of the reporting system well. Players also generally played their part.

However, as always in a season we had some incidents that were certainly not in the spirit of the game. One high profile incident led to a 10-year ban for the perpetrator and a 20-match ban for a 're-entering of the field' (served as 10 matches with discounts) and striking. No league wants to impose these bans on club supporters, but the CRRL will not resile from making long suspensions as appropriate.

This incident also led to CRRL and ACT Rugby Union coming to an agreement to recognise each other's suspensions greater than two matches. Both codes believe this is in the best interests of the respective competitions and adds further protection for players.



Apart from disorderly behaviour by some parents on the sidelines, the other areas of contention from a disciplinary perspective are the league safes and the citizen touch judges. The CRRL Disciplinary Committee consistently cited league safes for not retreating from a melee or persisting in staying on the field longer than is applicable. This is compounded with any getting involved with the referees. The same goes for citizen touch judges who believe holding the flag gives them permission to criticise a referee. This needs to stop and people must understand what their responsibilities are.

Referees

Once again, our referees have done an outstanding job. The growth of our participation rates has added extra pressure to the number of referees available on any given weekend and a number of referees undertake matches across Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and others will do 3-4 hours in a row. This is both physically and mentally taxing and we ask for all supporters to recognise that many referees are at different stages of development and need support and education rather than criticism, and worse still, abuse.

To that end, the referees' association and the CRRL have trialled the grey socks identifier for first year referees so that players, coaches, managers and supporters know that the officiating referee is new to the game.



Figure 9 - Referee wearing grey socks

Honours

Our game had several honours for members of our football community.



Figure 10 - Katrina Fanning AO PSM

Katrina Fanning is a very worthy recipient of being inducted into both the NRL and ACT Sports Hall of Fame. Katrina is Jillaroo #6; captained Australia, is currently on the Raiders Board, and Number 1 supporter of the Raiders NRLW team allied to her work as Chair of the NRL Indigenous advisory panel. Congratulations to Katrina on her outstanding contribution to Canberra rugby league.

The CRRL had the honour of naming four awards this season for the Raiders Cup and George Tooke Shield League Tag competitions.

Emma James from Harden, has had the GTS Player of the Year named after her in recognition of her outstanding achievements with Harden in the League Tag competition. Bungendore’s Teagan Pateman was honoured with having the GTS League Tag Grand Final Player of the Match named after her. West Belconnen’s Sarah Carter has had the Raiders Cup League Tag player of the year named after her for her efforts over many years, and Caitlin Turnbull from Gungahlin now presents the Raiders Cup player of the Grand Final. Congratulations to Emma, Teagan, Sarah and Caitlin on their efforts and this recognition.



Figure 11 - Emma James, Sarah Carter, Caitlin Turnbull, Matthew Pateman (Teagan’s father)

Harrison Leadbitter from the Belconnen Sharks and Adam Booth from the University of Canberra were selected in the NSW Universities Cup team. After the carnival Harrison was then selected in the Australian Universities Merit Team.

And congratulations to Matt O’Dwyer from the Charles Weston School in Coombs who was named the 2024 Teacher of the Year as part of the NRL Community Awards. Thank you Matt for your outstanding contribution to rugby league.

Closing Remarks

The CRRL once again would like to thank our media partners for their continued coverage and support of our sport. To WIN TV, Channel 9, The Canberra Times, Queanbeyan Age, Riot ACT, ABC Radio and television, 2CC and the regional news media for their continued support in promoting community sport.

This season the CRRL hired Jeff Hanson from NSW Country & Racing to write articles on the George Tooke Shield competition. Jeff produced plenty of good content to help us keep promoting our regional competition as well.

It was great to see Sam Williams take on Saturday Grandstand on ABC Radio and his efforts at promoting our local game as well as Jarrod Croker and Michelle Bishop on SEN.

The Raiders Group of clubs and Canberra District Rugby League continued their commitment to rugby league which makes our sport very cost effective for the participants and ensures the viability of the community clubs and the CRRL itself. This investment in our game allows also for professional staff and administration to assist the clubs and makes the league one of the strongest in the regions.

Thanks to all the licensed clubs' general managers and the support of the CDRL Board, whose contribution to our game ensures we have a well-run, efficiently administered competition.

To the CRRL staff, thank you once again for your outstanding contribution to facilitating our clubs and administering the league.

Deb Charman and Stacey Studholme are an effective team in administering the senior and junior competitions and always act in a professional and dedicated manner. The one-to-one service they provide to their respective clubs is greatly appreciated by the rugby league family.



Figure 12 - Anthony McQueen

Anthony McQueen continues to develop the relationships with our trainers and has the accreditations area fully compliant. Anthony has done an outstanding job in promoting our wheelchair rugby league offering and doing school visits and event demonstrations.

Liam Wyllie has continued on his learning journey of all things rugby league. His Saturday photography at matches in all kinds of weather shows a dedication to his craft and ensuring there is great communications with the clubs and the wider rugby league audience.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

Once again James “Sully” Sullivan is the voice of local rugby league. The amount of kilometres Sully covers in doing a NSW Cup match then returning to cover the Raiders Cup has to be seen to be believed. Sully is all you want in a commentator; passionate, knowledgeable, colourful, accurate and just loves his league. He also hosts the Rub of the Green podcast with Liam.

Our thanks also go to Chris Coleman, Hayden Blackmore, Finn Williamson, Michael Schirripa and Sunny Singh for your contribution to our match day coverage.

To Jake McDonald, the Group 16 NSWRL League and Club Support Coordinator, thank you for all your help and advice. Jake has been invaluable in organising the South Coast teams and aligning with the common strategic objectives between the CRRL and Group 16.

Jess Crisp is now the Community manager, and she has moved under the umbrella of the CRRL to better integrate our local league with the Raiders offerings. Jess has just completed the Raiders/CRRL Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and is also developing a community strategic plan.

When we visit our regional areas, we understand that rugby league is still the glue for so many of our regional townships for a common and shared experience. The townships are growing which will strengthen both the regional clubs but also those closer to Canberra as well. Our juniors continue to grow, and we need to continually nurture not only the players but also the coaches, administrators and supporters to ensure rugby league has a bright future.

Whilst I believe that rugby league is currently in a good place, there is still much to improve: facilities being the primary goal; a renewal of the strategic plan and looking to the future and ensuring that we are a totally inclusive game for all.

We will continue to challenge ourselves and refuse to stand still. There is still much to do.

Mark Vergano OAM
General Manager



Figure 13 - James Sullivan (left), Hayden Blackmore (right)

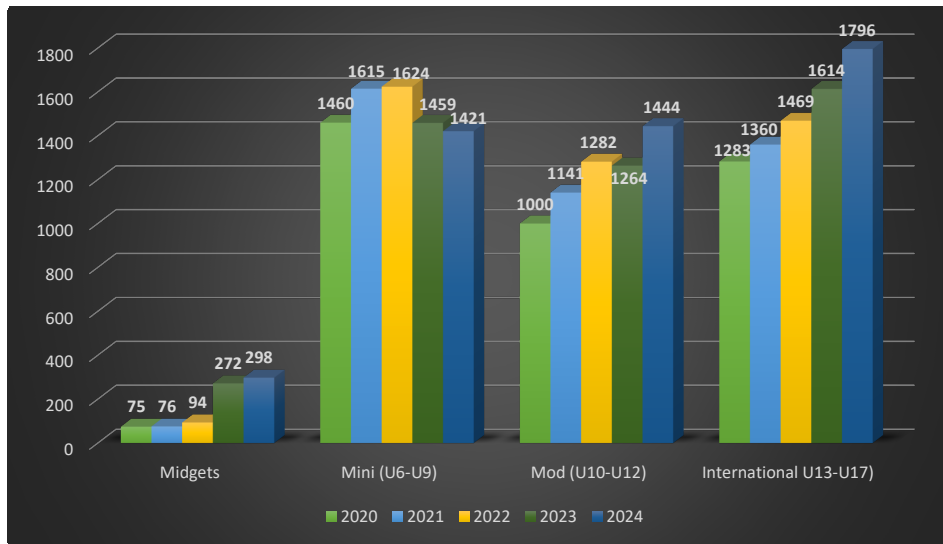
JUNIOR COMPETITION STATISTICS

Total number of clubs: 16
 Total Number of teams: 379
 Total Number of players: 4959

Competitions	2020 Teams	2020 Players	2021 Teams	2021 Players	2022 Teams	2022 Players	2023 Teams	2023 Players	2024 Teams	2024 Players
Midgets	-	75	-	76	-	92		272	17	298
Mini (U6-U9) *	131	1460	141	1615	146	1624	143	1459	142	1421
Mod (U10- U12) **	61	1000	79	1141	83	1282	92	1264	97	1444
International U13-U17)**	69	1283	73	1360	76	1469	94	1615	123	1796
Totals	261*	3818	293*	4192	305	4469	329*	4610	379	4959

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* Numbers include Goulburn Mini Competition, which was administered by The Canberra Region Rugby League, and run by the Goulburn Junior MRLFC. Please note that this does not include Midgets but does include 5-Year-olds)
 ** Numbers include U11, U13, U15 and U17 Girls teams as well as U10, U12, U14 and U16 League Tag.



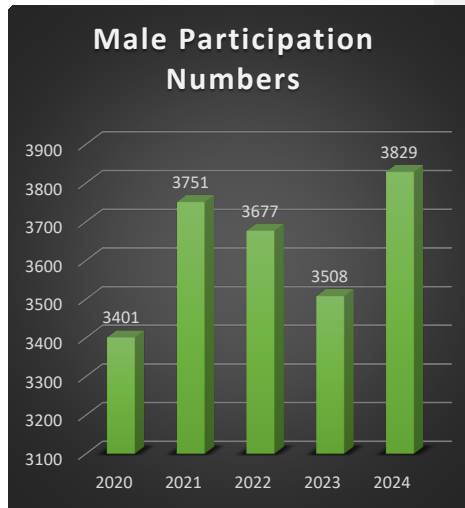


CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

Competition Breakdown by Age Group	2020 Teams	2020 Players	2021 Teams	2021 Players	2022 Teams	2022 Players	2023 Teams	2023 Players	2024 Teams	2024 Players
Midgets	-	75		76	-	92		83		92
Under 5	-	146		188	-	170		189		206
Under 6	32	292	36	266	37	295	33	266	35	272
Under 7	34	305	38	379	37	336	35	343	35	310
Under 8	33	360	33	369	38	419	37	373	35	404
Under 9	30	357	34	413	34	398	37	477	34	415
Under 10	20	345	27	402	28	432	20	368	31	423
Under 10 Leaguetag	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	41	8	88
Under 11	26	332	23	350	24	418	25	432	22	429
Under 12	18	323	19	389	20	358	20	369	20	327
Under 12 Leaguetag	N/A	N/A	10	125	11	137	10	54	15	177
Under 13	15	380	15	319	12	294	23	436	21	466
Under 14	12	274	17	381	11	284	12	287	17	336
Under 14 Leaguetag	4	73	5	80	11	171	9	85	10	137
Under 15	8	270	9	271	14	331	16	291	19	384
Under 16	8	189	9	232	7	225	11	298	9	152
Under 16 Leaguetag	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	19	6	108
Under 17	6	29	7	118	6	172	15	199	12	213
Score Raiders										20

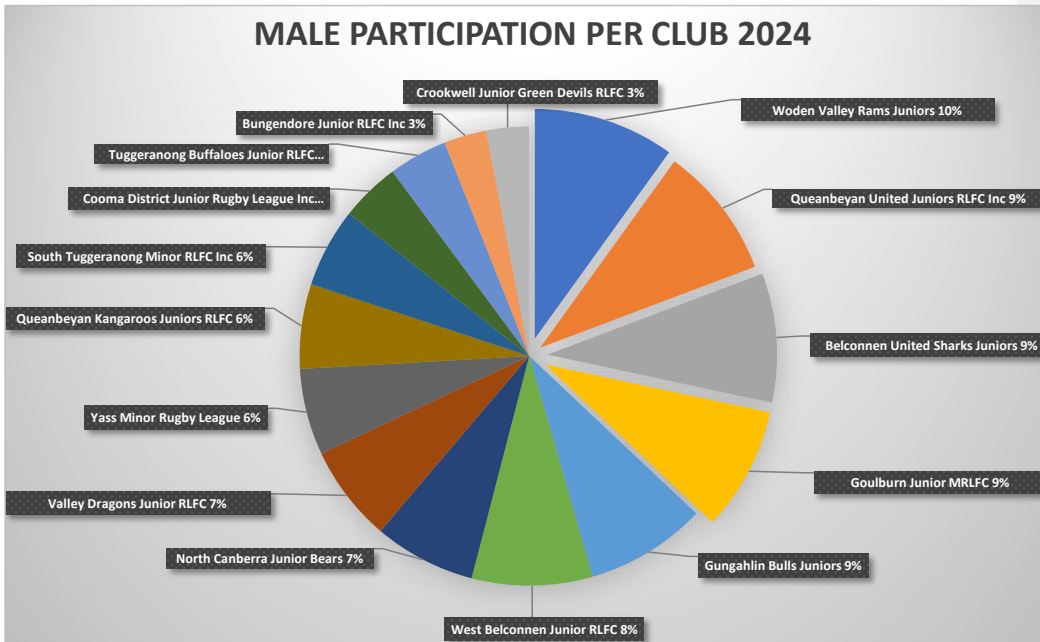
Male Participation in Competitions

Competition Breakdown by Age Group	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Midgets	62	62	80	81	80
Under 5	135	173	145	184	188
Under 6	277	257	272	264	252
Under 7	283	356	313	287	282
Under 8	322	358	388	318	360
Under 9	339	370	369	396	364
Under 10	332	382	359	328	414
Under 11	314	334	360	317	330
Under 12	301	340	328	313	354
Under 13	305	290	252	307	325
Under 14	217	312	227	219	305
Under 15	216	203	250	181	220
Under 16	164	183	178	196	176
Under 17	134	131	156	117	153
18+					26
Total	3401	3751	3677	3508	3829



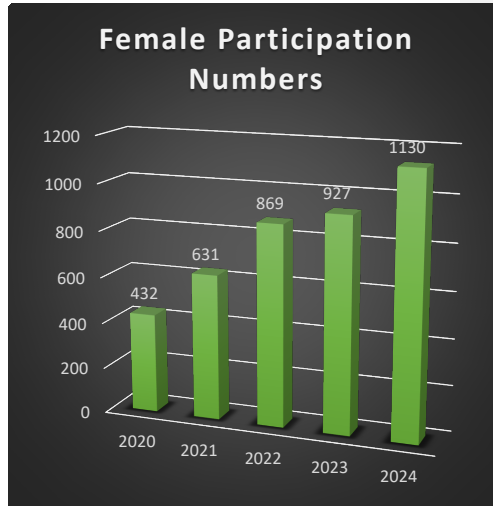
2024 Male participation breakdown by club – all green highlights had an increase of last year.

Club	2023	2024
Belconnen United Sharks Juniors	319	351
Bungendore Junior RLFC Inc	118	116
Cooma District Junior Rugby League Inc	166	162
Crookwell Junior Green Devils RLFC	67	116
Goulburn Junior MRLFC	321	335
Gungahlin Bulls Juniors	344	329
North Canberra Junior Bears	219	277
Queanbeyan Kangaroos Juniors RLFC	213	230
Queanbeyan United Juniors RLFC Inc	330	360
South Coast United		
South Tuggeranong Minor RLFC Inc	230	216
Tuggeranong Buffaloes Junior RLFC	179	160
Valley Dragons Junior RLFC	273	263
West Belconnen Junior RLFC	319	328
Woden Valley Rams Juniors	356	384
Yass Minor Rugby League	229	235



Female Participation in both Tackle and League Tag

Competition Breakdown by Age Group	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Midgets	10	17	12	7	12
Under 5	14	21	25	16	18
Under 6	18	12	23	29	20
Under 7	19	25	23	28	28
Under 8	38	18	31	33	44
Under 9	19	53	30	56	51
Under 10	15	50	73	57	97
Under 11	17	66	72	87	99
Under 12	19	60	92	92	150
Under 13	75	42	121	111	141
Under 14	62	85	110	136	168
Under 15	64	74	124	104	164
Under 16	30	66	82	91	84
Under 17	32	42	51	74	52
18 +				6	2
Total	432	631	869	927	1130

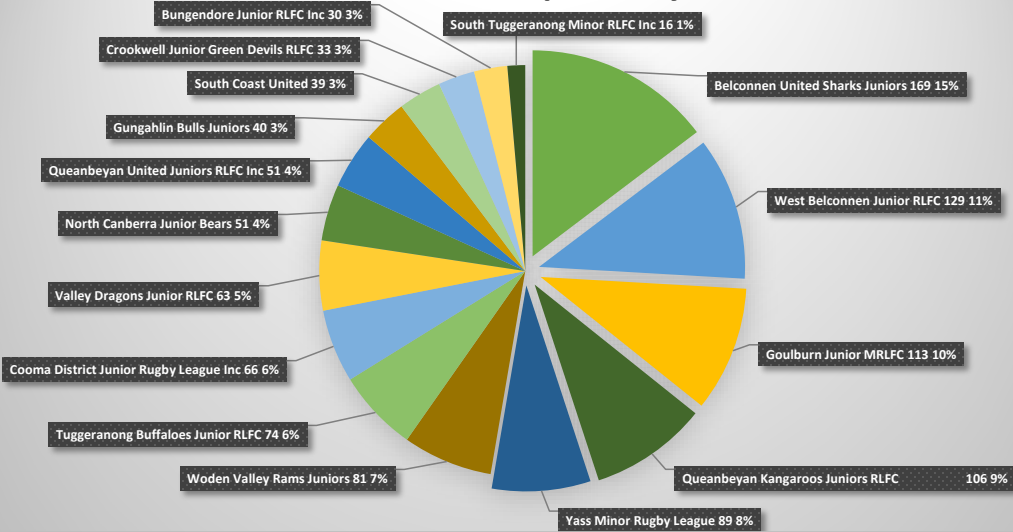


2024 Female participation breakdown by club – all green highlights had an increase of last year.

Club	2023	2024
Belconnen United Sharks Juniors	117	169
Boorowa Rovers	9	
Bungendore Junior RLFC Inc	39	30
Cooma District Junior Rugby League Inc	68	66
Crookwell Junior Green Devils RLFC	21	33
Goulburn Junior MRLFC	86	113
Gungahlin Bulls Juniors	37	40
North Canberra Junior Bears	36	51
Queanbeyan Kangaroos Juniors RLFC	69	106
Queanbeyan United Juniors RLFC Inc	47	51
South Coast United	34	39
South Tuggeranong Minor RLFC Inc	16	16
Tuggeranong Buffaloes Junior RLFC	53	74
Valley Dragons Junior RLFC	43	63
West Belconnen Junior RLFC	106	129
Woden Valley Rams Juniors	57	81
Yass Minor Rugby League	89	89



2024 Female Participation by Club



COACH DEVELOPER INTRODUCTION

The Coach Developer role aims to drive meaningful change at the community level of Rugby League by focusing on upskilling volunteer coaches, enhancing culture, and fostering growth in male, female, and all-abilities pathways. It provides accessible resources for volunteers to deepen their understanding of the game, supporting everyone from new Under 6's coaches to those advancing into senior-level coaching in both male and female spaces.

Based on previous seasons, Canberra Region Rugby League believes this role would greatly benefit coaches across the region by supporting their growth and development, opening new opportunities for individuals. Ultimately, it aims to enhance player development and foster sustainable, enjoyable club environments within the league.

My primary goal in this role is to be a reliable resource for all clubs to utilise, ensuring the hard-working volunteers in the Canberra region have the support they need to strengthen their clubs and develop their coaches. By prioritising local clubs and volunteers, this role aims to create an environment where players and staff feel valued and motivated to return each year, providing targeted support and assistance wherever needed.

Moving forward, I'm eager to build strong relationships with dedicated volunteers and gain insight into their needs and perspectives. My focus is on empowering them to grow grassroots Rugby League at their clubs with ease and confidence.

I look forward to meeting everyone across the league and working together to make a positive difference!

Liam Herbert
CRRL Coach Developer



Figure 14 - Liam Herbert - Coach Developer



2024 JUNIOR PREMIERS

COMPETITION	WINNING TEAM/S
U11 Div 1	Woden Valley Rams
U11 Div 2	North Canberra Bears
U11 Div 3	Belconnen United Sharks
U12 Div 1	Queanbeyan Blues
U12 Div 2	West Belconnen Warriors & Gungahlin Bulls
U12 Div 3	Cooma Colts
U12 League Tag	Queanbeyan Blues
U13 Div 1	Gungahlin Bulls
U13 Div 2	South Tuggeranong Knights
U13 Div 3	South Tuggeranong Knights
U13 Female	Belconnen United Sharks
U14 Div 1	Woden Valley Rams
U14 Div 2	Yass Magpies
U14 Div 3	Tuggeranong Buffaloes
U14 League Tag	Goulburn Stockmen
U15 Div 1	Belconnen United Sharks
U15 Div 1 Female	South Coast Marlins
U15 Div 2	Goulburn Stockmen
U15 Div 2 Female	Belconnen United Sharks
U16 Div 1	Belconnen United Sharks
U16 Div 2	Woden Valley Rams
U16 League Tag	Woden Valley Rams
U17 Div 1	Queanbeyan Blues
U17 Div 2	West Belconnen Warriors
U17 Female	Belconnen United Sharks

Congratulations to all the clubs who were able to top off what was a successful season across all juniors' competitions.

LEAGUE TAG AWARD NAMES

In 2024, we introduced new titles for our Canberra Raiders Cup and George Tooke Shield League Tag awards. These titles are a tribute to the players who have achieved great success and made a lasting impact in the League Tag competitions.



Figure 15 - Sarah Carter (left)

Sarah Carter Medal - Canberra Raiders Cup League Tag Best & Fairest

Sarah Carter joined the League Tag competition at its inception in 2016, initially representing the Belconnen United Sharks. She went onto play for the West Belconnen Warriors from 2018-2022 where she was named Player of the Year in both 2019 and 2022 and is a three-time leading point scorer.



Figure 16 - Caitlin Turnbull (right)

Caitlin Turnbull Medal - Canberra Raiders Cup Grand Final Player of the Match

Caitlin Turnbull was an integral player for the Gungahlin Bulls League Tag side from 2018-2023. She was named Player of the Year in 2018 and 2020 and is a three-time leading try scorer.

Turnbull recently transitioned to tackle rugby league, where she is thriving.



Figure 17 - Emma James (left)

Emma James Medal - George Tooke Shield League Tag Best & Fairest

Emma James, a long-standing Harden Hawkettes team member, has been instrumental in their success, earning five Best and Fairest awards and winning six premierships, including this year's Grand Final, where she was named Player of the Match.



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**



Figure 18 - Teagan Pateman (right)

**Teagan Pateman Medal – George Tooke Shield
Grand Final Player of the Match**

Teagan Pateman is one of the pioneer players of League Tag in the George Tooke Shield, scoring 105 tries over five seasons with the Bungendore Tigerettes. In 2015, she earned the competition’s Best and Fairest, Top Try Scorer, and Top Points awards.

MCINTYRE MEDAL AWARDS 2024

Dylan McLachlan of the Queanbeyan Blues was awarded the 2024 Les McIntyre Medal, recognised as the Best and Fairest player of the Canberra Raiders Cup First-Grade competition.

The talented halfback narrowly edged out finalists Sam Williams (Queanbeyan Kangaroos) and Liam Oakley (Tuggeranong), securing the medal by just two points.

McLachlan finished on top with 23 points, surpassing last year's McIntyre Medallist, Williams, who polled 21 points.

It was McLachlan's debut season in the Canberra Raiders Cup, as he made his return to Rugby League this year after two seasons playing Rugby Union.

The 2024 Queanbeyan Blues recruit was given the captaincy role and was instrumental in the club's turnaround from last year.

Under his leadership, the Blues rose from a seventh-place finish last year to a top two regular season finish and a Grand Final appearance in 2024.



Figure 19 - Dylan McLachlan



Figure 20 - Olivia Howe

Olivia Howe of the Goulburn City Bulldogs was awarded the 2024 Maree Bush Medal as the Best and Fairest player of the Katrina Fanning Shield.

Despite the challenging season for the Bulldogs, the crafty dummy half was a consistent top performer for her team, playing a pivotal role in their improvement in the latter part of the season.

Howe polled 24 points, finishing three points ahead of medal contenders Lara Cosgrove (Woden), Mya McGlynn (Belconnen Sharks), and Payge-Louise Condon (Queanbeyan Blues), who all polled 21 points each.



Figure 21 - Cody Smith

Cody Smith of the Gungahlin Bulls was the recipient of the Leedon Shield in back-to-back seasons, recognising his consistency for the Bulls as they made another Grand Final appearance in 2024.

West Belconnen Warriors prop Jesse Milin earned the David Sharpe Medal for Best and Fairest in the Under 19's competition, an impressive achievement given the challenging season for the Warriors.



Figure 22 - Keesha Kapea

Woden Valley Rams star League Tagger Keesha Kapea was awarded the Sarah Carter Medal, recognised as the competition's Best and Fairest player in consecutive seasons.

Cootamundra Bulldogs captain-coach Lauren Connell earned the Emma James Medal for the Best and Fairest player in the George Tooke Shield League Tag competition.



Figure 23 - Peter Dunn, Brad Laurent, Steven Cummins

The George Tooke Shield saw a three-way tie for the Gavin Miller Medal, with Bradley Laurent (Bungendore), Steven Cummins (Crookwell), and back-to-back winner Peter Dunn (North Canberra) sharing Best and Fairest honours

Jason McManus was awarded the Noel Bissett Trophy for Outstanding Referee honours.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE



Figure 24 - Jess Howard

Jesse Martin (Woden) earned the Hewson/Stonham Shield for the Monaro Colts Best and Fairest. The Women's Monaro Colts Best and Fairest was awarded to Jess Howard (Yass).

The George Tooke Shield Representative Player of the Year awards went to Chris Rawlinson (Binalong) in the Open Men's and back-to-back recipient Jayde Della (Crookwell) in the League Tag.



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

BEST & FAIREST STANDINGS

CRC FIRST GRADE

Dylan McLachlan - 23 points

Sam Williams - 21 points

Liam Oakley - 18 points

CRC RESERVE GRADE

Cody Smith - 23 points

Charlie Shepherd - 21 points

Kane Allan - 14 points

KATRINA FANNING SHIELD

Olivia Howe - 24 points

Lara Cosgrove - 21 points

Mya McGlynn - 21 points

Payge-Louise Condon - 21 points

CRC LEAGUE TAG

Keesha Kapea - 37 points

Tarni Magyar - 19 points

Emily Warner - 17 points

CRC UNDER 19'S

Jesse Milin - 16 points

Max Mercer - 15 points

Mason Kearney - 12 points

GTS OPEN MEN'S

Bradley Laurent - 13 points

Peter Dunn - 13 points

Steven Cummins - 13 points

GTS LEAGUE TAG

Lauren Connell - 18 points

Emma James - 17 points

Imogen Pye - 17 points



FULL LIST OF AWARD WINNERS

*The following awards are based off regular season statistics.

BLUMERS LAWYERS CANBERRA RAIDERS CUP FIRST GRADE

LES MCINTYRE MEDAL (BEST & FAIREST)	Dylan McLachlan 23 points	QUEANBEYAN BLUES
DON FURNER SNR SHIELD (COACH OF THE YEAR)	Jeremy Braun	QUEANBEYAN BLUES
TOP POINT SCORER	George Morseu 158 points	QUEANBEYAN BLUES
TOP TRY SCORER	Josh Billing 17 tries	QUEANBEYAN BLUES

BLUMERS LAWYERS CANBERRA RAIDERS CUP RESERVE GRADE

LEEDON SHIELD (BEST & FAIREST)	Cody Smith 23 points	GUNGAHLIN BULLS
COACH OF THE YEAR	Anthony Vitler	YASS MAGPIES
TOP POINT SCORERS	Christopher Thorley & Liam Howard 148 points	WEST BELCONNEN WARRIORS / WODEN VALLEY RAMS
TOP TRY SCORER	Kane Allan 15 tries	GUNGAHLIN BULLS

BLUMERS LAWYERS KATRINA FANNING SHIELD

MAREE BUSH MEDAL (BEST & FAIREST)	Olivia Howe 24 points	GOULBURN CITY BULLDOGS
GRAHAM WILLARD SHIELD (COACH OF THE YEAR)	Connor Bush & Dave Tronc	WODEN VALLEY RAMS
TOP POINT SCORER	Lara Cosgrove 164 points	WODEN VALLEY RAMS
TOP TRY SCORER	Caitlin Turnbull 26 tries	GUNGAHLIN BULLS



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

BLUMERS LAWYERS UNDER 19'S

DAVID SHARPE MEDAL (BEST & FAIREST)	Jesse Milin 16 points	WEST BELCONNEN WARRIORS
COACH OF THE YEAR	Scott Ferris	GOULBURN CITY BULLDOGS
TOP POINT SCORER	Levi Woods 106 points	GOULBURN CITY BULLDOGS
TOP TRY SCORER	Jayden Norgrove 10 tries	WODEN VALLEY RAMS

BLUMERS LAWYERS CANBERRA RAIDERS CUP LADIES LEAGUE TAG

SARAH CARTER MEDAL (BEST & FAIREST)	Keesha Kapea 37 points	WODEN VALLEY RAMS
COACH OF THE YEAR	Bryce Lloyd	WODEN VALLEY RAMS
TOP POINT SCORER	Keesha Kapea 212 points	WODEN VALLEY RAMS
TOP TRY SCORER	Keesha Kapea 32 tries	WODEN VALLEY RAMS

BLUMERS LAWYERS GEORGE TOOKE SHIELD OPEN MEN'S

GAVIN MILLER MEDAL (BEST & FAIREST)	Bradley Laurent, Peter Dunn, Steven Cummins - 13 points	BUNGENDORE TIGERS, NORTH CANBERRA BEARS, CROOKWELL GREEN DEVILS
COACH OF THE YEAR	David Buttriss	COOTAMUNDRA BULLDOGS
TOP POINT SCORER	Daniel Jacobs 122 points	BUNGENDORE TIGERS
TOP TRY SCORER	Joshua Baker 13 tries	BUNGENDORE TIGERS



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

BLUMERS LAWYERS GEORGE TOOKE SHIELD LADIES LEAGUE TAG

EMMA JAMES MEDAL (BEST & FAIREST)	Lauren Connell 18 points	COOTAMUNDRA BULLDOGS
COACH OF THE YEAR	Kristie McKenna	BINALONG BRAHMANS
TOP POINT SCORER	Annie Kent & Eliza Taylor - 92 points	BINALONG BRAHMANS / COOTAMUNDRA BULLDOGS
TOP TRY SCORER	Annie Kent & Eliza Taylor - 23 tries	BINALONG BRAHMANS / COOTAMUNDRA BULLDOGS

SPECIAL AWARDS

NOEL BLISSETT TROPHY	Jason McManus	
HEWSON/STONHAM MEDAL	Jesse Martin	WODEN VALLEY RAMS
MONARO WOMEN'S BEST & FAIREST	Jess Howard	YASS MAGPIES
GTS REP PLAYER OF THE YEAR	Chris Rawlinson	BINALONG BRAHMANS
GTS LEAGUE TAG REP PLAYER OF THE YEAR	Jayde Della	CROOKWELL GREEN DEVILS
ROLLING RAIDERS RECOGNITION	Toby Popple, Bradley Burns, Zac Carl, Anthony McQueen, Mitch Sentance, Victoria Simpson, Nick Alexander, Chris O'Brien, Amanda Carlyon, Jaimz Knight, Jamie Osborne	



NAMING OF AWARDS

Les McIntyre Medal – The Canberra Raiders Cup First Grade Best and Fairest Award is named after Les McIntyre OAM who was the founding father of the Canberra Raiders. McIntyre was awarded life membership at the Canberra Raiders, Country Rugby League, and New South Wales Rugby League.

Don Furner Snr Shield – The Canberra Raiders Cup First Grade Coach of the Year award is named after former Australian representative Don Furner Senior. During his playing years, Furner also represented Queensland before enjoying a successful coaching career. Furner coached Australia, the Queanbeyan Blues, and was also the inaugural coach of the Canberra Raiders.

Leedon Shield – The Canberra Raiders Cup Reserve Grade Best and Fairest award is named after Lee Donnelly who helped pave the way for the Raiders' entry to the NSWRL competition in 1982. He was heavily involved with the Woden Valley Rams and was also awarded life membership of the old Group 19 competition.

David Sharpe Award – The Canberra Raiders Cup Under 19's Best and Fairest Award is named after David Sharpe. Sharpe was involved in rugby league in the Canberra Region as a player for the Queanbeyan Blues before helping establish senior rugby league in Tuggeranong with the Valley Dragons and Tuggeranong Bushrangers. Sharpe coached both sides. He was well known for his role as football manager with the Canberra Raiders where he implemented education, development, and welfare programs for the NRL.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

Gavin Miller Shield – The George Tooke Shield Open Men’s Best and Fairest Award is named after two-time Dally M Medalist Gavin Miller. Miller played for a number of clubs but is best remembered for his stint at Cronulla where he was named as a club immortal. Miller also played for Goulburn during the late 1970’s and early 1990’s.

Sarah Carter Medal – The Canberra Raiders Cup League Tag Best and Fairest Award is named after one of the original players of the competition, Sarah Carter. Carter joined the competition at its inception in 2016, initially representing the Belconnen United Sharks. She went on to play for the West Belconnen Warriors from 2018-2022 where she was named Player of the Year in both 2019 and 2022 and is a three-time leading point scorer.

Emma James Medal – The George Tooke Shield League Tag Best and Fairest Award is named after Emma James. James is a long-standing Harden Hawkettes team member and has been instrumental in their success, earning five Best and Fairest awards and winning six premierships.

Hewson/Stonham Shield – The Representative Player of the Year Award is named after Steve Hewson and Phil Stonham. Steve Hewson, who was awarded an Order of Australia in 2023, represented Monaro, NSW Country, NSW, and was named Country Player of the Year in 1975. He is now involved in developing the overall strategy for NSW Wheelchair Rugby League, and in previous years has coached the Wheelaroos and NSW Wheelchair State of Origin teams. Phil Stonham enjoyed a long representative career with Monaro and was named Canberra Region as well as Country Player of the Year in 2004. Stonham played for the Queanbeyan Blues throughout most of his playing career.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

Noel Bissett Trophy - The Outstanding Referee Award is named after former NSWRL referee and former CRRL Chairman, Noel Bissett. Bissett, who was awarded an Order of Australia in 2013, officiated in 275 Group 8 matches including 11 Grand Finals. Bissett is a life member of the Canberra Raiders and was also the president of the Canberra/Monaro Men of League charity.

Don Elphick Medal - The award for Outstanding Rookie from the Canberra Region and the Canberra Raiders is named after Don Elphick. Elphick played an instrumental role in the formation of the Canberra Raiders and is a life member of the club.



SENIOR COMPETITIONS OVERVIEW

BLUMERS LAWYERS CANBERRA RAIDERS CUP FIRST GRADE

Team	Played	Points	Wins	Draws	Losses	Byes	For	Against	Diff.
Queanbeyan Kangaroos	16	26	12	2	2	2	613	244	369
Queanbeyan Blues	16	26	12	2	2	2	630	284	346
Woden Valley Rams	16	26	13	0	3	2	476	188	288
Belconnen United Sharks	16	21	10	1	5	2	450	303	147
Tuggeranong Bushrangers	16	12	6	0	10	2	282	432	-150
West Belconnen Warriors	16	12	6	0	10	2	270	434	-164
Goulburn City Bulldogs	16	8	4	0	12	2	282	556	-274
Yass Magpies	16	7	3	1	12	2	290	602	-312
Gungahlin Bulls	16	6	3	0	13	2	262	512	-250

The 2024 Blumers Lawyers Canberra Raiders Cup First Grade season ended with the Queanbeyan Kangaroos securing back-to-back premierships in a thrilling Queanbeyan derby Grand Final against the Blues.

The season was highly competitive, especially among the top four teams, all of which were strong contenders for the title as finals approached.

The Kangaroos, Blues, and Rams finished tied on points, with the Sharks close behind in fourth. Big late season wins helped the Kangaroos secure their second consecutive minor premiership, just ahead of the Blues on points differential.

After a closely contested semi-finals series, the Queanbeyan rivals faced off in the Grand Final, a match up that was exciting all year.

Their previous two encounters during the season had both ended in draws - 32-all in round two and 24-all in round 11.

The Kangaroos finally broke the deadlock in the Grand Final qualifier, winning 22-14.

In the Grand Final, they proved superior once again, defeating the Blues 18-10 to claim their second consecutive title.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

BLUMERS LAWYERS KATRINA FANNING SHIELD

Team	Played	Points	Wins	Draws	Losses	Byes	For	Against	Diff.
Yass Magpies	16	24	12	0	4	2	415	156	259
Queanbeyan Blues	16	24	12	0	4	2	411	224	187
Woden Valley Rams	16	22	11	0	5	2	424	186	238
Gungahlin Bulls	16	20	10	0	6	2	430	258	172
West Belconnen Warriors	16	18	11	0	5	2	352	158	194
Goulburn City Bulldogs	16	13	6	1	9	2	224	412	-188
Belconnen United Sharks	16	11	5	1	10	2	278	278	0
Tuggeranong Bushrangers	16	6	3	0	13	2	182	380	-198
Bungendore Kangaroos	16	2	1	0	15	2	110	706	-596

*The West Belconnen Warriors were deducted two points due to Tough Love in League.

The Blumers Lawyers Katrina Fanning Shield culminated in a Grand Final showdown between the Yass Magpies and Gungahlin Bulls, with the Magpies securing a commanding 28-10 victory.

The season was fiercely competitive, particularly the race for the top four and the minor premiership in the final rounds. At various points, multiple teams were tied on points, and the competition leader continuously changed.

In 2024 the competition didn't split into two tiers like last year, which saw the top five teams excel, while the bottom four showed steady improvement, notably the Goulburn City Bulldogs, who claimed wins over top teams, and Olivia Howe earning the Maree Bush Medal.

The Belconnen United Sharks, in their inaugural season, were consistently competitive, and the Queanbeyan Blues impressed by finishing in the top two after previously being in tier two.

The finals series was thrilling, with Yass claiming the Shield after a remarkable 11-game win streak following a slow start to the season.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

BLUMERS LAWYERS CANBERRA RAIDERS CUP RESERVE GRADE

Team	Played	Points	Wins	Draws	Losses	Byes	For	Against	Diff.
West Belconnen Warriors	16	28	14	0	2	2	440	168	272
Woden Valley Rams	16	26	13	0	3	2	536	216	320
Gungahlin Bulls	16	26	13	0	3	2	530	240	290
Yass Magpies	16	18	9	0	7	2	370	242	128
Goulburn City Bulldogs	16	18	9	0	7	2	409	329	80
Queanbeyan Kangaroos	16	9	4	1	11	2	260	409	-149
Tuggeranong Bushrangers	16	9	4	1	11	2	258	432	-174
Belconnen United Sharks	16	7	3	1	12	2	232	646	-414
Queanbeyan Blues	16	1	1	1	14	2	194	547	-353

The Blumers Lawyers Canberra Raiders Cup Reserve Grade showcased the growing depth of talent across the Open Men's grades.

Unlike last year, when the Gungahlin Bulls won the minor premiership by 10 points, 2024 saw a closer race.

The Warriors secured the minor premiership in the final round with 28 points, while the Rams and Bulls finished second and third, both with 26 points.

Yass edged out Goulburn for fourth place with a better points differential after both finished on 18 points.

Gungahlin and Woden claimed strong wins in week one of the finals, with Woden advancing to the Grand Final.

The preliminary final was a thrilling match, with the Bulls edging out the Warriors 28-26, setting up a Bulls and Rams Grand Final.

In a high-scoring clash, the Woden Valley Rams triumphed 32-26, capping off an outstanding Reserve Grade season.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

BLUMERS LAWYERS UNDER 19's

Team	Played	Points	Wins	Draws	Losses	Byes	For	Against	Diff.
Goulburn City Bulldogs	14	23	11	1	2	4	442	158	284
Queanbeyan Blues	14	22	11	0	3	4	275	209	66
Woden Valley Rams	14	21	10	1	3	4	339	234	105
Tuggeranong Bushrangers	14	17	8	1	5	4	314	263	51
Yass Magpies	14	10	5	0	9	4	194	326	-132
West Belconnen Warriors	14	7	3	1	10	4	218	294	-76
Belconnen United Sharks	14	6	3	0	11	4	196	330	-134
Gungahlin Bulls	14	6	3	0	11	4	196	360	-164

The Blumers Lawyers Under 19's season delivered thrilling, closely contested matches each week, highlighting the young talent in the region.

Goulburn, Queanbeyan Blues, Woden, and Tuggeranong emerged as the top contenders, setting the stage for an exciting finals series.

In a much-anticipated clash, southside rivals Woden and Tuggeranong faced off, with Woden securing a strong win to advance to the preliminary final.

Meanwhile, Goulburn, the minor premiers, earned a Grand Final spot with a decisive victory over the Blues.

The following week, Woden claimed a 32-22 win in an end-to-end preliminary final against the Blues, earning the chance to go back-to-back.

Riding a wave of momentum, the Rams dominated the Grand Final, winning 34-12 to lift the trophy for the second consecutive season.

It was also amazing to see many Under 19's players step up into first grade this year, signalling a bright future for the senior competitions.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

BLUMERS LAWYERS CANBERRA RAIDERS CUP LEAGUE TAG

Team	Played	Points	Wins	Draws	Losses	Byes	For	Against	Diff.
Woden Valley Rams	16	32	16	0	0	2	733	40	693
Gungahlin Bulls	16	28	14	0	2	2	363	88	275
West Belconnen Warriors	16	22	11	0	5	2	402	160	242
Goulburn City Bulldogs	16	22	11	0	5	2	306	208	98
Belconnen United Sharks	16	12	6	0	10	2	212	224	-12
Yass Magpies	16	12	6	0	10	2	160	372	-212
Tuggeranong Bushrangers	16	8	4	0	12	2	110	322	-212
Queanbeyan Blues	16	4	3	0	13	2	110	448	-338
Queanbeyan Kangaroos	16	0	1	0	15	2	56	590	-534

The Blumers Lawyers Canberra Raiders Cup League Tag season concluded with a nail-biting Grand Final, where the Woden Valley Rams claimed their third consecutive title in a 16-14 thriller over the Gungahlin Bulls.

The Rams dominated the season, going undefeated, while the Bulls, their closest contender, only lost to the Rams throughout the year.

The Warriors and Bulldogs also contended strongly, rounding out the top four.

In the major semi-final, the Bulls looked poised for an upset but were denied by a last-minute Rams try, sending Woden to the Grand Final.

The Bulls earned their spot in the final after a strong preliminary win over the Warriors, setting up a showdown between last year's finalists.

The Bulls entered the Grand Final with confidence following their minor semifinal performance.

It was a back-and-forth battle with both teams trading tries. The Bulls had a chance to tie the game late, but a sideline conversion attempt fell short, allowing the Rams to hold their 2-point lead and secure their third straight championship.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

BLUMERS LAWYERS GEORGE TOOKE SHIELD OPEN MEN'S

Team	Played	Points	Wins	Draws	Losses	Byes	For	Against	Diff.
Bungendore Tigers	14	23	11	1	2	0	530	164	266
Binalong Brahmans	14	23	11	1	2	0	387	168	219
Harden Hawks	14	22	11	0	3	0	414	193	221
Cootamundra Bulldogs	14	20	10	0	4	0	150	232	218
Boorowa Rovers	14	9	4	1	9	0	260	413	-153
Crookwell Green Devils	14	8	4	0	10	0	306	358	-52
North Canberra Bears	14	6	3	0	11	0	257	530	-273
UC Stars	14	1	0	1	13	0	142	688	-546

The 2024 Blumers Lawyers George Tooke Shield Open Men's competition delivered one of the most thrilling top four battles of the year.

The race for the minor premiership saw constant shifts, with Bungendore, Binalong, Harden, and Cootamundra all in the mix until the final rounds.

Bungendore ultimately secured the minor premiership, finishing level with Binalong on 23 points but boasting a superior points differential. Harden followed closely with 22 points, and Cootamundra finished fourth on 20 points.

Last year's finalists, Boorowa and Crookwell, fought for fifth place, with reigning premiers Boorowa edging Crookwell by one point after a final-round draw against UC.

The finals series was fiercely competitive, culminating in a Bungendore vs. Harden Grand Final.

Their previous matchups made for an intriguing storyline, with Bungendore winning 50-0 in round one, while Harden responded with a 40-0 win in round eight.

Bungendore secured their Grand Final spot with a 19-4 victory over Harden in the major semi-final. They then delivered a dominant performance in front of their home crowd at Mick Sherd Oval, winning 30-10 to lift the Shield.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

BLUMERS LAWYERS GEORGE TOOKE SHIELD LEAGUE TAG

Team	Played	Points	Wins	Draws	Losses	Byes	For	Against	Diff.
Harden Hawks	14	23	11	1	2	0	334	150	184
Cootamundra Bulldogs	14	21	10	1	3	0	346	124	222
Crookwell Green Devils	14	19	9	1	4	0	242	196	46
Binalong Brahmans	14	18	8	2	4	0	294	164	130
North Canberra Bears	14	14	6	2	6	0	172	198	-26
Boorowa Rovers	14	12	6	0	8	0	292	182	110
Bungendore Tigers	14	3	1	1	12	0	84	384	-300
UC Stars	14	2	1	0	13	0	91	458	-366

The Blumers Lawyers George Tooke Shield League Tag saw Harden's dominance continue in 2024, as they secured their third consecutive title.

This marked their sixth championship win in nine Grand Finals, with the Hawks having qualified for nine out of a possible 10 Grand Finals since the competition began in 2014.

Harden claimed the minor premiership with 23 points, closely followed by Cootamundra on 21, while Crookwell (19), Binalong (18), and North Canberra (14) completed the top five.

Crookwell emerged as the dark horse of the season, managing a draw and a win over Harden. In a surprising preliminary final, Crookwell upset last year's finalist, Cootamundra, with a tight 4-0 win to book their Grand Final spot.

Harden had already advanced to the final with a 6-0 victory over Cootamundra in the major semifinal the week prior.

The Grand Final was another close battle, with Harden securing a 10-6 victory to claim their third straight title.

The tight scores throughout the season, particularly during finals, showcased the growing competitiveness of the GTS League Tag competition.

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

BLUMERS LAWYERS CANBERRA RAIDERS CUP

Team	Firsts X4	Res X3	KFS X3	U19 X3	LT X3	Total
Woden Valley Rams	104	78	66	42	64	354
West Belconnen Warriors	48	84	54	14	44	244
Queanbeyan Blues	104	3	72	44	8	231
Gungahlin Bulls	24	78	60	12	56	230
Goulburn City Bulldogs	32	54	39	46	44	215
Yass Magpies	28	54	72	20	24	198
Belconnen United Sharks	84	21	33	12	24	174
Tuggeranong Bushrangers	48	27	18	34	16	143
Queanbeyan/ Bungendore Kangaroos	104	27	6	0	0	137

Congratulations to the Woden Valley Rams for winning the 2024 Canberra Raiders Cup Club Championship award.

The Club Championships rewards clubs for their overall participation and success across all senior competitions.



Figure 25 - Albert Camilleri (left) & Sean Maloney (right) - Woden

BLUMERS LAWYERS GEORGE TOOKE SHIELD

Team	Men's X4	LT X3	KFS X3	Total
Harden Hawks	88	69	-	157
Binalong Brahmans	92	54	-	146
Cootamundra Bulldogs	80	63	-	143
Bungendore Tigers/ Kangaroos	92	9	2	107
Crookwell Green Devils	32	57	-	89
Boorowa Rovers	36	36	-	72
North Canberra Bears	24	42	-	66
UC Stars	4	6	-	10

Congratulations to the Harden Hawks for winning the 2024 George Tooke Shield Club Championship award.

The Club Championships rewards clubs for their overall participation and success across all senior competitions.



Figure 26 - Emma James - Harden

COMMUNITY REPORT

In 2024, the partnership between the Canberra Raiders Community Department and Canberra Region Rugby League (CRRL) continued, aiming to enhance engagement and support within our local rugby league community.

Community engagement was strong throughout the season, starting with 12 junior clubs taking part in open 'come and try days' and 14 junior clubs taking part in the annual Raiders Junior Club Visits, both featuring attendance by Canberra Raiders players. When we asked the players about their favourite aspect of these engagements, they highlighted the opportunity to be involved with the younger kids who aspire to be playing NRL/NRLW one day. A heartfelt thank you to all the clubs' volunteers who assisted in arranging these engagements. It truly establishes that working together continues to inspire our participants to chase their rugby league dreams.



On Sunday the 7th of April, the Canberra Raiders home game was dedicated to CRRL junior participants. During half time of the main game, the annual Junior Club relay took place, with 12 clubs battling it out for victory. It was fantastic to see the competitive nature of these clubs and over 140 of our local participants soaking up the atmosphere of over 16,000 in attendance at GIO Stadium. Throughout the season, we also saw several clubs take part in game day experiences including, Guard of Honour, Walk Out at the Indigenous Round, Autograph Alley, Coin Toss and many more.



Figure 27 - MensLink representative at the Juniors Season Launch

This year, we welcomed the Canberra Raiders Community Partners, Menslink and Fearless Women. Both community partners were engaged by CRRL as support organisations for all junior clubs to access over the season. It is wonderful to see community groups supporting our cohort of participants with many clubs reaching out to engage their services throughout the year.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Raiders Group for their ongoing support and commitment to advancing rugby league within the Canberra region and surrounding areas.



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

Thank you to the Raiders Licence Clubs in Belconnen, Gungahlin, Mawson, Weston and Queanbeyan who continue to support our great game to make sure that rugby league remains strong, viable and a sustainable sport in our community. As we enjoy the off-season and look forward to the 2025 season, CRRL and the Raiders Community Department will work to create opportunities for engagement with our local clubs, focusing on learning, development and the expansion of our game for all.

Jess Crisp
Community Engagement Manager

ACCREDITATION REPORT

Building on the success of our accreditation compliance in 2023, 2024 proved to be another outstanding season. Thanks to the dedication of our accredited volunteers, both the Junior and Senior competitions thrived.

As in previous seasons, we encountered challenges, but the communication and relationship between CRRL and the clubs continued to strengthen. This enhanced communication led to a higher compliance rate among both coaches and sports trainers. Although we have yet to achieve our goal of 100% compliance, we are trending upward and remain committed to reaching this target in 2025.



In total, we offered 13 community coach courses (seven for ages 6-12 and six for ages 13+), along with nine League First Aid and Sports Trainer courses. Additionally, we conducted seven CPR refreshers, three Tackle Ready deliverer courses, and piloted the U6-7 Community Coach education workshop. These new offerings allowed us to better educate and support our growing cohort of coaches and sports trainers, servicing 325 new coaches and 225 new sports trainers.

A recurring challenge has been the number of courses available for trainers, and we are continually working to organise new sessions to accommodate the rising registrations. It is crucial that we maintain these relationships to ensure all courses are filled in a timely manner.

In 2024, we saw an increase in our Sports Trainer and League Safe numbers. This led to our largest contingent of sports trainers.

YTD	Coach	Sports Trainer	Leaguesafe
2023	789	562	1292
2024	605	661 (17% increase)	1601 (24% increase)

*Numbers based off 2024 My Sideline Registrations

The Tackle Ready program, facilitated by NRL Game Development Officers Shane Read and Taylor Giggins, continued to show significant progress. As part of the Player Development Framework (PDF), this program helps coaches and players learn proper tackle techniques. U7 coaches and players engage in tag for the first six weeks of their competition while practicing tackling skills, transitioning to tackle in Round Seven.



In 2024, after completing the Tackle Ready Program, the U7s participated in a gala day to showcase their new tackling abilities. Each participant received a Tackle Ready graduation certificate during the event. We have received positive feedback regarding the program's implementation, and parents are proud to see their children learning safe tackle techniques.

I commend everyone for their patience and support as we maintained a strong focus on our Concussion Protocols. The processes we have implemented over the past few seasons have empowered our Sports Trainers to confidently identify and report any suspected concussions. In 2024, we were ranked #1 in NSW for our concussion management and reporting. This will remain a key priority for us in 2025 as we continue to enhance the confidence of our Sports Trainers and ensure clear communication regarding any changes to the protocols.



Overall, 2024 was a successful year for our accreditation efforts. We effectively built on the relationships developed with our trainer cohort and will continue to nurture these connections in 2025.

Our primary focuses for the upcoming year will be achieving 100% compliance in accreditations, managing registrations for working with vulnerable people and children, and enhancing concussion management and reporting. The importance of ensuring compliance is met is for overall safeguarding of the players and volunteers involved and to ensure they can continue to play community rugby league in safe, knowledgeable, and supportive environment.

We are committed to supporting our coaches and trainers, ensuring they feel equipped with the knowledge needed to perform their roles confidently. I look forward to collaborating with everyone in 2025.

Anthony McQueen

CRRL Competition and Accreditation Assistant

INCLUSION PROGRAMS REPORT

2024 was a successful year for our inclusion programs, the Rolling Raiders and the Score Raiders. Their growth and success were evident, with increased support highlighting their role as vital pillars of community rugby league.



Figure 28 - Wheelchair RL in Griffith

This year, we had a jam-packed calendar of Wheelchair Rugby League events, hosting 16 Community Come and Try sessions across various locations, including Tuggeranong, Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Canberra City, Belconnen, AIS, and GIO Stadium. These events provided a platform to attract new participants and support the growth of our program. Although we couldn't establish a viable local competition this season, the Rolling Raiders gained entry into the NSW Cup Wheelchair Rugby League competition.

After a tough start, losing their first four games, the Rolling Raiders achieved their inaugural victory against the West Tigers in front of a packed Wagga crowd. Competing in a four-team league, the Rolling Raiders finished the regular season in fourth place and embarked on a remarkable finals run, defeating the West Tigers, Parramatta Eels, and Dragons in successive weeks to be crowned the 2024 NSW Cup Wheelchair Rugby League premiers.

Rolling Raiders superstar Zac Carl was named Player of the Match in the Grand Final and received the season MVP award. In total, 11 players proudly donned the lime green jersey for the Rolling Raiders in 2024.

After a stellar season, Rolling Raiders Captain/Coach Toby Pople represented NSW Blues in the 2024 Wheelchair Interstate Challenge, where they narrowly lost to Queensland in July. This performance paved the way for him to reach the pinnacle of Wheelchair Rugby League by representing the Australian Wheelaroos on their historic first-ever tour of New Zealand in November. The Wheelaroos achieved impressive victories in both test matches, with a combined margin of 208-12.



Figure 29 - Zac Carl (left) - Grand Final POTM

In May, Zac Carl and Toby Popple also represented NSW Country, while Brad Burns, Amanda Carlyon, Jaimz Knight, Mitchell Sentence, and Victoria Simpson played for the NSW Country Barbarians in the NSW City vs. Country curtain-raiser, which was coached by Carl and Popple.

This season wouldn't have been possible without our wonderful sponsors, Entice Travel and Zatoma Transport, who have been integral to the development and growth of our program. We look forward to continuing our partnership with them as the Rolling Raiders aim to defend their premiership and welcome a team into the NSW Plate second-tier competition.



Figure 30 - Wheelchair RL at Canberra College

We also experienced significant growth in regional development and school engagement this year. Following our late inclusion in Sporting Schools in 2023, we serviced 20 different school programs and showcased Wheelchair Rugby League to over 1,000 new school-aged players. In November, we hosted our first-ever schools' gala day, with four colleges participating, and a primary school event in early December that attracted six schools.

Wheelchair Rugby League hit the road again with programs in Griffith, Wagga Wagga, Albury, and Goulburn. In 2025, we will focus on establishing viable programs in these regions while revisiting Bathurst and the Central West.

The CRRL continued its partnership with the Disability Trust and Score Raiders in 2024, during which the Score Raiders recorded their largest participation numbers to date. They were once again integrated into the U14 competition and remained competitive against some of the strongest teams in the league. We extend our gratitude to all clubs for their continued support of this program.

On September 15th, the Score Raiders faced off against the Score Dragons at GIO Stadium but unfortunately fell short. Their season culminated with a narrow Grand Final loss to the Whistleblowers at NSWRL HQ in Bruce on September 23rd, a game that was well received by fans and spectators alike. The Score Raiders are determined to return stronger than ever in 2025.



Figure 31 - Score Raiders Grand Final



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

In 2024, we continued to strengthen and build new partnerships. We extend special thanks to The Disability Trust, Entice Travel, Zatoma Transport, Intereach, FerosCare, Invictus Australia, Marymead Autism Centre, Capital Region Community Service, Canberra Raiders, and both the ACT and NSW Governments for your support throughout the year.

We hope to continue working with you in 2025. Without your unwavering support, commitment, and encouragement, we wouldn't be able to sustain these rewarding programs. We've achieved several important milestones, highlighted by the Rolling Raiders' premiership success, and we look forward to returning even stronger in 2025.

Anthony McQueen

CRRL Competition and Accreditation Assistant

ROLLING RAIDERS SEASON WRAP

The Canberra Rolling Raiders debuted in the 2024 NSW Wheelchair Rugby League competition, transitioning from several years of non-competitive local play to joining the league and broadening opportunities for players to represent their communities on a larger stage.

The Rolling Raiders had four players with NSW Cup level experience in Bradley Burns, Zac Carl, Chris O'Brien and Captain/Coach Toby Popple. Amanda Carlyon had previous experience playing in the tier 2 NSW Plate competition in 2023. New players to the competition included Nick Alexander, Jaimz Knight, Anthony McQueen, Jamie Osborne, Mitchell Sentence, and Victoria Simpson.

With several new players, the Rolling Raiders faced the added challenge of competing against teams featuring seasoned players from representative sides like the NSW Blues and the Australian Wheelaroos.

The season began with two games in Sydney, where the Raiders had a slow start, losing both matches but gaining valuable experience.

Rounds Three and Four were held at Queanbeyan PCYC, marking the first time teams travelled outside Sydney for this competition. Despite the Raiders losing both games, the matchdays thrilled the home crowd, and the team showed promising improvement, boosted by the addition of Brad Burns in Round Three.

In Round Five, the West Tigers travelled to Wagga Wagga for the area's first-ever competitive Wheelchair Rugby League match, giving local players Toby Popple, Zac Carl, and Jaimz Knight a chance to showcase the sport at home.

Despite the Tigers fielding only four players, the Raiders, strengthened by returning representative Chris O'Brien and the support of an enthusiastic Wagga crowd, secured their first win of the season in this 5v4 matchup.



In the next round, the Rolling Raiders faced the top-of-the-table St George Illawarra Dragons, who secured the Minor Premiership with the win. Despite the loss, it was the Raiders' strongest showing of the season, boosting their confidence for the semi-finals. In the first week of finals, they faced the third-placed West Tigers, captained by Australian Wheelaroos leader Brad Grove, and delivered a controlled, cohesive performance to advance to the preliminary final.

In the preliminary final, the Rolling Raiders faced the reigning premiers, the Parramatta Eels, who featured three past and present Wheelaroos representatives. The match opened with fierce intensity, as both teams were locked in an arm-wrestle. By halftime, the Raiders held the lead, with Parramatta facing a setback after Captain Liam Luff was sidelined by a failed HIA, leaving them with four players. The Raiders seized the advantage, powering through the second half to secure their spot in the 2024 Grand Final.

The Rolling Raiders faced the minor premiers, the Dragons, led by the formidable father-son duo Cory and Craig Cannane. Entering the match as underdogs, the Raiders endured an intense start, with both teams making early errors. Despite this, the Raiders struck first, taking a narrow lead into halftime. The Dragons responded strongly in the second half, gradually edging closer on the scoreline, but the Raiders held their nerve to secure victory in the 2024 Grand Final.



After winning just one of six regular season matches, the Raiders peaked at the right time, winning three consecutive finals matches to clinch the NSW Cup in their debut season.

The 2024 NSW Cup Wheelchair Rugby League competition offered valuable experience for all participants, with both new and returning players gaining confidence for 2025. The Rolling Raiders aim to further grow the game in the ACT and Southern NSW, with plans to establish a second-tier NSW Plate team next season.

Zac Carl was named Player of the Match in the Grand Final and also received the Rolling Raiders MVP award, while Toby Popple was selected for the NSW team and earned a spot on the Australian Wheelaroos for their tour of New Zealand in November.



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

2024 RESULTS

Round One: Parramatta Eels 42 d Rolling Raiders 32

Round Two: West Tigers 52 d Rolling Raiders 10

Round Three: Dragons 56 d Rolling Raiders 22

Round Four: Parramatta Eels 56 d Rolling Raiders 30

Round Five: Rolling Raiders 56 d West Tigers 26

Round Six: Dragons 50 d Rolling Raiders 36

Finals Week One: Rolling Raiders 60 d West Tigers 30

Finals Week Two: Rolling Raiders 42 d Parramatta Eels 12

Grand Final: Rolling Raiders 50 d Dragons 32

GAME DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Firstly, we would like to thank all the clubs, schools, and volunteers for their continued support of our programs throughout 2024. We appreciate all the hard work that you do and there would not be a game without your dedication.

NRL Canberra is still working in the Southern NSW game development team in 2024. These areas include Canberra, Illawarra, Tablelands, South and Far South Coast regions.

2024 has been a successful year for everyone. NRL Canberra delivered an increased number of Secondary school programs in semester one and term three including Sporting Schools, LIFT and Tackle Ready programs. This increase in interest from secondary schools is very encouraging for the recruitment and retention of players aged 13+ in the CRRL District.

Our NRL Southern NSW Development team have once again conducted many events, competitions and education courses and community events. This included some new initiatives to ensure that players, coaches, referees, sports trainers, and volunteers are assisted in participating in Community Rugby League.



Figure 32 - Raiders Tag Gala Day

It was another good year for our after-school program, LEAGUE STARS with 120 participants in 2024 across 10 programs. Thank you to the schools, clubs, teachers, and volunteers who have helped promote and run League Stars and we look forward to working with you in 2024 to continue to provide opportunities for new and existing participants within our game.

We would also like to thank Jason Mathie and all the staff at the Canberra Raiders for their ongoing support. We are very fortunate to work in partnership with an NRL club and the fantastic support they provide for our region is greatly appreciated. Thanks to Canberra Region RL Mark Vergano, Deb Charman, Stacey Studholme, Anthony McQueen, and Liam Wyllie as well as all our Junior Rugby League clubs and committees, our event and programs could not occur without your ongoing support and guidance.

Finally, a big thank you goes to our NRL Game Development Officers who help support our region; this includes Matt Williams, Kyle Williams, Huw Ellis, Alysha Jansen, Gethin Thomas, Quincey Dodd, Holly Furness and Josh Norris as well as our NRL Southern region manager Matt O'Brien and our Assistant Development Officers.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

Our GDO team works extremely hard to try and improve Rugby League in the region and their passion and dedication to the game is second to none.

The following pages showcase our 2024 information from a variety of NRL initiatives delivered across the Canberra region, which will include:

- School Programs and Event Participation
- Education Courses and Training
- Junior League Retention
- League Stars
- Female Participation
- Community events

These provide you with a snapshot of the depth of work that goes into the year by our team. If you would like any further detailed information, please contact our local Game Development Officers.

Once again thank you for a great 2024. Enjoy the break and we look forward to working with you in 2025.

Shane Read & Taylor Giggins

NRL Game Development, Canberra.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

LEAGUE STARS

- A total of one League Stars after school programs were offered throughout 2023, with 180 participants. Only one program was cancelled due to low registrations.
- NRL Canberra conducted 3 x NRL holiday clinics, 3 CRRL Development clinics and the Canberra Raiders Master class with a total of 470 participants.

SCHOOL COMPETITIONS

Primary School

In 2024 we were able to conduct all our Primary School gala day events, these include:

- **Legends Shield South Canberra** (16 teams) (9x schools)
- **Legends Shield North Canberra** (17 teams) (11 x schools)
- **Gilbert/Croker Legends shield** (46 teams), (7x schools)
- **Sullivan Shield North** (10 teams) (6 x schools) and **South Canberra** (16 teams) (8x schools)
- **Raiders Tag Canberra years 3-6 North** (30 x teams) (8x schools) **South** (81 x teams) (18 x schools)
- **Raiders Tag Canberra years K-2 North** (11x teams 3 x schools) **South** (48x teams 14 x schools)
- **Raiders Tag Goulburn years K-2** (21 x teams 3x schools)
- **NSWPSSA Classic Shield** in Bruce (5 teams) with North Goulburn Public School progressing to state finals.

High School

In 2024 we were able to conduct all our High School and College gala day events. These included: University Shield in Goulburn, Female League Tag, Alan Tongue Cup 9's Male, Katrina Fanning Cup 9s Female, Country Cup Tablelands, Buckley Shield Tablelands, Country Cup Canberra and Schoolboy Trophy Canberra.

Our new initiative of NRL Raiders Tag for secondary schools will again be conducted in mid -term 4 of 2024. 14 Teams nominated for the event in 2023, as of October 31st, 2024, we have 33 teams across 2 x events.

NRL Game Development Canberra also supports NRL staff on the Far South Coast and Riverina areas to conduct gala day events and school / community programs.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

Results:

University Shield NSWPSSA - U17 and U18 males, Mulwaree HS to progress to regional final.

Buckley Shield NSWPSSA - U14 male, Mulwaree HS def Mossvale Public School, progressed to state finals but were knocked out.

NRL Country Cup - Tablelands - U13 and U15 males, U13 - Mulwaree to proceed to regional finals, U15 - Mulwaree to proceed to regional finals.

Country Cup Canberra (Clyde/Router) - 8x Schools, 10x teams U13 - St Francis Xavier progress as the only nomination, knocked out at regional final - St Edmunds def St Francis Xavier College. St Edmunds progress to the state finals in Bathurst but were defeated.

Schoolboy Trophy - Year 11-12 Boys - Winner - Erindale College def Lake Ginninderra College, Lake Ginninderra College progressed to state finals in Wagga Wagga but were knocked out.

Katrina Fanning Cup 9's Canberra - Year 7-12 Girls - 8 x schools 15 x teams
Winners: U14 -St Francis Xavier College, U16 - St Mary MacKillop College, U18 - Gungahlin College.

Katrina Fanning Cup 9's Monaro finals- U14 Winner - St Francis Xavier College def Narooma HS.

U16 Winner - Narooma HS def St Mary MacKillop College, U18 Winner - Gungahlin College def Monaro HS.

Alan Tongue Cup 9's - Year 7-12 Boys 15 x schools, 29 teams U14 Winner - Trinity CC Goulburn def John Paul II College, U16 Winner - Melba Copland SS def Trinity CC Goulburn, U18 Winner - Erindale Red def Erindale Black.

Ladies League Tag - Year 7-12 Girls - 12 x schools, 27 teams Winners - U14: St Clares College, U16: Daramalan College, U18: Erindale College.

Raiders Tag - Secondary Schools - years 7-10 - Mixed 7 aside event, 46 teams / 18 schools.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

School Programs

- Canberra Raiders Community Blitz was conducted in February 2024 delivering the NRL INSPIRE message to 22 ACT/NSW Primary schools. League Stars Inspire workshops were also conducted across multiple schools in the Canberra Region including the Dickson College Bridging program.
- 3 Sporting Schools LIFT Programs were delivered with 135 school students participating in a Rugby League program across ACT/NSW High Schools.
- League Stars Introduction clinics were run within schools to promote a League Stars program in their area.
- Tackle Safe programs were delivered across Primary and Secondary Schools in ACT & NSW to assist in preparation for gala day attendance.

Education

In 2024 NRL Game Development conducted the following courses:

- 7 Community Coach 6-12 workshops
- 6 Community Coach 13-18 workshops
- 2 Teachers Coaching workshops - Cancelled due to low numbers
- 9 League First Aid courses
- 9 Level 1 Sports Trainer courses
- 7 CPR Updates
- 7 Level 1 & Level 2 Re-Accreditations
- 3 x Tackle Ready Deliverer courses
- Education day in Goulburn for Tablelands volunteers (3 courses in 1x day)
- Pilot U6-7 Community coach education workshop

NRL Game Development in collaboration with CRRL conducted Sports Trainer, Coaching and manager information seminars. These workshops were a great success and congratulations to Canberra Raiders/CRRL staff for delivering the sessions.



REPRESENTATIVE FOOTBALL WRAP

MONARO COLTS OPEN MEN'S (COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS)

The Monaro Colts Open Men's team had a successful 2024 season, reaching the Grand Final but falling short 20-4 against a strong Newcastle-Maitland side.

This marked a significant turnaround from their 2023 campaign, where they were knocked out early after a big 46-12 loss to the Riverina Bulls in round one.

Co-coached by Jason Kelly and captain Sam Williams, they started 2024 with a tight 36-30 win over Riverina and followed it up with a 12-8 semi-final victory against Northern Rivers Titans, who had ex-NRL star Todd Carney in the halves.



Figure 33 - Sam Williams

In the Grand Final, the Colts faced Newcastle-Maitland, featuring ex-NRL players Blake Ferguson and Will Smith, and led by former Gold Coast Titans coach Garth Brennan. Although Monaro put up a good fight, they ultimately fell short.



Figure 34 - Josh Ayers

Later in the year, Josh Ayers, who also plays for the Queanbeyan Kangaroos, was named Men's Country Championship Player of the Year at the NSWRL Brad Fittler Medal awards night. Ayers was also the only Monaro player selected for NSW Country team that took on NSW City earlier this year.

Jesse Martin of the Woden Valley Rams was awarded the Hewson/Stonham Medal at the Les McIntyre Medal awards night, recognised by the coaches as the Monaro Colts Player of the Year.

Squad: Gideon Afemui (Woden), Josh Ayers (Queanbeyan Kangaroos), Thomas Bethke (West Belconnen), Ben Davis (Yass), Bayley Hitchcock (Queanbeyan Kangaroos), Lachlan Ingram (Queanbeyan Kangaroos), Jake Kiely (Queanbeyan Kangaroos), Levita Levita (Cooma), Jesse Martin (Woden), Brigham Moeakiola (Tuggeranong), Jeffery Morgan (Woden), Nicholas Navarro (Tuggeranong), Liam Oakley (Tuggeranong), Bradley Prior (Woden), Toroa Rapana, Samuel Williams (Queanbeyan Kangaroos), Brandon Withers (West Belconnen), Matt Woolnough (Belconnen United), Sonny Tupuola (Belconnen United).

Coaches: Jason Kelly and Sam Williams



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

MONARO COLTS OPEN WOMEN'S (COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS)

The Monaro Colts Open Women's team couldn't replicate their undefeated 2023 campaign, where they claimed their first Country Championship title.

They began 2024 with a commanding 44-0 win over the Riverina Bulls but fell short in their next match against the Western Rams, which would have secured a spot in the final.

In a hard-fought game, the Rams secured a 20-10 victory, ending Monaro's campaign, and later went on to win the tournament.

Jessica Howard, captain of the team and player for the Yass Magpies, was named the Open Women's Monaro Colts Player of the Year at the Les McIntyre Medal ceremony by coach Nathan Smith.



Figure 35 - Caitlin Turnbull

Squad: Kaitlyn Andrews (Yass), Rosaline Aumale (West Belconnen), Anna Tabuai-Dingley, Gabbie Davis (Yass), Shannon Evans (Queanbeyan Blues), Kayla Fleming (Gungahlin), Sydney Harrison (Yass), Teliya Hetaraka (West Belconnen), Jessica Howard (Yass), Olivia Howe (Goulburn), Zoe Podmore (Tuggeranong), Lucy Prosser (Yass), Caitlin Turnbull (Gungahlin), Madyson Tooth (Goulburn), Gisela Vea (West Belconnen), Zali Waihape (West Belconnen), Remi Wilton, Tijana Zdravevska (Gungahlin).

Coach: Nathan Smith



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

ANDREW JOHNS CUP (UNDER 16s)

The Monaro Colts Andrew Johns Cup team had a slow start in 2024, opening their campaign with three consecutive losses to the Central Coast Roosters, Illawarra South Coast Dragons, and Western Rams.

They bounced back in the final two rounds, securing a narrow 16-10 victory over eventual Grand Finalists Macarthur Wests Tigers and a commanding 34-8 win against the Riverina Bulls.



Despite their strong finish, the Colts narrowly missed the finals, placing third in their pool when only the top two teams advanced.

While they didn't progress, their form at the latter end was a positive finish to their 2024 campaign.

Squad: Okie Aldridge (Eden), Joaz Ayamiseba (Queanbeyan Blues), Christopher Awad (West Belconnen), Darcy Baldwin (Belconnen United), Max Buser (Woden), Johnny Constable (Narooma), Latrell Dyer (Queanbeyan Blues), Jay Frando (Belconnen United), Ben Gasnier (South Tuggeranong), Tyla Hope (Belconnen United), Brodie Irvin (Bega), Sebastian Jones (South Tuggeranong), Hunter McDonald (Narooma), Seth McDonald (Queanbeyan Blues), Riley Morris (Batemans Bay), BJ Pumpa (Belconnen United), Kodi Roberts (Batemans Bay), Lachlan Smith (Belconnen United), Logan Summerell (Queanbeyan Blues), 'Uhila Tai (Belconnen United), Darnell Thomas (Queanbeyan Blues), Tyler Stonham (Queanbeyan Blues), Kane Wilson (Goulburn), Sonny Willett (Goulburn), Aiden Wunsch (Belconnen United).

Coach: Jack Bramley

LAURIE DALEY CUP (UNDER 18s)

The Monaro Colts made history by claiming their first Laurie Daley Cup title in 2024, with a gallant 28-18 victory over the Northern Tigers in the Grand Final.



This victory redeemed their close 26-24 loss in the 2023 Grand Final against Illawarra South Coast Dragons.

After a rocky start to the season with a 14-0 defeat to the Central Coast Roosters, Monaro bounced back, winning their next four pool matches and topping their group.

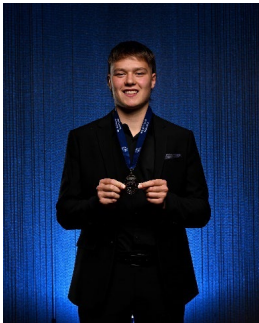


Figure 36 - Jonah Anderson

They avenged their earlier loss to Central Coast in the semi-final, securing a 26-18 win and advancing to the Grand Final against Northern Tigers.

In an end-to-end, tightly contested Grand Final, Monaro emerged victorious with a 28-18 win to secure their first-ever Laurie Daley Cup title.

Colts halfback Jonah Anderson had an exceptional campaign, earning the John 'Choc' Anderson OAM Medal for Player of the Match in the final and later being awarded the Tom Nelson Medal as the Laurie Daley Cup Player of the Year at the Brad Fittler Medal ceremony.

Squad: Brock Apolovski, Jonah Anderson, Ryan Blowes, Mitchell Brophy, Sam Chapman, Matthew Cox, James Croker, Lachlan Cunnanan, Patrick Dawson, Joey Elton, Toby Ferris, Ashton Flint, Sam Griffin, Alex Hardy, Yuri Hromow, Hayry Hudson, Lowame Lilo, Clinton Latham, Josiah Leuila-Briggs, Sam Lever, Jesse Milin, JJ Ma'u-Pohiva, Andrew Muir, Lucas McPherson, Jorge Constable, Luke Tualii.

Coach: Brendan Bradley



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

REGIONAL LISA FIAOLA CUP (UNDER 17s FEMALE)

In the 2024 Regional Lisa Fiaola Cup, the Monaro Colts won one of their two pool stage matches, but it wasn't enough to reach the final.

The competition featured two pools of three teams each, with the top team from each pool advancing to the Grand Final.

Monaro began their campaign with a dominant 64-4 victory over the Riverina Bulls, highlighted by Uta Uatisono Poka and Teuila Ahkey both scoring four tries each.



However, in their next match, they fell to a strong Western Rams side in a narrow 22-16 defeat, ending Monaro's run. The Western Rams went on to claim the title with a 22-8 win over the Northern Tigers in the final.

Squad: Mila Ahkey (Queanbeyan Blues), Alerya Brayshaw (Yass), Lara Carroll (South Coast United), Frankie Cappello (Tuggeranong), Jayda Danilczak (Belconnen United), Paua-lee Going (Tuggeranong), Sabrina Marela (Griffith), Jaymie Napier (Woden), Adelaide Norris (Tuggeranong), Ella Panagiotopoulos (Belconnen United), Nevaeh Peace (Belconnen United), Isabella Piper (Belconnen United), Uta Uatisono Poka (Queanbeyan Blues), Makenna Ravouvou (Belconnen United), Leilani Raappana (Belconnen United), Sara Small (Belconnen United), Kymiah Stewart (South Coast United), Ella Van Den Heuvel (Belconnen United), Dominica White (Belconnen United).

Coach: Carrie Mitchell



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

NSWRL OPENS BLUES TAG GALA DAY

The CRRL League Tag team went undefeated at the NSWRL Opens Blues Tag Gala Day.



Featuring players from the Canberra Raiders Cup and George Tooke Shield, the team faced off against representative sides from Central Coast, Cronulla, Newcastle, and Woodbridge.

They opened with a narrow 12-10 win over Central Coast, followed by strong victories against Cronulla (22-12) and Woodbridge (50-0). Their toughest match came against Newcastle, ending in a 10-all draw.



Figure 37 - Clare Smith

In the semi-final, they beat Cronulla 16-0 before redeeming themselves against Newcastle in the Grand Final with a 12-6 victory.

Clare Smith of the Harden Hawkettes was named Player of the Tournament.

This win continues the team's success, as a similar squad competing under the Monaro Colts name also went undefeated to win the title last year, showcasing the strength of the CRRL League Tag competitions.

Squad: Mackenzie Alcock (Woden), Ruby Carey (Woden), Annie Croker (Goulburn), Rachel Grocott (Gungahlin), Lahni Hall (Gungahlin), Maddison Harney (West Belconnen), Karina Hewlett (Woden), Maddie Hyland (Gungahlin), Ellie Hyland (Gungahlin), Emma James (Harden), Annie Kent (Binalong), Matisse McNair (Gungahlin), Alice Ruwald (Gungahlin), Clare Smith (Harden), Georgia Smith (Gungahlin), Alicia Trevethan (Woden), Emily Warner (Belconnen United)

Coach: Darren Grocott



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

GEORGE TOOKE SHIELD OPEN MEN'S REP TEAM

In their annual representative clash against the Woodbridge Cup team, the George Tooke Shield side secured a hard-fought 18-10 victory.

It was a gritty contest, with the GTS side holding a narrow 6-0 lead at halftime.

Coached by Jack Bramley, the GTS team continued to show their determination in the second half, with both sides scoring two tries, but GTS outscored Woodbridge three tries to two overall.

Chris Rawlinson of the Binalong Brahmans was named best on ground, with his leadership and kicking game proving decisive in the win.



Figure 38 - Bradley Laurent (L) & Jack Bramley (R)

Squad: Adam Booth (UC), Andrew Swaffield (Binalong), Brad Laurent (Bungendore), Chris Rawlinson (Binalong), Cooper Cross (Boorowa), Dylan Ahosivi (Bungendore), Dylan King (North Canberra), Harry Elphick (Binalong), Hamish Scott (Boorowa), Jacob Maher (Cootamundra), Jesse Collins (Bungendore), Michael Gordon (Bungendore), Murray Armour (Boorowa), Reuben Oleh (Binalong), Rhys Secomb (Crookwell), Tavake Taholo (North Canberra), Tyran Sullivan (Bungendore), Will Goode (Binalong).

Coach: Jack Bramley



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

GEORGE TOOKE SHIELD LEAGUE TAG REP TEAM

In a commanding performance in the league tag match, George Tooke Shield was too good for Woodbridge Cup, winning seven tries to three.

It was a scintillating first half performance, with Georgia Smith, Amarti Kelleher, and Jayde Della crossing for doubles while Emma James was perfect with the boot as GTS led 36-6 at halftime.



Jayde Della crossed for her third to open the second half, while the Woodbridge Cup side scored two of their own, but the GTS side ultimately came away with a dominant 42-18 victory.

Squad: Amarli Kelleher (Cootamundra), Annie Kent (Binalong), Chloe Muggelton (Harden), Emma Gallagher (Crookwell), Emma James (Harden), Eliza Butt (Harden), Elyssa Radnedge (Cootamundra), Georgia Smith (Harden), Jayde Della (Crookwell), Andie McTavish (Cootamundra), Kaylee Charlton (North Canberra), Kezia Hughes-Watts (North Canberra), Sasha Louttit (Cootamundra), Tahnee-Lee Della (Crookwell), Imogen Pye (Boorowa), Kate Menz (Harden).

Coach: Jason Pollard

REFEREES REPORT

Office Bearers 2024

Chairman: Oliver LEVIDO

Executive Officer - CRRL Board Member: Chris NIGHTINGALE

Director Finance: Katherine NIGHTINGALE

Operations Manager: Mark RYAN

Director Coaching and Development (Director Referees): James GOULD

Director Members Services: Jason SEVERS

Director Recruitment & Retention: David CHARMAN

2024 was another challenging year where the local competitions showed an overall increase in the number of players by 6.2%. Female participation had increased by 13.8%. This equated to 195 games of tackle and tag rugby league each weekend.

All our members should be congratulated on the professionalism and dedication they showed throughout the season, especially those who officiated in multiple games over three days each weekend. As usual for Canberra we had quite a number of mornings that were very “cold”. However, it was not just the mornings that were cold, we had one weekend where the First-Grade game at 4pm was officiated in (feels like) minus degrees temperature, certainly testing everybody’s resolve and commitment.

Recruitment continued to be very strong with 42 candidates undertaking the Referees U6-U12 Years course. Whilst this was very promising, the demographics and playing careers of the new members presented us with a challenging jigsaw to solve and balance each weekend. 30 of the new members were aged between 13 and 16 and still involved as players. With the structure in Canberra being that all U7 to U15 games are played on a Sunday morning meant that finding games for these new referees was only possible through the assistance of the CRRL Junior Competition Manager who re-organised game times to give our new members the best chance of officiating in these games.



We are lucky to have organisations such as the Canberra Raiders and Canberra Region Rugby League support our Association and assist with recruitment and development of referees.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

The support from the CRRL staff, especially General Manager Mark Vergano and Chairman Gary Green cannot be under-estimated. Incidents involving unsavoury conduct by players, officials or spectators were swiftly dealt with by the League, sending a strong message that poor behaviour is not acceptable, and match officials will be supported by them.

Achievements

On the Representative front we had a Junior Representative Squad with referees in both Regional and Metro Squads. (Tristan Brooker, Liam Richardson, Thomas Rynehart and Gage Miles). Gage was promoted to the Graded Squad early in the year. Congratulations to Martin Jones and Gage Miles for their achievements with the NSW High Performance squad in 2024. Martin refereed the Sydney Shield Grand Final and Gage the in-goal touch judge in that same game. Their success serves as an inspiration for all our members.

The Annual Awards Dinner and Presentation Night was well attended with the following awards presented.

Award	Recipient
"Neville Norris" Shield - Rookie of the Year	Sam Drance & Lucas Jambor
"Bruce Chapman" Shield - Most Improved Junior	Matiu Robinson
"Neville 'Chief' Harradine" Shield - Junior Encouragement	Lachy Russell
"Jack McKie OAM" Trophy - Most Improved Senior	Billy Perrott
"Alan Hodge" Shield - Senior Encouragement	Darren McKenzie
"Jim Mahoney" Shield - Outstanding Service to the Association	Phillip Stuart
"Henderson Family" Shield - Most Improved Touch Judge	Angus Blackman
"Keith Gegg" Shield - First Grade Touch Judge Shield	Andrew Nightingale & Tristan Brooker
"Noel Bissett OAM" Shield - First Grade Referee Shield	Jason McManus



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

Financially the Association is in a very stable position with signing two major sponsorship agreements with The District Bar & Restaurant, and GenTech Automotive, together with a sleeve sponsor in Fundamental Physiology, and continuing with a major sponsorship from the Canberra Raiders (Gungahlin Raiders Club) and grants from NSWRL Referees Assn.

Chris Nightingale

Executive Officer - CDRL Referees Association

JUDICIARY REPORT

In 2024, judiciary hearings were again held in person, with out-of-town clubs being given the option to either appear in person or by zoom. It should be noted that whilst appearing via zoom was good for some clubs it also came with technical difficulties that made the judicial hearing longer and more frustrating for all parties concerned.

For the 2024 season there were a total of 190 send off and citing in total across the senior and junior competitions, 142 of these offences occurred in the seniors, 48 offences occurred in the juniors. The increase in the number of offences brought before the MRC can in part be attributed to the fact that offences in all senior grades from Under 19's were made reportable by referees this year.

Striking remains the most common offence with 38 occurrences (clubs are reminded that this is a non-contestable 1 match suspension if proven). The second most common offence was Unnecessary Heavy Contact with 29, this number is directly contributable to the sometimes-borderline timing of late tackles. Dangerous throw charges also increased this year and are of major concern due to their capacity to cause serious injuries to the tackled player.



The continued abuse of match officials by players, officials and parents/ spectators increased quite dramatically and clubs should be encouraged to remind all their stakeholders that this will not be tolerated and those bodies found guilty of match official abuse will be penalised heavily.

Unfortunately, a major concern again for the CRRL and the judiciary in 2024 was the ever-increasing occurrence of unacceptable off field behaviour by team officials, parents and spectators. The behaviour exhibited in some of these cases resulted in lengthy suspensions. Clubs are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that their officials, players, and parents behave in a manner that matches the NRL Code of Conduct for these groups and that failing to do so can, and has, resulted in clubs being placed on good behaviour bonds for lengthy periods of time.

Whilst acknowledging that it is difficult for clubs to ensure all volunteers and team officials understand their roles and responsibilities on game day and that at times these volunteers can be called upon at short notice there were a number of incidences where the volunteer touch judges, and league safes overstepped their roles placing themselves and the players in potentially dangerous positions.



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

Again, it is the club's responsibility to ensure that if people are given a role, then this should be explained to them.

Finally, clubs, particularly junior clubs, should be reminded that an appearance at a judicial hearing is not an opportunity to question the referee's integrity, it is a chance to present a person's case and their plea to the charges.

Thanks should go to the chairpersons and judiciary panel members for their professional approach to all cases and volunteering their time on Wednesday evenings.

Yours in League

Glyn Sargent

2024 Match Review Chairman



MEDIA REPORT

The Canberra Region Rugby League’s media presence continued to expand in 2024, driven by the implementation of digital media and communication strategies established in the off-season.

This year, we adopted a holistic media approach, shifting from a predominant focus on the first-grade men’s competition to providing comprehensive coverage of all our products, including various genders, age groups, and our community and inclusive initiatives.

This comprehensive approach led to growth across all digital platforms, yielding notable engagement insights on our website and our social media channels.

Website

Aside from providing essential information such as fixtures, programs, rules and regulations, and other administrative documents, our website serves as a platform to tell the stories of the CRRL through a continuous flow of written content.

In 2024, the site attracted over 260,000 views, with the majority of traffic driven by our articles. Special thanks to Jeff Hanson for his dedicated coverage of the George Tooke Shield, providing engaging weekly write-ups that boost the competition’s visibility and contribute to our mission of comprehensive media coverage of all our products. We also thank the clubs for supporting media commitments, as press conferences enhance our senior competition coverage, promoting the CRRL, clubs, and player profiles.

Top 10 Articles 2024	Views
U14 & 15 Development Squads Announced	6816
GTS Rep Squads Announced	3030
2025 Harold Matthews Open Trials	2666
Development Squad Selection Process	2222
Monaro Country Championships: Round 1 Team lists	2114
Batemans Bay KO: Gameday Guide	2075
Team Lists: April 6	1916
Team Lists: CRC Grand Finals	1767
Around the Grounds: May 11	1755
Around the Grounds: May 4	1751

Social Media

The growth of our social media channels this season was particularly satisfying, with over 1,300 new Facebook followers and more than 500 on Instagram.



Facebook remains our primary platform, now with over 17,000 followers, where we effectively engage and inform our target audience. Meanwhile, X (formerly Twitter) is still our weakest platform, gaining only 14 new followers this year for a total of 618, despite sharing the same content as Facebook and Instagram.

A key driver of engagement has been the increased use of easily consumable video content, leveraging BarTV's clipping capabilities to post weekly highlights from our senior competitions and expand the overall coverage of CRRL's products on social media.

The Rub of the Green

The Rub of the Green podcast maintained a consistent listener base throughout the season, with audience numbers comparable to last year. While this indicates a solid foundation, it also highlights the need to review our format and strategies to boost listenership in 2025.

A special thanks goes to James "Sully" Sullivan for his dedication in leading the show this year. Sully's contributions as CRRL's lead commentator and media personality at key events like the Les McIntyre Medal and Season Launch have been invaluable.

BarTV

CRRL maintained its strong partnership with BarTV, providing free Facebook live streams every weekend and filming all senior competition matches, with appreciated flexibility to accommodate schedule changes, travel to regional George Tooke Shield games, and comprehensive coverage of our Junior Grand Finals.

The added commentary elevates the professionalism and entertainment value for viewers. A big thank you goes to Sully and Chris Coleman for their commentary efforts, and to media intern Hayden Blackmore, who led the call for several matches, including the George Tooke Shield Grand Final.





Closing Remarks

CRRL's media landscape is in an exciting phase of growth, with new ideas and strategies constantly emerging to keep pace with the ever-evolving digital media environment.

As Digital and Media Coordinator, I'd like to extend my thanks to the CRRL team and the broader CRRL community for their support in helping achieve our media goals this season. Bring on 2025!

Liam Wyllie

CRRL Digital and Media Coordinator

CRRL Social Channels

Facebook: 17,439

Instagram: 5,183

X: 618



CRRL Social Tiles





**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

LIFE MEMBERS

Canberra District Rugby League (Raiders) Life Members

Les McIntyre*
George Tooke*
Bill Sullivan
Don Furner Snr*
Gerry Edwards*
Mal Meninga
Noel Bissett*
John McIntyre
Tony Wood

Canberra Region Rugby League Life Members

Michael Clarke
Cliff Stevens
Peter Cox*
Bob Gresham
Graham Johnston
Rhonda Carson
Karen Ebsworth
Tom Ebsworth
Chris Nightingale
John Cooper

*Deceased

NEWS FROM 2024

Fanning inducted into NRL Hall of Fame



The National Rugby League (NRL) formally inducted the first ever female players into the NRL Hall of Fame.

The following players were confirmed as featuring in the Hall of Fame in the 2024 Class: Natalie Dwyer, Katrina Fanning, Tarsha Gale, Veronica White, Karyn Murphy, and Tahnee Norris.

“This is an historic moment for the game – our first ever female players inducted into rugby league’s highest honour: the Hall of Fame,” ARLC Chairman Peter V’landys AM said.

“This class includes some of the great trailblazers of women’s Rugby League. They all significantly helped to put women’s Rugby League in the strong position it is today.”

Katrina Fanning, ACT Australian of the Year in 2020, is Jillaroo #6 and played 24 Tests, including the inaugural Test against New Zealand in 1995. The Canberra women’s Premiership is named the Katrina Fanning Shield in her honour.

Rolling Raiders crowned NSW Cup premiers in inaugural season

The Rolling Raiders achieved the fairytale ending to their inaugural NSW Cup Wheelchair Rugby League season as they lifted the trophy after a triumphant Grand Final victory.



The Raiders rolled into Menai Indoor Sports Centre and secured a dominant 50-36 victory over the minor premiers and competition favourites, the St George Illawarra Dragons.

The unlikely premiers from Canberra had finished last in the four-team competition but remarkably went on a stunning run in the finals to earn their place in the Grand Final.

Their journey to the big dance began with a commanding 60-30 victory over the Wests Tigers in the first week of the finals, followed by another impressive 42-12 win against last year's premiers, the Parramatta Eels, in the preliminary final.

Heading into the Grand Final, the Raiders remained underdogs, having previously suffered significant defeats against the Dragons during the season, losing 56-22 in round three and 50-36 in round six.

But the Toby Popple led Raiders showed up once again, taking an early lead and maintaining control to secure the victory.

Zac Carl played a pivotal role in the win and was recognised with the best on court award for his outstanding four try performance.

2024 Rolling Raiders Squad

Toby Popple (c), Bradley Burns, Zac Carl, Anthony McQueen, Mitch Sentance, Victoria Simpson, Nick Alexander, Chris O'Brien, Amanda Carlyon, Jaimz Knight, Jamie Osbourne.

CRRL hosts inaugural TackleReady Graduation



The Canberra Region Rugby League (CRRL) held its inaugural TackleReady Program graduation event for all Under 7's, marking a memorable day in their Rugby League journey.

All 37 Under 7's teams in the CRRL undertook their final TackleReady Program session, before showcasing their skills in their first-ever game of tackle rugby league.

Progressing from tag rugby league in Under 6's to a gradual transition into tackle through the TackleReady Program offers young players a safe and structured way to build their skills, confidence, and passion for the game.

Each player received their personalised certificate of completion, representing an important milestone in their development as they move on to play tackle rugby league each week.



The TackleReady Program allows participants to learn correct and safe techniques, preparing them for the tackle version of Rugby League.

The six-session program is delivered by club-appointed TackleReady instructors who are trained and guided by NRL Development Officers, with the aim to increase player confidence and physical competence in all tackling situations.

TackleReady is part of the Player Development Framework which has three main objectives: attract and retain participation, foster personal development, and transition and nurture performance.

The graduation event proved to be a massive success, highlighting the significance of celebrating and recognising this pivotal milestone in their rugby league journey.



Grey socks initiative backing our new referees

Grey socks are the new look for in-training match officials around the grounds, as the Canberra Region Rugby League (CRRL) and the Canberra & District Rugby League Referees Association (CDRLRA) ramp up their support for rookie referees.

For Rugby League supporters attending CRRL fixtures in 2024 and beyond, a match official wearing grey socks signifies that they are first year referees who are still learning their craft.



The grey socks initiative aims to attract more referees and boost retention by creating a positive officiating environment. This includes treating these referees with respect, refraining from abuse, and understanding that they are still learning, just like the players.

By fostering a supportive and encouraging environment, the campaign aims to enhance the experience for new referees and contribute to their development in officiating rugby league matches.

The CRRL's General Manager Mark Vergano said the grey socks represent a strong message to the rugby league community and aims to mitigate prominent behavioural issues from spectators.

"The grey socks initiative sees a number of sports in the ACT actively identifying the newer referees, so spectators, parents and coaches understand that we have a young person in training and learning their craft," Vergano said.

"The main messages for the rugby league community is that a less experienced referee needs time, support, positive reinforcement and understanding from those not in the centre, so that we help nurture them and not drive them away by negative sideline reactions, criticism and abuse.

"Unfortunately, across many sports there are supporters who seem to forget that the match officials are also participants doing a job to the best of their ability and just one instance of bad behaviour on the sidelines with criticism or being disrespectful does cost sports match officials.

"We are hoping that with a visual cue, spectators, parents and coaches will be reminded that young referees need nurturing and support not criticism and abuse."



**CANBERRA REGION
RUGBY LEAGUE**

Introducing the Junior Bushrangers Pathway



An important development for rugby league in the Tuggeranong Valley emerged in 2024, with the four Tuggeranong based clubs establishing a collaborative partnership to improve awareness of rugby league within the region.

Under the initiative, all male players in the under 15s, and those registered for girls-only competitions from the Tuggeranong Buffaloes, Valley Dragons, and South Tuggeranong Knights, competed under one unified banner as the Tuggeranong Bushrangers.

This partnership aims to encourage and facilitate opportunities for increased participation of male international and female age groups by streamlining registrations for the nominated age groups, while also clearly defining a pathway from junior to senior rugby league in the Tuggeranong Valley.

In the development of the agreement, the four Tuggeranong clubs emphasised the importance of allowing players to continue to compete under their junior banner, honouring the heritage and identity of their junior clubs before combining to enter the Bushrangers pathway.

The agreement encompasses a three-year implementation plan before it is in full effect, with an option of extension.

Starting from 2024, all girls registered to play in the girls only competitions will play under the Tuggeranong Bushrangers brand. Regarding the boys, integration commenced with the under 15s, progressing with the 15s and 16s in 2025, and culminating in the integration of under 15s, 16s, and 17s boys in 2026.

Congratulations to Steve Hewson OAM

The CRRL would like to congratulate Steve Hewson for receiving a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in this year's Australia Day Honours for service to Rugby League.

Steve is a Queanbeyan Blues and Monaro legend, also known for his representation for NSW Country and NSW.

In 1975, he was named the Country Player of the Year after an upset victory against the City Firsts. In the same year, he played for NSW against Queensland, scoring a try in all his appearances.



Recently, Hewson was awarded the OAM for services to Rugby League highlighted by his post-playing career, particularly his contributions to Wheelchair Rugby League.

The former representative halfback has been integral in the development of Wheelchair Rugby League, representing various roles within the sport.

Notably, he coached the Australian Wheelchair Rugby League team (Wheelaros) as well as the inaugural NSW Wheelchair State of Origin squad. He was also appointed as a referee for the 2022 Wheelchair Rugby League World Cup.

Without Steve, Canberra Region Wheelchair Rugby League wouldn't be where it is today, as he played a pivotal role in establishing the program and continues to assist in the thriving and growing community.

Additionally, Hewson was a Development Officer for the Canberra Raiders in the 1980s and coached their SG Ball team, as well the Queanbeyan Blues Under 17s, Under 19s, and Reserve Grade sides.



OBITUARIES

Ricky White

The Canberra Region Rugby League celebrates the life of Richard 'Ricky' White, who passed away on 11 December 2023, remembering him as a legendary figure in Canberra rugby league.

Ricky primarily represented a Gungahlin Bulls foundation club, the Belconnen United Panthers, formed in 1969 when the Belconnen District was only a few years old.

He captain-coached the Panthers in the 70s, guiding the side to their first grand final in 1973. He built the foundation for the club which propelled them to win five consecutive premierships in proceeding years (1975-1979).

He also captain-coached West Belconnen to their first ever grand final, before returning to help a struggling Panthers outfit in 1986.

Additionally, Ricky played for the Canberra Workers and Ainslie, featuring in over 450 rugby league games in his playing career.

The CRRL would like to thank Gungahlin Bulls RLFC life member Tony Sanz for providing this information and for honouring Ricky White and his great contribution to the game of rugby league in the region.



Figure 39 - Ricky White



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

Ray Dunbar

The Canberra Region Rugby League pays tribute to Raymond 'Ray' Dunbar, who passed away on 23 February 2024, honouring his lasting contributions to the game and the community.

Ray began his rugby league journey playing in Wagga, representing the Wagga Magpies JRLFC and the Wagga Kangaroos RLFC, winning a few premierships along the way.

He made the move from Wagga Wagga to Canberra in the late 1950's, where he eventually started his coaching career.

From 1965 through to 1974, he was involved with North Canberra and Downer Junior Rugby Union before coaching multiple Lakes United sides from 1975 till the late 1970's.

From there, he went on to become a back-to-back premiership winning coach for East Canberra's Under 15/16's side in 1979 and 1980.

Ray also coached and managed many successful Canberra District Minor Rugby League teams, including the 1978 Harold Matthews Cup winning side that defeated Parramatta in the final.

"Whilst success was often a direct result of the skill and talent of the players, management and coaching staff, the players and their families were made to feel welcome and enjoyed a playing environment where everyone gave 100%," said Gary Dunbar, one of three of Ray's children.

"Team BBQs and get togethers made for an even closer-knit family environment that will be fondly remembered by all.

"He was a husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather. A clubman, coach, mentor, and volunteer that did so much for the game he loved, not for the want of praise and recognition, but for those that wanted to be part of the same team, club and family".



Figure 40 - Ray Dunbar



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

Brian Bourke

The Canberra Region Rugby League and Canberra Raiders honor the life and legacy of Brian Bourke, a former Queanbeyan Blues player and founding Raiders staff member, who sadly passed away on 26 May 2024.

Brian played for the Queanbeyan Blues from 1959-1976. Post-playing career he was heavily involved in sports training and was the Canberra Raider's inaugural Head Trainer working alongside coach Don Furner senior.

Such was his stature in the local rugby league community, he was immortalised with a statue that still resides in the Queanbeyan Leagues Club.

Canberra Raiders Patron and former Chairman John McIntyre said Brian would always be remembered as a significant contributor to the game of rugby league in the ACT and Queanbeyan regions.

"Brian was a long-time player for the Queanbeyan Blues whose legacy will long be remembered by those who played with him or were coached by him," Mr McIntyre said. "Brian believed that hard work was the key to achieving success and he implemented this as the Raider's inaugural Head Trainer."

"I think it's important to point out that Brian was not only well respected by the players he played with, but also the players he played against."



Figure 41 - Brian Bourke statue at Queanbeyan Leagues Club

Ken Bell

The Canberra Region Rugby League honours the memory of William 'Ken' Bell, a revered local legend of the game, who passed away on 12 June 2024.

Ken Bell is a Life Member of both the Yass Magpies Minor and Senior Rugby League Clubs, recognised for his unwavering dedication and support over many years.

In honour of his invaluable contributions, Yass' home ground, Walker Park, proudly displays Ken's name on the grandstand.

Additionally, Bell served as a match official for the Canberra District Rugby League Referees Association, contributing as both a Referee and Touch Judge.



Figure 42 - Ken Bell

Carol Henry

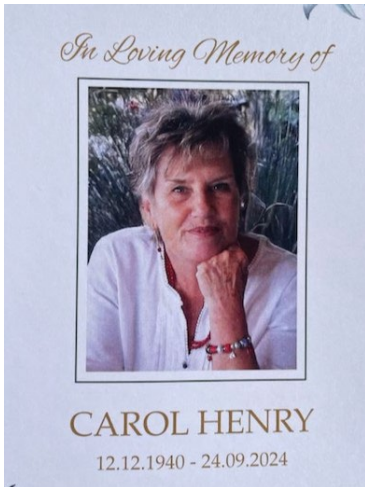


Figure 43 - Carol Henry

The Canberra Region Rugby League pays tribute to Carol Henry, who passed away on 24 September 2024.

Carol was a cherished member of the rugby league community and the wife of the CRRL's first Chairman, the late Ian Henry, whose contributions were instrumental to the West Belconnen club.

She was also the mother of Neil Henry, former Raiders coach and a legendary figure in Group 8 rugby league.

Her legacy and deep connection to the game will be fondly remembered.



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

Graham Willard

The Canberra Region Rugby League honours the passing of Graham Willard, a pioneer of Women's Rugby League in Australia and the Canberra region, who passed away on 18 November 2024.

Graham was a passionate supporter of women's rugby league, coaching numerous teams in the 1990's locally, then the ACT representative teams and finally was the inaugural Jillaroos coach.

Players such as Cath Welch, Katrina Fanning, Maree Bush, Rom Emmanuel, Robyn Miller are just some of the players who had the privilege of being coached by Graham.

Graham had played with the North Sydney Bears (#598) in Sydney before relocating to Canberra where he also later became involved with the local Men of League chapter.

In recent years, Graham once again became associated with the Open Women's rugby league with the re-establishment of a women's tackle competition and the first representative sides in many years.

Graham once again was out searching for talent and the CRRL was honoured to have Graham's expertise and passion help us guide the new generation of players.

Graham's influence is best summarised by the reminiscences and tribute of two of his former players; Cath Welch and Maree Bush.

Cath Welch recounts:

A mildly spoken man who was passionate about sharing his knowledge of footy both as a player and coach. Graham coached club, ACT and Jillaroo women's rugby league teams in the 90's and early 2000's when women playing rugby league was not so much an acceptable thing. He always defended the ability of women to play the game and promoted their achievements in the game.

He was awarded as a Life Member of Canberra Women's Rugby League in 1998 and the Coach of the Year in the Katrina Fanning Shield is named in his honour.

I first met Graham over 30 years ago, his love and knowledge of the game was always evident, as a spectator, player, coach and friend. He was very proud of how the women's game had progressed and become not only acceptable but popular.



Figure 44 - Graham Willard



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE

I played in many teams coached by Graham during the 90's, however I think he was in his element during 1997 and 1998 when as Coach with his wife Penny as Manager, daughters Vanessa as player and Yvette as Sports Trainer he coached the Rams to victories in both Grand Finals. His love of family and footy celebrated.



Figure 45 - East Canberra Premiership Photo

Maree Bush recalls:

The first I got to know of Graham Willard was when he coached East Canberra in my early years of playing for Rams, he was able to bring together a formidable team that always made sure my Rams came in 2nd. It wasn't till 1994 when he and I both moved to the Valley Dragons that I first had the privilege of seeing first hand what a wonderful coach he was.

As a coach, he had the ability to watch a player, identify and build both a player's strengths and weaknesses, improving on their confidence and playing abilities.

In 95' when the comp was in need of another team, he became my sounding board when I decided to build the Queanbyan Blues women's team, assisting and encouraging me, all to the benefit and future of the women's game.

I was able to rejoin Graham at the Rams in 1997 and again in 1998, he was the proudest of coaches when he took us to grand final wins in both years. These 2 years were made even more special with the family environment he created by bringing along his beautiful wife and biggest support, Penny, his daughter Vanessa as a player and his daughter Yvette as our strapper.

Many of the players knew him as Dad because of the way he treated us, although he later got the moniker "Uncle Arthur" (referenced from the comedy company). He had a wonderful sense of humour.



He was passionate about Rugby League, and particularly the women's game, its growth and future. As an unconventional sport at the time for women, Graham was a pioneer for the game and in his treatment of us as real players

He was the best mentor and friend. Thank you from me and my family for being a patient, caring and uplifting influence in our lives.

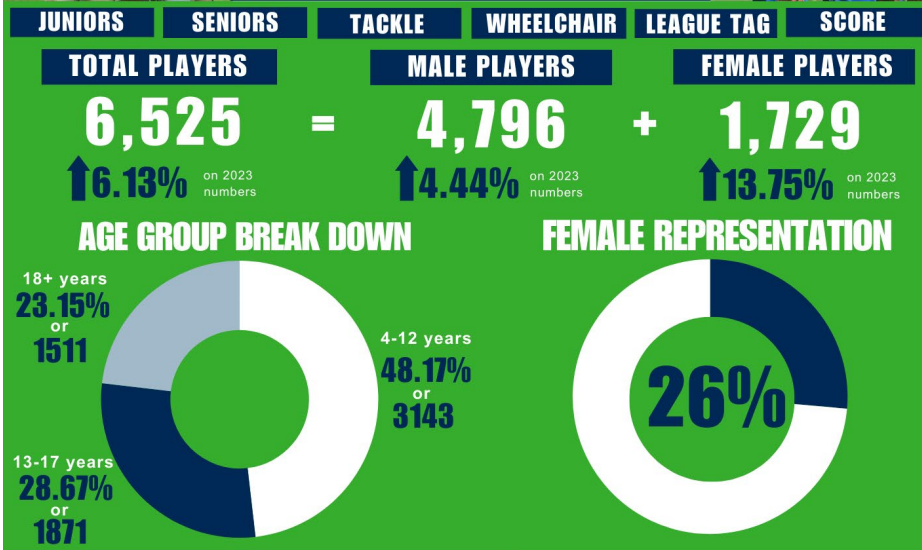
The Canberra Region Rugby League and the whole rugby league community celebrates a wonderful contribution by Graham to the great game of rugby league.



Figure 46 - Graham Willard in attendance at CRRL's Centenary



CANBERRA REGION RUGBY LEAGUE



Each weekend, approximately **195** games are played across **37** Venues.
 These games are facilitated by **812** of our loyal and dedicated club volunteers.

