

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 19 DECEMBER 2024

VIA ZOOM

MINUTES

CHAIR Troy Grant

**PRESENT
ASSOCIATE
MEMBERS** Jeremy Edwards (APRLC - Asia Pacific RL Confederation), Dean Andrew, David Butler (ERL - European Rugby League).

**FULL
MEMBERS** Graham Annesley (ARLC - Australian RL Commission), Charles Carlson, Mata Rakanui (CIRLA - Cook Islands Rugby League Association), Gilles Dumas, Berenice Flores (FFRXIII - Fédération Française de Rugby à Treize), Akuila Masi (FNRL - Fiji National Rugby League), Greg Peters (NZRL - New Zealand Rugby League), Stanley Hondina (PNGRFL - Papua New Guinea Rugby Football League), Tony Sutton (RFL - Rugby Football League), Frans Erasmus, Gideon Fick (SARLA - South African Rugby League Association), Nenad Zujic (SRLF - Serbian Rugby League Federation), Michael Whitten (TRXIII - Tonga Rugby XIII), Bozheno Kuzmych, Artur Martyrosian (UFRL - Ukrainian Federation of Rugby League), James Davies (WRL - Wales Rugby League).

**AFFILIATE
MEMBERS** Lukas Hergott (CZRLA - Czech Rugby League Association), Ileana Iacopetti (FIRL – Federazione Italiana Rugby League), Andreas Antonopoulos, Terry Liberopoulos, (GRLF - Greek Rugby League Federation), Jim Reynolds (RLI - Rugby League Ireland), Veronika Eidsaune-Little, Anne Haigh (RLN - Rugby League Norge), Gurol Yildiz (TRLA – Turkish RL Association), Matthew Goschnick (USARL - United States Association of Rugby League).

**OBSERVER
MEMBERS** Pablo Aguilera (AARL – Argentine Association RL), Arnaldo Telo (ARL - Albania Rugby League), Xilena Camacho, Juan Espinal (CRL - Colombia Rugby League), Damjan Georgievsk (NMRL – North Macedonia Rugby League).

PRESENT Danny Kazandjian, Mark Martin, Charlotte Monkman (IRL).

APOLOGIES John Cameron (CRLA - Canada Rugby League Association).

ABSENT AERL - Asociacion Española de RL, ARBH - Asocijacija Ragbi 13 Bosna i Hercegovina, ARLES – El Salvador Rugby League Association, ARLK - Russian Association of Rugby League Clubs, BRL - Burundi Rugby League, BRLF - Bulgarian RL Federation, CBRL – Confederação Brasileira de Rugby League, CIRL – Côte d'Ivoire Rugby League, CRL13 - Cameroon Rugby League 13, DCRL - Congo Rugby League, FMRL - Fédération Marocaine de Rugby à XIII, HRLF - Hungarian Rugby League Federation, JRL - Japan Rugby League, KRLF - Kenya Rugby League Federation, LRLA - Libya Rugby League Association, LRLF – Lebanese Rugby League Federation, MERL - Montenegro Rugby League, MRL – Malta Rugby League, NRLA - Nigerian Rugby League Association, NRLB - Nederlandse Rugby League Bond, NRLD - Nationaler Rugby League Deutschland, PNRL - Panbansang Ragbi Liga Ng Pilipinas, PRL - Palestine Rugby League, PRXIII - Polska Rugby XIII, RFL13C - Chile, RLFC – Rugby League Federation Ghana, RLJ – Rugby League Jamaica, RLS - RL Samoa, RLU – Rugby





League Uganda, SIRLF - Solomon Islands Rugby League Federation, SKRL – Slovak Rugby League, SLRLF - Sierra Leone Rugby League Federation, SRL – Scotland Rugby League, SvRL - Svensk Rugby League Forening, TRLA - Turkish Rugby League Association, VRL - Vanuatu Rugby League.

1.0 WELCOME, ROLL CALL & APOLOGIES

Mr Grant called the meeting to order and welcomed delegates to the 2024 IRL AGM. Mr Grant noted that the meeting will be simultaneously for both IRL companies. Both have the same members and Board, although resolutions specific to each will be taken separately. Mr Grant invited Mr Kazandjian to call the roll. With 12 out of 14 full members present, Mr Kazandjian confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Mr Grant acknowledged that there is no universally agreeable time to hold the AGM and noted the timing is particularly inconvenient for those in the Western Hemisphere. He thanked those present for their attendance.

Mr Grant noted that, since IRL last met in plenary session, the game has witnessed a very good international season, which he will address in his report. He welcomed new leaders from TRXIII, AARL and USARL to their first general meeting.

2.0 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM

The Chair proposed adopting the minutes of the previous meeting.

RESOLUTION 1: *motion to approve the minutes from the IRL AGM held virtually on 19/12/23. Motion moved by Mr Reynolds (RLI) and seconded by Mr Peters (NZRL). The minutes were approved.*

In addition, he proposed adopting the minutes of the extraordinary full members meeting.

RESOLUTION 2: *motion to approve the minutes from the IRL EGM held virtually on 14/3/24. Motion moved by Mr Davies (WRL) and seconded by Mr Zuijc (SRLF). The minutes were approved.*

3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS AGM

Mr Grant referred to the written report provided by Mr Martyrosian (UFRL), thanked him for his proactive steps and asked him to report any suggestions to ERL. Dr Erasmus asked whether the Middle East Africa national federations can be included in the initiative. Mr Grant suggested he contact Mr Martyrosian directly.

4.0 CHAIR AND DIRECTORS' REPORT

Mr Grant reported on the following items:

Changes to the Board since the last AGM

- At the end of this meeting Sandis Tsaka & Mr Peters begin their third and final three-year terms as Directors nominated by APRL





- In February Laurie Daley replaced Greg Barclay as the third independent Director. Following Laurie's appointment as NSW coach this month the Board has conducted its own internal process to ensure it is comfortable that Mr Daley will retain an independent stance – and reported on behalf of the Board that it is both satisfied and was looking forward to Mr Daley continuing his significant contribution

On the field

- The Chair paid tribute to the members who have contributed to a record number of games and the first fruits of the international calendar agreed in 2023. He said the positive media reaction has helped place international rugby league back in the spotlight while acknowledging there is more work to do
- Wheelchair RL's Celtic Cup was played in Ireland for the first time; and won by the hosts; New Zealand became the latest nation to play wheelchair RL, hosting Australia twice, meaning two nations hosted wheelchair internationals for the first time in 2024; and France ended the season with a well organised and contested match vs England
- The first ever women's RLWCQ competition in RL history, with 16 nations across all four regions playing 15 games between April to October. Mr Grant congratulated France, Samoa and Wales for qualifying for RLWC 2026
- In Oct/Nov Mr Grant noted the strong England men's performance vs Samoa and the memorable men's and women's Pacific Championships. He congratulated ARLC for organising the event and Australia for winning both Cup competitions
- Finally, the Chair thanked AARL for closing out the year by hosting the Sudamericano. He acknowledged the extraordinary efforts the hosts had gone to. IRL has plans to commit resources to that part of the world from next year to support growth in a remote part of the RL world

Off the field

- Following a unanimous request by the tendering nations, the bid submission deadline for RLWCs 2028-30 was extended to February 2025. IRL is expecting bids from PNG, USA, Kenya, South Africa, England, France and New Zealand. Mr Grant reminded the members that monetising IRL's key asset, the RLWCs, is at the very core of the federation's current strategy
- In March the Board confirmed that any member with an annual turnover of £1m or more will be ineligible for an annual grant. The Chair confirmed that this drew unanimous support from the five NFs who that applies to and suggested that it is a sign of ARLC, FFR13, NZRL, PNGRFL and RFL's commitment to the success of their fellow members in IRL. Mr Grant thanked them for that commitment
- In March IRL reported on significant changes to the membership register. The reclassified members are all pursuing strategies to re-apply for full membership, as are a clutch of other affiliate members, whom IRL is supporting to bridge the gap to full membership





- Mr Grant thanked the IRL Women and Girl's Advisory Group for its work that has resulted in the women & girls development toolkit, which is now available for member use. He confirmed that the group's chair, Julia Lee, is resigning her position due to work commitments and thanked her for her leadership over four years
- In September IRL welcomed Geoff Bellew as the new Head of Judiciary, replacing the inaugural post-holder, Karim Khan, who left to become a judge. Mr Grant paid tribute to both men
- Finally, in July, IRL announced Australia and PNG would host RLWC 2026. Mr Grant thanked ARLC for submitting a compelling bid and on behalf of the IRL Board and members said he was looking forward to working with them to ensure this new era of RLWCs gets off to the best possible start

5.0 FINANCE

Mr Grant gave the floor to IRL finance manager Mr Martin.

Mr Martin delivered a finance presentation. The first part focussed on providing the members with additional information with regards to the 2023 accounts of International Rugby League Limited and Rugby League International Federation Limited. This started with a recap of IRL's financial systems that have been brought in under the current regime. Members were then reminded of the historical relationship between the two companies before Mr Martin presented the 2023 figures compared to 2022, for context, noting in particular the cancellation of France 2025 in May 2023 and the Board's July 2023 decision to reposition the world cup to 2026, both of which had a sizeable impact on the IRL's financial position and planning.

Mr Zujic (SRLF) asked for a report on the RLWC 2021 financial performance. Mr Martin said IRL was only able to report on the rights fee received by the company. Mr Grant further explained that the host country, not IRL, runs the world cup. Mr Sutton (RFL), representing the owner of the RLWC 2021 delivery company, confirmed that the tournament had lost approximately half a million pounds, mainly due to the covid-induced 12-month delay.

Mr Sutton (RFL) questioned whether the GB Oceania Ltd debt noted in the IRL Ltd accounts is provided for and whether the intention was to write it off. Mr Martin said the amount would be written off in the 2024 accounts. Mr Sutton asked what the 2024 and 2025 forecast looked like. Mr Kazandjian said the IRL continued on a prudent footing, that the organisation intends acquiring long term partners by entering the commercial market as soon as the world cup hosts are confirmed, but until then the organisation is forecasting losses for 2024 and 2025.

Mr Grant reported that the Board decided on 18/12/24 to move back to a one company set up, which would make the IF more efficient.





RESOLUTION 3: motion to approve the 2023 accounts of International Rugby League Ltd. This motion was moved by Mr Sutton (RFL) and seconded by Dr Erasmus (SARLA). The motion was carried.

RESOLUTION 4: motion to approve the 2023 accounts of Rugby League International Federation Ltd. This motion was moved by Mr Annesley (ARLC) and seconded by Mr Dumas (FFR13). The motion was carried.

6.0 APPOINT OR APPROVE THE REAPPOINTMENT OF THE AUDITORS OF THE COMPANIES

Mr Grant pointed out that the rationale behind resolution 5 was to cut costs. As the Australian company does not trade the Board felt it was sensible to commend ARLC's offer to the members and thanked ARLC for that offer.

He read out the following resolutions to the members:

RESOLUTION 5: motion to appoint Australian RL Commission as the independent accountants of Rugby League International Federation Ltd for the 2024 financial year. The motion was moved by Mr Zujic (SRLF) and seconded by Mr Whitten (TRXIII). The motion was carried.

RESOLUTION 6: motion to retain Haysmacintyre as the independent accountants of International Rugby League Ltd for the 2024 financial year. The motion was moved by Mr Sutton (RFL) and seconded by Mr Dumas (FFR13). The motion was carried.

7.0 APPLICATIONS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD

Mr Grant confirmed no business from the previous day's Board meeting had been proposed as a late inclusion by the Board on the AGM agenda.

8.0 GOVERNANCE REFORM CONSULTATION

Mr Grant reported that, following his regional consultations last year, the Board will propose a new configuration: three independent Directors, including the Chair; and the Chairs of APRL, ARLC, ERL, NZRL and RFL. If the changes are approved, the Board would be reduced from 11 to eight. A written resolution for the members to vote on the proposed changes would be issued in early 2025.

9.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Peters (NZRL) asked for an update on the international eligibility review. Mr Grant said the Curtin Institute, the project partner, had started its research but was yet to reach out to key stakeholders. Mr Peters said that the focus of the data collection is on the movement of peoples, mainly in the Pacific, and immigration rates into Australia and New Zealand.

Mr Reynolds (RLI) asked for an update on IRL's attempt to gain Olympic recognition. Mr Kazandjian reported on the process, including the AIMS application as the first step and linked it to the provisions of the IRL Annual Membership Audit, stressing the importance of good governance throughout the membership. Mr Grant added that he had previously approached the Queensland government about inclusion in the 2032 Olympic Games. The then government





rejected the possibility of rugby league participating in the Games but Mr Grant confirmed he had written to the new Queensland sports minister last week.

Mr Sutton asked how smaller NFs will get support from IRL on the issue of concussion and offered RFL advice to any NFs on the same subject given the RFL's involvement in concussion litigation. Mr Kazandjian confirmed that the IRL Player Safety Advisory Group can make recommendations on potential rules and Laws changes to the Board, and how the international game will be refereed. Once any recommendations had been approved by the Board they would be implemented throughout the membership.

Mr Zujic (SRLF) asked if there is a working group to pursue 2032 Games inclusion. Mr Kazandjian confirmed that IRL membership is overseeing the application for AIMS membership. Mr Zujic asked whether it would be beneficial to add senior ARLC officials to any IRL working group. Mr Grant confirmed that senior ARLC leadership sits on the IRL Board and is fully engaged in the process. Mr Kazandjian confirmed that IRL had acted swiftly following the Olympic movement's confirmation of the recognition process.

The Chair thanked everyone for their work throughout the year and wished everyone well ahead of the festive period.

The meeting closed.

