



**SYDNEY WEST**  
RUGBY REFEREES' ASSOCIATION INC.

# Annual Report 2022

***The Sydney West Rugby Referees' Association receives funding from the following organisations.***

***We'd like to thank them for their generous support of rugby and encourage you to support them too.***



**The Rugby Club  
Foundation**



## **Background to Sydney West RRA**

From the early 1960s, Rugby refereeing in the area we now service was carried out by members of the Eastwood District RURA and the Parramatta District RURA. Following a series of discussions, at the end of the 2006 season the members of those two associations agreed to form a new district referee association to be known as Sydney West Rugby Referees' Association Inc.

Sydney West Rugby Referees' Association is an incorporated "not for profit" organisation established and operated in accordance with the NSW Office of Fair Trading's "Model Constitution for Incorporated Associations". The association's registered incorporation number is INC.9886803.

## **Office-Bearers and Management Committee Members**

Under the Model Constitution, the Association's Management Committee is comprised of the six office-bearer positions mentioned below plus three ordinary members. The occupants of those positions in 2020 are as follows:-

<b>President</b>	Gary Payne
<b>Vice Presidents</b>	
<i>Recruitment &amp; Retention</i>	Bob Watson
<i>Registration &amp; Accreditation</i>	Tim Gauci
<i>Training &amp; Development</i>	Callum Winchester
<b>Secretary &amp; Public Officer</b>	Paul Fitzgerald
<b>Treasurer</b>	Tony Hackett
<b>Ordinary Members of the Committee</b>	Ian Martin
	Grant Briggs*
	Jenny Pearce
<b>Honorary Patron</b>	Stuart Dickinson
<b>Honorary Auditor</b>	Neil Colquhoun
<b>Honorary Legal Officer</b>	Steve Hardy

\* Grant Briggs also acts as the Association's Equipment Officer

## **Life Members**

At the inaugural meeting of Sydney West Rugby Referees' Association, members resolved unanimously that life members of the Eastwood District RURA and the Parramatta District RURA would from that date also be regarded as life members of Sydney West RRA. Since 2007 life membership has been awarded to a further group of distinguished Sydney West members. The names of those whose efforts have been recognized with life membership are listed below. We honour them and thank them for their sustained periods of service to the association, to Rugby refereeing and to referee administration.

***Eastwood District RURA***

Stan Chirgwin (dec'd)  
Jim Millen (dec'd)

Ian Eldred (dec'd)  
Robin Timmins  
Bob Watson

Dick McGee (dec'd)  
Owen Gillard

***Parramatta District RURA***

Ray Duffy  
Brian Crutcher  
Ken Lawler  
Phillip Bell

Jim Gleeson (dec'd)  
George Bennett (dec'd)  
Colin Lawler  
David Fahey  
Allan Haidley

Peter Whyte  
Theo Whiting  
Roger Rooms  
Joe Lake

***Sydney West Rugby Referees' Association***

Tony Hackett  
Peter Smith

Chris Cunliffe-Jones (dec'd)  
Paddy Watts

Lindsay Spencer  
Ian Mooney

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

The 2022 season beckoned as the year we bounced back, emerging from the restrictions and lockdowns of nearly 2 years of Covid-19 and happily returning to some sort of normality. We started the season with great anticipation and hope, and in many respects, we were well rewarded. We managed to get a full season of rugby, we had a successful and full representative season, we were finally able to host an Annual Dinner and Presentation Night and we had 115 referee registrations over the course of the year.

Unfortunately, from a refereeing perspective, the season was plagued with issues around the timely appointments of referees to games. There were many weeks when referees had to wait until Thursday (or later) to get their appointments. This was both frustrating and unsatisfactory for referees who, like everyone else, like to have some advance notice in order to plan for family time and other commitments. A couple of very wet weekends added to the problem and the end result was that a lot of referees declined their appointment when it did finally arrive, leaving large gaps in refereeing numbers on numerous weekends.

It didn't help that referees often failed to notify of their "UNAVAILABILITY" on RX. This is a crucial element in the smooth administration of the appointment system yet too often referees forget or ignore this simple courtesy. The Committee is asking all members this season to be vigilant and consistent.

The 2022 season saw the Sydney Juniors Rugby Union (SJRU) season kick-off arrangements with two weeks of 'gala day' formats, as they did in 2021. This was particularly challenging from the perspective of referee appointments and placements. Since many of our referees are juniors who are also current players, the new gala day format for the first two weeks saw many venues in the younger age groups without referees. Callum Winchester, our VP Training and Development, was sorely tested trying to juggle our resources but managed to get referees to cover most of the games allocated to us.

Sydney West referees and many of our Referee Coaches were well represented in June during the long weekend with the State Championships. With some great sponsorship from The Rugby Club Foundation, NSW Rugby Union compensated referees and referee coaches for their travel and accommodation expenses in attending State Championships. In 2022 we also invested in two VEO cameras which we have used for referee coaching. We had mixed results from their use, with more than 20 games recorded in 2022 and hope to get greater benefit in 2023.

Rugby Explorer (RX) continues to be the central tool for referee communication and record keeping. In 2022 a new app, "RefLive" was introduced with the dual purpose of allowing referees to 'report' on their own game, (especially in relation to sideline behaviour) and to provide a new, simplified format for referee coaches to lodge reports on referee performance. The app had only minor take-up in 2022 but will be strongly rolled out in 2023, encouraging all referees to use it after every game. A central role of the app is to develop a large database of information about "issues" that referees might encounter, enabling Rugby Australia to approach policy decisions armed with current and real data.

The 2022 season has seen the SWRRA Committee continuing its work in building programs and procedures to achieve its goal of promoting and developing referees. We had 115 registrations although it is important to remember that 40% of our members each year are under the age of

## **President's Report (continued)**

18, and there is another large group within the registered referee numbers that are 'non-active', and this element tends to distort the true number of 'active and available' referees we have.

Over the last few years, the rugby season has gradually become much longer. It is not just a winter sport, and we find ourselves doing rugby-related work throughout the year. There are 7's and 10's tournaments all year round, increased tournament exposure for Minis and increased administrative requirements. In the off-season, the Committee met for a full Saturday for a Strategic Planning Day. The amount of information and the workload in managing a referee association has increased significantly, requiring administrators to spend more time to get the job done. It is fitting, on behalf of the membership, to sincerely and whole-heartedly thank the Committee for all of its work during a very testing year.

On a sad note, we lost one of our Life Members during 2022. George Bennett OAM was the oldest of our life members and a regular attendee at our Education Nights. A referee from yesteryear, George remained very supportive of the Association and was particularly interested in the development of our young referees. George will be sorely missed.

For the first time since 2019 we were able to have an Annual Presentation Night. This also provided an opportunity to present the Chris Cunliffe-Jones Spirit of Rugby Award. This was the fifth time this has been presented, the recipient for this was **Ian Fraser**, a man who has given almost all his life to rugby and to community service. It was an inspiring night. In addition, we decided to make a special presentation last year which we called the Distinguished Service Award. Over many years, **Phil McCrea**, as well as being an active referee, has managed a very successful Minis competition at St Lukes ground every Saturday morning. That competition has been a great boon to bringing and retaining boys and girls in the sport of rugby, and for this, the Committee felt well justified in making this award to Phil.

As always, there are many supporters to thank each year. The Kings School in particular, and specifically Jenny Pearce, have been great supporters of SWRRA. They have been generous with their resources and time to assist the Association in providing a solid platform for the promotion of rugby and referees. Similarly, I want to thank The Rugby Club Foundation for their generous financial support. Through their generosity we have been able to upgrade our audio and video equipment to drive the referee coaching program that we have.

Finally, Patties Pies (Four'n'Twenty) continues to invest in rugby referees in NSW and specifically in grass roots development. Their ongoing sponsorship of the referees (through NSWRU) and of individual clubs has seen new funds coming into Sydney West to enable us to allocate more resources to referee development and more professional referee kit. On behalf of all the members, I thank Patties for their support and hope that this partnership in developing rugby will continue well into the future. Alex Richards, NSWRU Referee Manager has, as always, been a great support for our Association and has worked tirelessly to develop referees and grow rugby in NSW. Thank you, Alex, for all of your efforts and hard work. Finally, Parramatta Leagues Club (Vikings Club) has been very generous in allowing us the use of facilities for meetings and Education Nights, free of charge. This has been a significant saving for the Association, and we thank them for their support.

**GARY PAYNE**

**PRESIDENT**

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

When I agreed to take on the Secretary role for 2022, little did I know that my work commitments were about to dramatically change. Even though I had been a member of the Committee for 2021, I had a fair idea of what the Secretary role entailed, but more continued absence due to work commitments made the task extremely difficult. The 2021 outgoing Secretary Callum Winchester had set things up nicely for me and I enjoyed a smooth transition into the role, but 'life' intervened. Thanks to Gary Payne and others on the Committee for 'covering' me so often.

This will be my one and only Secretary's report as I will be resigning the position to take up the Vice President Recruitment and Retention should my nomination be successful.

The Association acknowledges the support provided by the Parramatta Leagues Club in allowing use of the Scandia Room at Vikings Sports Club for our monthly Education Nights and regular Referee Coach meetings. We have able to use the club's facilities for free throughout the season for which we are very appreciative.

### **Meetings in 2022**

The Management Committee met on eleven (11) occasions during 2021. We thank Tony Hackett for again allowing use of his firm's boardroom for our monthly Committee meetings and Callum Winchester for facilitating the Zoom sessions.

Education Nights in 2012 were well supported by members with an average of about 30 members attending per session. . We were lucky to have Todd Cummings presenting the content again and thank him for his time and continued interest in assisting the Association in developing referees. As always there was plenty of discussion and debate, all of which hopefully contributed to us improving our refereeing.

### **Award Winners for 2022**

The winners of our major awards in 2022 were as follows:-

NSWRU Zone Referee of the Year:	Peter Zeith
NSWRU Zone Junior Referee of the Year:	Mostyn Winchester
Eastwood District JRU Most Improved Junior Referee:	Tom Jordan
Association Member of the Year:	Jenny Pearce
Distinguished Service Award:	Phil McCrea

### **Schools and Clubs**

We continued our long association with The King's School, Oakhill College, Redfield College, Blue Mountains Grammar School and SCECGS Redlands. In particular, we thank The King's School for allowing use of their Centre for Learning and Leadership auditorium in mid-March for our 2022 Super Sunday event and the 2021 Annual General Meeting held immediately prior to it.

## **Secretary's Report (continued)**

For the past 16 seasons, Sydney West RRA members have proudly serviced senior and junior clubs in the Eastwood, Parramatta, Penrith and West Harbour Districts. In addition, a number of our referees were used to 'backfill' gaps in appointments elsewhere, seeing a number of us also refereeing across the regions traditionally served by Sydney North and Sydney South RRA.

As always, we acknowledge and appreciate the support and hospitality provided by the schools and clubs throughout the 2022 season.

### **Website and Social Media**

We continued to develop our online presence, especially with social media, adding an Instagram account ([@sydwestrefs](#)) in 2022. Give us a follow! Our strategy continues to develop so look out for more in 2022.

We now have a "Social Media Coordinator" – Rebecca O'Farrell. She has been terrific during the season posting information, results and photos on our Facebook and Instagram sites. Thank you so much Rebecca for your work in keeping SWRRA alive with up-to-date information. Rebecca has also updated our website – go and have a look. We really would like to recognise as many of our members as possible on social media, so if you have any articles or photos to share, please send them through. (We are in the process of setting up a separate email address for Rebecca, so when it is ready to go, we will let everyone know.)

Thank you for your support during the year. I look forward to continuing to serve you in 2023, in a different role.

**Paul Fitzgerald**

**SECRETARY & PUBLIC OFFICER**



## TREASURER'S REPORT

### Treasurer's Report

This is the report for the 16th financial year of the Sydney West Rugby Referee's Association.

**The 2022 financial year statements are still subject to audit which is my fault due to health** and work pressures I was unable to get them to Neil Colquhoun, the Association's honorary Auditor. Once the audit is completed, they will be posted on the Association's website at that time.

A set of the Association's 2022 financial statements (subject to audit) are attached as an annexure to this Annual Report and I would like to draw your attention to the following items:

- the financial result for the year was a deficit of \$79 (2021: deficit \$2,149);
- as part of the revised Patties sponsorship agreement we received \$9,570 (2021:\$5,460) and we will receive a further \$18,276 in 2023. A new sponsorship package is being developed through NSWRRRA which will include other sponsors apart from Patties who will continue their sponsorship. A sharing model has also been developed as to how these monies will be distributed;
- the 2022 season returned to some normality although severely impacted by wet weather at times and more games were played than in the 2021 season so revenue was not as heavily impacted with Schools contributing \$6,200 (2021: \$4,440) and Rugby NSW: \$11,128 (2021: \$10,750);
- the annual grant of \$8,000 from NSWRU was restored after being suspended in 2021 due to COVID funding issues;
- we also gratefully received a further grant of \$3,000 (2021: \$2,500) from The Rugby Club Foundation (TRCF) which was to be used to fund coaching and development. The funds were expended on upgrading referee communications equipment and we are required to give a written report to TRCF on those expenditures and monitor the training and development outcomes;
- membership subscriptions were maintained at \$25 per member and \$15 for students in 2022. The amount of \$1,510 up \$255 from 2021 was a result of having more active referees as the annual subscription is deducted from referee payments made to members at the end of the year;
- the NSW Government made available a Community Sports Recovery Grant as part of its COVID recovery initiative. NSWRU made an application for this on behalf of all Associations in respect of which we received \$1,000 as our share of this Grant;

## **Treasurer's Report (continued)**

- last year we invested in a Veo camera recording system to enable us to effectively record and digitally store games for coaching purposes. This made our existing 2 Solo Shot cameras surplus to requirements and we were able to sell these for \$750;
- this year the Association in recognition the effort being made by our members coming out of COVID it was decided to increase the amount reimbursed to referees to \$30 per game (2021: \$25). This additional \$5 per game was funded at a cost of \$3,568 out of the Association's cash reserves. A new referee funding model is currently being negotiated with NSWRU by NSWRRRA on behalf of all Sydney metropolitan Associations;
- the Annual Dinner did go ahead this year at a cost of \$2,831. This function is fully subsidised by the Association;
- during the year additional purchases were made in referee communication kits \$8,593 which will assist in referee coaching and additional kits bags \$718 for new referees;
- fitness training was again offered to members at a cost of \$2,496 (2021: \$2,995) with no contribution being required by participants;
- NSWRU formed an organisation called The NSW Positive Rugby Foundation in 2017. This year our members were invited to donate all or part of their match reimbursements to the Foundation in respect of which the Foundation will issue a receipt entitling the donor to a tax deduction for that amount. The amounts donated this year amounted to \$1,128 (6 members). This amount including any ongoing donations from members will be 'reserved' for an SWRRA project sometime in the future. Many thanks to the referees that donated this year;
- we closed the year with cash at bank and on investment amounting to \$48,743 (2021: \$37,096). The Creditor figure of \$1,343 is represented by the donation to The NSW Positive Rugby Foundation \$1,128 paid in January 2023 and \$215 for 2022 season referee payments to referees whose bank account details had not been provided. We have paid all other liabilities in respect of the 2022 season which stands us in good stead to be able to fund training, recruitment and development activities in 2023 with an Accumulated Funds balance of \$50,789.

**TONY HACKETT HONORARY**

**TREASURER**



**Sydney West Rugby Referees' Association Inc.**  
**ABN: 43 677 017 345**  
**Balance Sheet**  
**as at 31 December 2022**

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash at bank - Westpac Banking Corporation	13,743	3,746
- Term Deposit	35,000	33,350
Debtors - Refereeing Fees	2,400	14,545
Prepayment	989	0
	<b>\$52,132</b>	<b>\$51,641</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Creditors - Referee Payments	1,343	773
	<b>\$1,343</b>	<b>\$ 773</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b><u>\$50,789</u></b>	<b><u>\$50,868</u></b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>		
Balance at 1 January	50,868	53,017
<b>Add / (Deduct):</b> Surplus / (Deficit) for year	(79)	(2,149)
	<b><u>\$50,789</u></b>	<b><u>\$50,868</u></b>
Balance at 31 December	<b><u>\$50,789</u></b>	<b><u>\$50,868</u></b>



**Sydney West Rugby Referees' Association Inc.**  
**ABN: 43 677 017 345**  
**Profit & Loss Statement**  
**for the year ended 31 December 2022**

	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Member Subscriptions	1,510	1,255
Refereeing Fess - Clubs	11,128	10,750
- Schools	6,200	4,440
- Coaching	2,020	2,115
- State Championships	0	1,926
Grants - NSW Rugby Union	8,000	0
- NSW Rugby Foundation (Equipment)	3,000	2,500
- Community Sports Recovery Grant	1,000	0
Sponsorship - Patties Pies	9,570	5,460
Equipment Sales	750	0
Miscellaneous	10	0
Bank Interest	147	110
<b>INCOME TOTAL</b>	<b><u>43,335</u></b>	<b><u>\$28,555</u></b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Reimbursements - Referees & Coaches	22,475	18,141
- Coaching & Development Expenses	2,324	1,002
Annual Dinner	2,831	0
Awards	1,591	410
Meetings	341	465
Equipment & Clothing	9,311	5,872
Donations	0	104
Website & IT	538	131
Miscellaneous - OFT	0	47
- Fitness	2,456	2,995
- Super Sunday	1,482	1,375
- Flowers, etc	65	162
<b>EXPENSES TOTAL</b>	<b><u>43,414</u></b>	<b><u>\$30,705</u></b>
<b>SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)</b>	<b><u>\$(79)</u></b>	<b><u>\$(2,149)</u></b>

## REGISTRATION & ACCREDITATION

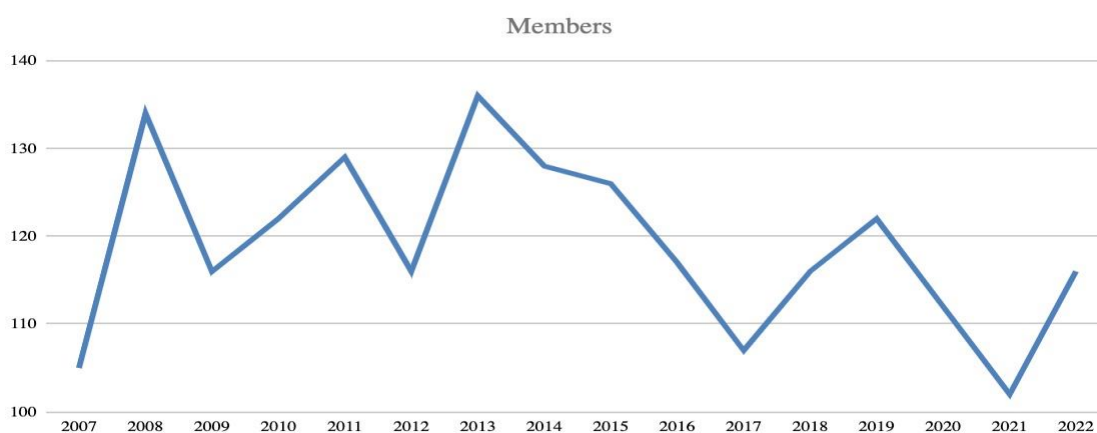
The 2022 season represented a return to near-normal for Sydney West RRA (SWRRA) and as a result, it was heartening to see an uptick in registrations to the highest level since the 2019 season and the second highest since 2016. After losing 20 registrations over the last two (2) COVID-affected seasons, we have almost returned to our pre-COVID numbers - with lots of potential upside in coming seasons.

As in prior seasons, the SWRRA utilises a two-step process for registration. It's worth reminding members that the membership form on our website (Step 2) will continue to be needed to enable a complete picture of our members – including capturing bank information and gear sizing, as well as the ability to cross-check spelling of names and addresses. Please ensure you have completed both steps in your registration this season.

### Registrations by Year 2007 to 2022

We continue to monitor our numbers and profiling members is increasingly difficult. This is another reason we seek engagement on our newly re-designed, 1-page member form. This information truly helps us to form a better picture of our membership, design programs to help members develop as well as helping to ensure we're meeting other needs for the membership including providing up-to-standard appointments.

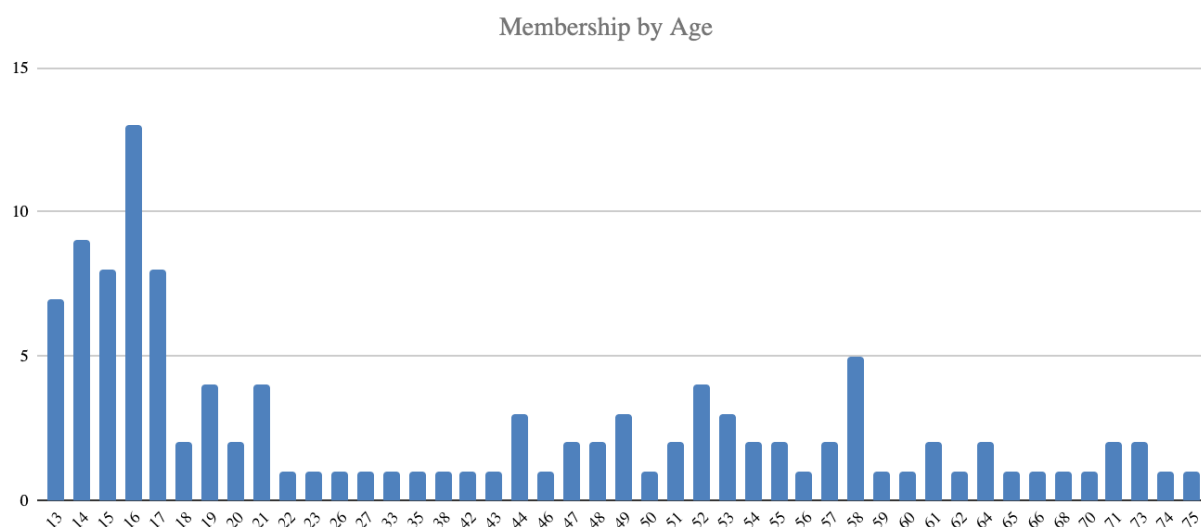
The table below demonstrates the highly variable registrations for the Association in end of season membership numbers across each of the 16 seasons of our existence.



Average membership over the 16-year period 2007 to 2022 has remained consistent at 119 in 2022. Our 2022 end of season figure is 116 and hence remains slightly under average but is hopefully returning toward our highest membership in the last five (5) years.

Distribution of members by age shows that the majority of the SWRRA cohort fall into either under 18 (41%) or the 50 to 60 (21%) age brackets. Similar to the last season, the age cohort born in 2006 (now 16 years of age) remains the most highly represented age group - albeit we have one less membership in 2022 for that bracket. The Association continues to build programs and welcome membership from all age brackets but is particularly keen on fortifying those younger age brackets as well as referees post university age and young parents who might be keen to get involved as their children get into Pathways Rugby.

## Registration & Accreditation (continued)



### New Members

The improved registration totals this year brought with it 28 new members which includes two female members. After the challenges of 2020 and 2021, we look forward to greater engagement, continued involvement and opportunity for growth in these new members in coming seasons.

Clare Adamson	Anthony Calavassy	Ryno Carstens	Taine Cassar	John Chapman
Ethan Filipo	Justin Friend	Myles Harrington	Niko Hatzistamatiou	Patrick Hickton
Alexander Ingham	Adi Vuda Koroi	Jack McDonald	Brett McDonald	Dennis Nothdurft
Brayden Ogier	David Ogier	Isaac Perkins	Jacob Revill	Gian Sevenster
William Sims	Connor Sinnott	Dougal Smith	Patrick Thomson	Henry Wakeling
Edward Walker	Christian Wansey	Kian White		

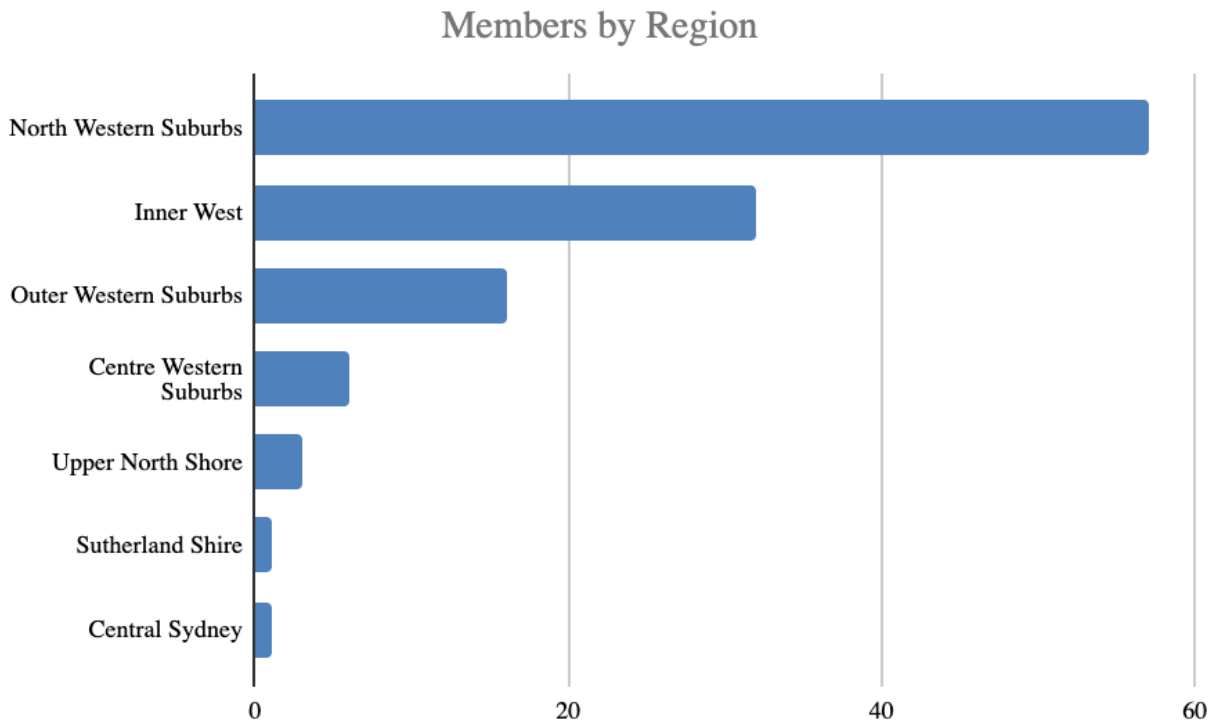
### Membership by Location

Membership of the Association in 2022 continues to demonstrate the large pool of those living in the North and western regions of greater Sydney. To improve clarity, some re-categorisation of some regions has been done in the table below. This results in a graph showing @77% of referees drawn from the North and Inner West of Sydney. A small number of members are drawn from areas more traditionally serviced by Sydney South and even Sydney North. Notably in 2022, members from regional areas (ostensibly boarders drawn from boarding schools such as The King's School) have not returned, nor have new members taken up registration.

With re-focused attention on recruitment of referees using the data we have at hand and directed strategic attention on specific groups of new recruits in traditional and new recruitment areas within Western Sydney, the Association hopes to continue growth

## Registration & Accreditation (continued)

toward and beyond our historic high levels of registration in coming seasons. Growth and maintenance of the Association's membership is necessary to assist in servicing the wide range of games and levels that SWRRA officiates.



Thank you to my fellow committee members and to the membership of SWRRA for their patience and commitment in the 2022 season.

**TIM GAUCI**

**VICE PRESIDENT, REGISTRATION & ACCREDITATION**

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Pre-Season**

For many members the 2022 season commenced with our Pre-Season training sessions, with Chris Cottee putting us through our paces at Muirfield High School. The poor weather sent us under cover on the netball courts for a few weeks, but this didn't deter the hardy regulars. Pre-season training provides SWRRA referees the chance to get some referee specific training into the legs as well as some time to socialise with fellow referees. I'd encourage more members to take advantage of this opportunity next season.

### **The Armidale School (TAS) Carnival**

Following a two year hiatus due to COVID-19, the TAS carnival returned in 2022 with the addition of U14 and U16 girls sevens together with the traditional U12 boys fifteens games. This carnival is run by Country Rugby but due to the large number of games requires support from Sydney referees. This presents us a great development opportunity for our year 10 and 11 referees in a non-competitive environment. This also provides the first experience of touring for these young referees and the opportunity to be part of a team. In 2022 the following team was selected for the carnival:

- Fynn Carstens
- Tom Jordan
- Callum Winchester (Coach)

### **Rugby Australia School Student Scholarship (SSS) Program**

As mentioned in the 2021 SWRRA Annual Report, Rugby Australia closed the SSS program in 2021 in favour of a Transition program targeting 18 – 24-year-old referees. This is not an age group where we have enough members to participate in the program. We will be looking to tweak our own development program to continue the development of school age referees.

The mooted Sydney Youth Development Program to be run by NSWRU didn't get off the ground in 2022 due to several reasons but mainly due to the short amount of time available to initiate it and gain the requisite funding. We expect this to get underway in 2023 to support the development of our year 10 to year 12 referees.

### **NSWJRU State Championships**

The NSW State Junior State Championships returned for 2022 June long weekend with SWRRA members involved across most of the tournaments. The following members were selected:

- Fynn Carstens (U12 Boys)
- Mostyn Winchester (U13 Boys)
- Tom Jordan (U13 Boys)
- Max Goldring (U14 Boys)
- Zac Martin (U14 Boys)



## **Training & Development (continued)**

- Clare Adamson (U14 Girls)
- William Taylor (U16 Boys)

We also had a number of Referee Coaches selected for these tournaments:

- Callum Winchester (U13 Boys)
- Michael Goldring (U14 Boys)
- Gary Payne (U14 Girls)
- Todd Cummings (U15 Boys)
- Ian Mooney (U16 Boys)

In addition, the NSWJRU 7s State Championships for U15s and U17s were held from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of October in Forster with a number of SWRRA Members selected:

- Mostyn Winchester
- William Taylor
- Callum Winchester (Coach)

From these tournaments the following notable appointments were achieved:

- Mostyn Winchester – U13 State Championship Grand Final
- Tom Jordan – U13 State Championship Semi Final
- William Taylor – U15 Boys 7s State Championship Cup Final

## **SJRU/Schools**

The SJRU repeated the Gala Day format for rounds one and two to start the 2022 season. It proved a little challenging to fill the games, particularly the younger age groups, where our member players were mostly unavailable to referee. The gala days gave us the opportunity to introduce a number of new Referee Coaches into the ranks. For both rounds we ran a number of coach the coach sessions to assist our new coaches start to hone their craft. The season itself was very challenging due to the amount of rain affected weekends, resulting in fixtures moving around at very late notice. By the time of the finals the weather was more settled, and a good proportion of members were involved.

We thank Blue Mountains Grammar School, The King's School, Oakhill College, Redlands and Redfield College for their support in allowing us to provide match officials to their school games during the season.

## **Coaching and Training**

The association requested a grant from The Rugby Club Foundation (TRCF) for the purchase of two Veo Cameras. Veo uses Artificial Intelligence to tag the videos with game events such as scrums, lineouts, kick offs etc. to enable the viewer to quickly review key aspects of the game. The video footage is an invaluable tool for referee development and feedback. With a building library of footage we hope to be able to use some for our Education nights in 2023. We intend to use this at more fields and with more coaches in 2023 to ensure wider coverage of the membership.

## **Training & Development (continued)**

During the off season for 2021 we delivered a recruitment drive within our more experienced members for more Referee Coaches to be introduced into the fold. We welcomed four new Referee Coaches into the ranks, however with the disrupted season we were unable to train and accredit as many Referee Coaches as we would have liked. We hope with some encouragement some more of our experienced members will take up the clipboard in 2023. A strong coaching group is critical to the development of all our members no matter age or experience.

## **Education**

Our education meetings were back to a normal cadence in 2022. Thank you to fellow member Todd Cummings who presented the education content again in 2022. Our education nights coincided with the Rugby Australia monthly referee webinars this year, so in a bid to increase attendance we moved our education to Tuesday nights from June. There was a marginal improvement in attendance however far shy of what we would like. This is an important part of your education and development as a referee, so we encourage all members to attend on a regular basis. We will be looking at further changes in 2023 to ensure the Education nights are both relevant and fun to attend.

I'd like to thank Alex Richards from NSWRU for providing content and facilitating our pre-season Game Management Guidelines as part of our Super Sunday event. Thanks also to The King's School for the use of their facilities for Super Sunday, to Muirfield High School for the use of their facilities for Pre-Season Training, and to Parramatta Leagues Club who kindly donate time and space at Viking's Sports Club to run our monthly Education Nights and Referee Coach meetings.

I look forward to seeing more of you around the grounds in 2023.

**CALLUM WINCHESTER**

**VP TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Sydney West RRA ended the 2021 year with 102 registered members. Although the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on each of the last three seasons, the 102 number for 2021 was the lowest ever end of season figure over the 16 years in which we have operated. Fortunately, promising signs of a return to normality were noticeable for much of 2022.

Although 15 members from 2021 failed to renew in 2022, the 15 figure was pleasingly less than the 29 and 32 members who failed to renew in each of the 2020 and 2021 seasons. The addition of 29 new members in 2022 allowed us to end the latest season with a membership of 116. This represents an increase of 14 on the end of season figure for 2021 and is the third occasion overall (and the first since 2013) in which we achieved a “double digit” gain in net membership.

In further positive news, while we aim to retain as many members as possible, the 15 members from 2021 who decided to not renew in 2022 was considerably less than the 2007~2022 season average of 26.3 “failed to renew” cases.

The names of members who joined the association in 2022 are shown in Annexure (TBC). Hopefully all enjoyed their first year of refereeing. We look forward to having them — and all other members — renew with us in 2023 and the years beyond.

For many years the parents of school aged players have provided us with a small but dependable source of referee recruits. A number of these parents are also accredited assistant referees. In recent seasons there has been a reduction in the number of teams and players in the under 13 to under 18 age groups of the Sydney JRU competition. An unfortunate flow-on effect of the decrease in teams is a reduction in the number of people (e.g. the parents of young players) seeking to become accredited referees or assistant referees.

The Committee recently completed a review of strategic planning associated with recruitment and retention. That review highlighted the need to increase the number of referees as a priority area for 2023. In particular, we are keen to increase the number of female referees as well as the number of referees in the 19~45 years age group.

With that in mind, we know from experience that existing members are also our most effective recruitment officers. If you have a friend, work mate, club mate, team mate, etc, that you know would make a good referee, please encourage him or her to consider taking up the whistle in 2023.

Simply direct them to the “[Referee Recruitment](#)” page of our website. There they will find everything they need to know about becoming a Rugby referee and Sydney West RRA member.

Finally, after stepping back from the Management Committee at the end of the 2018 season, in 2022 I re-joined the Committee to fill the vacant VP Recruitment & Retention position. It has been a privilege and fun to work with such a committed, energetic and talented group of people. Unfortunately, in the light of some minor but ongoing health difficulties, I recently informed the Committee that my involvement in recruitment and retention matters was not likely to extend beyond the 2022 AGM scheduled for 12 March 2023.

## **Recruitment and Retention (continued)**

If you're considering offering yourself at the AGM for election to an office-bearer position, I encourage you to consider joining the Sydney West Committee and contribute to our efforts to assist referees in developing their skills and help grow rugby in western Sydney.

**Bob Watson**

**Vice President, Recruitment & Retention**