

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 19 DECEMBER 2023

VIA ZOOM

MINUTES

CHAIR	Troy Grant
PRESENT ASSOCIATE MEMBERS	Jeremy Edwards (APRLC - Asia Pacific RL Confederation), Dean Andrew, Dave Butler (ERL - European Rugby League).
FULL MEMBERS	Andrew Abdo (ARLC - Australian RL Commission), Charles Carlson, Francis Toa (CIRLA - Cook Islands Rugby League Association), Gilles Dumas, Berenice Flores (FFRXIII - Fédération Française de Rugby à Treize), Don Natabe (FNRL - Fiji National Rugby League), Dave Hurdle (NZRL - New Zealand Rugby League), Stanley Hondina (PNGRFL - Papua New Guinea Rugby Football League), Tony Sutton (RFL - Rugby Football League), Jim Reynolds (RLI - Rugby League Ireland), Ponifasio Vasa (RLS - Rugby League Samoa), Krappie Eloff, Frans Erasmus (SARLA - South African Rugby League Association), Vladan Kikanovic (SRLF - Serbian Rugby League Federation), Artur Martyrosian (UFRL - Ukrainian Federation of Rugby League), Brian Juliff (WRL - Wales Rugby League).
AFFILIATE MEMBERS	John Cameron (CRLA - Canada Rugby League Association), Lukas Hergott (CZRLA - Czech Rugby League Association), Yamina Abdesselem, Lahcen Chuis (FMRL - Fédération Marocaine de Rugby à XIII), Terry Liberopoulos, George Stilianos (GRLF - Greek Rugby League Federation), Ade Adebisi (NRLA - Nigerian Rugby League Association), Jafaru Mustafa, Juliana Storey (RLFG - Rugby League Federation Ghana).
OBSERVER MEMBERS	Xhino Drangu (ARL - Albania Rugby League), Jean du Christ Rusiga (BRL - Burundi Rugby League), Issouf Ouatarra (CIRL - Cote d'Ivoire Rugby League), Charles Cardovillis, Quicks Nkwakwa (Kenya Rugby League Federation), Rey Nery (PNRL - Panbansang Ragbi Liga Ng Pilipinas), Lukasz Lucka (PRXIII - Polska Rugby XIII), Leen Loweiti (PRL - Palestine Rugby League), Irankunde Fortunate (RLU - Rugby League Uganda), Maito'o Haurae (SIRLF - Solomon Islands Rugby League Federation), Charles Cimitiere (SKRL - Slovak Rugby League), Ben Howard (VRL - Vanuatu Rugby League).
PRESENT	Remond Safi (ERL), Andrew Hill, Danny Kazandjian, Mark Martin, Charlotte Monkman (IRL).
APOLOGIES	Peter V'landys (ARLC), Greg Peters (NZRL), Reon Edwards, Emma Young (IRL).
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, BRLA - Belgian RL Association, BRLF - Bulgarian RL Federation, CBRL - Confederação Brasileira de Rugby League, CRL - Colombia Rugby League, CRL13 - Cameroon Rugby League 13, DRLF - Danmark Rugby League Federation, DCRL - Congo Rugby League, ERLA - Ethiopian Rugby League Association, FIRL - Federazione Italiana Rugby League, HRLF - Hungarian Rugby League Federation, JRL - Japan Rugby





League, KSARLA - Saudi Arabia Rugby League Association, LRL - Latvia Rugby League, LRLA - Libya Rugby League Association, LRLF – Lebanese Rugby League Federation, MERL - Montenegro Rugby League, MRL – Malta Rugby League, NMRL – North Macedonia Rugby League, NRLB - Nederlandse Rugby League Bond, NRLD - Nationaler Rugby League Deutschland, RFL13C - Chile, RLJ – Rugby League Jamaica, RLN - Rugby League Norge, SLRLF - Sierra Leone Rugby League Federation, SRL – Scotland Rugby League, SvRL - Svensk Rugby League Forening, TRLA - Turkish Rugby League Association, USARL -United States Association of Rugby League.

1.0 WELCOME, ROLL CALL & APOLOGIES

Mr Grant called the meeting to order and welcomed delegates to the 2023 IRL AGM. Mr Grant noted that the meeting will be simultaneously for both IRL companies. Both have same members & Board, although resolutions specific to each will be taken separately. Mr Grant invited Mr Kazandjian to call the roll. With 12 out of 18 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 said that while some IRL Directors are in the meeting, only Simon Johnson is here in that capacity, with the others all representatives of their national federations.

Mr Grant noted that, since IRL last met in plenary session, in Newcastle last October, the game has crowned world champions – all of whom have been beaten recently, showing the vitality and potential in the international game.

2.0 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM

The Chair proposed adopting the minutes of the previous meeting, held virtually on 15 October 2022.

RESOLUTION 1: *motion to approve the minutes from the IRL AGM held virtually on 15 October 2022. Motion moved by Mr Reynolds (RLI) and seconded by Mr Juliff (WRL). The minutes were approved.*

3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS AGM

Mr Grant noted the significant event of the May withdrawal of France as the 2025 RLWC host due to worsening economic conditions in France, which had resulted in a significant redesign of the IRL calendar, which he proposed addressing in more detail in agenda item 4.

Mr Grant then confirmed two new observer members had been admitted by the Full Members in April via written resolution: Slovak RL and North Macedonia RL. He welcomed both to the organisation.

4.0 CHAIR AND DIRECTORS' REPORT

Mr Grant reported on the following items:





- Changes to the Board since the last AGM
 - As reported in Newcastle, Peter V'landys and Andrew Abdo became the two ARLC Directors and have today completed their first year on the IRL Board. Mr Grant reported that both had added significant benefit to the Board
 - RFL Director Rhodri Jones joined the IRL Board in February, replacing Ralph Rimmer, who had resigned in December 2022
 - In July IRL Deputy Chair Luc Lacoste resigned due to ill health and has been replaced on the IRL Board by European RL Chair Dean Andrew, and as Deputy IRL Chair by Simon Johnson, who Mr Grant thanked for his support throughout the year
 - Greg Barclay has indicated his role as president of cricket's IF obliges him to step down and he tendered his resignation earlier in the year but remains on the Board throughout a succession phase
 - Similarly, Mr Grant informed the members of his intention to stand down due to work commitments. He did not intend walking away from the IF until a proper succession plan has been confirmed but acknowledged that the Chair role required a significant time commitment, which he is no longer able to give due to his expanding professional obligations. He thanked all the members for their trust in him as Chair
 - Mr Grant thanked all the Directors for their contributions to the organisation throughout the year

- On the field
 - Mr Grant said the sheer volume of football was impressive, citing as an example nine international matches in one 23-day period
 - Pacific Championship: supported by the Australian government; 13 men's & women's matches in Australia, New Zealand & Papua New Guinea. Mr Grant congratulated PNG & New Zealand for being crowned inaugural winners. He confirmed the 2024 edition will have a longer lead-in time, which would benefit it
 - Tonga tour: A historic first 3-match tour by a Pacific country to England, with three strong performances by England
 - Women's: 18 Senior International Matches compared to 12 non-RLWC matches in 2022 – a 50% increase showing the growth in the women's game. This included Women's internationals in all four IRL regions, including the first ever games in Africa, for which honour Nigeria & Ghana will be accredited in the sport's annals
 - N. American Women's Championship: Mr Grant congratulated Canada for a convincing victory against USA and Jamaica
 - Judiciary: More football meant more incidents dealt with the by IRL's independent Judiciary (16 in 2022 compared to 37 in 2023). Each case requires considerable bureaucracy. Mr Grant paid tribute to Judiciary Secretary Moray Gilland, a volunteer, who has managed the department exceptionally well.

- Regulatory





- IRL approved the Minimum Medical Standard in November. This will be applied to all Senior Internationals and is now in the operational rules
 - In October IRL carried out its first targeted drug testing outside the RLWC (in the England vs Tonga series), which Mr Grant noted was a sign of IRL's gradually growing capacity as a functional IF discharging its responsibilities to world sport
 - The new IRL portal is now live. Mr Grant thanked members for their patience over the previous iterations of the portal which were not satisfactory. He hoped the new iteration will be a helpful resource
- Strategy & calendar
 - Arguably the most important news of the year resulted from the Singapore meetings in July/August. The Chair emphasised that the calendar is not a completed project and will evolve
 - IRL now has a multi-year calendar that enables real planning throughout all IRL's stakeholders
 - The shift in RLWC cycle and approach to bundling our assets should give IRL more commercial potential than at any time in our history, which will allow more investment into the members and the international game
 - Mr Grant confirmed that a regional consultation on calendar preferences will commence in March

Mr Grant closed by reporting, just a year after the tragic loss of Tiziano Franchini, Italian RL's vice president, the passing of Scotland RL Chair Keith Hogg's in June, noting his leadership of and contribution to rugby league in Scotland.

Mr Vasa (RLS) complimented the Chair on acknowledging the local needs of the members. He raised Samoa's financial constraints in touring England in 2024. Mr Grant confirmed all nations are sovereign and ultimately must decide their own participation. He congratulated the new RLS administration on their leadership.

Mr Vasa raised the question of grants, admitting the new administration was unsure about the grant process. Mr Grant proposed a meeting between RLS and IRL management to clarify matters.

ACTION: IRL management to contact RLS to address the grants system.

5.0 FINANCE

Mr Grant confirmed that all members had received a written finance report and both companies' financial statements, both of which have been approved by the Board. He 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 2022 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. There then followed a presentation of the consolidated financial position of the organisation, including





work on reducing IRL Ltd's tax bill, which had been successfully completed; the treatment of the outstanding £565k RLWC2021 rights fee; and the positive balance sheet position as a result of the world cup.

Mr Sutton (RFL) questioned the intra-company loan and requested detail around the prepayments and accrued income figure. Mr Martin explained the loans net out and confirmed IRL was launching a tax-efficiency project in 2024 to establish the best way of managing the relationship between the companies in the future. He said most of the prepayment and accrued income relates to RLWC2021.

RESOLUTION 2: *motion to approve the 2022 accounts of International Rugby League Ltd. This motion was moved by Mr Natabe (FNRL) and seconded by Mr Hondina (PNGRFL). The motion was carried.*

RESOLUTION 3: *motion to approve the 2022 accounts of Rugby League International Federation Ltd. This motion was moved by Mr Reynolds (RLI) and seconded by Mr Sutton (RFL). The motion was carried.*

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

Mr Grant read out the following resolutions to the members:

RESOLUTION 4: *motion to retain Newmerical as the independent accountants of Rugby League International Federation Ltd for the 2023 financial year. The motion was moved by Mr Sutton (RFL) and seconded by Mr Juliff (WRL). The motion was carried.*

RESOLUTION 5: *motion to retain Haysmacintyre as the independent accountants of International Rugby League Ltd for the 2023 financial year. The motion was moved by Mr Reynolds (RLI) and seconded by Mr Carlson (CIRLA). The motion was carried.*

7.0 APPLICATIONS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD

Mr Grant paid tribute to the progress being made by KRLF, which this year ran an 8-team men's plus women's and junior 13-a-side championships, in addition to hosting France, which had proven to be a diplomatic success for the sport.

RESOLUTION 6: *motion to accept Kenya Rugby League Federation (KRLF) as an Affiliate Member of the Company. The motion was moved by Mr Erasmus (SARLA) and seconded by Mr Natabe (FNRL). The motion was carried.*

8.0 ACCEPT INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS

Mr Grant noted Emma Young had been re-elected by the Board and begins her third term today. Mr Grant reported the exceptional work Ms Young and Reon Edwards had undertaken on the audit & risk committee in particular.

9.0 GOVERNANCE REFORM CONSULTATION

Mr Grant reported that the Board had discussed reducing the size of the IRL Board and confirmed IRL will launch a member consultation programme. He said the





intention was to make the IF sleeker and contended that the sport is over-governed internationally. He said an extraordinary general meeting would be held in the future. One of the possible new concepts will be two independent Directors rather than the current three.

10.0 RESOLUTION PROPOSED BY UKRAINIAN FEDERATION OF RUGBY LEAGUE & SECONDED BY NATIONALER RUGBY LEAGUE DEUTSCHLAND

Mr Grant read out the resolution and invited Mr Martyrosian (UFRL) to speak to it. Mr Martyrosian said the situation in rugby league had changed a lot this year and members needed to increase activity in parallel to IRL strategic progress. He felt regional working groups would be optimal, with around 11-13 participants in each.

Mr Andrew (ERL) confirmed UFRL had proposed the same resolution at the ERL AGM and felt that the consultations confirmed by IRL in this meeting would answer the questions posed by the UFRL resolution.

Mr Natabe (FNRL) asked whether the IRL has entered into a similar process before. Mr Kazandjian spoke to the current regime's commitment to transparency and consistent consultation with members on policy and other matters, citing the Chair's multiple Q&A sessions with members and the membership policy.

***Resolution 7:** The IRL members should form a working group to assess the needs of all members of the IRL and to formulate potential strategic options for the IRL general assembly to decide on at an extraordinary general meeting of the members. The members of the working group, its objectives and the time frame for submission of the options should be discussed and agreed upon at the 2023 Annual General Meeting. The motion was carried.*

Mr Grant invited Mr Martyrosian to lead the working group and asked Mr Kazandjian to provide secretarial support.

11.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business. The Chair thanked everyone for their work throughout the year and wished everyone well ahead of the festive period.

The meeting closed.

