

**INTERNATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 21 OCTOBER 2021**

**VIA ZOOM**

**MINUTES**

**CHAIR** Troy Grant

**PRESENT ASSOCIATE MEMBERS** Jeremy Edwards (APRLC - Asia Pacific RL Confederation), Graeme Thompson, Remond Safi (ERL - European Rugby League).

**FULL MEMBERS** Wayne Pearce (ARLC - Australian RL Commission), Jon Christie (ARLK - Russian Association of Rugby League Clubs), Charles Carlson, Robert Graham (CIRLA - Cook Islands Rugby League Association), Dominique Baloup (FFRXIII (Fédération Française de Rugby à Treize), Orazio D'arro, Tiziano Franchini (FIRL - Federazione Italiana Rugby League), Viliame Naupoto, Don Natabe (FNRL - Fiji National Rugby League), Nayef Albert Abi Said (LRLF - Lebanese Rugby League Federation), Greg Peters (NZRL - New Zealand Rugby League), Stanley Hondina, Sandis Tsaka (PNGRFL - Papua New Guinea Rugby Football League), Simon Johnson, Ralph Rimmer (RFL - Rugby Football League), Adam Cox, Jim Reynolds (RLI - Rugby League Ireland), Frans Parsons (SARLA - South African Rugby League Association), Jon Harris, Scott Simon (SRL - Scotland Rugby League), Vladan Kikanovic (SRLF - Serbian Rugby League Federation), Artur Martyrosian (UFRL - Ukrainian Federation of Rugby League), Brian Juliff, Gareth Kear (WRL - Wales Rugby League).

**AFFILIATE MEMBERS** Robert Burgin (CBRL - Confederacao Brasileira Rugby League), , Yamina Abdeselem, Najib Daouma (FMRL - Fédération Marocaine de Rugby à XIII), George Stilianos, Terry Liberopoulos (GRLA - Greece Rugby League Association), David Axisa, Jean Pierre Zarb (MRL - Malta Rugby League), Ade Adebisi, Adam Sada (NRLA - Nigerian Rugby League Association), Bob Doughton, Andy Hay (NRLD - Nationaler Rugby League Deutschland), Jafaru Awudu Mustapha (RLFG – Rugby League Federation Ghana), Gurol Yildiz (TRLA - Turkish Rugby League Association).

**OBSERVER MEMBERS** Arnaldo Telo (ARL - Albania Rugby League), Jean du Christ Rusiga (BRL - Burundi Rugby League), Juan David Espinal (CRL - Colombia Rugby League), Rogers Mbanza (DCRL - Congo Rugby League), (), Rabie El Masri (PRL - Palestine Rugby League), Reynaldo Nery, Joseph Cole (PNRL - Panbansang Ragbi Liga Ng Pilipinas), Ben Howard (VRL - Vanuatu Rugby League).

**PRESENT** Troy Grant (IRL), Danny Kazandjian (IRL), Mark Martin (IRL), Charlotte Monkman (IRL), David Birchall (IRL), Sara Piper (IRL), Niel Wood (IRL).

**APOLOGIES** Luc Lacoste (FFRXIII - Fédération Française de Rugby 13), Viliame Naupoto (FNRL - Fiji National Rugby League), Reon Edwards (NZRL - New Zealand Rugby League), Farouk Nana Prempeh, Kareem Captain (RLFG – Rugby League Federation Ghana), Antonio Korikalo (Vanuatu Rugby League).

**ABSENT** AERL - Asociacion Española de RL, ARBH - Asocijacija Ragbi 13 Bosna i Hercegovina, BRLA - Belgian RL Association, BRLF - Bulgarian RL Federation,



CRL - Canada Rugby League, CZRLA - Czech Rugby League Association, CRL13 - Cameroon Rugby League 13, DRLF - Danmark Rugby League Federation, ERLA - Ethiopian Rugby League Association, ESRLA - El Salvador Rugby League Association, GRLF - Georgian Rugby League Federation, HRLF - Hungarian Rugby League Federation, JRL - Japan Rugby League, JRLA - Jamaican Rugby League Association, LRL - Latvia Rugby League, LRLA - Libya Rugby League Association, MERL - Montenegro Rugby League, NRLB - Nederlandse Rugby League Bond, PRXIII - Polska Rugby XIII, RFL13Chile, RLN - Rugby League Norge, RLS - Rugby League Samoa, KSARLA - Saudi Arabia Rugby League Association, SIRLF - Solomon Islands Rugby League Federation, SLRLF - Sierra Leone Rugby League Federation, SRLF - Svensk Rugby League Forening, USARL - United States Association of Rugby League.

### **1.0 WELCOME, ROLL CALL & APOLOGIES**

Mr Grant formally introduced himself and welcomed the delegates to the 2021 IRL AGM. Mr Grant reminded delegates that each member is only constitutionally allowed two delegates to attend today's meeting and any queries raised will be addressed at the appropriate juncture. Mr Grant invited Mr Kazandjian to call the roll. With 16 out of 18 full members present, Mr Kazandjian confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Mr Grant acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic is still impacting RL around the globe and he commended nations for their continued efforts to play and administer rugby league despite the challenging circumstances. It was acknowledged that the two professional leagues have successfully completed two domestic seasons. Mr Grant congratulated Serbia and the Netherlands for their victories in the European Championships B & D respectively.

Mr Grant is looking forward to an in-person AGM and Congress in November 2022 in Newcastle Upon Tyne, in the days preceding the opening ceremony of the rescheduled RLWC2021. Until then, Mr Grant reminded members that the "Open Members Forums" provide an opportunity for the Board and management to be accessible and encouraged members to take advantage of these occasions.

### **2.0 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM**

The Chair proposed adopting the minutes of the previous meeting, held virtually on 25 November 2020.

**RESOLUTION 1:** *Motion to approve the minutes from the IRL AGM held virtually on 25 November 2020. Motion moved by Mr Reynolds and seconded by Mr Rimmer. The minutes were adopted.*

### **3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS AGM**

It was noted that there were no outstanding action items from the 2020 AGM.

Mr Grant formally thanked Mr Barclay for his tenure as Chair of the IRL from January 2020 until March 2021. Mr Grant advised that Mr Barclay remains a valuable Director on the IRL Board and is currently leading a significant project on the commercial opportunities and capabilities of the organisation.





Mr Grant reported that at the 2020 AGM members passed a resolution to run a procurement process to seek a new auditor for the Australian company for FY2020. Mr Grant explained that after running the procurement process, the Written Resolution to appoint Thompson Partners as the independent reviewer of the company had been circulated on 15 April 2021 and carried by the full members. Mr Grant advised that Thompson's have independently reviewed the accounts which will be discussed under item 5 on today's agenda.

As regards membership activity, Mr Grant reported that:

- On 7 Jan 2021 three written resolutions were issued, to admit Philippines as an Observer and Morocco and Cameroon as Affiliate Members. Mr Grant congratulated all three nations and welcomed PNRL to its first AGM as a member.
- On 8 June 2021 two written resolutions were issued to admit Japan and Montenegro to the IRL, followed by a written resolution to admit El Salvador on 21 July. Mr Grant reported that all three motions had been carried and therefore extended his welcome to those organisations to the IRL

Mr Grant highlighted that at the last AGM neither of the IRL's two companies' accounts were ready for approval. However, Mr Grant reported that on 15 April 2021, two Written Resolutions to approve the FY2019 accounts of both the IRL's companies were circulated to members and both were carried, thereby approving both sets of accounts and concluding the constitutional process. Mr Grant pointed out that this is the first time this organisation has had their financial statements for both companies completed within the required statutory timeframe, which is an indication of organisational progress.

As regards Tonga, Mr Grant explained that in April 2021 the Court of Arbitration for Sport dismissed Tonga National RL's appeal against its expulsion, which had been confirmed by the IRL's members in March 2020. Mr Grant confirmed that work continues with the interim management group in Tonga and the IRL looks forward to Tonga obtaining an international federation membership status once again.

Mr Grant concluded by thanking Chris Brindley, Chair of RLWC2021, and Jon Dutton, CEO of RLWC2021, and their team for the outstanding work and continued efforts in making great headway for a successful 2022 event. Mr Grant acknowledged all participating nations who have undergone significant disruption and the IRL will continue to support those nations in the 12 month lead up to the tournament.





#### 4.0 CHAIR AND DIRECTORS' REPORT

Mr Grant reported on the following items:

- overriding focus on the future of the sport and less about the past. The Open Members Forums will continue as valuable and frequent interactions between the Chair and members.
- **COVID-19:** it is envisaged that the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to cause difficulties for the IRL and its member nations for some significant time, particularly regarding access to global travel, vaccination requirements, additional costs etc. However, Mr Grant does not believe any of these issues are insurmountable and, in addition to this, the IRL has undergone a process to look at significant reductions to its expenses, to improve governance and the transparency and controls around finances. As Chair, Mr Grant has formed four critical committees led by IRL Directors, alongside the management team's advisory groups. Greg Barclay chairs the Commercial Committee, Emma Young the Strategy & Governance Committee and Reon Edwards the Audit and Risk Committee. In addition, Mr Grant chairs the RLWC2025 Exploratory Committee.
- **INTERNATIONAL CALENDAR:** Mr Grant advised the creation and completion of the international calendar has been somewhat delayed from the original timeframe due to a number of disruptions throughout the process. These include primarily, but not exclusively, the postponement of RLWC21 and the consequences thereafter for qualification pathways for 2025, as well as pre-existing contractual commitments for some nations. TG maintained that the calendar must reflect all levels of the game and informed the final iteration will be shared with the IRL Commercial Committee and Board within week, before being circulated to confederations and nations for their perusal.
- TG advised that a priority and challenge for the IRL is to generate more revenue for the sport, which can then be reinvested into our nations. TG reported that the IRL has designed a lean rugby league structure with a number of Directors doing a significant amount of voluntary work. Mr Grant confirmed that the international calendar will largely underpin the new strategy.
- **ON FIELD:** Mr Grant expressed his thanks to the IRL Match Officials Manager, Stuart Cummings, for his leadership and implementation of the 3-tier match official squad structure. Mr Grant reported that the IRL has published new international Laws, wheelchair Laws & PDRL Playing Conditions and it is the first time that the IRL has published all its Laws to the same high standard of presentation.
- **COMMUNICATIONS:** Mr Grant alluded to the launch of the IRL Portal which aims to provide a resource tool for members and create a more coherent international federation.
- **REGULATORY:** Mr Grant reported that the IRL published new anti-doping rules on 1 Jan 2021 in line with the WADA Code. In addition, a new, centrally managed judiciary is now operational and the IRL has recruited approximately 50 panel pool members from every level of the game. Mr Grant expressed his thanks for their contribution and service to this important function of the game. Mr Grant alluded to the professionally designed 2020 annual report,





which was published in March 2021, and directed all members to download this from the intRL.sport website if they haven't done so already.

- **GOVERNANCE:** As mentioned above, Mr Grant advised that the organisation has created very active governance committees and advisory groups all of which are working on critical projects and developments dovetailing with the IRL's overarching strategic priorities. Mr Grant welcomed and invited any Members' contributions to any of those committees at the appropriate opportunity.

## 5.0 FINANCE

Mr Kazandjian explained that from the start of the reorganisation of the IRL late last year, the focus has been on a culture that is member oriented with full transparency of the finances and operations. Mark Martin, IRL Finance Manager, was welcomed to share a presentation with the members, for both Rugby League International Federation Ltd (RLIF Ltd), the original company incorporated in Australia, and its successor company, International Rugby League Limited (IRL Ltd), which is incorporated in England and Wales.

Mr Martin advised members that the RLIF Ltd element of the presentation will be based on the financial accounts for the year ended 31st October 2020, and the IRL Ltd element will be based on the financial accounts for the year ended 31st December 2020. Both sets of accounts had been circulated.

Mr Martin was pleased to report that the presentation highlights the significant improvements that IRL has made to its financial systems in the last twelve months. Most significantly, Mr Martin reiterated that, for the first time, the financial statements for both IRL Ltd and RLIF Ltd were submitted to the appropriate authorities within the statutory deadlines. In line with this disciplined approach, Mr Martin pointed to the creation of the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) in October 2020, which has been delegated by the Board to carry out rigorous oversight of financial activities on the organisation's behalf.

Mr Martin explained that management and ARC prepare a detailed budget for the financial year for scrutiny and approval by the Board, that management reforecasts on a monthly basis; that ARC approves the reforecast on a quarterly basis and, importantly, both management and ARC monitor financial projections through to 2025.

Mr Martin explained that, historically, the organisation reporting a deficit in the accounts is not uncommon. Mr Martin explained that the organisation benefits from a large surplus in the World Cup years, however this is followed by three deficit years. Mr Martin advised that Covid-19 has significantly impacted the IRL's finances with no income generated in 2020 and the postponement of RLWC21, therefore the IRL has been forced to make considerable reductions in expenditure.

Mr Martin presented the consolidated balance sheet, highlighting the net asset position which is the figure the Board scrutinizes and reflects on when the viability





of the organisation is assessed. Mr Martin reported that the organisation had £1.5m of reserves as at end of 2020, with a bank balance of £2.3 (2019) to £1.2 (2020). Mr Martin advised that the projected bank balance for the end of 2021 should only slightly decrease to just above £1M, which is attributable to the diligent reassessment of costs and also working hard to recover amounts owed.

*SARLA joined the meeting.*

An invitation was extended for Members to raise any queries on the accounts or presentation. No queries were raised and therefore Mr Grant presented the following resolutions:

**RESOLUTION 2:** *motion to approve the 2020 accounts of International Rugby League Ltd. This motion was moved by Don Natabe (FNRL - Fiji National Rugby League) and seconded by Jim Reynolds (RLI - Rugby League Ireland). The motion was carried.*

**RESOLUTION 3:** *motion to approve the 2019-20 accounts of Rugby League International Federation Ltd. This motion was moved by Dominique Baloup (FFRXIII (Fédération Française de Rugby à Treize) and seconded by Brian Juliff (WRL - Wales Rugby League). The motion was carried.*

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

TG read out the following resolutions to the members:

**RESOLUTION 4:** *motion to review the auditors of Rugby League International Federation Ltd for the 2020-21 financial year through a procurement process. The motion was moved by Jim Reynolds (RLI - Rugby League Ireland) and seconded by Charles Carlson (CIRLA - Cook Islands Rugby League Association). The motion was carried.*

**RESOLUTION 5:** *motion to retain Haysmacintyre as the independent accountants of International Rugby League Ltd for the 2021 financial year. The motion was moved by Jon Christie (ARLK - Russian Association of Rugby League Clubs) and seconded by Jim Reynolds (RLI - Rugby League Ireland). The motion was carried.*

## **7.0 NOTIFICATION OF DIRECTORSHIPS**

### **7.1 Notification of the Directors appointed in place of those retiring**

Mr Kazandjian reported that on 21 September 2021 the ERL nominated Luc Lacoste, the president of the Federation Française de Rugby 13, for a first term, replacing Paul Nicholson, who is retiring. Mr Kazandjian explained that Mr Lacoste's first term will expire at the 2024 AGM. Mr Grant formally welcomed LL and expressed his sincere appreciation to PN for his valued contributions to the development of international rugby league during his time on the IRL Board.





- 7.2 Notification of independent Directors appointed in accordance with Article 4.4  
Mr Grant reported that on 10 January 2021 Emma Young was re-elected by the Board for a second of three permitted terms.

In addition, Mr Grant reported that on 22 September 2021 Greg Barclay was unanimously nominated by the nominations committee for a second of three permitted terms. Mr Grant advised that the IRL Board elected G. Barclay by ordinary resolution on 20 October 2021.

## 8.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### Orazio D'arro (Federazione Italiana Rugby League)

Mr D'arro requested that any supporting information regarding the accounts should be circulated to the members earlier than 24-hours prior to the meeting. In addition, Mr D'arro also recommended that the IRL should request a minimum of three quotes for independent auditors. Mr Kazandjian confirmed that the statutory accounts were circulated a week before the meeting, along with the agenda and other supporting documents. Mr Kazandjian advised that the IRL does seek three quotes as part of the auditor tender process, as it has done in previous years.

### Ben Howard (VRL - Vanuatu Rugby League)

Mr Howard requested details for the 2022 AGM and Congress. Mr Howard requested the details are agreed and shared as soon as possible so travel arrangements can be made and their fixtures can work around these overseas dates. Mr Grant confirmed the AGM and Congress would take place on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> and Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022 in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, in advance of the RLWC2022 opening ceremony on Saturday 15 October 2022.

**ACTION: CM to circulate details for AGM and Congress 2022 at the earliest opportunity.**

### Robert Burgin (CBRL - Confederacao Brasileira Rugby League)

Mr Burgin felt it would be remiss if we did not take the opportunity to reflect on the growth of the sport with the welcoming of additional new members. Mr Burgin highlighted the ability of the IRL to change the rules at very short notice in a world cup year which he feels this relates to an issue he would like to raise on the subject of Directors on the IRL Board. Mr Burgin explained that the majority of Directors are drawn from the quarter finalist world up nations when in reality there are 40 member nations that exist on the fringe. In the future, Mr Burgin would like to see a coalition or representation of countries that are at a different stage of development represented on the IRL Board. TG acknowledged Mr Burgin's sentiments and explained that Emma Young is leading a committee about strategy and governance so that component can be factored into that work. Mr Grant also reminded Mr Burgin that the Membership Forums offer the opportunity for all members to voice their thoughts directly to the Chair on matters such as governance and reform.

### Don Natabe (FNRL - Fiji National Rugby League)





Mr Natabe requested confirmation that all participating world cup nations have signed their participation agreements for RLWC2021. Mr Grant reported that his understanding is that there are two outstanding agreements, but Jon Dutton is confident they are well progressed and will be signed and received in the next week.

With no further items raised by the members, Mr Grant brought the formal business of the meeting to a close and thanked members for their attendance and contributions.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:07am UK.

