

## **SRU Participation Agreement Statement**

The SRU Board's role is to ensure the integrity and quality of the Sydney Premier Rugby competition. This also includes the responsibility for growing our game within the constraints and resources of the SRU. The SRU works closely with NSWRU and all NSW Rugby affiliates to achieve those goals and ensure Rugby is accessible for all participants.

To achieve and maintain a level of quality and competitiveness we have implemented a Participation Agreement with certain standards and expectations to be met by clubs in Sydney Premier Rugby. The purpose of this statement is to outline a number of key decisions made in respect of the Participation Agreement.

The showcase of our competition is the Charter Hall Shute Shield. It is perhaps the longest and most successful competition of its type in the world. It is a competition that has always supported diversity and has created wonderful memories while supporting the rich heritage of our game.

We are also mindful of the playing experience for all grades, spectators, and members across Sydney Premier Rugby. This is coupled with a growth mindset to ensure we make the most of the tremendous opportunities given to us through our broadcast arrangements with Stan and Rugby Australia and our naming rights partner Charter Hall.

The SRU takes all these things into consideration, as well as taking into account the changing demographics of Sydney, when looking after both the immediate and longer-term needs of Sydney Premier Rugby. This is to ensure that Rugby in Sydney not only remains strong but grows and provides great experiences for all involved with the game, whether as a volunteer, coach, administrator, social or aspirational player.

## **Jack Scott Cup – Women's Rugby**

The SRU is supporting Women's rugby in NSW and has made it mandatory for all Premier Rugby Clubs to have a Women's XV's team in the Jack Scott Cup by 2023. Sydney Women's Rugby will work with the SRU in providing a pathway and guidance for clubs where required. Women's rugby is a growing part of our game and we will play our part to ensure women are provided every opportunity to play, as well as to enjoy positive experiences doing so. The community expects our game to provide full inclusivity regardless of gender or race. Women's rugby is part of our social license to play sport and we fully support its inclusion into our competition and look forward to working with Sydney Women's Rugby in continuing to grow the game.

## **Hunter Wildfires**

The Wildfires were readmitted into Sydney Premier Rugby in 2020 as an expansion club. The Wildfires enjoy incredible community support and are a well-resourced club with a

depth of board capability that would be the envy of most sports clubs and associations. The wider Hunter region has been identified by NSWRU as an area of growth and this is supported by over 2,300 junior registrations.

It is also understood by the SRU that admission into Premier Rugby cannot be at the detriment of the local competition. SRU acknowledges that after only playing 23 rounds of Premiership rugby Wildfires are capable of being very competitive. The SRU has provided dispensation to the Wildfires to allow them an opportunity to grow into the participation agreement standards.

### **Western Sydney Two Blues**

As a founding member of Sydney Premier Rugby, the Two Blues have for over 140 years been creating memories and provided a rich pipeline of players. They have played a key part in the diverse and inclusive experience Rugby brings for players and supporters alike.

In recent years the hard-working volunteers of the Two Blues have struggled to improve the performance of the club, this is certainly not due to the efforts of few. This can also be attributed to perhaps a lack of resources generally across rugby communities. The SRU has provided dispensation for the Two Blues for the 2022 season.

This decision has been made in conjunction with support to be provided by NSWRU who will provide resources and oversight for a rebuilding program. This will anchor the Western Sydney Two Blues as the Sydney Premier Rugby club for Greater Western Sydney. Further, an advisory committee will be established to assist the Two Blues Board and Management through the rebuilding program.

Sydney Premier Rugby in Greater Western Sydney has for many years been the development ground for a significant number of talented rugby players, both male and female. It also has incredible support from Mayor Steve Christou and the Cumberland Council which has delivered a first-class facility named in honour of our longest living Wallaby Eric Tweedale. This rich history cannot and should not be lost to our game. As such, it is important the SRU, in keeping with its responsibility for growing the game supports the Two Blues through this difficult time.

SRU is confident that with strong focus and the right capability, the Two Blues can again be competitive and meet the full requirement of the participation agreement. A roadmap to full compliance is being resourced and a governance model being developed.

### **Penrith Emus**

Penrith will not be awarded a participation agreement for 2022 but are invited to participate on the Advisory Committee for Greater Western Sydney rugby district with a

view to remaining a presence in rugby working with the Western Sydney Two Blues to grow the game in Greater Western Sydney.

The SRU would like to take this opportunity to thank the Penrith Emus, their board, management, coaches, volunteers, and players for their efforts in being part of Sydney Premier Rugby since they joined in 1995.

We appreciate the strength of the local Penrith Junior program in the region and will work with NSWRU to find ways to provide pathways for local juniors to stay engaged with Rugby within the wider GWS district and the Western Sydney Two Blues.

### **Closing statement**

The SRU appreciates that recent seasons have not been easy for all clubs involved in Sydney Premier Rugby. These have been difficult times, not just from a Rugby perspective, but more generally. The provision of dispensation for both the Wildfires and Two Blues does not detract from the hard work put in by administrators, coaches, volunteers and players across the competition, but is a pragmatic decision to strengthen the Sydney Premier Rugby for the long-term.

The future of rugby is positive, and the SRU will play its part in growing rugby in NSW and Australia.

Regards

Phillip Parsons – SRU President