



“People in Rugby” Model

Nga Taangata i te Whutuporo

In 2018 the Union led by its Purpose, “Improve Lives, Through Rugby”, Vision and Strategy to Maximise Engagement and Grow Participation with Quality Community Experiences through the following tactics- *Cultivate a Climate of Development, Fun and Safety around our Junior and Youth Rugby Programs; and Build a future focused Participation Pathway (“ladder”) that places the participants at the centre of the experience and provides safe playing opportunities at every level-* made leadership, culture and system shifts with the goal of wanting more kids, having fun, for longer.

The Union, with its community, introduced several initiatives at Junior Rugby level such as defining a clear value offering of a climate of development and fun, a boys Rugby Rip grade (beyond 9 years old), different forms and formats that promote time on task and skill development, combined club and school grades, replaced Club representative and Union representative programs with Rugby development experiences. There have been some highlights:

- The non-contact grade for boys into club rugby system (under 9, under 13) was legitimised and now is a national offering- 22% increase in Club registration
- The girl’s rugby grades (from 1 grade with 8 teams, currently 4 grades with 65 teams) has been promoted nationally by NZR.
- The value offering- climate of development and fun- has been supported and promoted by other major sports in NZ.
- The removal of performance and representative Programs which evidence shows harms the long-term development of youth and discourages participation has been adopted by other sports; and introducing “age and stage” appropriate development experiences.

Furthermore, from one of the smaller PU cost bases, we can be proud of our contribution the NZ Rugby overall participation numbers. In 2019, NHRU were 6th place in overall numbers (behind Akl, Cant, Wgt, Bop & Wai), 4th for junior overall numbers (behind Akl, Cant, Bop) and had the faster growing girls and woman’s program.

2019 Registered Players	NZR	NHRU	% of NZR
Total Registered Players (from 26 constituent PU’s)	159773	10056	6.29%
Registered Female Players	31035	2364	7.62%
Registered Male Player	128733	7692	5.98%
Registered Coaches	11937	695	5.82%
Registered Referees	1813	96	5.30%
Adults	35438	1524	4.30%
Teens	35432	1714	4.84%
Juniors	88903	6818	7.67%

We have also seen positive results around our pinnacle men and woman teams in recent years where our strategy has been to *Drive a Performance Environment that Grows People to Succeed* through the following tactics- *Connect with our community to support home grown potential & promote Harbour people to the next step.* By way of example, the following key outcomes were achieved in 2019:

- 26 of 28 M10 Cup contracted players were promoted from NH clubs (30 of 32 in 2020).
- Promoted 13 new club players into the M10 Cup Team
- Promoted 15 players into 2020 SR squads
- Promoted 2 coaches to 2019 Blues SR squad
- The 2nd year of a Women's Pathways programs playing in the Farah Palmer Cup which has graduated four players into the Black Ferns program.

In a wider context, the North Shore will be an influential and relevant community in NZ's future. It is currently going through an immense transformation with rapid population growth, a changing age profile and ethnic profile. In the next 10-15 years, of the 13 high growth areas, 8 of these will be on the North Shore. The fastest growing being Upper Harbour, Massey, Hibiscus & Bays- it is this "growing and changing population (that) will shape the sports that are played and the way they are played in the future" (WA Facilities Plan).

BUT community Rugby is facing huge adversity and we must confront the brutal facts of our current reality. Youth and Senior Rugby is in survival mode with declining participation rates. This is having a significant negative impact on Clubs and Schools- less players, less teams, less grades- makes for a poorer experience for all. The flow on effect is that although we have some passionate community volunteers who work tirelessly, it is making their roles very difficult and we are quite frankly burning out volunteers out.

There are numerous reasons for this but some of the more significant drivers of change are as follows:

- The world is changing at pace-
 - Societal urbanisation, ethnic diversity, technology, sedentary lifestyles
 - Youth- eSports, changing motivates, body image.
 - Sport- concussion and safety, more active recreation
 - Economic- growing deprivation, Busy with school and jobs
- Peoples views and habits for Sport have changed-
 - At a level, time, cost, and location that suits them, irrespective of the provider
 - Change between organised sport and informal activity (active)
 - The majority (76%) of young people participate in physical activity for fun, to hang out with friends (45%), for fitness and health (31%) and to learn new skills
 - Unless people understand the value of Rugby and the offer, they will not prioritise it in their lives
- Rugby and Sports is not evolving to meet individual, family, and communities' holistic and diverse needs. If this experience is not provided people will simply spend their time in other ways.

We are in the 3rd year of our strategy and are committed to keep evolving the Rugby experience with the participants in mind to ensure Rugby and Sport remains relevant in our community.

On this background, and in an attempt future proof Rugby in our Province and ensure our Clubs remain relevant, alongside our Purpose, Vision and Tactics, management are proposing a fundamental shift from the traditional Rugby “participation to performance” triangle model to a new model- the “People in Rugby” Model.

The Traditional Participation to Performance Model



Why? The traditional model continues to produce the best athletes to win pinnacle events however is it not providing the experience that meets the changing needs and demands for our community game. We make the following observations:

- One size fit all, chronological & linear approach- “you’re either in or you’re out”
- Elite Performance is seen as the pinnacle at all levels- climate of performance v climate of development
- It is a participant only model
- Limited choices and once participant leave, they do not have option to come back (linear)
- Sport led experience not participant led “I don’t want to be an All Black, I just want to play with my mates and have fun”
- There is a dependency within the model that is counterproductive- i.e. if we change, we will stop producing All Blacks. This is simply not true.
- Male centric
- We are losing junior, youth and senior players year on year- the statistics are alarming!
- NZ Sports statistics show the most significant drop off in youth sports occurs at 15 years old however the U13 age group is where a significant shift occurs in Rugby.

The “People in Rugby” Model

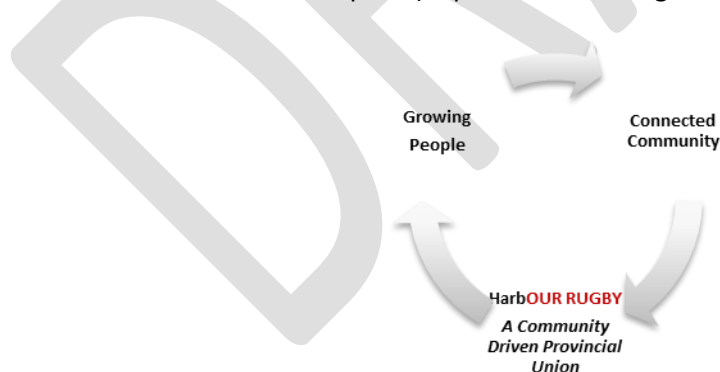


Why? The People in Rugby Model is centred around all Rugby's people, putting them at the centre of the experience, and uses a mental model that focuses on needs and motivation.

It also fundamentally evolves how we look at the experiences we are creating for our community. Evidence suggests people are trending towards a broader active engagement and participation experience. Whilst we will work to continue to better define what is appropriate when it comes to a performance experience within the current system.

Furthermore, the People in Rugby Model:

- Connects back to our Purpose (Improve lives through Rugby), Vision and Harbour Way



- Contemplates all Rugby's people together. Whether you are a player, coach, administrator, referee, parent, or life member- we want them to be included. This also allows us to think more broadly about those who are most at risk or currently underrepresented.
- Puts people and the centre of the experience and "based on their needs and motivation" (Maslow's Hierarchy of needs/ Self-motivation theory)



- Broadens the focus on what an “active” experience is- and can be; creating more choices to participate- “We don’t all want the same thing” (Sport NZ Young people profile). Narrows the focus and defines what a “performance” experience is.
- Moves away from chronological participation to performance pathway to relative age and stage development.

Rugby is not alone as a sport with the challenges it faces regarding engagement and participation but we are encouraged by the direction of NZR through the 2019 Participation framework and from Sport NZ over the last twelve months (Balance is better) in this area to encourage leadership, culture, and system changes.

There are several papers and resources that we have used in the formation of this model. By way of example but not limited to:

- NZR Secondary School Review & NZR Benchmark data
- Sport NZ- Ensuring the Sector is fit for the future
- Sport NZ- Secondary School age review
- Sport NZ- balance is better
- Wider AKL facilities plan
- Good Sports Spine
- National VOP data
- NHR participation & VOP data

We have also not been alone in developing the “People in Rugby” model. The following individuals, groups and organisations have helped us better understand what participants want and how they want to consume their sport of choice.

- Simon Walters - PhD Senior Lecturer School of Sport and Recreation AUT University
- Ken Lynch - Sport NZ High Performance Athlete Development (HPAD) Manager
- Daragh Sheridan Ph.D. – Sport NZ HP Coaching Manager
- Junior Club & School leaders
- Vincent Minjares- Good Sports, AUT
- NH Rugby Staff

All have indicated their willingness to continue to stay connected and support this body of work. Like us, they see promise in the approach but also understand that it will continue to evolve.