



Referee Recruitment & Retention Plan

ACT Rugby Referees Association

Updated January 2024

Plan prepared by Interact Collaborations following conversations and workshops with ACTRRA.

INTRODUCTION

The ACT Rugby Referees Association (ACTRRA) is responsible for the development and allocation of referees for rugby union games in the ACT and surrounding NSW regions. This includes the region from Yass and Goulburn to Bungendore and Jindabyne to Batemans Bay.

Each week referees are appointed to up to 80 junior and 35 senior games throughout the region. ACTRRA members are also appointed as support officials to games involving the Brumbies.

Following the 2022 ACT Rugby season, the ACTRRA identified that recruiting and retaining the number of referees required to officiate the sport in the ACT and surrounding region had become more difficult.

This plan is informed by the outcomes of the *ACTRRA Report: Improving the recruitment and retention of rugby referees in the ACT and surrounding region* and a planning session with the ACTRRA Executive and key stakeholders on 30 March 2023 (the output from this session is at Attachment 1).

This identified the following key focus areas, particularly as they relate to retention and recruitment form the basis of the plan:

- Development and progression
- Remuneration
- Relationships
- Communication and promotion
- Attracting and retaining female referees
- Volunteer capacity
- Referee safety
- Attraction

This plan is intended to sit within the broader ACTRRA Strategic Plan and be a 'live' document that is reviewed and updated as the landscape along with the needs of members and stakeholders change. It aims to focus on actionable initiatives.

AIM

Develop a pool of capable and confident referees who enjoy officiating rugby union games in the ACT.

OBJECTIVES

- Reduce the churn of qualified referees by 50%
- Attract 40 new referees to undertake training each year and transition 80% to take on match appointments
- Transition 75% of first year referees to undertake a second season
- Maintain referee satisfaction of 95%
- Improved visibility and awareness of high performance opportunities for referees
- Support provided for capable referees to transition to Rugby Australia pathways, including ACTRRA representation at the 2027 and 2029 Rugby World Cups.

KEY FOCUS AREAS

1. **Development and progression** – *Providing transparent development pathways, feedback and the opportunity to improve.*
2. **Remuneration** – *Transparent and efficient remuneration.*
3. **Relationships** – *Working positively and in collaboration with key stakeholders.*
4. **Communication and promotion** – *Open lines of communication and building a positive image.*
5. **Attracting and retaining female referees** – *Supporting and promoting diversity.*
6. **Volunteer capacity** – *Supporting retention and broadening the volunteer base.*
7. **Referee safety** – *Working to stamp out referee abuse.*
8. **Attraction** – *Increasing the number of ACTRRA members.*

Key Focus Area 1: Development and progression – *Providing transparent development pathways, feedback and the opportunity to improve.*

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET/S |
|---|--|------------------------------|-----------|---|
| Provide transparent pathways for all levels and aspirations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a pathway/development plan in Ref Live for every referee, who wants it, to enable referees to practice self-reflection but also show the referee coach specific areas the referee is working on when they are coached Identify clear processes for progression, grading and development opportunities | High Medium | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every active referee is offered a pathway/development plan End of season survey indicates that all active referees understand the processes for progression, grading and selection for development opportunities |
| Provide relevant and accessible development opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan development nights with a specific focus Establish a schedule of development opportunities at the beginning of the season Continue to deliver specialist programs like the junior academy for like minded referees | High High High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Season plan established with the ability to be flexible to meet the needs of referees during the season. |
| Build confidence, relationships and improved understanding through more face to face training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the hybrid approach of online training delivered in a group setting | High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face to face training opportunities available |

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET/S |
|--|--|---|-----------|---|
| Deliver more coaching and mentoring to a wider range of referees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide training in using hudl or other electronic recording of the game ● Improve efficiencies for referees by using hudl for some coaching sessions where it is available ● Encourage suitably experienced people with Smart Rugby and Season Ready qualifications to provide mentoring ● Have a planned approach to appointing coaches and mentors | <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coaches are equipped to provide feedback in hudl ● Every referee receives two written coaching reports each year |
| Maintain consistency and quality of coaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ongoing support and training for referee coaches in both game guidelines and successful approaches to coaching and mentoring ● Ensure referee coaches are supported in using the available tools to understand a referee's development focus and provide feedback | <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training opportunities for referee coaches established and attended |
| Support new members to improve transition and progression | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a succinct induction pack for new members regarding support, who's who at ACTRRA, processes, payments, pathways and available tools ● Appoint a 'buddy' for new referees ● Ensure each new referee is coached on their first game day experience ● Formal handover from previous association and provide a reference/referral for ACT referees moving to a prospective new association. | <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Each new member receives an induction pack ● Each new referee has a 'buddy' appointed |

Key Focus Area 2: Remuneration – *Transparent and efficient remuneration.*

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET |
|---|---|---------------------------------|-----------|---|
| Provide reliable and regular match payments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commence a discussion with ACT Rugby about regular EFT payments for referees who opt in ● Commence a discussion with the ACTJRU to establish an accessible and modernised system for JRU match payments | <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review of match payment systems undertaken and options presented |
| Inform a fair remuneration framework comparable to other sports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Produce a readily available policy on remuneration at all levels, including travel allowances and ad hoc appointments. ● Contribute to a review of rugby union match payments and allowances with an understanding of out of pocket expenses and in comparison to other sports | <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> | | |
| Reduce costs where possible for referees, educators and other ACTRRA volunteers undertaking official duties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to offer a waiver of membership fees where the financial position allows ● As above, understand travel costs and reimburse | <p>High/ Quick wins</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Membership fees waived ● End of season survey indicates that all match officials were comfortable with the travel costs that were reimbursed |

Key Focus Area 3: Relationships – Working positively and in collaboration with key stakeholders.

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET |
|--|---|-----------------------|-----------|---|
| Promote a culture of transparency and inclusivity with ACTRRA members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share executive meeting minutes with members Prioritise off field social events for referees | High Quick win | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of season survey indicates that >80% of members felt welcomed in the ACTRRA organisation Hold 4 social events for referees during the season/pre-season |
| Establish positive relationships with clubs and schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to referee attendance and participation at club training sessions (even pre-season fitness). Focus on establishing positive relationships with clubs and schools from the ACTRRA President role on the Community Rugby Committee and the Club Presidents Group to individual match officials connecting with captains and coaches. Referee to attend and support the player coach courses delivered by Brumbies. | High High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with at least 3 clubs to form relationships for referees to join training sessions End of season survey indicates that >75% of active referees felt that their relationship with clubs/schools had improved Each player coach course attended by a referee |
| Address systemic issues with JRU that are having an impact on referee satisfaction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive to focus on identifying key issues and addressing them Consider establishing/reviewing an MOU or similar with the JRU to formalise the relationship beyond committees | Medium Medium | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document the relationship/service delivery between the JRU and ACTRRA |
| Utilise Rugby Australia resources and promote pathways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and communicate Rugby Australia tools, support, programs and pathways to all members | High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overview of pathways and opportunities developed and shared with referees |

Key Focus Area 4: Communication and promotion – *Open lines of communication and building a positive image.*

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|-----------|---|
| Regular communication to all members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Send regular emails to all members that include relevant information such as 'save the dates', ACTRRA pathway/tool information, point to information on the website, or focus on a skill (eg. spotlight from a coach) ● Establish a private Facebook 'group' for members that allows ACTRRA to deliver information and referees to engage with each other ● Develop protocols and templates for timely information to be emailed and shared on social media by nominated office holders without an extensive approval process ● Continue to maintain the website as a consistent portal of information for members and prospective members ● Explore the need for a communications platform for senior and junior appointers to complement Rugby Explorer – particularly for short notice changes | <p>Extremely high</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fortnightly emails sent to referees during the season (as required/monthly outside of the season) ● Facebook group established and managed (reviewed for effectiveness) ● Establish protocols/roles for sharing information |

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET |
|--|---|---|-----------|---|
| Build a positive image of being a referee, highlighting diversity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote success at all ages and levels. Invest in a photo library so that referees of all ages, gender and background are portrayed in the social media brand and website Increase visibility by encouraging senior referees to drop by junior games. Create referee profiles on social media for a range of members. | <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media and other material represents the diversity of referees |
| Targeted communication material and channels for specific demographics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and understand the ways in which members would prefer to interact with/receive information from ACTRRA Establish a social media plan that identifies the brand, relevant platforms and proposed content Utilise the skills and resources of members in the target demographic to produce content for social media in line with the strategy | <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to obtain feedback from members about the ways they find most effective to receive information from ACTRRA Establish a group of members to manage the social media presence of the organisation |

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET |
|--|---|---|-----------|---|
| <p>Look for ways for current members to encourage new members to join (a warm welcome)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively encourage a culture of existing members inviting those who they think will be interested in refereeing to get involved Provide members and advocates with a range of tools to invite potential referees to the association. Eg. An email to share, social media content or a postcard with key information. Obtain information from Rugby Australia about courses and registrations for course and expressions of interest so they can be followed up personally | <p>Medium</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Extremely High</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shareable content developed for members/champions to share with potential referees A process is established to receive timely information from Rugby Australia about courses and registrations |
| <p>Reach out to new audiences</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop targeted communications to promote opportunities for key groups such as parents of juniors, school students and players in transition Work with ACT Rugby to utilise their database/s to distribute relevant information Engage with Rugby Australia to ensure expression of interest from individuals is raised with ACTRRA | <p>Medium</p> <p>Quick win</p> <p>Quick win</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a communications engagement strategy focus on new members |

Key Focus Area 5: Attracting and retaining female referees – Supporting and promoting diversity.

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET |
|---|--|--|-----------|--|
| Create a welcoming and supportive environment for female referees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build a support network for female referees ● Consider events and specific development/training course for female referees ● Ensure there are uniforms available that fit females ● Appoint a mentor for new and emerging female referees ● Actively seek to establish a culture across the organisation that is understanding and supportive of all referees regardless of gender and background ● Actively seek to identify and support female members to serve on the executive and/or report to the executive | <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>Quick win</p> <p>Quick win</p> <p>High</p> <p>Quick win</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support network for female referees established ● Survey indicates that >80% female referees felt they were welcomed and supported in the organisation |
| Increase number of female referees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Align with Rugby Australia's goals for female representation | High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number/percentage of games officiated by female referees increases each year |

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET |
|---------------------------------|--|--|-----------|---|
| Providing recognisable pathways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish a development plan with all female referees ● Recognise and connect female referees into Rugby Australia pathways and opportunities where appropriate ● Actively promote the success of female referees ● Ensure female referees are appointed to grades and genders within their ability level | <p>High</p> <p>Quick win</p> <p>Quick win</p> <p>Quick win</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Every female referee to have a development plan ● ACTRRA to be aware of and promote Rugby Australia pathways |

Key Focus Area 6: Volunteer capacity – Supporting retention and broadening the volunteer base.

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | TARGET |
|---|--|-----------------------|-----------|---|
| Reduce workload of volunteers in key positions and increase capacity to deliver outcomes for ACTRRA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage a paid Rugby Referee Development Officer to manage and oversee the initiatives Understand and clearly define the tasks best taken on by a paid position | High High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep conversation alive about the need for a paid role |
| Increase understanding of roles and workloads and improve accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop duty statements for all positions Establish an appropriate schedule of check-ins with coaches, assessors and appointers to discuss grading, appointments and progress | High High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty statements developed |
| Increase utilisation of the broader membership in voluntary roles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create opportunities for members to assist in different areas such as social events, mentoring, supporting training etc. then actively approach and invite individuals to be involved | Quick win | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of season survey indicates that >80% of members understood where they could further support the organisation outside of their referee duties |
| Support and develop the cohort of coaches, educators and trainers to manage workload and ensure succession planning is in place | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider coach, educator/trainer remuneration Approach Rugby Australia to run a foundation referee coach course | High Quick win | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain active group of coaches and educators |

Key Focus Area 7: Referee safety – Working to stamp out referee abuse.

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS |
|---|---|-----------------------|-----------|--|
| Ensure all referees feel supported when managing instances of referee abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the role of the welfare officer and understanding of how/when to report instances of referee abuse Better training and utilisation of Ref Live to report and review instance of referee abuse | Quick win High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of season survey indicates that all referees felt supported in managing instances of referee abuse |
| Reducing the instance of player and spectator abuse and inappropriate behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with ACT Rugby and the JRU on constructive ways to connect with junior and senior clubs on expectations for positive behaviour and an education campaign to shift culture. Work with ACT Rugby and Rugby Australia on implementing club penalties for abuse | High Medium | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instances of referee abuse decreases |
| Gain greater support from Ground Marshalls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to support ACT Rugby and clubs to review and improve the visibility and profile of the of the Ground Marshalls in managing spectator behaviour and perhaps deliver specific training Ensure referees are aware of the role of the Ground Marshall and how best to engage with the Ground Marshalls. | High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referees feel supported by Ground Marshalls |
| Build rapport with clubs and club education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for executive, educators and referees to connect more with clubs and players at all levels | High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above - relationships |

Key Focus Area 8: Attraction – Increasing the number of ACTRRA members.

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS |
|--|--|--|-----------|---|
| Increase the opportunities for members to provide a 'warm introduction' to the association | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise face to face engagement at information sessions and training – ensure members recruiting are relatable to the cohort (consider demographic) Empower younger members of the association and non-appointed personnel to recruit their peers | High High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in new recruits |
| Create a club/team environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bolster opportunities for social connection and support | High | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of season survey indicates that >80% of members felt welcomed in the ACTRRA organisation |
| Expand on cohorts who are attracted to refereeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a specific focus on parents of junior teams undertaking a course Consider connecting with ADF personnel as they move to the ACT Expand on school programs Appoint a 'champion' in each school/club environment to promote the role of the referee and identify potential candidates | Medium Medium Medium Medium | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in new recruits |

| GOAL | INITIATIVES | PRIORITY | RESOURCES | KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS |
|---|---|---|-----------|---|
| <p>Identify gaps in attraction and work strategically to engage</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require clubs/schools to send a minimum number of representatives to referee training • Deliver referee training to development players to improve their knowledge of the game such as junior Brumbies, Vikings GEN Red or Erindale College along with other schools that do not already take that approach • Actively target former players and fast track their development where appropriate | <p>Quick win</p> <p>Quick win</p> <p>Medium</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a record of how new members came to register with ACTRRA |