

Hunter Rugby

# Engagement Priorities Project

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*Enigma*  
Pro bono

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- 1. Why we're here**
2. The methodology
3. The findings
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# Why we're here

Following a season of no play in most respects of Rugby in the Hunter due to Covid 19, Hunter Rugby has identified the need to enhance engagement with it's clubs and community in efforts to ensure the advancement and continued prosperity of local rugby in The Hunter. This project serves to identify and order key engagement priorities in a pragmatic and responsible manner.

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## The Methodology

On June 11, 2021 a meeting was coordinated by Rugby Hunter President, Glenn Turner and facilitated by Enigma MD, Peter Chapman at the committee rooms of No.2 Sports Ground. Hunter Rugby participating club representatives, Hunter Junior Rugby and Hunter Rugby officials were invited to participate in a workshop designed to unearth and document the key problems facing the Hunter Rugby competition in specific relation to engagement of supporters, players and sponsors. The content of this report is informed by the findings of that workshop, subsequent conversations and desk research conducted by Enigma. This report has been developed pro bono.

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## The Findings

Across our three focus areas of watching, playing and sponsoring, we unearthed a long list of problems and associated potential solutions.

Once captured, as a group we prioritised what the group felt were the most important issues to address.

# The Findings

## PARKING LOT

Develop an Engagement Blueprint

Succession planning throughout the club.

Hunter Rugby Prospectus.

one thing

- A pathway system - Hunter Rugby facilitate club sharing
  - Connection to the community
  - more uptake of rugby exposure
  - Actions Around Cuts Camp.
  - Engagement Blueprint?
  - make sure what we plan gets done.
- Get a handle on management & Resourcing so it's not pie in the sky.

## PLAYING

### IDEAS

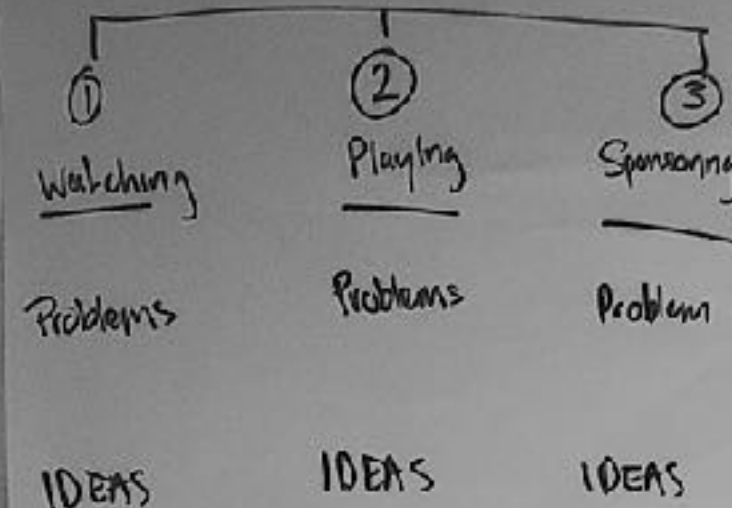
- Create greater development of Clubs
- Kids running out w/ 1st Grade.
- Get you together w/ Soc.
- 1st Grade to Shadow 1st Grade
- Mum need to be happy/engaged
- Bring Back the Rep program
- Masterclass series for teenage players

## PLAYING

We need to work out the Pathway from ~~Playing~~ Soc.

- exchanges + Players hosting
- We need to engage w/ the Clubs owners
- Scholarship opportunity UoN
- Player Pathway Opportunities into work.
- Zone level Club Academy -
- Addressing Player needs
- need to help Players navigate Playing into real zones.

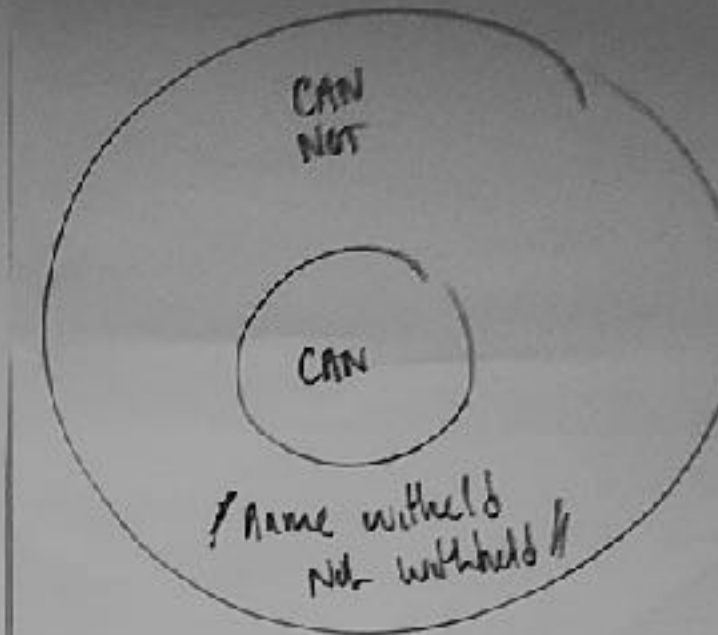
## Engagement



## SPONSORING

### IDEAS

- A Finals push
- tickets to the Finals Series for Sponsors.
- A clear definition of what the Hunter Rugby Products - what's the benefit & what's plan & how it's getting.



## WATCHING

IDEAS / Problems.

- Structured vendor relationships
- Add subscriptions to Bar to membership
- membership is not systemised / structured
- variable Standards Across home growth.
- connecting Game day details (NBRC / MRUC) people to run Game day Experience.
- Communication is over complicated.
- How do we capture final series Database.

## WATCHING Problems

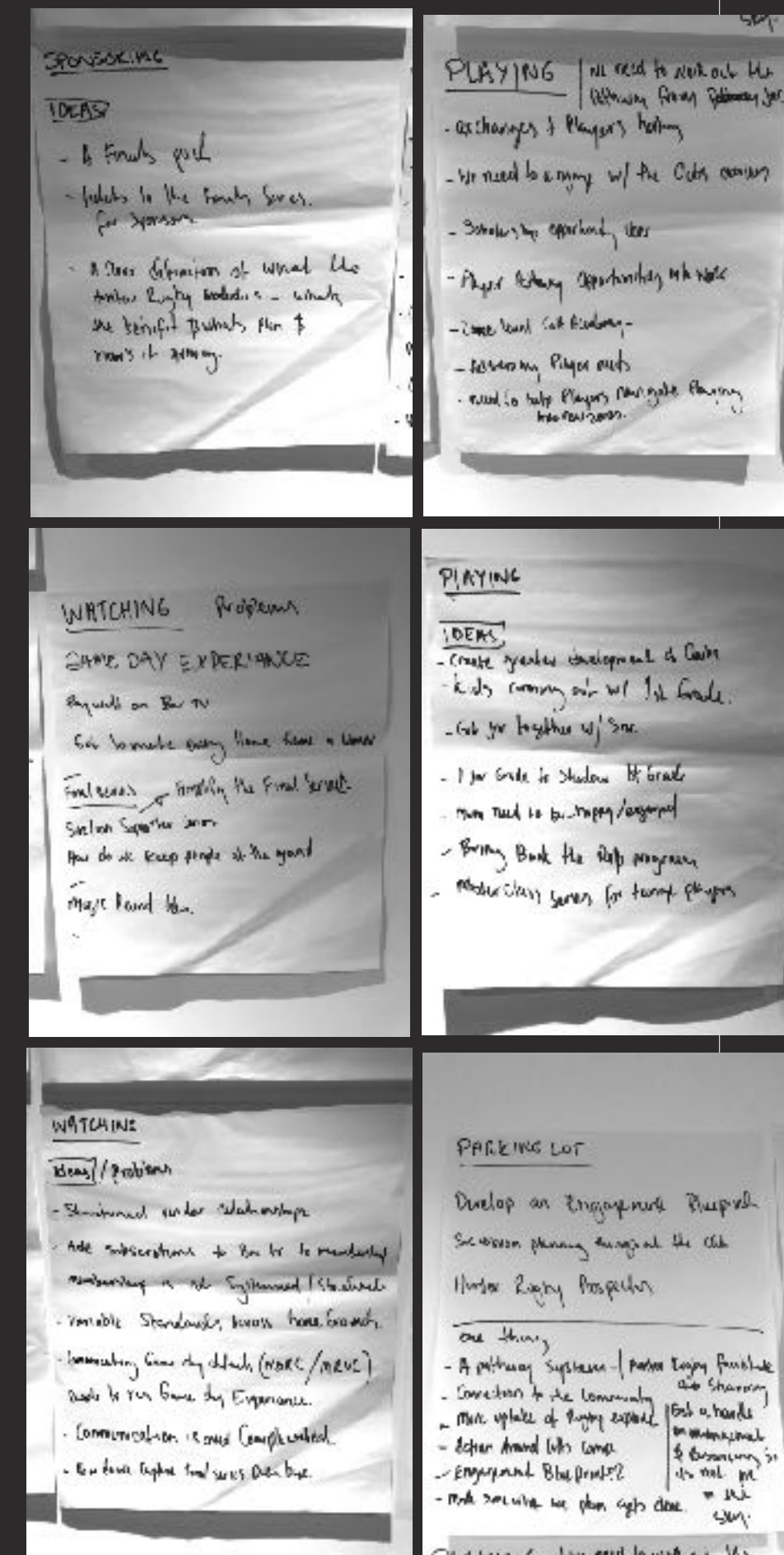
### GAME DAY EXPERIENCE

- Paywall on Bar TV
- Got to make every Home Game a winner
- Final series Amplifying the Final Series
- Section Supporter Series
- How do we keep people at the ground
- magic Round Idea.

# Priority tasks

From our long list of issues and opportunities, we have landed on 7 priority tasks:

1. Hunter Rugby benefits prospectus
2. Community engagement playbook for clubs
3. Pathway programs
4. Exchange program
5. Turbo charge finals series
6. Junior & senior club interaction playbook for clubs
7. Hunter Rugby membership & data capture



# Prioritising the priorities

From our list of priorities, we can order in way of immediate, short, medium and long term time horizons.

## Immediate

Within 90 days

- Community engagement playbook for clubs
- Turbo charge finals series

## Short term

Within 6 months

- Pathway programs
- Hunter Rugby benefits prospectus

## Medium term

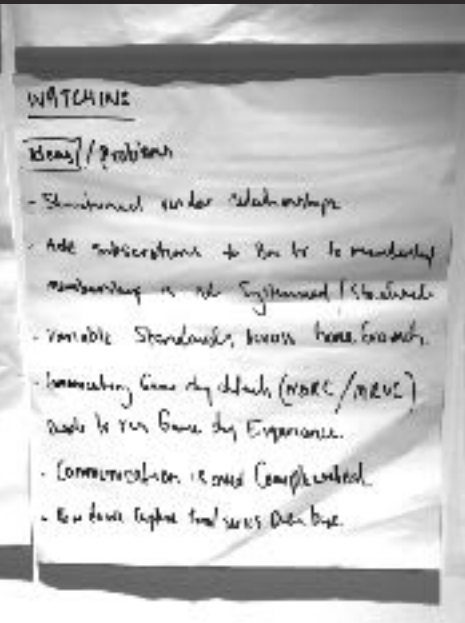
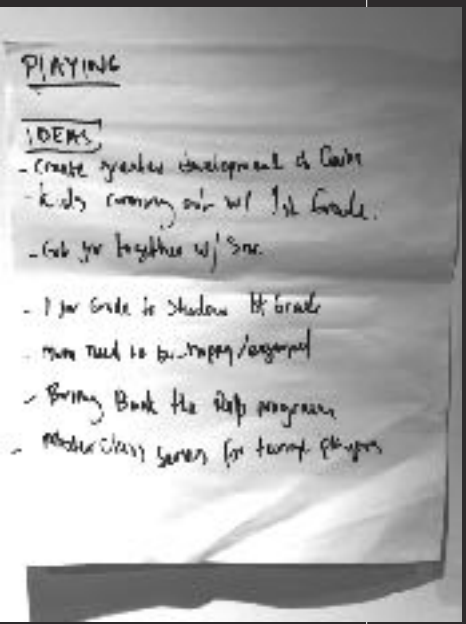
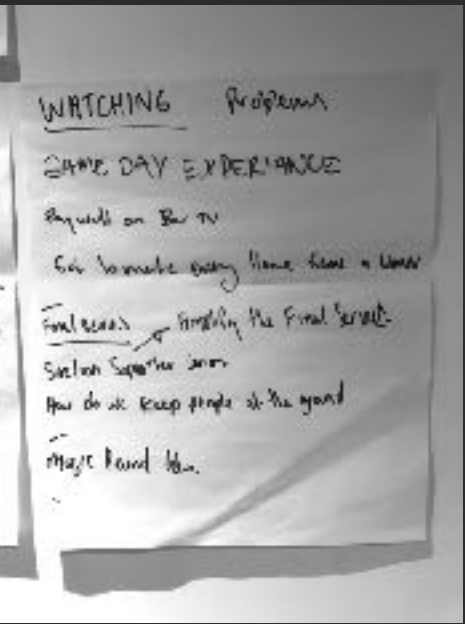
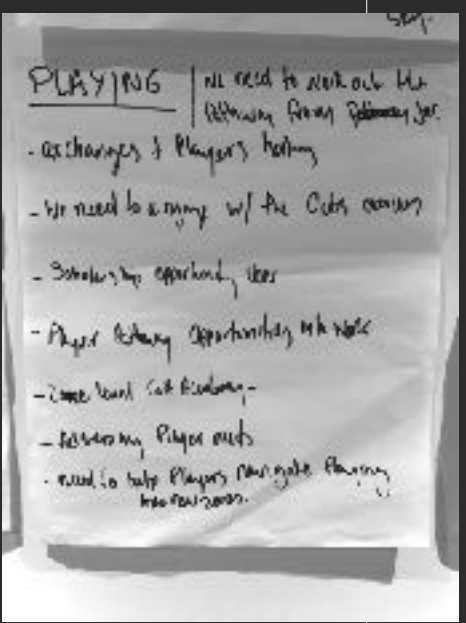
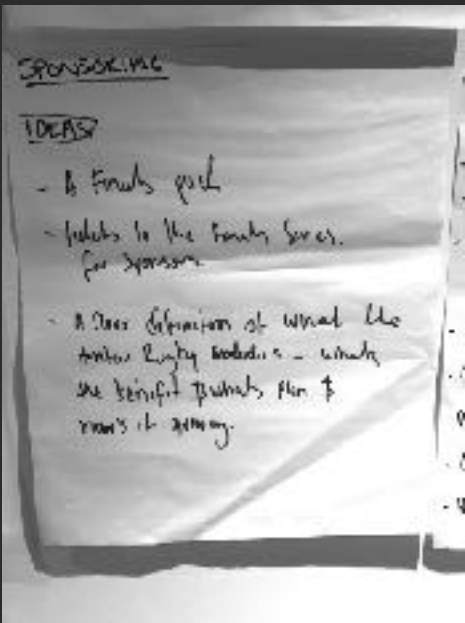
Within 12 months

- Jnr & snr club interaction playbook for clubs
- Hunter Rugby membership & data capture

## Long term

Within 2 years

- Exchange program



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# Tasks to a page

In the following section we document – one to a page – the 7 priority tasks by identifying the issue, opportunity and idea as well as a recommended first action.

1. Hunter Rugby benefits prospectus
2. Community engagement playbook for clubs
3. Pathway programs
4. Exchange program
5. Turbo charge finals series
6. Junior & senior club interaction playbook for clubs
7. Hunter Rugby membership & data capture

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>Task:</div> <div><i>Hunter Rugby Prospectus</i></div> <div>1</div> <div>Timing:</div> <div>Medium</div> <div>Within 12 months</div> | <div>Issue:</div> <div>At a club level, there is no consistent approach to sponsorship. Fees, benefits and engagement differ from club to club. While this isn't a problem on its own - the issue is that there is no consistent 'bigger picture' of Hunter Rugby - there is a great story about the strength of club Rugby in this region that each club could be using to attract, retain and grow commercial relationships. At the moment, the key driver of sponsorship is personal relationships and club affinity. While these are critical factors - sponsors are likely to be more 'sticky' when introduced to the full benefit of supporting club rugby in the Hunter.</div> | <div>Opportunity:</div> <div>Engage club sponsors on a broader level by telling the Hunter Rugby story to sponsors and sponsorship prospects. This narrative would serve as a thread of consistency across clubs and create a great baseline for sponsorship activities. The focus of this activity should be centred around the strength (and associated benefits from sponsoring) rugby in the Hunter - heritage, participation stats, testimonials, communication.</div> |
|                                                                                                                                          | <div>Idea:</div> <div>Create 'The Power of Hunter Rugby' sponsorship prospectus. Include the following elements:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heritage of rugby in the Hunter</li><li>• Competition overview</li><li>• Participation statistics</li><li>• Community engagement stats</li><li>• Current sponsor testimonials</li><li>• Contact Support on a survey on sponsorship</li></ul></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <div>First action:</div> <div>Scope the research, design and development of a prospectus (PDF format)</div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Task:

### *Hunter Rugby Benefits Prospectus*

1

## Timing:

Short

Within 6 months

## Issue:

At a club level, there is no consistent approach to sponsorship. Fees, benefits and engagement differ from club to club. While this isn't a problem on its own - the issue is that there is no consistent 'bigger picture' of Hunter Rugby - there is a great story about the strength of club Rugby in this region that each club could be using to attract, retain and grow commercial relationships. At the moment, the key driver of sponsorship is personal relationships and club affinity. While these are critical factors - sponsors are likely to be more 'sticky' when introduced to the full benefit of supporting club rugby in the Hunter.

## Idea:

Create 'The Power of Hunter Rugby' sponsorship prospectus. Include the following elements:

- Heritage of rugby in the Hunter
- Competition overview
- Participation statistics
- Community engagement stats
- Current sponsor testimonials
- Conduct & report on a fan survey on sponsor affinity

## Opportunity:

Engage club sponsors on a broader level by telling the Hunter Rugby story to sponsors and sponsorship prospects. This narrative would serve as a thread of consistency across clubs and create a great baseline for sponsorship activities. The focus of this activity should be centred around the strength (and associated benefits from sponsoring) rugby in the Hunter - heritage, participation stats, testimonials, communication.

## First action:

Assign a resource to scope the research, design and development of a prospectus (PDF format)

## Task:

### *Community engagement playbook for clubs*

2

## Timing:

Immediate

Next 90 days

## Issue:

There is no consistency in the way that individual clubs engage their community in all aspects of the club. Some clubs have it sorted, others are doing game day and social media well, some have a handle on merchandise and fund raising while others are struggling with it all.

## Opportunity:

There is precedent for best practice - both within Hunter Rugby and outside of Hunter Rugby (and outside of rugby all together) - where clubs are doing an excellent job of community engagement. The opportunity is to lift standards across all Hunter Rugby clubs, helping them grow and prosper from strong community engagement by benchmarking against best practice.

## Idea:

Research and document a best practice benchmark in a community engagement 'playbook' - a document that will be available to clubs and serves as a practical roadmap for enhancing their activities across the following aspects of engagement:

- Game day experience
- Social media activity
- Special events
- Fund raising
- Merchandising
- Membership

## First action:

Assign a resource to scope the research, design and development of the playbook (PDF format)

Task:

## *Pathway programs*

3

Timing:

Short

Within 6 months

Issue:

With no colts competition in 2020 and 2021, the transition between junior rugby and senior rugby has become compromised which risks losing transitional players and their families from rugby which will have a negative impact on the local game as a whole. Similarly, there is not a clear enough path for star players to progress from Hunter Rugby seniors competition to more competitive grades of rugby.

Idea:

Create a set of well defined pathway programs centred around a 2022 colts competition and seniors. Communicate with all clubs (jnr and snr) as early in 2021 as possible.

Opportunity:

Create a well defined and managed pathway between junior and senior Rugby and between seniors and higher levels of competition.

First action:

Assign a project team focus specifically on the 2022 & beyond pathways programs.

## Task:

### *Exchange Program*

4

## Timing:

Long term

Within 2 years

## Issue:

While some clubs have had ad-hoc success with player exchanges and tours in the past, Hunter Rugby doesn't have any structured relationships or affiliations with comparable zones nationally or internationally.

## Idea:

Build a reciprocal exchange program with multiple comparable Rugby competitions both nationally and internationally. In addition  
- Hunter Rugby should assist individual clubs where it can to organise team tours at a club level.

## Opportunity:

Rugby is a world game and one of the greatest benefits is its ability to drive national and international experiences. We must enhance the benefit and opportunity Hunter Rugby provides to its players referees and develop a structured exchange and tour program.

Note: Significant work has been done on this opportunity already by Howard Davies which can be built upon.

## First action:

Assign a resource to scope the research and design of an exchange program for clubs and referees.

## Task:

### *Turbo charge finals series*

5

## Timing:

Immediate

Next 90 days

## Issue:

Finals series has been executed relatively successfully for the past few years with most people agreeing that they are a success. The issue here is - like everything - they can be better. Finals series is our greatest opportunity to make a direct impact on the game day experience as it's run by Hunter Rugby.

There are some key practical limitations and issues (licensing & beverage availability among others) on game day that are impacting the finals series game day experience and commercial opportunity.

## Idea:

Reconsider the final series game day experience to make it more conducive to staying longer. Included in the review should be:

- Review alternate venue options
- Review liquor licensing restrictions & security requirements
- Number of bars and capacity to handle high pour volumes
- Entertainment post match
- Kids entertainment
- Food offering
- Shuttle bus services for clubs outside of Newcastle LGA.

## Opportunity:

Enrich the reputation of local Rugby and drive the financial outcome of finals series by enhancing people's experience.

“Get more people to stay longer”

## First action:

Assign a project team to focus specifically on the 2021 finals series

## Task:

### *Junior & senior club interaction playbook for clubs*

6

## Timing:

Medium term

Within 12 months

## Issue:

Interaction between affiliated senior and Junior clubs is ad-hoc and un structured. There is not a consistent approach to how juniors engage with their seniors. Some clubs have strong rituals around the 'run on with first grade' while others have strong juniors clinics run by seniors.

## Opportunity:

Learning for best practice from inside and outside of Hunter Rugby, lift the standard of junior and senior club interaction and create a consistent base experience across Hunter Rugby clubs in regards to how they engage with their affiliate club by benchmarking against best practice.

## Idea:

Benchmark best practice and develop jnr/snr interaction playbook - much like the community engagement document - it could be available to clubs and and serves as a practical roadmap for enhancing their activities across the following aspects of affiliated club interaction:

- Juniors skills clinics
- First grade match day rituals involving jnrs
- Pre juniors 'rugby introduction' kids programs
- Juniors coaching opportunities for seniors
- Integrate Jnr and snr coaching groups

## First action:

Assign a resource to scope the research, design and development of the playbook (PDF format)

## Task:

### *Hunter Rugby membership & data capture*

7

## Timing:

Medium term

Within 12 months

## Issue:

Hunter Rugby currently capture no data on anyone other than club players. This means there is no intel on who is attending games (particularly finals series). There is also no way for a rugby fan to purchase a membership which gives them access to all games regardless of the ground.

## Opportunity:

The opportunity increase the amount of people that interact with the local game. One aspect is to capture data during finals series and build a supporter database for future marketing efforts. There is an additional opportunity to create a membership product for those that wish to become a Hunter Rugby member and gain access to bespoke member benefits (like access to all live hunter rugby games and bar tv subscription as well as higher level benefits like test match priority ticketing).

## Idea:

Build a community (increase eyeballs) at a Hunter Rugby level. Create a tiered Hunter Rugby membership (and data capture) program with three levels including corresponding benefits:

1. Finals series member
2. Season member
3. Season and Finals member

We should also create a structured social media strategy to engage and grow audiences of Hunter Rugby.

In addition (or potentially combined) we should consider the role of Wildfires membership.

## First action:

Assign a resource to scope the research and development of a membership and data capture program.

# Next steps

1. Share findings with stakeholder group
2. Incorporate stockholder feedback
3. Align on priorities and time horizons
4. Assign resources to final agreed priorities & scope work
5. Agree on scope of works
6. Commence work