



Media Release

Following the Historic Pacific Rugby League Partnership Signing, PNGRFL Reaffirms Commitment to Regional Pathways

Port Moresby, 10 July 2026: Following the historic signing of the Pacific Rugby League Partnership in Brisbane on Wednesday, 8 July 2026, the Papua New Guinea Rugby Football League (PNGRFL) has reaffirmed its commitment to delivering sustainable rugby league pathways that will strengthen participation, player development and high-performance systems across Papua New Guinea and the wider Pacific region.

The landmark Statement of Partnership, signed by the Australian Rugby League Commission (ARLC) and the national rugby league federations of Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tonga, in the presence of the Prime Ministers of Australia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tonga, represents a significant milestone in the collective commitment to advancing rugby league throughout the Pacific. The partnership is supported by the Australian Government and Pacific governments and provides a coordinated framework to grow the game through community participation, player pathways, academies and elite competition.

As the governing body for rugby league in Papua New Guinea and a signatory to the partnership, PNGRFL welcomes the shared commitment to strengthening rugby league development across the region. The organisation recognises that the long-term success of the partnership will depend on strong collaboration between governments, the ARLC and Pacific rugby league federations to build sustainable programmes that benefit communities and create opportunities for future generations.

For PNGRFL, the partnership reinforces the organisation's responsibility to lead the development of rugby league within Papua New Guinea through structured participation, talent identification and high-performance pathways. The pathway to the PNG Chiefs begins long before a player reaches the professional level. It starts in schools, communities, junior competitions and provincial leagues, where young players first engage with the game. Through its established Participation, Pathways and Performance programmes, PNGRFL will continue to identify, develop and prepare talented athletes while strengthening coaching, match officiating and community rugby league systems throughout the country.

The objectives of the Pacific Rugby League Partnership closely align with PNGRFL's long-term strategic priorities. These include expanding opportunities for boys and girls to participate in rugby league, strengthening school and community competitions, enhancing coach and match official education, and working alongside fellow Pacific rugby league federations to establish connected development pathways that support progression from grassroots participation through to elite and international rugby league.

PNGRFL also welcomes the partnership's commitment to advancing women's rugby league across the Pacific. The continued growth of the women's game remains a strategic priority





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for the organisation, and the partnership provides an important platform to strengthen female participation, competition structures and performance pathways, ensuring greater opportunities for women and girls to progress at every level of the game.

PNGRFL Chairman Sandis Tsaka said the signing of the Pacific Rugby League Partnership marks a defining moment for rugby league in Papua New Guinea and the wider Pacific.

"This historic signing represents far more than the establishment of a new franchise. It is the beginning of a long-term commitment to creating a connected rugby league pathway that will identify, nurture and develop talented young players across Papua New Guinea and the Pacific."

"While the PNG Chiefs will proudly represent our nation on the national stage, PNGRFL's responsibility is to ensure that the pathway leading to that opportunity is strong, inclusive and sustainable. We will continue working with our provincial affiliates, schools, community rugby league programmes and our Pacific neighbours to build a development system that identifies talent early, develops players, coaches and match officials, and creates genuine opportunities for young people to reach the highest levels of the game."

"We thank Prime Minister Hon. James Marape, the Government of Papua New Guinea, the Australian Government and the National Rugby League for their vision and commitment to investing in the future of rugby league. Together, we are building more than a team—we are creating a lasting legacy that will inspire generations of Pacific Islanders and strengthen rugby league across our region."

PNGRFL remains committed to working collaboratively with the Australian Rugby League Commission, partner rugby league federations, governments and all stakeholders to ensure the Pacific Rugby League Partnership delivers meaningful and lasting outcomes for rugby league and the communities it serves throughout the Pacific.

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