



Strategic Review of Governance Structures in Ipswich and Gold Coast Leagues

The Australian Sport Commission (ASC) is a Commonwealth body responsible for developing and funding Australian sport. The ASC is leading the way to improve sports governance and in June 2015 published mandatory sports governance principles. In June 2016 the ASC released another paper on governance reform which calls for sports to take a unified approach to behaviours, processes and supporting systems. *“This reform process is about leaders acting for the common good of their sport at all levels, particularly state and national bodies,”* (Mr John Wylie, Chair ASC)

The QRL has endorsed almost all of the ASC principles and is working with the Intrust Super Cup Clubs (ISC Clubs) to implement a Club governance model based upon these principles. In November 2015, the QRL stated its intent that the three Queensland Divisions work with their local Leagues to review governance frameworks. The SEQ Divisional Board agreed in January 2016 that the ASC principles should be used to guide a strategic review of governance in the Division and has worked with the Leagues to establish Working Groups within the Gold Coast and Ipswich. The focus of the Working Groups has been to design how the transition to the new governance model will operate. Brisbane is now also involved, having recently established a Working Group.

Below are answers to some questions you may have about the process and its outcomes.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Why is this happening?

There are quite a few reasons. Compliance with the ASC governance model will benefit the game and all those who are involved, hence the QRL and Division have decided that governance reform needs to be in line with the ASC model structure. This will ensure the administration of the game is ‘best practice’ and also allow local Leagues and clubs to gain an ‘optimised’ ranking and thus improve access for local Clubs to funding opportunities.

Rugby league is facing increased competition from other sports to attract families and young players. To remain competitive, we must offer the best product to the community. Improved governance will enable volunteers, coaches, referees and parents to concentrate on participation in the game whilst the strategic planning for continual improvement and game expansion to new population areas will be overseen by the one governance body in each local League.

2. What is happening and when?

The ASC governance principles call for one administration body managed by a Board. This means the existing junior and senior associations and the existing Management Committees will transform into one body to allow this change. The Association Chairs elected by the clubs will go onto the Board as the elected representatives as well as the Management Committee Chair.

The new body will have a company structure with local people sitting on the Board and the Committees. (see below FAQs 12 & 13).

The timeline is to have this new body working for the 2017 football year.



3. What are the benefits of the review?

There are many benefits for adopting an improved governance model. Some of these include:

- Clubs will have only one body to engage with and improved opportunities to become involved with local League decision making.
- It will be clear which body makes the decisions- ie the new League Board. The Manager and staff will implement the strategy and decisions.
- With the junior and senior competitions under one body, the pathways for players moving through the age groups will be clearer. This in turn, should improve retention in the teenage age player groups because the disconnect currently in place will disappear.
- There will be one source of information on the local League competition for busy Club Executives and parents. This will provide clarity and certainty.
- Having one body will allow a coordinated focus on key stakeholders such as volunteers, coaches, referees and players to ensure decisions take their interests into account and ensure support structures are in place (ie the support could be holding a training session for new club Treasure or coaches – this will reduce club effort and also promote consistency)
- Opportunities for realising increased strategic and collective sponsorship across the game will improve as they become a key focus of the new body. This means more funds flowing into grass roots footy.
- Improved transparency in decision making in the administration of the game.
- Tax savings on transferring to company on the transfer of funds and assets of the Associations to the new body.

4. What does this mean for club committees?

In practice, not much will change. Most importantly club structures will not be affected. We are not asking clubs to change their administration and they will continue to elect their President, Secretary and Treasurer and run as normal.

Current club activities such as selecting teams, appointing coaches and running games will not be impacted. Clubs will retain their independence over Club events and their finances. The new body will be able to provide increased support to Club Executives because the focus will be on making sure that the employed office staff and the new body work together on all issues.

The source of information on pre-season competitions, season draws and end of season events will be centralised from the one governance body through to the local League Office. This will improve certainty and consistency for Clubs. The Manager of the League Office (and his/her staff) will work closely with the new League Board to implement their strategic vision and thus be a key point of contact for Clubs and the community. Another key benefit to the Clubs will be the opportunity to become involved in the Committees which will support the work of this Board. (See below FAQs 13 &14).

5. Will we still have regular meetings?

Absolutely. There will still be meetings each month for Clubs to come and hear about Committee and Board activity. If over time Clubs show a preference for communications via new letters and less regular meetings on some issues such governance but the frequency will really be driven by the Clubs.



6. What does this mean for players?

Players will continue to play games as scheduled with little to no impact on them individually. However, the improved governance will result in improved support structures and the development of programs for access to education and training for coaches and referees. In addition, strategic planning of the whole competition from juniors to seniors will seek improved pathways for players to transition through the game.

7. What does this mean for volunteers?

There will be no change for our volunteers who help out to support the games by working in the canteens, marking fields, managing teams, being Leaguesafe officials, running the Clubs and coaching our players etc. The QRL and SEQ Board values all volunteers very highly and one of the priorities of the review is to ensure their contribution is always recognised and supported by effective governance.

Volunteers can continue to be engaged in the administration of the game through their Clubs or via the Committees which will be established under the new League Board.

8. What does this mean for life members?

The plan is for existing Life Members to transfer their membership to the new entity so that their valued contribution to the game will continue to be formally acknowledged. Of course new Life Members can be nominated as the new body continues to administer the game.

9. Is there a mandate to proceed with these changes?

Yes, the QRL and SEQ Boards have endorsed the review of governance in the local Leagues. In addition, the ASC publication of the mandatory principles provides a clear financial mandate to change our structures as funding will be linked to demonstrating good governance.

10. What is the proposed timeline for implementation?

Working Groups have been looking at this governance restructure for a few months now, to understand how it can be implemented. They have taken legal advice on the "how/what and when". The advice is to make the actual change at the AGMs in October/November 2016 and then the new body can start work though the legal steps will continue in the background. We need to consult widely with the Clubs and community prior to then.

11. What is this new body?

It will model the principles in the ASC mandatory Sports Government Principles publication (June 2015). This means the new body will have a Company structure and the Clubs will be members of that company. There will a Board to make decisions on the administration of the game at the local league level. The Board will have some elected representative Directors (elected by the member Clubs) and Independent Directors appointed by the members at AGMs.

12. What documents create this new body?

There is a draft Constitution and Charter for each League (Gold Coast and Brisbane). The Constitution creates the body and set the rules on operation, voting at AGMs, electing members, appointing independent directors etc. The Board Charter contains a Code of Conduct and explains how the Board should act. It also contains detail on the Committee and an explanation of their functions.



If a member of the Board breaches the Code of Conduct this is to be reported to the Chair/ Manager and disciplinary action may follow. Clubs may call a general meeting under the Corporations Act (s249D) to address a breach.

13. What does the term ‘independent’ mean?

Independent Board members are those who:

- are not elected by the members to represent any constituent body
- are not employed by the organisation
- do not hold any other material office within the organisational structure
- have no material conflict of interest as a result of being a director.

The ASC guidelines recommend a three year exclusion period to qualify as an independent however the Working Group (with SEQ Board Sport) agreed to reduce that to 12 months meaning that a person who has been a League/club member in the preceding 12 months does not qualify.

14. How will the local clubs be represented?

Clubs are critical to the success of the game and their voice will be represented in the new structure via the Committees which will be established to support the new League Board.

There will be at least four Committees and membership will be made up of volunteers from the Clubs or other interested people. This will ensure that the issues the clubs are dealing with are raised at Committee level by people from clubland.

For example issues with a rule change, - the Committee will hear about that from its members who are drawn clubs. We know that some clubs may struggle to find members to nominate for a Committee as they are all busy mowing fields or staffing canteens. The process will include a formalised consultation process where the Committees must show that consultation has taken place before recommendations to the Board can be made. This will prevent surprise decisions.

Clubs will also vote at the Annual General Meetings (AGMs) on any vacancy for elected Board members.

15. What are the Committees?

The Committees are bodies made up of volunteers from the Clubs or other interested people. Anyone interested in the game may volunteer to serve on a Committee, you do not need to be a club executive. As a parent you could make a real difference to the game by volunteering to be on the game Development Committee and helping think big about a League wide sponsor. Or you might help write a Financial Guide for new Club Executives.

The four initial Committees will be: Finance, Audit and Risk; Governance; Competitions and Game Development. We have notes on the general functions of those Committees in the Board Charter.

16. How do you get on a Committee?

Any interested person can nominate to be on a Committee. The Board will consider all the applications and will make the final decision on who is appointed based upon the skills required to ensure the best outcomes for the game and also the need to get a fair representation on the Committees from a variety of interests. Information on what these Committees will be responsible for, the time commitment required and the skill set sought from Committee members is available. Nominations forms are available as well.



17. What will happen to League or Club funds?

Any funds accumulated by the local Leagues will be transferred to the new body but particular accumulated funds can be quarantined for particular projects or purposes to ensure these funds are used as desired. For example funds from a junior association can be reserved to be spent only on junior projects.

Club funds will not be touched.

18. How do I get more involved?

You can get involved by coming to a Club consultation session and reading these FAQs. We also encourage you to think about how you might support the change either by volunteering to serve on a Board Committee or by actively supporting the Board and Committees through your role as a Club Executive.

19. What is the risk of not implementing this new model?

Our current operating model works, but it is inefficient and relies heavily on Club and League committees and there is duplication of effort. Messages can become lost or uncertain with three League bodies involved in administering the game.

Failing to act will perpetuate these inefficiencies and mean opportunities to improve structures, training, growing the game, etc will be missed. It will also mean that rugby league bodies in SEQ do not become compliant with the ASC mandatory principles. This means that funding opportunities may decrease.

In addition, increasing challenges from other sports for families' time expose the game of rugby league to the risk of losing its place as the game of choice in Queensland and will increase retention difficulties. If these other sports do adopt the mandatory principles and the league bodies do not, league will be disadvantaged.

20. Where do I go for more information?

If you have any questions not answered in this sheet please send them through to the Chairs of the Junior or Senior Associations or the Management Committee so they can be addressed and added to the FAQ sheet for everyone to read.

There will be updates posted to the SEQ webpage as well. If you wish to ask a specific question of the Facilitator just pass it through your Chair and Rachel Baird will contact you directly.