

**NEW ZEALAND**  
**WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY**  
**SYSTEM STRATEGY**  
**NZR ACTION PLAN 2023**



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# INTRODUCING THE NZR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY ACTION PLAN

*At New Zealand Rugby, we truly believe rugby is a game for all.*

The Women and Girls in Rugby System Strategy is an important framework that sets out structured pathways in the women and girls' game. Following on from the incredible scenes around the country during the Rugby World Cup last year, there could not be a better time for this work, to ensure the game is best placed to support women and girls for the next decade and beyond.

Having been co-designed with the rugby system itself, the System Strategy provides scaffolded direction built from the needs and desires of women and girls who live and love the game. It belongs to the whole of the game, and it challenges each rugby organisation to assess where they're at in their delivery and support of women and girls, then use the prioritised building blocks to create sustainable, impactful change.

As such, NZR has taken the time to review the System Strategy and decide our next steps in the women and girls journey. The following action plan outlines the commitments we are making to lead and enable the acceleration of the Strategy's recommendations in 2023. We want to ensure we lead the change journey the rugby community is undertaking with this work, and deliver on our objectives.

The five focus areas are strongly interconnected and co-reliant, as are the building blocks within them. Any significant change to engagement of women and girls in rugby requires a strategic long-term view, clear establishment of shorter-term priorities, and sustained commitment, resourcing, and investment into women and girls across the system.



## Strategy Focus Areas

|          |                      |  |
|----------|----------------------|--|
| <b>A</b> | <b>CULTURE</b>       | An open-minded and inclusive culture across rugby  |
| <b>B</b> | <b>SYSTEM</b>        | Focused rugby system, investment, roles, resourcing and accountability   |
| <b>C</b> | <b>PARTICIPATION</b> | Women & girls participation growth and pathways fostered through innovation and flexibility                    |
| <b>D</b> | <b>PERFORMANCE</b>   | Balanced and sustainable performance outcomes for women and girls rugby – high performance, fan and commercial |
| <b>E</b> | <b>TRANSITIONS</b>   | Women & Girls entry and retention in rugby through safe, supportive and confident transitions                  |

The NZR Action Plan acknowledges that change is needed in all these focus areas, and we have prioritised our 2023 plan to ensure all areas are supported, led and enabled. We respect that rugby stakeholders are each starting from different points, have different resources and different populations to consider.

We look forward to standing beside our partners in this change journey and seeing the sustainable enhancements of the women and girls game over the coming year and beyond.

**Mark Robinson**  
CEO, New Zealand Rugby

# 2023 – NZR ACTION PLAN

## NZR IS COMMITTED TO LEADING AND ENABLING THE WOMEN & GIRLS IN RUGBY SYSTEM STRATEGY

### Our key commitments in 2023 include:

| New | Directly aligned to the Strategy  |
|-----|---|
|     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a women and girls leadership group inside NZR to drive this strategic priority, with clear accountability.</li> <li>- Governance training and support systems – unconscious bias training, Chair training, and diversity change management planning support.</li> <li>- Map the women and girls rugby system to create clarity around roles, responsibilities, and accountability.</li> <li>- Work with the rugby system, including Provincial Unions, to help assess against the strategy building blocks, and use this information to build local women and girls business plans.</li> <li>- Ensure we have additional people resource to support and enable key priorities.</li> <li>- Complete a Women and Girls High Performance and Talent Strategy.</li> <li>- Invest more in high performance campaigns, athlete welfare and wellbeing support systems.</li> <li>- Increase investment into women and girls' rugby.</li> <li>- Targeted recruitment and retention programme for female referees.</li> <li>- Address the most critical health and safety risks identified in women and girls' rugby participation and environment spaces.</li> <li>- Explore, develop and refine a risk/reward framework with our key system stakeholders.</li> <li>- Source critical commercial, fan and brand data.</li> <li>- Better sharing of insights and connecting partners to accelerate change throughout the system.</li> </ul> <p>These key insights will be critical for planning, investment and implementation considerations in 2024.</p> |

New Zealand Rugby's total  
**Women and Girls**  
**investment in 2023**  
**\$21,781,000**

| Build | Existing activity that remains aligned to the Strategy  |
|-------|---|
|       | <p><b>High Performance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Black Ferns – XV's and Sevens training environments and campaigns.</li> <li>- High Performance domestic rugby competitions – Super Rugby Aupiki and Farah Palmer Cup.</li> <li>- Domestic Black Ferns Test delivery.</li> <li>- Implementation of the Black Ferns Review recommendations.</li> <li>- Implementation of the Hub Review recommendations.</li> </ul>   |
|       | <p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women and Girls programme system delivery support.</li> <li>- Ako Wāhine Programme – Women's Coaching Programme.</li> <li>- Secondary Schools programme leadership and delivery.</li> <li>- Activator programme.</li> <li>- Women's injury prevention projects.</li> <li>- Age grade development programmes – investment into Regional Rugby Councils.</li> <li>- Rugby club facility upgrade programme.</li> <li>- U18 Ngā Māreikura programme – Māori age group development programme.</li> </ul>  |
|       | <p><b>People and culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governance diversity targets.</li> <li>- Demonstrating system leadership through the NZR Board Diversity Action Plan and commitment to achieving 40% female representation on the NZR board.</li> <li>- Enabling partners' progress towards governance diversity targets through tagged Strategic Alignment Funding.</li> <li>- Facilitating learning and development opportunities for governance, senior leadership and partners (Governance training, Mitigating Unconscious Bias, Skills for Inclusive Leadership, DEI Management Essentials, Cultural Competency).</li> <li>- Conducting gender pay review for NZR staff.</li> </ul> |
|       | <p><b>Corporate Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women and Girls programme leadership</li> </ul>   |
|       | <p><b>Commercial, Marketing, Communications and Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Black Ferns, Black Ferns Sevens, Super Rugby Aupiki and Farah Palmer Cup marketing, promotion and celebration.</li> <li>- Women and Girls commercial sales and partner management.</li> <li>- Rugby World Cup trophy tour – promotion and celebration of the Black Ferns' win throughout New Zealand.</li> <li>- Black Ferns capping and celebration events.</li> </ul>   |

## Targeted NZR Women and Girls roles

The following are targeted, intentional roles to deliver against NZR's strategic commitment to women and girls. In addition to these roles, there are many other staff within our wider NZR team that commit significant time and resource to the women and girls' space.

| New  | Directly aligned to the Strategy | Existing  | Roles that remains aligned to the Strategy |
|--|----------------------------------|---|--|
| <p><b>6 FTEs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Head of Women's High Performance</li> <li>- High Performance Administration – Women's</li> <li>- Black Ferns Campaign Manager</li> <li>- Women's Referee Development Manager</li> <li>- Head of Women and Girls Community Rugby</li> <li>- Women's Commercial Sales</li> </ul> |                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Head of Women's Rugby</li> <li>- Culture, Diversity &amp; Inclusion Manager</li> <li>- 3 x Women's Rugby Participation Managers</li> <li>- Game Development Manager – Women</li> <li>- Competition and Player Contracting Manager – Super Rugby Aupiki</li> <li>- Black Ferns Sevens coaching team</li> <li>- Black Ferns coaching team</li> </ul> |  |

## How does this work align with the Women and Girls in Rugby System Strategy?

Our Action Plan has been put together based off the prioritised building blocks identified within the System Strategy, according to NZR's current position across each of the focus areas. Here is a breakdown of the Strategy Building Blocks that will be positively impacted by our 2023 Action Plan.

| Focus Area           | Building Block   | Ref.        |
|----------------------|--|-------------|
| <b>SYSTEM</b>        | Intentional leadership of women and girls rugby  | <b>B1.1</b> |
|                      | Redefine rugby system relationships, roles and responsibilities for women and girls  | <b>B1.2</b> |
| <b>CULTURE</b>       | Baseline member protection standards   | <b>A1.2</b> |
|                      | Females in governance quotas   | <b>A1.3</b> |
|                      | Cross-rugby women and girls data and information sharing   | <b>A1.1</b> |
| <b>TRANSITIONS</b>   | Art of coaching women and girls module   | <b>E1.1</b> |
|                      | Safe skill coaching for key women and girls transitions into tackle rugby  | <b>E1.2</b> |
|                      | Philosophy and practice of girls-only offering and flexible hybrid delivery of rugby   | <b>E1.3</b> |
|                      | Training for the delivery of high quality, inclusive rugby experiences for diverse W&G   | <b>E1.4</b> |
|                      | Officials training on the art of refereeing women and girls, including safety for refereeing W&G with mixed capability and ages                    | <b>E2.1</b> |
| <b>PARTICIPATION</b> | Shift to PU-led model and regional and local delivery roles and responsibilities agreed to drive high quality experiences                          | <b>C1.1</b> |
|                      | Delivery of athlete skill-build and injury prevention programmes for safe and confident entry or transition into tackle rugby for 11-18+ year olds | <b>C1.2</b> |
| <b>PERFORMANCE</b>   | Competitions, performance and high performance pathway reviews (e.g. Women's HP Plan)  | <b>D1.1</b> |
|                      | Talent identification, development and support – players, coaches, referees and managers (i.e. Women's Talent ID Plan)                             | <b>D1.2</b> |
|                      | W&G commercial insights  | <b>D1.4</b> |
|                      | W&G fan engagement & brand insights  | <b>D1.5</b> |