



ACT Rugby Referees Association

Report: Improving the recruitment and retention of rugby referees in the ACT and surrounding region

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Consultation conducted and report prepared by Interact Collaborations.



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INTRODUCTION

Background

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 is not uncommon for other local sports who are faced with similar challenges and looking at ways to recruit and retain game officials.

The ACTRRA Executive sought to develop a recruitment and retention plan. The key drivers and opportunities for the Executive were:

- **The need to provide the referees to officiate rugby union fixtures in the ACT and surrounding region.**

In 2022, referee appointments were not met. The growth of the women's game and 7's rugby had the potential to see an increased number of fixtures through the regular season and for school and representative competitions. It is worth noting that in 2022, the number of juniors playing rugby in the region were in a state of decline showing potential for future growth following COVID-19 disruptions.

Table 1: Total ACT and Southern NSW Participation Numbers 2021 to 2022

ACTSNSW	CLUB/COMMUNITY				SCHOOLS			
	XVs Juniors	XVs Seniors	7s	Touch 7s	Get into Rugby	7s	Touch 7s	Promotional Activity
2022 ACTUALS	3,861	2,958	1,286	264	6,809	2,166	401	12,785
2021 ACTUALS	4,381	2,813	475	144	4,298	2,328	300	8,150
% GROWTH	-11.86%	5.15%	170.73%	69.44%	58.42%	-6.96%	33.66%	56.87%

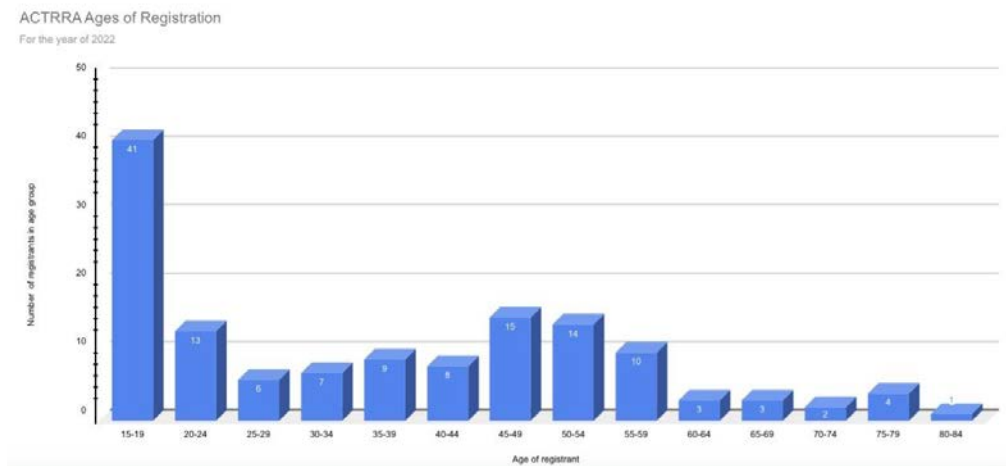
Please note: Schools data above denotes Rugby Development Officer and Brumbies player activity in schools across the ACT&NSW. Club/Community is reflective of all junior and senior competitions in the region across the variants of XV's, 7's and Touch 7's. Promotional Activity captures one-off promotional experiences.

Source: [ACT Brumbies Annual Report 2022](#)

- **Membership of ACTRRA could benefit from diversifying across age and gender to ensure the sustainability of the organisation.**

The average age of senior referees was increasing without a strategic and consistent pipeline of developing referees (and referee coaches) transitioning from junior appointments through development pathways. The gender diversity of ACTRRA did not reflect the increased diversity in the sport as a whole.

Figure 1: ACTRRA Ages of Registration 2022



Source: Supplied by ACTRRA

- **Opportunities such as the Rugby World Cup in 2027 and the Olympics in 2032 provide opportunities for both referee development pathways and greater visibility of rugby union in Australia.**

It is important that ACTRRA work in lockstep with Rugby Australia and have a development pipeline of referees the right age to be in a position to take these opportunities. The visibility of rugby union in general will provide an opportunity to grow the game and with that the pool of officials.

It was also acknowledged that ACTRRA needed a plan for recruitment and retention of referees that recognised and understood the local and unique characteristics of the ACT and surrounding region.

The first step was to undertake a **review** to understand the motivations, potential motivations and/or barriers to involvement for referees and opportunities for ACTRRA in relation to recruitment and retention. This forms the basis of this report and informs the development of a **recruitment and retention plan**.

Review

The review phase of the project identifies stakeholders and aims to understand their motivations, potential motivations and/or barriers to involvement as well as the current environment with two tools:

1. A survey tool distributed to ACTRRA members and the rugby community
2. Interviews.

This engagement was to inform the planning process and sought to:

- understand the factors influencing retention of current referees
- identify target groups more likely to be interested in refereeing
- consider the things that impact on making a decision to become a referee.

More detail is provided on these tools in the following section. Survey data and list of interviewees is contained in Attachment 1 & 2 at the end of this document.

Report Structure

This report provides an overview of the review inputs and documents the key findings of the review to inform ACTRRA planning, with respect to recruitment and retention of referees, in the following key focus areas:

1. Development and progression
2. Remuneration
3. Relationships
4. Communication and promotion
5. Attracting and retaining female referees
6. Volunteer capacity
7. Referee safety.

The review sought to understand more about what brought current referees to ACTRRA, what kept them involved, and where the challenges were. This information helps to attract more like-minded individuals and has potential to support an increase in the diversity of referees.

This sentiment is captured across the key focus areas above and is also summarised in this report under two Key Considerations at the end of this report:

1. Attraction
2. Retention

The report is based on information available and interviews conducted in the first half of 2023. It will inform the development of an ACTRRA recruitment and retention plan.

REVIEW INPUTS

Review Input 1: Survey

A survey *Rugby Refereeing in the ACT* was undertaken to provide insight into the motivations, barriers for referees and perceptions of what is involved in becoming a referee from a broad audience. The public survey invited all perspectives that may not have been obtained through direct contact.

The survey utilised a Google Forms platform and was circulated via email and through social media (example of tiles to the left) to the rugby community in the ACT and surrounding region.

The de-identified survey output is at *Attachment 1*.

Ninety-five responses were received to the survey between 24 February & 21 March 2023.

Representation

The target cohort for the survey included:

- current/past referees
- club/school representatives
- coaches and managers
- players
- parents of players.

Responses were largely representative of the target cohort with responses from across the age ranges.

Significantly more men (76) responded than women (16), however, this was to be expected from the target cohort.

While 50% of respondents were involved with ACTRRA, a range of organisations were represented in the survey responses. Feedback was provided from those with an involvement in school (29%), junior club (26%), small clubs (14%), large clubs (22%), country clubs (16%).

It is worthwhile noting that the majority of respondents (70.5%) had been involved in the sport for over 10 years and only 3.2% of respondents for less than 2 years.

Of the respondents two thirds were or had been qualified and registered rugby union referees. They were directed to Part B of the survey to understand their motivations and challenges. One third had not been a registered referee and they completed Part C of the survey to better understand what had prevented them from becoming a referee.



Review Input 2: Interviews

Twenty interviews were held with referees, former referees, referee coaches and key stakeholders. These were conducted face to face where possible or over the phone. These interviews provided an opportunity to gain deeper insight into the motivations, barriers and culture for referees and other factors influencing the recruitment and retention of referees in the ACT and surrounding region.

ACTRRA provided a list of stakeholders to be involved, some follow up interviews were held with stakeholders recommended throughout the process.

Note that it was requested that Interact did not engage with the ACT JRU or Rugby Australia. This limits some of the findings in this report as to how they relate to those stakeholders and how the work of ACTRRA fits within national programs and initiatives.

A full list of those interviewed is at *Attachment 2*. The interviews have informed the report below.



KEY FOCUS AREA 1: DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESSION

Clearly defined and transparent development pathways, feedback and the opportunity to improve and progress is important for most referees and their satisfaction in the role.

Responses to the survey showed that 40% were happy where they were at in their development, yet close to 60% of referees aspire to referee at a higher level in the future, or were unsure about their aspirations.

The corporate world is increasingly aware of the significance employee aspiration has for the success of the organisation. In particular: acknowledging and aligning growth opportunities with aspirations can foster increased engagement and commitment; supporting individual aspirations improves retention and employee satisfaction; and, valuing and supporting growth ambitions develops loyalty and positive brand ambassadors.

The 2023 survey and interviews were consistent with the 2018 Match Official Survey where development, selection and promotion, and referee coaching were three of the top five most concerning issues for rugby officiating in the ACT.

There was little evidence from those interviewed that pointed to a clear framework to evaluate, assess, grade, plan improvement and map progression of referees. This was a common frustration and led to some speculation about the fairness and transparency of appointments.

In addition to providing greater satisfaction (and retention), having transparent development pathways in place is important to identify and nurture talent for national and international appointments in the future.

WHAT WE HEARD

On the whole, **referees crave development and support** that is unfulfilled.

There is a general **lack of awareness of development pathways**, tools, or criteria to progress as a referee.

“I had a plan on Rugby Explorer – but no one looked at it.”

The 2018 Match Official Survey indicated that over half of referees were not communicated with about where they were at in the development pathway. Over

60% were not encouraged to complete an Individual Season Plan in 2018.

Development sessions can seem ad hoc, have little notice and don't seem to fit into a structured development plan. This was reflected in feedback provided by ACT referees in the 2018 Match Official Survey.

“Lionshare with ACTRRA is a transactional appointment space, judicial space. Have not been playing in the recruitment and development space.”

On the whole, **referee coaching sessions are valued**, however the available referee coaches are stretched and do not have the resources to provide additional support. A significant percentage of referees were not supported by a referee coach in the 2023 season.

It was noted fairly broadly that there can be a **lack of consistency or focus of coaching sessions**. This led to some referee confusion and frustration. Different coaches can have vastly different interpretations of the feedback needed.

“Each referee coach points out something different and they are often contradictory.”

“Feedback from coaches on a particular day are not compiled or provided in context of other feedback already given. It’s only ever a snapshot in time and doesn’t provide guidance on whether I am improving or declining.”

There are examples of individuals who have sought out **coaching with a consistent coach and/or mentor** through the season – they felt well supported as they could ask for feedback or a ‘sounding board’ at any time.

It is important to note that others valued the different approaches or opinions from different coaches.

There is little evidence to point to training and development for referee coaches to ensure that they are coaching consistently and to modern, up to date standards.

“There needs to be a refresher on coaching and mentoring.”

Rugby Australia initiatives/pathways are not aligned and there are examples of a disconnect between players on Rugby Australia performance pathways and those identified for higher duties by ACTRRA.

The process of appointments and/or talent identification of referees is not clear or transparent.

“You can progress up the ranks of junior appointments. Transition from juniors to seniors is murky. If you don’t know people you don’t know how to be allocated to senior games.”

“No understanding of what level you are at or how you get to it”.

Grading of referees is reportedly quite different from the view of club coaches.

Those who have the confidence or connections to reach out for support do receive it.

The most successful recruitment and development of junior referees appears to be by parents or known family friends who often provide support to new referees.

Attending the field for a new, young referee can be daunting without the support in place.

The junior academy established in 2023 appears to be providing support, mentoring and peer connection to a broader cohort of young referees. Parents of junior referees have been impressed with the approach in 2023. In particular,

how their kids have benefitted from the Associations' personable approach.

Some young referees have expressed that they would be interested in supporting new referees in their first few games as a 'buddy'.

Available tools and resources such as Hudl and Ref Live could be better utilised to support more coaching. There is a need to ensure referees and coaches are trained in the resources available to them.

"There are tools in place that are not well known and could be better utilised."

"If you don't know what is available you can't access it."

There has been feedback regarding the online referee courses. It is suggested that face to face courses need to take place. There have been some positive outcomes shown in 2023 where educators have undertaken a face to face session alongside the online training to provide additional support and mentorship.

INITIATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Use of a workbook or similar tool that enables referees to practice self-reflection but also show the referee coach specific areas the referee is working on when they are coached.
- Utilise hudl for referee coaching.
- The appointment of a 'buddy' for new referees to assist with their first game day experience.
- Provide training and development for all ACTRRA members in the use of the online tools available.
- Program of development sessions.
- Pathway plan for every referee.
- Let people know there is a development plan on Rugby Explorer and reflect on this in coaching sessions.
- Training for educators so that there is a capability of educators to share the load.
- Continue to support specialist programs like the junior academy where like minded referees can establish a peer to peer connection.
- Ongoing training for referee coaches.
- Review of the coaching system to build efficiencies and align support to what the referees need/want.

KEY FOCUS AREA 2: REMUNERATION

Being paid was not the primary motivator for many referees. However, remuneration – how and when referees are paid, ensuring personal costs are covered and pay scales comparable to other sports was raised frequently as both a concern and an opportunity to drive referee retention and recruitment.

The lack of remuneration and workloads of other voluntary roles, such as development officers, allocators, trainers and educators and referee coaches within the organisation was raised by a wide range of respondents as a challenge that needed to be addressed.

Comparison of referee match payments during the regular season of rugby union, soccer and AFL in the ACT in table 1 below. This has been based on the regular season of 1st grade men, 1st grade women, under 18s, under 16s and under 10s for comparative purposes. Information was sought from Canberra Rugby League and ACT Basketball, however this has not been provided to date.

Table 1: Comparison of referee match payments in the ACT

Role	Rugby Union		Soccer		AFL Canberra	
	Referee	AR	Referee	AR	Umpires (x2)	Boundary
1st grade men	\$80	\$30	\$175	\$80	\$121	\$84.50
1st grade women	\$45	\$20	\$120 (senior league only)	\$60	\$91.20	\$54.50
Under 18	\$60/\$50	\$25/\$15	\$100 (premier) \$70 (junior)	\$50 (premier) \$35 (junior)	\$91.20 (rising star) \$68.50 (Div 2)	\$66 (rising star) \$37.30 (Div 2)
Under 16	\$35	n/a	\$75 (premier) \$60 (junior)	\$37 (premier) \$30 (junior)	\$59	\$35.50
Under 10s	\$20	n/a	\$20	n/a	\$25.80	\$25.80

WHAT WE HEARD

While many referees did so to give back to the game and/or continue involvement in the game they loved, **match payments are generally helpful in covering costs and justifying the time spent.**

Match payments can be particularly helpful for **recruiting young people** to referee. This cohort may choose to referee rather than take on other part time work on the weekends.

Senior game rates are paid twice per season from the Brumbies Community office and is via EFT direct to bank accounts. Junior game rates are 'pay on the day' from the host club - generally payment is collected from the canteen or home team ground manager.

The lump sum payment for senior games was supported by those with other full time jobs, however some emerging referees who are students would find **a regular payment more sustainable.**

Regularity and value of payment is important for retention when you consider the cohort of referees who rely on the income and may be drawn away because they need to find other part-time work on a Saturday.

Based on a small survey of other football codes in the ACT (in Table 1 above), **match payments are generally lower** than some other sports.

Travel allowances helped get to matches across the region – particularly as costs are increasing.

These allowances are one of the points of **disparity between the JRU and senior competition** can be an issue.

“JRU is trying to pay the referees less. If you are allocated a junior game in Jindabyne. 15 and over will pay petrol, yet junior games you only get the \$20 match payment.”

In the junior competition, there can be issues with referees in obtaining **match payments from the canteen.** This is certainly intimidating for an early career referee. Perhaps a more modern approach could influence retention.

There appears to be a lack of clarity around **which fixtures are paid or unpaid** where travel allowance applies. Referees can be uncomfortable about following this up.

It was noted that **many integral roles are not remunerated** such as appointments, coaching and training. This could influence the recruitment and retention of individuals in those roles. Referees respectfully highlighted that the lack of time and capacity in some key voluntary positions led to points of frustration for the referees.

Rugby Australia have a payment structure for educators and trainers which is not met in the ACT.

Interestingly, the provision of match payments **increased the expectations clubs have of referees** in terms of fitness and capability – however note that one club representative interviewed thought match official payments to be 3-4 times higher than they are.

The different remuneration rates for different grades and competitions has the potential to increase a referee's

frustration with appointments or lack of progress through the ranks.

In 2023 the ACTRRA Executive **waived membership fees for referees**. This policy was made possible due to the financial position of the Association who benefit from the generous support of sponsors and dedication of volunteers in key roles.

The fee waiver was received positively by members, prospective members and parents of recruits. Anecdotally, this contributed positively to the recruiting and retention effort in 2023.

INITIATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Produce a readily available policy on remuneration at all levels.
- Include information about the match payment or travel allowance on the appointment information. Particularly for officiating outside of the regular winter competitions.
- Review the remuneration process for the JRU and consider options for regular payments and bank transfers to all referees.
- Look to ensure referees are not out of pocket for appointments at regional grounds.
- Continue to offer a waiver of membership fees where the financial position of ACTRRA allows this.

KEY FOCUS AREA 3: RELATIONSHIPS

ACTRRA's role to develop referees for rugby union games in the ACT and surrounding NSW regions requires:

- *collaborative relationships with a range of stakeholder organisations*
- *supportive relationships between ACTRRA members who have different experiences and motivations*
- *relationships with the broader rugby community that the organisation relies on to recruit new referees.*

For example, external stakeholder relationships are needed between:

- *Rugby Australia*
- *Brumbies ACT*
- *ACT Junior Rugby Union*
- *Clubs and schools – their coaches, management, players and supporters*
- *Regional clubs – Yass and Goulburn to Bungendore; and Jindabyne to Batemans Bay – their coaches, management, players and supporters.*

ACTRRA also need to maintain positive relationships between:

- *Executive and referees*
- *Executive and referee coaches*
- *Referees with each other*

Maintaining positive working relationships with these diverse stakeholders is understandably a particular challenge for a small volunteer organisation – made even more complex when many stakeholders are also led by volunteers with limited capacity and potentially shorter tenure.

It is clear that there are strained relationships between ACTRRA and some key stakeholders and there is opportunity for the Executive to reconnect and work more constructively.

There are also opportunities for the organisation itself to foster a more transparent, welcoming and supportive environment for its members and potential recruits.

WHAT WE HEARD

External relationships

There are opportunities for ACTRRA to improve the relationship and dialogue with ACT Brumbies, Rugby Australia, clubs and schools.

“Relationships need to be built so that everyone is on the same page.”

“ACTRRA has become too transactional.”

“There is animosity between ACTJRU and ACTRRA – it is sometimes uncomfortable being involved in both.”

According to feedback a lack of timely communication with **junior clubs and the ACTJRU** can impact directly on referee retention. For example, referees become frustrated with appointments changed late and the inability to plan things around refereeing.

The relationship/respect between **clubs** and ACTRRA needs to improve. Improved relationships have the potential to deliver a more positive experience for referees, but also drive recruitment from clubs.

“Clubs can be driving a negative narrative against referees.”

“Historically there were combined forces. Coaches and match officials were working together.”

Individual referees can play a role in developing relationships with clubs.

“Referees need to talk to the coaches/captains. It is a 2-way street to build relationships.”

In the past referees have attended club

training sessions. This has been good for relationships and good development for players, coaches and the referees. For example, Tuggeranong, Queanbeyan and Royals welcome referees to training.

While the ACTRRA intent may be to avoid accusations of bias. The reality is that clubs hold a view of bias with those clubs that ACTRRA executive and members have relationships with.

The segregation of referees and players also makes the leap from player to referee more unlikely.

There did not appear to be trust that ACTRRA was effectively connected to the **Rugby Australia pathways** and development programs to provide the best opportunities for referees who had aspirations.

“How is ACTRRA plugging into the talent pathway?”

It is unclear whether Rugby Australia and ACTRRA had identified the same people for those opportunities. Examples were provided of aspirational referees leaving the ACT to pursue opportunities where they would be recognised.

Internal relationships

Perhaps inadvertently, there are 'cliques' in the ACTRRA membership that are difficult to navigate, can impact on inclusiveness and transparency, and have an overall impact on recruitment and retention.

This sense was reported from a range of perspectives whether it was from referees, coaches or administrators who felt there were insular groups within the organisation, whether they were A-Panel referees, members of the executive, or groups of referee coaches.

"Need to be made to feel part of a 'club' that cares and shares."

It remains that **confident and connected individuals feel comfortable** within the organisation, however others do not feel as welcome or supported.

The option for more frequent social opportunities for referees would be welcomed by many. It remains that there are referees who prefer to focus on refereeing and are not looking for additional social interaction.

INITIATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Return to referee attendance and participation at club training sessions (even pre-season fitness).
- Increase the opportunities for referees of a different grade to connect with each other.
- Address systemic issues with JRU that are having an impact on referee satisfaction.
- Promote a culture of transparency and inclusivity.
- 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.

Key Focus Area 4: COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

Communication plays an important role in cohesiveness and the member satisfaction of an organisation, relationships with key stakeholders, and more broadly, in the portrayal of the association and refereeing in general in the broader rugby community.

ACTRRA has limitations given it relies on volunteer resources, has a relatively small number of members compared to larger states, yet the need for and frequency of communication is comparable to those larger associations.

WHAT WE HEARD

The **lack of regular and timely ACTRRA communication** is a point of significant frustration to most referees. This feedback was also evident in the results of the *2018 Match Official Survey*.

There is a feeling that communication could be more efficient and transparent.

“Communication from the executive has been stifled by oversight.”

Note that negative feedback about communications was generally couched with an understanding that communication challenges are driven by a range of factors including volunteer capacity and information provision from other organisations.

“You need to be in the ‘in crowd’ to know what is going on.”

This sentiment was also reflected in the *2018 Match Official Survey* and rightly or wrongly driving a perception of a lack of transparency.

Practically, late communications makes the job of a referee more difficult and/or fewer referees are able to take up last minute opportunities.

From a recruitment perspective, it is important to note that **word of mouth/warm referral** is the most common way for an individual to become involved in ACTRRA. This is an important consideration when looking at when identifying and recruiting – how can ACTRRA empower more members and supporters to facilitate ‘warm referrals’?

There are opportunities for **improved data sharing between ACTRRA and Rugby Australia**. For example, the details of people in the region who have expressed interest or registered for referee courses – including attendance lists for courses run by ACTRRA – would allow ACTRRA to communicate directly, welcome participants and personally follow up on their aspirations.

Further to this, a preference for face to face training over the online experience is an extension of this supported ‘onboarding’ with the Association.

As a hybrid approach, in 2023 ACTRRA offered face to face follow-up sessions for participants of Referee Ready courses. This provided an opportunity for new referees to return and be mentored by an

ACTRRA referee, supporting their online deliverables. This connection with participants saw significant improvement in the transition from Referee Ready to on-field referees.

The **ACTRRA website** is a thorough repository of information for the Association and members. Feedback in interviews and workshops made it clear though, that many members and potential recruits were not aware the information was available, had not sought the information directly from the website, and/or had not understood the information as presented.

For example, a graphic detailing the referee pathway or process on a website is quite different to someone talking you through the process and introducing you to the association.

This presents opportunities to use email, electronic newsletters, social media channels and face to face communication to direct attention to information provided on the website – for both members and new recruits.

A review of ACTRRA social media shows that Facebook and Instagram portray a 'type' of referee. This can inhibit aspiration from a broader range of members or new recruits. It is important to note that there has been a positive shift to somewhat more representative content on ACTRRA accounts over the past 12 months.

INITIATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Provide save the date notification for known activities.
- Commit to timely, simple and regular communication.
- Established processes and free flowing information can reduce time for collation and increase frequency.
- Allow key office holders to communicate directly with members.
- Ensure the website provides clear guidance for anyone seeking to become a referee, however don't underestimate the 'warm welcome'.
- Develop targeted communications to promote opportunities to key groups such as parents of juniors and former players or players in transition.
- Invest in a photo library so that referees of all ages, gender and background are portrayed in the social media brand and website
- Rugby ACT has a database of individual participants in the game. ACTRRA could work on interacting with the database in some way.
- Engage with Rugby Australia to ensure course registration details and expressions of interest from referees in the region are shared with ACTRRA so that they can personally follow up and increase likelihood of transition.

KEY FOCUS AREA 5: ATTRACTING AND RETAINING FEMALE REFEREES

To build numbers of referees in the sport of rugby union, females need to be part of the recruitment and retention plan – particularly given this is a significant aspect of growth in the game. To encourage diversity in any environment the current environment needs to be acknowledged. The females who are involved can inform process and strategy and need to be encouraged to contribute and listened to.

WHAT WE HEARD

Female referees are a significant minority in the organisation. There are no females active in the current ACTRRA executive.

Those who are involved:

- generally do not feel included;
- have become accustomed to navigating a male dominated environment;
- report that misogynist behavior is present.

There is a lack of understanding of the needs of female referees and little is done to seek feedback or input.

It does not appear to be well understood that female referees may need different support or encouragement than perhaps their more confident counterparts.

There is a sense that most female referees do not attract the same appointments, opportunities or development compared with male referees.

There is a sense that female referees

are placed on female games because of their gender when this may or may not be the preferred appointment for their development.

Female referees have been embarrassed by poor fitting uniforms.

Female referees are keen to provide a support/mentor role to young females coming into the association.

Of note, 3 of 12 women on the Rugby Australia programs for developing female referees are from the ACT.

There is a sense that the women on these Rugby Australia pathways are not recognised or supported by ACTRRA as much as they should be and perhaps were selected for development despite of ACTRA.

INITIATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Build events/support network for female referees.
- Improve gender balance on the ACTRRA Board and/or consult genuinely with female referees.
- Ensure development plans are in place and understand the aspirations of the referees.
- Female uniform is important.
- Recognition and support of the female referees in Rugby Australia programs – including looking for opportunities specifically for women and identifying and supporting candidates to pursue those pathways.

KEY FOCUS AREA 6: VOLUNTEER CAPACITY

ACTRRA is a volunteer-led organisation. In the absence of a paid resource, volunteers are required to dedicate hundreds of hours to provide referees for each game in the region.

Overwhelmingly respondents recognised the limitations of voluntary capacity and recognised the immense contribution of these individuals.

WHAT WE HEARD

The output of the ACTRRA executive and volunteers is **highly regarded and appreciated**.

It would appear that it is a **challenge for volunteers to manage the workload**.

There is high **potential for volunteer burnout** and/or departure all together because the workload is too great in each role.

There is a significant pool of **referees who are enthusiastic about giving back** to the association through support and mentoring, training, social events and other roles, however they have never been approached and do not feel comfortable coming forward.

Playing a buddy/mentor role (as distinct from a formal coaching role) could open up the opportunities for young referees who are not already connected to the association to become involved.

“Having a buddy to your first match as a referee to provide support, help you introduce yourself to the coach and find the canteen to get paid would be invaluable.”

Rugby ACT noted that there is the potential for a Referee Development Officer to be funded for the region later in 2023 - a role which has existed previously.

INITIATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Identify roles for the broader membership and invite them to be involved.
- Consider the tasks that could be supported by a paid position.
- Consider educator/training remuneration and succession planning.

KEY FOCUS AREA 7: REFEREE SAFETY

It was clear that referee safety, abuse and disrespect of referees is a factor in the loss of many referees from the game. Further to this we heard from many who would not consider refereeing because of the concerns about abuse.

WHAT WE HEARD

Over half of the referees who completed the survey cited the most challenging or frustrating aspect of being a referee was the abuse and disrespect from players and spectators.

Referees did not generally feel respected by the clubs – this was perhaps more apparent in the JRU.

In saying that, a number of referees interviewed felt that it was ‘part of the game’ and had the processes in place to deal with it.

There is a challenge in ensuring junior referees are supported on the sideline early in their careers.

“Referee abuse is a real issue so as parents were on the sideline, leaning in, ensuring that our 12 year old didn’t have to put up with the abuse.”

ACTRRA has robust systems in place to support the wellbeing of referees. Those who had reported match abuse in the most part felt well supported by ACTRRA welfare officers. The *2018 Match Official Survey* indicated that not all referees understood the avenues to report instances of abuse and the follow up support available.

Those referees who established genuine relationships with clubs, coaches and players felt more respected.

Half of the 2023 survey respondents who had not refereed before cited poor treatment or abuse from players, coaches, or spectators and the **negative perception of referees as one of the main factors stopping them**. This is a challenge for ACTRRA to overcome when recruiting.

“I see far too much abuse and over the top disrespect by adults towards young referees at junior games... I would not encourage young referees to take up the whistle.”

It was noted that Ground and Field Marshals were in most instances ineffective or invisible where incidents occurred.

Abuse issues have been identified for a long time and have been a focus of a lot of the ACTRRA activities to ensure the support structures in place.

Anecdotally, it would appear that clubs do not have the same understanding of what constitutes referee abuse as ACTRRA. There needs to be a cultural shift in this space.

Note that other sports have a much broader frame of inappropriate behaviour – ie. bullying, degrading, abuse, or intimidating actions and behaviour – whereas rugby focus on match official abuse.

Most 'zero tolerance' policies (including ACT Rugby) are modelled on national policies, which include: '*condemn the use of violence in any form*'. It was reported that in other sports such as netball and basketball this saw a culture of the spectators calling each other out for inappropriate behaviour.

As a point of reference, Basketball ACT has a comprehensive [Behavior Management Framework](#) for their junior competitions in place that requires all participants and parents to commit to at the start of every season and reminded about frequently – particularly ahead of finals. Spectators are regularly reprimanded under the policy.

The policy is detailed and outlines the specific behaviours that result in warning and ejection cards (p8). This builds a shared understanding of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour.

Note that the court supervisor is independent of both teams. Junior and developmental referees are not able to be approached by a team – any question must go through the referee supervisor or court supervisor.

While it is easier to enforce at games in close quarters. When alongside the [ACTJRU equivalent policy](#), expectations and penalties are more explicit and immediately enforceable by an independent court supervisor.

INITIATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Work with ground and field marshals to formalise their role in managing spectator behaviour and ensure they are visible.
- Provide opportunities for referees to connect more with clubs and players at all levels – building mutual respect.
- Better utilisation of Ref Live to report and review.
- Work with ACT Brumbies and Rugby Australia on implementing club penalties for abuse.
- Consider zero tolerance for referees in under 18 or new referee shirts.
- Work with Rugby ACT and the JRU on constructive ways to work with junior and senior clubs on expectations for positive behaviour and an education campaign to shift culture. Consider:
 - policies in other sports where a zero tolerance culture exists
 - programs like in Queensland Darling Downs - *What is your behaviour doing to the mental health of the referee?*
 - whether policies can be more explicit with regard to what behaviour is inappropriate.

KEY CONSIDERATION 1: ATTRACTION

ACTRRA has been successful over many years to recruit and develop referees to support the game of rugby union in the ACT and surrounding region. Understanding the background, motivations and what current members enjoy about match officiating provides a basis to identify more like minded individuals. Equally, identifying and understanding the people involved in rugby, but not currently refereeing provides potential to grow the pool and diversity of referees. Having referees from a range of backgrounds and club/school affiliations can help in shifting the 'us/them' culture that has been reported.

WHAT WE HEARD

Enjoyment is the primary reason referees cite for being a referee, other motivations reported included:

- Love of the sport
- Understand laws of the game better
- Improve physical fitness
- Meet people and be part of a 'club' of like minded people
- Continue involvement after finishing playing
- Give back to the game
- Fill a need for referees
- Interest in earning extra money
- Supporting kids in their sport

Further to this was what the referees enjoyed most was:

- Best aspects of being a referee
- Fitness
- People/friends/community - broadly the rugby community and the referee community
- Understanding the game better
- Remaining involved/active in the game
- Supporting young players development and safety of the game
- Challenge
- Contribution

- Control of the game / positive influence on how the game is played
- Developing and reaching higher honours
- Not waking up battered and bruised!
- Team and camaraderie

It was common for the parents of juniors commonly take up refereeing to ensure the games are covered.

Some schools promote the referee course to their students to undertake the referee course with good uptake. Most clubs do not appear to have a similar focus.

Most new referees have been invited by someone they know and trust to give it a go.

INITIATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Develop a specific focus to have parents of junior teams undertake the course.
- Require clubs/schools to send a minimum number of representatives to referee training.
- Work with programs such as Vikings GEN Red or public school programs like Erindale College – both programs catering for boys and girls – to deliver the referee course.
- Empower champions in the schools and clubs who look for potential opportunities to recommend they become a referee.
- Tactical recruitment of Colts and above players who are slowly retiring from the game
- Target former players (male and female) and fast track them where appropriate. They have that all important knowledge of the game that doesn't just come from a law book.

“Need to target the Clubs to be involved in recruitment. Older players near retirement or injured would make the best referees. The stigma of them and us, needs to be overcome.”

- It could be mandated that clubs supply a minimum number of referees (including new referees) to be allowed to play in the competition. This is consistent with many other sports.
- Junior rep players and their parents should be strongly encouraged to do a referees course.
- Showcase female talent and pathways.

KEY CONSIDERATION 2: RETENTION

Organisations like ACTRRA will always experience churn as people move through different stages of their life and have different priorities.

While many of the opportunities and frustrations for referees have been addressed in the sections above, it is worthwhile revisiting what is important for referees to remain involved and what is frustrating to maximise the enjoyment and tenure of the referee community.

WHAT WE HEARD

What keeps referees involved:

- Opportunity to improve and progress
- Being part of referee/rugby community
- Fitness
- Helping other referees improve
- Knowing matches are well facilitated and safe
- Being respected and valued
- Getting appropriate appointments
- Coaching and positive uplifting community and mateship
- Filling a role that is needed
- Enjoyment
- Support from ACTRRA and Brumbies
- Support and opportunities
- Finding balance between refereeing and other commitments
- Regular appointments
- Player respect
- Payments.

Referees reported the most frustrating aspect for them were:

- Lack of communication from ACTRRA
- Uniform fit
- Abuse / from players and spectators
- Maintaining knowledge of rules and correct positioning

- Referees not appreciating the time of the referee coach
- Clubs not playing a role in fulfilling ref appointments when needed
- Balance of work, family and other commitments
- Cliques
- Lack of feedback on how to improve
Clarity on progress
- Lack of development opportunities
- Being appointed to the right level/
recognising talent
- Politics between referees and clubs
- Justifying expense and time
- Inconsistent appointments
- Balancing other commitments
Burnout
- Lopsided games week in week out
- Lack of education opportunities
- Lack of support from senior referees

This feedback has informed the sections of the report above and the relevant initiatives for consideration in each section. Please see those sections for initiatives for consideration.



Joy's Summer
PHOTOGRAPHY

ATTACHMENT 1: SURVEY – RUGBY REFEREEING IN THE ACT

This survey was undertaken by the ACT Rugby Union Referees Association as part of the work the Association undertook to continue to recruit, develop and retain referees in the ACT and surrounding region.

The survey was distributed on a Google Forms platform and promoted through ACTRRA email and social media networks.

Ninety-five responses were received between 24 February & 21 March 2023.

Note the Survey Data Privacy Policy is as follows:

This survey is being conducted for research purposes only and all responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Please note that the information you provide will be used for analysis and to better understand the views and opinions of the rugby community. Your participation is voluntary and you may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering.

All responses will be kept anonymous and no personally identifiable information will be collected—unless you opt to share your email address in which instance it will be used for follow up relating to this survey only. Individual survey responses will be disposed of on or before 31 August 2023.

Your privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance to us and we will take all necessary measures to protect your personal information.

Please be aware that while we will make every effort to ensure the security of the data, no method of transmission over the internet or electronic storage is 100% secure. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the absolute security of any information you provide.

By continuing with this survey, you are indicating that you have read and understood this disclaimer and consent to the use of your anonymous responses in our research.

PART 1: Demographic data (all survey respondents)

Age of respondents

Age	Number	% of respondents
15-19	8	8.6
20-24	5	5.4
25-29	6	6.5
30-34	6	6.5
35-39	6	6.5
40-44	9	9.7
45-49	17	18.3
50-54	21	22.6
55-59	2	2.2
60-64	3	3.2
65-69	4	4.3
70-74	1	1.1
75-79	2	2.2
80-84	3	3.2
TOTAL	93	

Have you played rugby union?

- 57.9% have played
- 27.4% currently play
- 14.7% have not played

Level played

- 12.9% never played
- 17.2% representative
- 17.2% 1st grade
- 14% 2nd grade
- 4.3% 3rd grade
- 3.2% 4th grade
- 1.1% Colts
- 14% Country Rugby
- 16.1% School or junior rugby

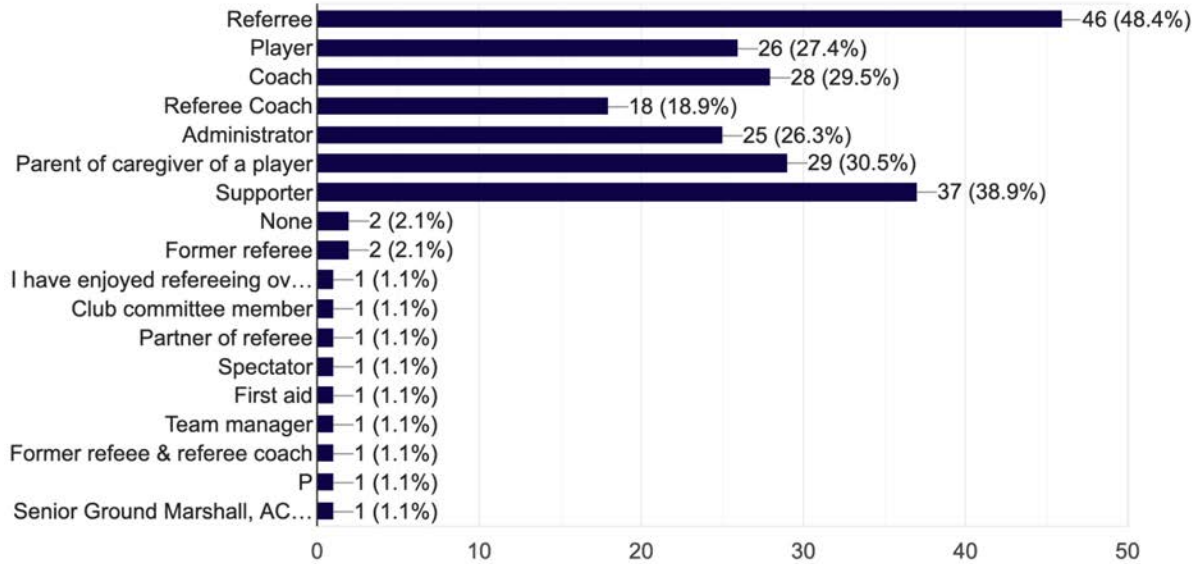
Gender

- 81.1 Man
- 16.8 Woman
- 2.1% Prefer not to say

Current involvement in rugby union

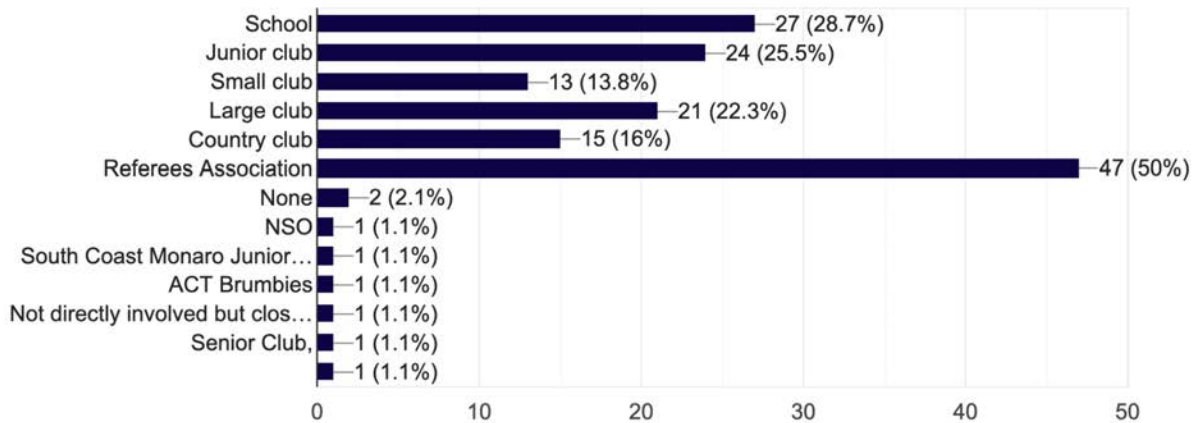
Describe your current involvement in rugby union (select all that apply)

95 responses



Thinking of the rugby organisation/s you are involved with now, how would you describe them (select all that apply)

94 responses

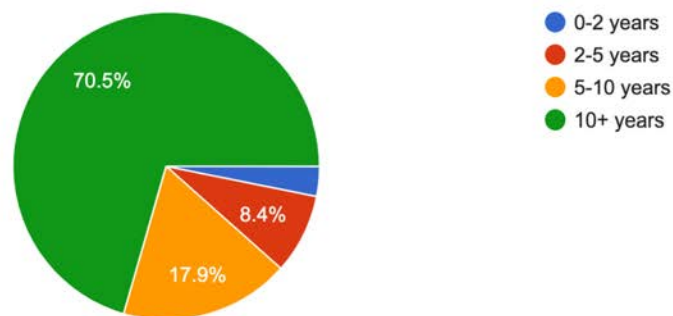


Length of time involved in rugby union

- 70.5% 10+ years
- 17.9% 5-10 years
- 8.4% 2-5 years
- 3.2% 0-2 years

How long have you been involved in school or club rugby union (in any capacity)?

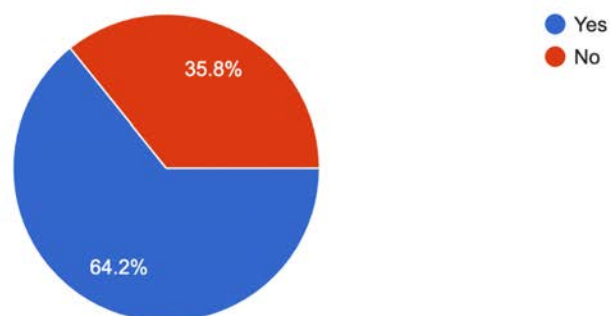
95 responses



Of those surveyed 64.2% are or have been a qualified and registered rugby union referee 35.8% of respondents had not.

Are you or have you ever been a qualified and registered rugby union referee?

95 responses



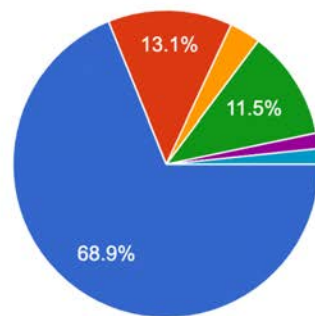
Questions for those who are or have been rugby union referees

Of the 61 respondents who are or have been a rugby referee:

- 68.9% are currently registered and seeking to referee in 2023
- 13.1% were undecided about whether they would referee
- 4.9% had decided not to referee
- 11.5% were retired
- 1.6% referee regularly when there is no appointment

What best describes your current involvement in rugby refereeing?

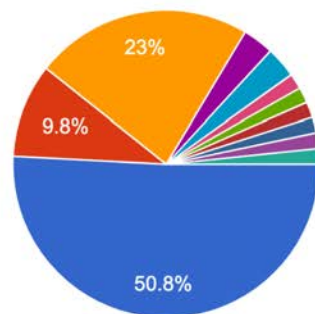
61 responses



- Currently registered and will be seeking opportunities in the 2023 season
- I have been an active referee in the past two years, but I am undecided as to whether I will referee in 2023
- I have been a referee in the past 2 years, however will not be refereeing in 2023
- I have not been an active referee for 2 or more years and do not intend to return to refereeing
- Referee past 2 years and registered to return
- I referee regularly when a referee is not available

What levels of rugby do you usually officiate in the ACT and surrounding regions?

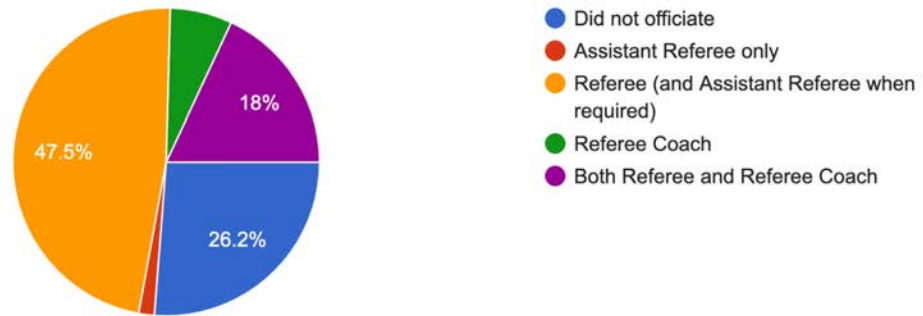
61 responses



- Adult club rugby
- Junior club and schools rugby (U12 and under)
- Junior club and schools rugby (u13 and over)
- Junior representative
- National
- International
- Wasn't given games in 2022 even after registration
- Not based in ACT
- Still new but have done National
- Adult and schools rugby
- Adult club rugby and all junior grades

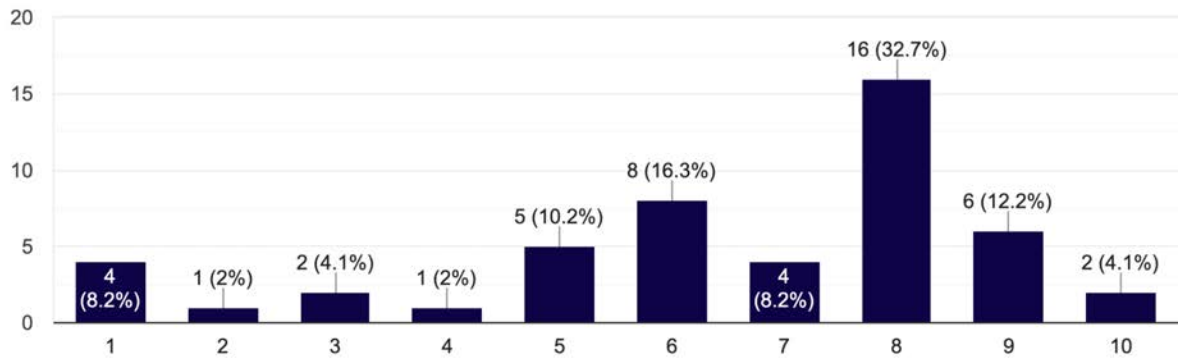
In what role did you officiate in 2022?

61 responses



For those who officiated in 2022, overall, how satisfied were you at the end of 2022 season with being a rugby referee in the ACT and regions?

49 responses

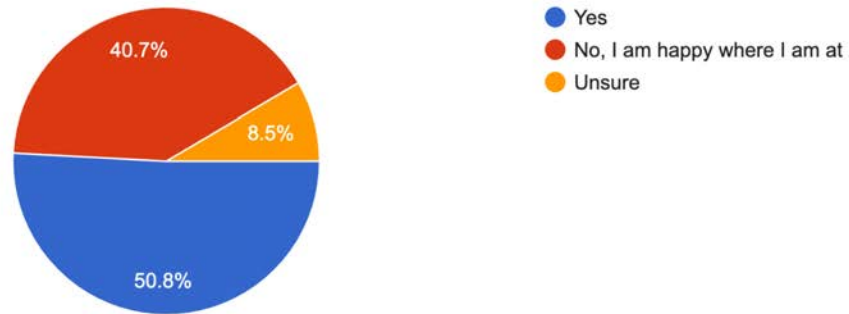


Note: 1 is dissatisfied 10 is Extremely satisfied.

50.8% of respondents (59) aspire to referee higher levels in the future, 40.7% were happy where they were at and 8.5% were unsure.

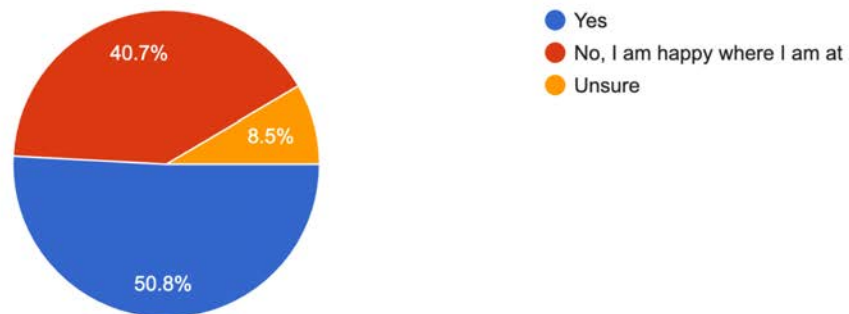
Do you aspire to referee higher levels in the future?

59 responses



Do you aspire to referee higher levels in the future?

59 responses



Can you tell us briefly about what motivated you to become involved in rugby refereeing?

- The incredible shorts
- Stay involved and connected to the game which I have played since I was a kid. I retired; missed it; tried coaching and realized that took more time to coach than play; and was introduced to refereeing by an extended family member
- Injury while playing
- My son was interested in earning some extra money, and is rugby mad. I thought I would join him and get a chance to give back to the game
- My sons were playing and there was always shortage of referees - so main reason was to fill in when there was no referee for my son's game.
- Community support
- Lack of referees

- After playing wanted to give back to Rugby
- I love the game of rugby union and I wanted to give back to the game I love.
- I used to be a Basketball referee and it was horrible. One of my friends was a referee and player (I watched his games) so I decided to give it a go.
- Opportunity at school to attend a referee course and referee school matches
- To play a part in filling shortages and try and help improve the standard
- Putting back in to a sport my children played
- My love for the sport. Also I tried to understand the laws of the game better, so I could be a better spectator. Being a referee also improves my physical fitness. It is also an opportunity to meet people and become a “part of a club” of like-minded individuals.
- Contributing to the game that i love
- Unable to play and too young to coach
- After I stopped playing I want to continue my involvement in rugby.
- Wanted to be involved in the game, was frustrated with the amount of referees
- The lack of referees.
- giving back to the game
- Obtained a referee certificate in teenage years to expand my knowledge of the game and improve my play
- Love of the game
- Involvement post playing to give back to Rugby
- Country Coach of Junior teams, in a regional area that never got sent a referee,.
- Got injured with rugby now I want to achieve my goals in Referee
- I couldn't play anymore due to age
- To give back to the game beyond being a player and spectator. To help address the paucity of referees for the next generation of players (my kids and their friends). To stay connected with the game.
- To be a part of rugby and be involved in the game (I'm only not refereeing because I had a baby recently)
- Best way to keep involved in the game
- I wanted to encourage students that I taught to become referees because I felt it would make them better players, offer another pathway within the game and enable them to contribute in a different way. I felt I couldn't ask them to do this if I wasn't a referee myself.
- In the hope my son would get a referee
- Supporting my children
- Injured as a player and wanted to stay in the game
- Test answer - is there a text limit on this response?
- That's my dream
- More out of necessity than desire!
- It's my passion to be involved in rugby and to give back to the community as well
- To keep involved in the game.

- So that I did not have to sit in the grandstand and cheer
- Returning after 6 years away
- To give back to the game
- Giving back to the game I love
- My love of rugby, and approaching too old to play at a high standard anymore
- I had become disgruntled with my coach at the time and left the schools team. I wanted to stay involved and so I did a refereeing U12 course hosted at the school.
- Family
- love of the game
- To continue participation after player days over
- To continue involvement post playing
- contribute towards game of rugby
- Love of rugby
- My sons were playing Junior Rugby and there was a lack of qualified referees to officiate their games
- Giving something back to the game that the family has loved for many decades
- requests from friends following injury
- Wasn't any good at playing. A school teacher suggested I refereed, gave it a shot and never looked back
- I wanted to learn the rules better and try something new
- To help kids have games with refs
- Give something back to the game
- My son played and I coached his team, and realised there was a lack of referees available, so decided to referee

What are/were the best things about being a referee?

- Free shorts
- Best seat in the house
- Being involved in the game
- Getting to be involved in the game when I can't play anymore
- Being involved in the games, seeing the kids rip in
- the personal challenge to facilitate a good game and being privileged to watch a highly skilled game close up.
- The game and peers
- Enjoyment, and ensuring boys played with a referee
- No pain on Monday and being up close to the game.
- I loved having control of the game AND The p\Players and the Coach's ex: telling me well done and love what you are doing for the Game
- The entire rugby community, the small refereeing community, the opportunities and knowledge and fun events. Plus the ability to improve and have people take their time to aid you with that.
- camaraderie within the referee community
- Making a contribution and the challenge.
- A reason to remain fit and be involved in the community
- Keeping fit, making new friends, helping our rugby/sporting community, understanding the game better thus making it a better spectating experience.
- Getting out in the sun on the weekend to contribute to the game i love
- Improving game knowledge
- Fitness, giving back to the game, excitement being close to the action.
- Being part of a team
- Facilitating. The game for others.
- still being active in the game
- My active involvement with Rugby was extended past my time to play at a high level.
- Being part of the game and the community
- Still being involved in the game, friendships and the opportunity to participate in rugby at all levels and locations
- Making sure the kids are safe
- I'm still close to the game and what I love
- I like training and mostly the team around it
- Close connection and contribution for the betterment of the game. Keeping fit and the physical and mental challenge of being a match official. It's cool.
- Reaching higher honours, travel, mates, the Adrenalin of making that on the spot decision, the thrill of close games
- The other referees
- Being involved in the development of younger players. It was a satisfying feeling refereeing a game that flowed.

- Helping the teams and the clubs
- Fun to participate
- Doing the match.
- Test answer - is there a text limit on this response?
- School and club
- Being close to the action and being able to help the kids from both teams in a game situation
- It allows me to follow my passion and keep update with the laws of the game
- Connection to the game. Best seat in the game.
- Best view of the game and it is enjoyable
- The mental challenge and the support other referees provide
- Being in the middle without the pain.
- Birds eye view of the game Being part of the game with the players still
- Keeping active and involved with a great group of people. The game is always ever changing and every situation is unique. It provides a unique experience and opportunity for quick judgment and decision making.
- It makes me enjoy the game
- enjoyment
- Hopefully assisting players to enjoy the game
- meeting new people, players and referee and being part of bigger community
- Making sure people could play by being a referee
- The camaraderie w other referees, facilitating safe, open and running rugby, ongoing involvement in the game I love, helping educate and develop young rugby players and being close to the play without waking up battered and bruised :-)
- Being able to put a positive influence into the way the game is played.
- involvement,close to the game, no injuries, black eyes or sore ribs etc
- Giving back to the game I love
- Fitness and challenge
- Still being able to be involved in the game and as stated earlier the ability to give something back
- Giving back to the game

If you are still refereeing, what are the two most important things that keep you involved?

- The free shorts
- Being around like minded people. Having an outlet and 'thing' to do away from the family.
- Atmosphere and gratitude of players
- I love the game and want to give back
- being respected and valued, getting appropriate appointments
- Lack of referees, quality of referees
- The players and keeping fit.
- Yes I'm still involved, the main to things are, I love the sport and Giving Back.
- Honesty in my ability/coaching and the positive and uplifting community and mateship
- To ensure I can help fill the shortage.
- Striving to do better and keep learning
- 1. The opportunity to progress and get a better "grading" thus referee more meaningful matches 2. Be a part of a "referee community" that helps rugby in our region become a sustainable sport.
- Higher level games so I can improve and to see other teams style if rugby
- Fitness and continued involvement in rugby
- Facilitating a game for others. Fellow Referees.
- Just Referee Coaching, enjoying being involved and helping Referees to improve
- Passing on to a new generation, the enjoyment I have experienced playing the game. Maintaining a safe game through educating referees in 'best practices' in officiating.
- Good rugby and an inclusive respectful community
- 1. Support from ACTRRA and Brumbies. 2. Enjoyment of the game and referring
- Kids safety and their enjoyment
- Being professional, the love for the game
- Wanting to do higher games
- Ongoing connection with the rugby community. Be a role model for my kids and others by accepting the challenge of being a referee.
- Support & opportunities
- The team and community involvement
- It needs to be fun and supportive
- Support
- Keeps me off the streets, and it keeps me active
- Test response
- First time
- Ensuring the matches take place and are officiated by someone who knows the laws and game play
- My passion and skills/experiences

- I enjoy being out in the middle Fitness aspect
- Enjoyment and seeing the change in the ability of the players
- Fairness and challenges
- I ref when no one turns up.
- Self improvement and development
- Regular games Player respect
- The flexibility of games and coaching with the easy going and welcoming attitude of organisers and coaches. The other thing is the opportunities it provides for myself in both the referee association as well as my workplace.
- Payments
- enjoyment and respect
- Enjoyment and quality of games
- community, opportunities
- Being fit enough to be effective as a Referee and finding a balance between work, family and Referee/Referee Coach commitments.
- Teaching on the field, and involvement in development
- Community, enjoyment
- As a Coach to help younger referees get better
- Enjoying the challenge and generally the attitude of players when they realise you ahve actually played the game rather than just being a referee
- Giving back to the game

What are/were the most challenging and/or frustrating aspects of being a referee?

- Can't fit into my shorts
- Abuse
- The uncertainty of future appointments.
- Spectator/coach dissent, and the enforceability of ground day rules
- Body positioning, I'm new to refereeing and almost end up in the rucks myself
- 1) disrespectful spectators 2) judiciary not applying reasonable sanctions for send offs/abuse
- The ACTRRA and ACT Rugby executive
- Referee abuse and sideline commentary from fools who don't know the rules.
- Lack of resources and sideline abuse.
- As I have only referred 2 games, Have nothing challenging
- Referee abuse from players and coaches. Lack of referee coaching sometimes. Lack of understanding with grading ability.
- The lack of feedback on how to improve.
- Being put on the same games each week where there were uncontested scrums and lopsided scores
- 1. Lack of communication from ACTRRA 2. Inconsistent delivery of "ambitious " targets that ACTRRA sets (development seminars etc) 3. Low financials compensation
- Negative referee coaches and abuse from spectators
- Coaching and clarity on how to progress
- Knowledge of rules and correct positioning
- Spectator abuse, association politics
- lack of communication and support from senior referees back to the junior referees.
- As a coach it is frustrating when referees do not appreciate the time you put into them
- Players lack of knowledge of the Laws of the Game
- Abuse and cliques
- Development Opportunities
- Sideline people who don't understand the rules. The vast amount of rules
- Not getting selected
- Major difference in coaching perspective and how regularly you are seen
- Balancing refereeing around coaching and other commitments. Frustration can be the paucity of referees to meet the demand each weekend and therefore having to officiate multiple games. Also the tendency for some players / clubs to want to officiate the game themselves on the field (ergo a lack of respect for the referee and their decisions).
- Poor coaching , frustrating appointments
- Abuse and disrespect

- Nothing really to do with refereeing itself, more that work commitments (family business and a lack of staff) have made it difficult as we progress through covid. I found myself coaching in the morning, rushing off to work, to then rush back to referee, often not really being super prepared for work or refereeing.
- The politics
- Lack of support from RA and NTRU for referees
- I don't know
- Not so much about being a referee, but that there should be tighter rules and incentives (or punishment) for home clubs to ensure a suitably qualified ref is available if a ref is not appointed to a match.
- My talent/skills have not been recognized, nor have I been appointed to the appropriate position/level of games
- Referee abuse
- Games been cancelled late
- Development
- The abuse from players and spectators.
- Game times
- The most challenging part is due to my irregular work schedule trying to get the appropriate coaching in order to progress my training and qualifications.
- Justifying the expense of time and personal money to cover the cost of refereeing
- Sideline behaviour
- referee abuse
- Ignorant Spectators & hot headed players
- Being injury free
- lack of education and opportunities
- Not being given games consistently
- Not being fit enough, over-committing as a Referee and Referee Coach, and the associated negative impact on family. In short, I think those who have administered the Association, including Junior and Senior Referee Coordinators, have done an amazing job and have been very selfless. We don't support or recognise our volunteers sufficiently. If you constantly make withdrawals don't be surprised if you go bankrupt.
- Parental attitudes. Dealing with the constantly changing and inaccurate IT from the ARU
- spectator ignorance, spectator abuse, butt of rugby jokes, often training by yourself, not properly or adequately supported by the Union
- The parents who think they know the rules, bad captains
- Abuse. Players, coaches & Parents. Staying up to date with laws and getting better at applying them in a game.
- The very ordinary attitude of the club officials, particularly in the South Coast Monaro competition
- The Politics between referees and clubs.

Ideas and initiatives

Have you experienced referee programs or recruitment campaigns in other states that could be considered for adoption in the ACT and surrounding region?

- NSW Suburban Rugby REFEREES 13.1 All Div 1, 2 & 3 clubs, as part of their affiliation process, will be required to put at least two of their members through the referee course and have them field-tested. 13.2 Those newly accredited referees will become members of the applicable local referee association and will be appointed as their club's 5th, 4th or 3rd grade referee (depending on Div) at each home game. 13.3 In the event of the appointed referee not attending the venue for a match within ten minutes of the scheduled kick-off time, a SmartRugby qualified referee may be appointed by mutual agreement between the two clubs. 13.4 The appointed referee shall be substituted at the first available opportunity after the match has commenced. 13.5 If no agreement can be reached, the home club shall appoint a SmartRugby qualified referee and the game shall be played. 13.6 Should, for any reason, a game not proceed under this rule, the match fixture shall be declared a bye and no competition points will be awarded to either club. 13.7 Any club unable to supply a SmartRugby qualified referee when required shall be fined \$100 for each offence.
- In junior netball you are unable to register a team if you do not supply a ref. something for ACT to consider.
- Yes, each club player that refs adds points towards best and fairest club award.
- Free super Rugby or Test tickets.
- The Parkrun have an app that encourages people to run at different locations. Refs need an app that encourages them to ref at different grounds.
- I do love the you-tube videos from NZ, about respecting the referee
- Look beyond other states to Ireland and the UK, the link to clubs is much stronger
- In my opinion a good experience I have had is a more classroom based training where we were able to run through more grand scheme ideas such as positioning, game management techniques, sideline positioning, and how to work effectively as a team of three. During the program we had every game with comms and it allowed us to develop a very strong coverage and collective situational awareness once we were able to trust and effectively communicate with each other.
- proper development groups within associations

- Don't rely on clubs to provide referees, they have enough trouble getting players & coaches, it's not their job to get referees too. Look outside rugby, get into schools
- However, I believe the Referee Development Officer position within each Association needs to be a paid or funded position to ensure a more dedicated resource is available to recruit and develop referees beyond volunteer committee members.
- A development system that does not rely so heavily upon 'levels'
- Yes NZ, clubs providing senior players to ref and their subs are paid by the union after referring 5 games.

Do you have any other comments, suggestions or initiatives to share to support the ACT Rugby Referees Association in recruiting and supporting more rugby union referees?

- More promotion (of rugby in general) in the public schools, and not only in the private schools. The vibe that rugby has is "private schools boys club" and this must change.
- Target schools and defence agencies
- Really just expanding on the point above. The onus needs to be on clubs. However there needs to be more face to face contact with clubs (especially those in country areas) to train these referees and give them the confidence to step up on a Saturday. Simply specifying that "anyone with Smart Rugby is fine to referee" is one thing. That is great in the sense that it reduces the barrier to entry. But if there is some additional brief training that people can easily access to help give them the confidence to actually take the whistle, it would help as well. Perhaps that already exists, but as a club administrator we're not aware of it.
- School based referee sub-associations, where school run their own referees, conduct training sessions, perhaps have their own kit, under the umbrella of ACTRRA. Allow them to appoint their own matches up to a pre agreed level but acknowledge that to referee A grade, they must come across to the ACTRRA
- Junior rep players and their parents should be strongly encouraged to do a referees course.
- Openness about selection / training and opportunities. Serious support for referees and promotion of respect
- I see far too much abuse and over the top disrespect by adults towards young referees at junior games. Now days I would not encourage young referees to take up the whistle. I don't blame teenagers not wanting to referee when they cop an earful from parents. ACT Unions judiciary and clubs have to take a stronger stand to eradicate disrespectful

behaviour on the sideline. Face to face referee courses need to take place. Online courses do not work.

- Having larger events to include younger (U18) referees. Allow more A/B panel referees to bond or coach some of the younger referees, even with a messaging system.
- Fine the club for ref abuse not the player.
- Get out to clubs and join in training sessions with players.
- A dedicated position needs to be created for the recruit/retention of referees - separate from Rugby Australia. They simply do not care about refereeing ranks other than the professional game.
- Award refs that have ref'd over 50, 100 games different ref Jumpers. Once again Parkrun awards people who have been involved for a long time. Currently we have Senior and junior shirts, why not have a shirt to ref in that shows they have done over 100, people will stay in refereeing to get this recognition
- 1. Target schools as part of 'community service' on CVs etc., Refereeing develops critical decision making, situational awareness, communication and conflict de-escalation - and you get paid for it. Opportunity to target Senior Girls who have involvement through other family members so have an understanding of the game.
- For rugby to adopt the netball no tolerance on abuse at games. The spectators themselves enforce the policy
- It could be mandated that clubs supply a minimum number of referees (including new referees) to be allowed to play in the competition.
- Overhaul the referee coaching structure and bring in into the current decade.
- The more you pay per match, the more people will be interested and the more seriously they will take their performance
- Target former players and fast track them where appropriate. They have that all important knowledge of the game that doesn't just come from a law book.
- I understand that financially it may not be viable but making the financial incentive more competitive compared to other football games or similar club level sports.
- The Referee Association communicating with the ACT Rugby Union at an equal level that is collegiate, not adversarial. Create an environment that will nurture and allow the exchange of ideas that will welcome individuals to refereeing.
- Pamphlets to hand out for recruiting and engagement with schools and clubs early in preseason

- I think referee payments would help
- It should be advertised at Brumbies Matches , as it was in the past. That is how I came in.
- RA needs improved Rugby Explorer platform and processes to ensure registration of persons wanting to complete referee courses are captured in lists that are visible to respective Associations who can then personally contact and engage those people prior to a course (mitigation for persons not turning up or forgetting about the course). There needs to be a realisation that relying on online training and certification comes with real risk that personnel wont complete the modules following the course and will be lost to the system having shown initial interest, in particular young kids. More must be done to personally engage these folks, have follow up opportunities and win the hearts and minds of their parents.
- More referee coaching and support at games where possible
- Need to target the Clubs to be involved in recruitment. Older players near retirement or injured would make the best referees. The stigma of them and us, needs to be overcome.
- Tactical recruitment of Colts and above players who are slowly retiring from the game
- Bring them to clubs and train with players and coaches to build rapport.

PART 2: Feedback from the rugby community who have never been a registered rugby union referee

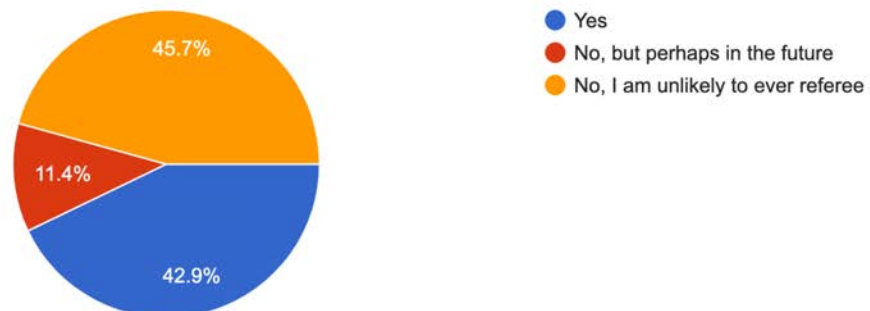
Have you been involved in officiating a game of rugby union at any level?

35 responses



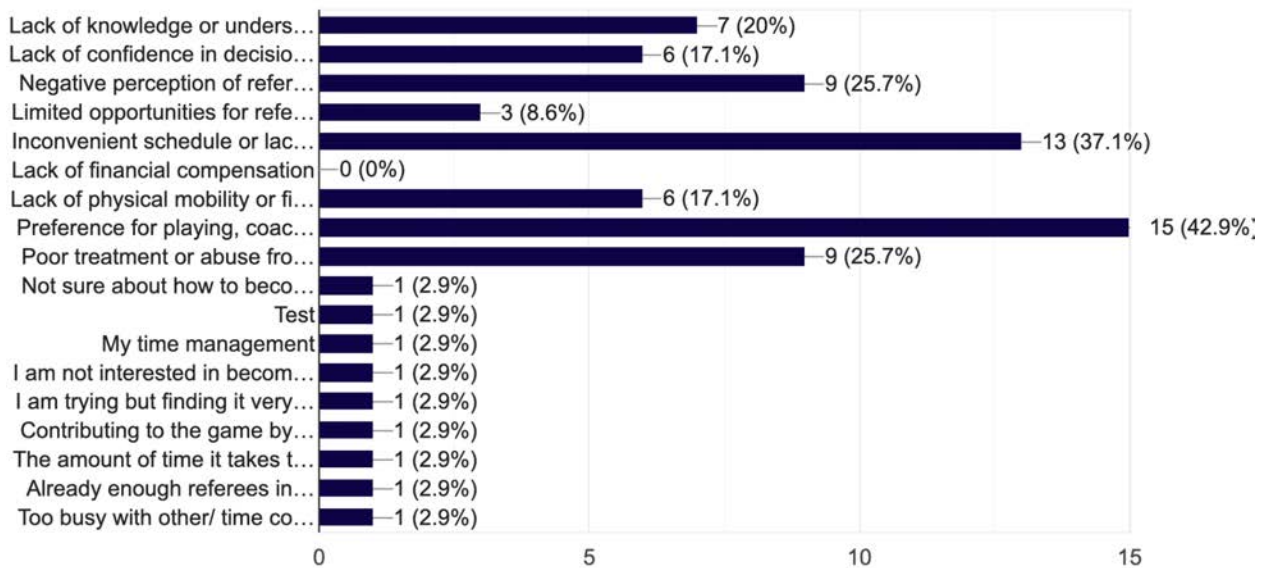
Have you considered becoming a qualified rugby union referee?

35 responses



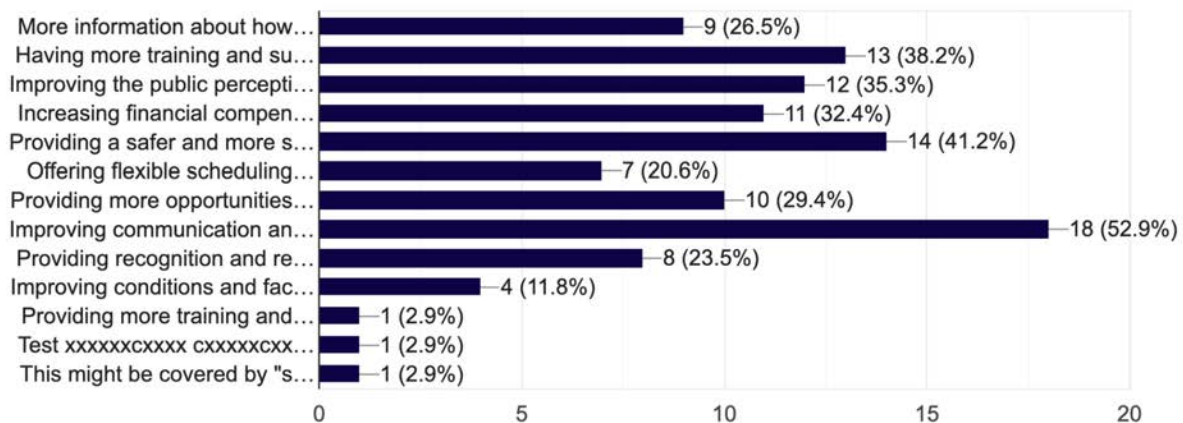
What are the three main factors stopping you, or people you know, from becoming a rugby union referee?

35 responses



Thinking about yourself and/or your friends or family involved in rugby, what do you think would make it more attractive to become a rugby union referee? (select up to four)

34 responses



Do you have any other comments or suggestions to make to support ACT Rugby Referees Association in recruiting, developing and supporting more rugby union referees?

- Very happy with the refs. I think trying to approach under 14 coaches to encourage their players to register as a ref would help.
- The current increase in training and development by the ACT Refs association is greatly appreciated. A lot of it really comes down to the Clubs to control spectator and coach behaviour to make it more appealing for referees to want to do the job - there may be novel approaches for Clubs/ground marshals to take to help reduce inappropriate behaviour
- as above (in 'other', under 'what do you think would make it more attractive')
- more incentive ie Pay and have rep players being trained to do little kids 7-9 that way they get a taste for it and more likely to continue to old ages groups were pay could be higher. I see heaps rugby union and league kids refereeing oztag including girls maybe talk to oztag and see what they are doing? Less expectation, doing 1 game per week and no pressure to do more if that's all they want
- It is not a simple solution however the game needs more qualified refs to survive.
- It is not clear what qualifications you need to become a referee. There is confusion between the in person courses, the online offering from rugby australia and other mechanisms for how you become a referee and what levels you can referee at depending on that. The ACT referee website is confusing to find the exact information, despite the flowchart
- Please train the juniors better, some of the younger refs are not well trained in the rules
- My U12 / yr 6 boy is interested in developing as a refereee (assistant ref to start) however it seems to be 13 years that is starts ie. year 8. Why is that?
- A stringer mentoring program for young or new referees. Hockey ACT have a great refereeing model that has supported better quality referees. Which included amending by-laws to allow referees to deal with spectators who were not respectful
- I wish I had the time, fitness and knowledge to help. I know that we don't have enough ref's it does make it a hard decision when ref's arent exactly the favourites on game day. One team always has to be the losers and that makes the ref a target. Unfortunately in my 10 years I have seen both parents/supporters behaving badly but I have also seen ref's who either don't know the laws (and I am no expert) or are without doubt biased to one team they are refereeing. It taints the image of ref's so that people think badly of them. Which is unfortunate because we need more. I think ACTRRA need to ensure

that referee's who are also club supporters are not responsible for refereeing games at clubs they support. It could go a long way to helping change the perception.

- Understand that alot of the refs are not on their emails all of the time and also it can be really confusing for a ref to have to referee an under 10 game then an under 14 then an under 18 and maybe even a senior 4th grade game. I understand this does come down to ref numbers
- I think doing the best you can with what resources you have available to you within time constraints and staff available - you all do a great job.

ATTACHMENT 2: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Thank you to the following individuals for taking the time to share insight and experience to inform this report.

Brendan Allardyce

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Nathan Mass

Mitch Egan

Emily Stoker

Ivan Gavazov

Nick Stoker

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Trevor Hancock

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