



**COOK ISLANDS RUGBY UNION**  
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## **TRANSITION AND RETENTION REPORT 2020**

### **& A PROPOSAL FOR A RESEARCH STUDY INTO PLAYER RETENTION**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Cook Islands Rugby Union has never before looked into a transition and retention programme. There has never been any research or investigation made into why players choose to play rugby, especially after many of them have already completed a season of rugby league or other sports during the first half of the year. There has never been a survey of what their individual influences and motivations are that draw them to rugby as opposed to other sports which are all occurring at the same time.

For the reasons of sustainability of the Game of Rugby in the Cook Islands, it is timely that we look into this matter for the benefit of the future of the Game in the Cook Islands. It is proposed that CIRU should commission a research study to investigate more about why players opt to play rugby, when do they start, how long to they play for and what may cause some of our more promising players to leave rugby or leave the island? Research into these motivations would help us to develop a Transition and Retention strategy based around our current player database of transitions and pathways in the Cook Islands and if required, due to whatever reasons, how we can possibly expand our database to include what other pathways we can encourage these departing players to take so that they may still remain involved, wherever they may be. The study will also look at identifying and incorporating player preferences and motivations from which we can develop an Individual Plan that continues to focus them on retaining their interest and aspirations for wanting to play for their home country.

For many of our payers we know that it is inevitable that many leave the Cook Islands for schooling and university studies or work or for family reasons. But with a more coordinated plan that includes our currently under-utilised network of Cook Islands Rugby Associations throughout New Zealand and Australia, CIRU's Rugby Development Team could continue to maintain contact with them and their families, supporting and monitoring their playing pathways, in order to encourage their continued commitment, wherever they are, to want to play rugby for the Cook Islands sometime in the future

#### **PROPOSAL - AN INVESTIGATIVE STUDY INTO A PLAYER RETENTION STRATEGY**

##### **PURPOSE**

An investigative study will result in a report that will recommend the development of a COOK ISLANDS PLAYER RETENTION STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.



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The study would aim to support a more strategic approach to enhanced player retention by way of and in line with the CIRU Strategic Plan 2020-2023 – developing rugby in the Cook Islands through improved collaboration and relationship building with our network of other key CIRU stakeholder organisations in Oceania and world-wide.

### **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- A profile of player preferences and motivations around why they play rugby; as well as how they would view player retention for the sustainability of rugby in the Cook Islands.
- A profile of club management and support for player performance, playing futures and player welfare; as well as its view on the sustainability of rugby in the Cook Islands in light of the prominence and support for rugby league
- A profile of community support for rugby in the Cook Islands and its sustainability
- A set of recommendations that can support the achievement of CIRU's Strategic Objectives 2020-2023

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study will require some investigation first of all into:

1. What motivates players of rugby in the Cook Islands
2. What are the competing influences that can draw players away from rugby
3. What support do the Rugby Clubs give to players – their constitutional obligations
4. How does CIRU aim to implement its strategic objectives related to:
  - a. What does CIRU have to do to improve player experience of Rugby in the Cook Islands to retain players in the Game
  - b. What does CIRU have to do to improve community experience of Rugby in the Cook Islands – to get their continued support for players and the Game
  - c. What does CIRU have to do to improve its relationship with other key CIRU stakeholders
5. The resultant report would make recommendations based on the major outcomes

### **FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The proposal will be reliant on the availability of funds to undertake the study – although much of it could be done by volunteers.

1. The survey would be best undertaken using Google Forms or SurveyMonkey although the latter provides more information by which to gather subsequent data. There is a cost for this service
2. The use of the internet or more preferably mobile technology in order to first distribute the survey and then gather the returned information required for the survey.
3. Once this information is available, the next requirement will be the time and effort of the investigation team to develop their report and their recommendations to the Executive Committee.



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4. The overall time required for such a study would probably be over 6 months dependent on the time available for the volunteers to put the survey together, distribute and gather the data, analyse the data and write the report and recommendations.

## **PREPARATORY QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE INCORPORATED INTO THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

### Rugby Players in the Cook Islands

- Why do players choose the game of rugby? what social ties are there to the sport – historically? Is there a close tie between rugby and village communities? Is it friends and family influences that draw them to the Game?
- What are the motivations of players to select rugby when they could be playing other sports or even relaxing after a season of league? What is the injury rate during the rugby season after 6 months of rugby league?
- What are constraints to their full commitment and participation to the Game – especially after a season of league for many of them? Other time commitments and life priorities?
- For those who do play rugby, what are the statistics around those who have transitioned through the junior grades, against those who start because their friends are playing, usually in their late teens?
- What are the main constraints for our young developing players that impede their remaining in the Cook Islands and continuing to play rugby?

### Competing sports and sporting cultures – especially Rugby League

- How are the two codes governed? What level of funding does each receive from CISNOC and the Government? What sort of player-support and development programmes do the clubs provide for both codes during the year? Are the codes treated equitably by the clubs when they transform themselves over the June/July months from league to rugby and back again in December/January? Is there an equal amount of funding and support given by the International bodies to support Rugby League Association and CIRU?
- Since when did rugby get relegated as the “second cab off the rank” to starting their season in June/July? With the result that many players come directly from a season of league and are susceptible to injury because they can’t take a break? What is the percentage of players who come directly from league to rugby?
- Other competing sports in the Cook Islands that are attracting players away from the Game - particularly Vaka Eiva which takes place at the same time as the Rarotonga 7s and months of prior training is a major commitment?
- Multiple demands on the few sponsors on the island? How does CIRU cope with this?

### Rugby Club culture

- How well do rugby clubs in the Cook Islands support the transition of rugby through the grades? Do they look into the reasons why players choose to stop playing rugby – preferences, motivations, constraints at different levels



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- What player development opportunities do clubs provide? Training programmes and physical preparedness? What player welfare programmes are in place – what support does CIRU give in this respect? Is there an expectation by clubs that CIRU should provide these programmes?
- Is there a positive personal development that is derived from the clubs in the Cook Islands? Any mentoring and personal coaching programmes provided? What support do clubs get from local businesses to support their activities? What relationship do they have with potential business partners in their village communities? Are they also divided in their loyalties between the codes and other competing sporting interests?