



14 December 2020

Dear Parents,

We are writing to share some exciting and positive news aimed at addressing the issue of retention of teenage boys in club rugby.

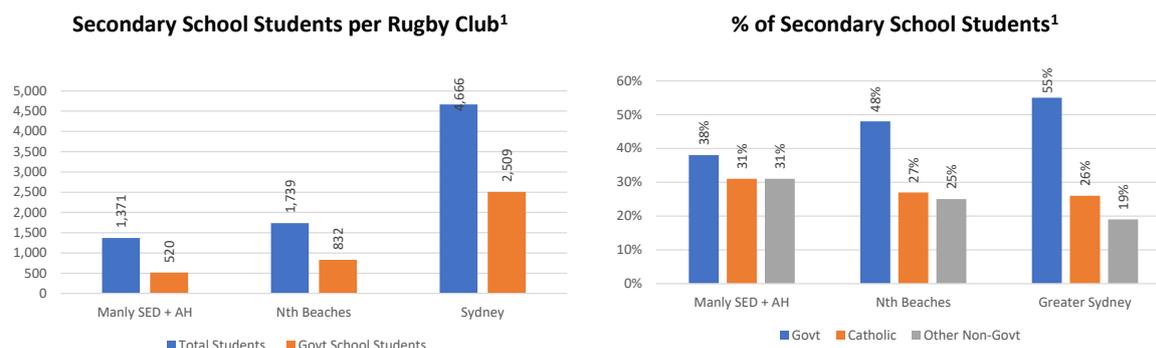
Allambie Jets, Harbord Harlequins, Manly Roos and Seaforth Raiders (**Feeder Clubs**) have recently agreed that, from the 2022 season onwards, the Feeder Clubs will only offer rugby from Under 6s to Under 12s, with players from each club encouraged to continue playing rugby in Under 13s and above for the Manly Savers Rugby Football Club (**Manly Savers RFC**), which will form a junior arm (**Manly Savers Juniors**) for the first time in its 111-year history.

The introduction of the Manly Savers Juniors seeks to provide players, parents and the Feeder Clubs with greater certainty as to the structure of the game in these older age groups, and a clear pathway for continued participation in club rugby through to the senior ranks, for players of all abilities.

Manly Savers RFC was formed in 1909 and has a long history in the NSW Suburban (“Subbies”) rugby competition, notably the Meldrum Cup. Further information on Manly Savers RFC and its history is provided at the end of this letter.

Background

Player retention from U13s (the year that most kids start high school) has been a major issue for the Feeder Clubs for a number of years, driven primarily by (1) the concentration of four junior clubs in a relatively small catchment area and (2) high enrolment in non-government secondary schools, which typically offer rugby as a winter sport played on Saturday.



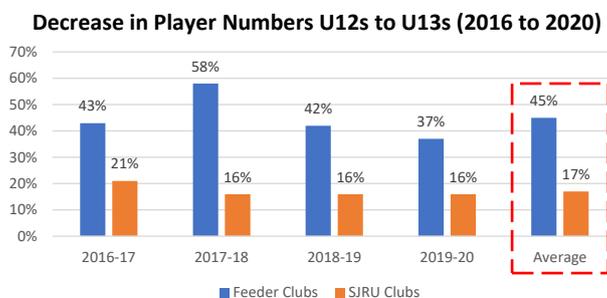
These challenges have progressively increased over time as the demographics of our area have continued to change, with the Feeder Clubs generally struggling to field standalone teams in the older age groups.

The Manly Vikings concept, a multi-club JV between Harbord Harlequins, Manly Roos and Seaforth Raiders, was introduced in 2014 as an attempt to counter the player retention issue. Although it was successful in enabling the clubs to continue fielding teams in the older age groups across a range of grades, it had a few weaknesses that ultimately meant it failed to solve the problem, with the Manly

¹ Sources: 2016 Census, SJRU. “Manly SED + AH” refers to the Manly State Electoral Division and Allambie Heights, which is the general geographic area covered by the Feeder Clubs.



area continuing to experience a disproportionate drop-off in player numbers from U12s to U13s, as highlighted in the chart below.



Manly Savers Juniors

The Manly Vikings model was in place until 2019, when multi-club JVs were abolished by the SJRU and clubs were instead encouraged to arrange JV teams with one other club in age groups where they did not have enough players to form a standalone team. This approach was not considered to be sustainable in the long-term given the lack of certainty year-to-year for players, families and Feeder Clubs, and the Feeder Clubs have been working with the Manly Savers RFC on the Manly Savers Juniors concept for several months as a more permanent solution for all parties.

The entry of the Manly Savers Juniors to the SJRU Sunday Competition was approved by a majority of Sydney clubs at the SJRU's AGM on 8 December 2020. The intention is for a **two-year transition** to introduce the Manly Savers Juniors to the SJRU competition:

2021 (next season): Manly Savers Juniors to field teams in U15s to Opens, replacing the current Manly Vikings teams.

2022 (following season): Manly Savers Juniors to field teams in all age groups from U13s to Opens, with the Feeder Clubs continuing to field teams in the U6 to U12 age groups.

The Feeder Clubs and Manly Savers RFC are now working on the finer points of the structure and transition arrangements, and further information will be provided to players/families in the U15 and above age groups in due course for the 2021 season. Information sessions will also be arranged for the younger age groups in each of the Feeder Clubs next year ahead of a **full transition for the 2022 season**.

Summary

The decision to set up the Manly Savers Juniors was not taken lightly by the Feeder Clubs, and we strongly believe that it is in the best interests of rugby in the Manly area:

- ✓ Greater certainty for players and families in relation to the structure of rugby in the older age groups, particularly for those players that attend government schools and therefore generally do not have the opportunity to play rugby at school.



- ✓ Greater certainty for the Feeder Clubs, which can now focus solely on growing player numbers in the U6 to U12 age groups that will then transition into the Manly Savers Juniors from U13.
- ✓ Opportunity for young men to keep playing club rugby with their mates regardless of which school they attend, whilst at the same time forming new friendships with players from other Feeder Clubs.
- ✓ Opportunity to feed off the Manly Savers brand and 100+ year heritage to create a true rugby club experience for these young men.
- ✓ A clear pathway to senior rugby for players of all ability levels, be that the Manly Marlins Colts/Grade or the Manly Savers in the NSW 'Subbies' rugby competition. This pathway also extends to coaches, managers and administrators who wish to remain part of the game in the future.
- ✓ Improved ability to grade players and teams according to their ability to ensure that they get maximum enjoyment out of their rugby.

Australian rugby clearly has its challenges at the moment; however, with the support of parents and families from each of the Feeder Clubs, we truly believe that the Manly Savers Juniors can be an outstanding success for the 'grassroots' of the game in our patch.

Like any rugby club, Manly Savers Juniors will only be as strong as its volunteers, and we encourage anyone who would like to be involved in its formation and administration to contact their respective Club President.

Yours in Rugby,

Richard Dickson
President



Hadyn Stephens
President



James Maxwell
President



Michael Clark
President



Peter Gibson
President





About Manly Savers RFC



Manly Savers Rugby Union team began life as Manly Surf Rugby in winter 1909, though members of Manly Surf and Life Saving Club were playing in local teams well before that. The current earliest formal written proof of the date is the programme for the Reunion Ball which was held in 1919, after the First World War.

Today Savers compete in the NSW Suburban Rugby Competition in the Meldrum Cup. This is a one team competition and considered tough but social rugby. Savers won the 2020 Meldrum Cup with the Grand Final under lights at Manly Oval.

You can read more about Savers here: <https://manlylsc.com/surf-sports/savers-rugby/>

