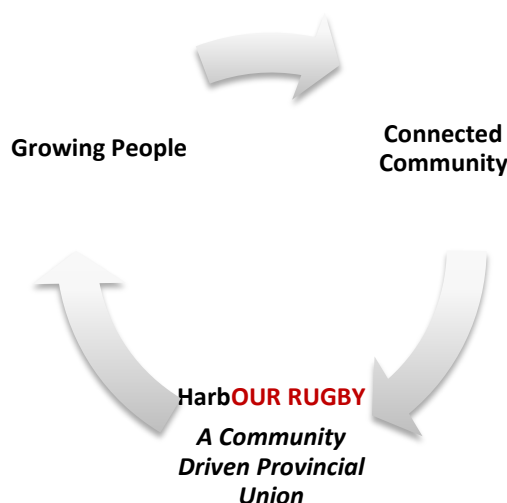




Background

North Harbour Rugby was formed in 1985 and encompasses a geographical area that includes 12 rugby clubs and 18 secondary schools within the North Harbour region.

Harbour Rugby is proud of its Purpose, “Improving Lives, Through Rugby”. The Union also has the following Vision.



Harbour Rugby has established some clear strategies to achieve its purpose and vision;

Below is an excerpt from Harbour’s Strategic Game Plan;

- *“Maximise Engagement and Grow Participation with Quality Community Experiences. This will be supported by the following tactics;*
 - *Cultivate a Climate of Development and Fun around our Junior Rugby Programs*
 - *Build a future focused Participation Pathway (“ladder”) that puts the participant at the center of the experience and provides playing opportunities at every level”*

This approach has also been shaped around evidence based research and information available such as, but not limited to:

- Good Sports <http://active.org.nz/good-sports/resources/> & the Good Sports Spine
 - *“Good Sports aims to create positive sporting experiences for Kiwi kids by supporting and educating the key adult influencers in children’s sport: parents, coaches, teachers and sport administrators”*
- Sport NZ – Balance is Better <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/SportNZ-BalancelBetter.pdf>
 - *“Developing athletes to realise their potential in sport and in life — winning in the long run”*
- NZ Rugby Talent Identification Philosophies and Pathways
 - *“Rugby is a late development sport- Wider Earlier- Capture point U17- Encourage multi skilled athletes-Measured approach to progress”*

- Community Sport; Voice of the Participant data

Last year (2018) this approach has seen a number of positive shifts around how Harbour Rugby connects with our Clubs and Schools, how we educate those who support the kids' i.e. volunteer coaches and administrators, and how we shape the various Rugby experiences and activations in our community.

The Union also undertook a process with its community Rugby leaders, which saw the following changes being introduced for the 2019 Junior Club Rugby season:

- Introducing a non-contact Ripa grade targeting Boys between 8-13 years of age.
- Revert the J4 (under 10's) grade back to 10 a side, half field format to align with the NZR Small Blacks Development model
- The removal of the Harbour Rugby administered club representative program, which will be replaced by Rugby development experiences available to all kids
- The introduction of a girls under 15 Club & School grade

In addition to this, Harbour Rugby also considered how the strategy, tactics and evidence based research related to their Junior Rugby Representative Programs and Teams.

On this background, Harbour Rugby has made the following changes to the Junior Rugby Representative Programs in 2019:

- The removal of the Harbour Under 13 & Under 14 Representative Programs and Teams, which will be replaced by the introduction of Rugby development experiences available to all kids.

(Harbour will continue with its Under 16 & Under 18 Representative Programs, which align with NZ Rugby's Talent Identification & Development Pathway "86% of All Black players in 2018 were developed and identified through NZ Rugby Development pathways")

Some of what the Evidence is telling us...



“Kiwi kids play sport to;

- *Have fun*

They also enjoy;

- *Playing with their mates*
- *Learning new skills*
- *Being fit and healthy*
- *Having a sense of fair play*

This list mirrors research from around the world with “fun” consistently cited by kids as the main reason they play sport”

“In 2018, 6774 junior players played Rugby in the Province.”

“Decline in boy’s participation starting at Under 11”

“Kids do like competition but what may be surprising for many parents and junior coaches is that winning does not feature highly on the list – or similar lists around the world. For kids, it’s not nearly as important as having fun, and in fact an overriding focus on winning can, and often does, make playing junior sport less fun which leads to reduced participation.”

“Evidence shows that there is a drop off in number around the time that players transition to tackle rugby, which also is compounded a few years later when the boys generally begin to mature physically.”

“Most sports are moving to a “less is more approach” at a young age, by controlling environmental variables (team numbers, field sizes, etc.) to ensure better skill development, increased individual involvement, and the opportunity for more participant attempts at acquiring the skills that are being taught on game day. There is also evidence that this approach aids with the coaching experience at this age.”

“To support children to have positive sporting experience adults should aim to fall under the Climate of Development around our Junior Rugby Programs- inspiration, connection, empowerment, play and variety. This environment is most likely to support children’s needs and creates engagement, interest and learning, but ultimately support’s children to develop a love of sport. Focusing on effort and improvement encourages children to strive to play hard and focus on developing to please themselves as oppose to others. It also promotes children to develop resilience by making mistakes as something to learn from.”

“When it comes to parents, broadly speaking, the actions that we see can be put into two categories:

1) Underpinned by a Climate of Development, where adults:

- *define success by effort and improvement;*
- *include everyone so they feel they matter;*
- *share control with children;*
- *design training and competitions using a learning-through-play approach;*
- *and support to try a variety of experiences (sports, positions, etc).*

Underpinned by Climate of Performance, where adults:

- *define success by winning & losing;*
- *focus only on the best players;*
- *exert strict control;*

- *design training and competitions for performance;*
- *and encourage early specialization”*

“Young people need balance. Rather than pressuring them to perform, they’ll do better if we encourage them to play; to explore a range of sports, to develop a range of skills, creativity and decision-making. If they are to become high performance athletes, they need time and encouragement to develop more than their physical ability: we must also support their social and emotional, cognitive and spiritual needs.”

“Three myths that the research has exposed:

- *Early specialisation is good (in-correct). Burn-out, over-use injuries and declining motivation: these are the more likely outcomes of early specialisation.*
- *Childhood success leads to adult success (in correct). Every athlete is different and progress is non-linear. Some only develop and emerge much later.*
- *Successful athletes focus on winning (in correct). In fact, the most successful athletes, teams, coaches and administrators focus on improvement and getting the processes right as opposed to winning. “*

“Reason to belong to a club in North Harbour (Player & Parents) - 43% to have fun, 20% to learn and improve skills”