



COMMUNITY RUGBY LEAGUE

Preferred Facility Guidelines

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Purpose and Background

Providing access to high quality Rugby League facilities is essential to facilitate participation, enable game development and pathways, and support the sustainability of community rugby league clubs.

The current provision of rugby league facilities across Australia varies widely in quality and standards, which in some case is limiting the opportunities to grow and sustain participation in the game.

The National Rugby League (NRL) understands that in order to grow the game, improvement in the quality and access to appropriate rugby league facilities is required. A 'whole of game' and strategic approach to facility planning and development will ensure that investment is maximised and the overall quality of rugby league facilities is improved.

As part of the NRL's strategic approach, the Preferred Facility Guidelines for Community Rugby League (Preferred Facility Guidelines) were developed in 2014 as a planning resource guide that assisted state bodies, associations and clubs in the planning of new facilities and/or redevelopment of existing facilities.

The Preferred Facility Guidelines also assisted local and state governments, schools and tertiary institutions, and other key stakeholders in the planning and development of rugby league facilities.

Due to the ever-changing sporting landscape and associated facility requirements, the Preferred Facility Guidelines have been reviewed and updated to ensure that they are meeting the current needs of rugby league and are aligned to industry best practice.

The Preferred Facility Guidelines 2021 document includes the following components:

- ▶ A Facility hierarchy including State, Regional and Local facilities
- ▶ Facility components to support participation and competitions
- ▶ Facility guidelines for each level of the facility hierarchy, including essential, non-essential or desired functional areas or items for each level.

This resource is provided as a guide for future facility planning and development, and is not intended to be compliance documentation for auditing or critiquing the suitability of existing facilities for competitions.





Facility Hierarchy

To support future planning and development of facilities, a Facility Hierarchy has been developed and includes three levels of facility:

- › State
- › Regional
- › Local.

The Facility Hierarchy aligns with rugby league competition standards and requirements, pathway development and participation programs. The Facility Hierarchy will be used in future facility planning processes and is a framework that can be used with reference to club size, participation and facility demand within defined catchment areas.

It is intended that the Facility Hierarchy be utilised in the development of state-wide facility plans and strategies, and assist in identifying facility needs and gaps in current facility provision.

The three levels of the hierarchy are defined as follows.

State

A high standard premier facility that is used for major events and second tier competitions below the NRL Premiership (i.e. NSW and QLD major competitions and representative fixtures).

State facilities may also service the highest level of competition in the broader region and be a nominated venue for finals and/or marquee games (i.e. NRL Premiership games).

Regional

A facility that services a region including multiple suburbs or areas, is often (but not always) included as part of a broader sport and recreation precinct that incorporates facilities for multiple sports.

A regional facility may include multiple playing fields and pavilions. Regional facilities are capable of hosting finals for the upper divisions of regional competitions, and should be maintained at an appropriate standard for these levels of competition.

Local

A local facility caters for local level clubs and competitions, including junior clubs and associations. Local facilities also play a very important role in game development and supporting participation programs.

A local facility services the club of the local suburb or town, and should be maintained at a level suitable for lower grade home and away matches.



Preferred Facility Guidelines

Preferred Facility Guidelines have been developed as an industry guide for the future planning of Rugby League facilities. These guidelines have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and are an important resource in the planning process.

The Preferred Facility Guidelines are not intended to replace standards established within building codes and legislation, local or state government planning controls or health and safety regulations.

Whilst functional areas are defined, it is important to consider the functional relationships between each area and critical adjacencies that will enhance the practical use of the facilities.

In some cases, functional areas could be combined to form integrated spaces that may be more practical. The involvement of state bodies and clubs in the planning and design process is critical to ensuring that the facility is designed in a way that best suits its specific functional needs.

The Preferred Facility Guidelines should be used with consideration to Universal Design Principles—a design philosophy that ensures that products, buildings, environments and experiences are innately accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of their age, level of ability, cultural background, or any other differentiating factors that contribute to the diversity of our communities. Additionally, where suitable, modular design and construction should be considered to minimise upfront capital costs.





Facility Components

The facility components supporting rugby league competitions and participation programs have been categorised into three main components:

- › Main pavilion/amenities building
- › Field of play
- › Additional facilities.

Within each component, there are specific functional areas and items that are either essential, non-essential or desired. All specific functional areas are considered essential components unless identified otherwise in the tables below.

Main Pavilion/Amenities Building

At all levels, the main pavilion/amenities building should be a community focussed facility. The design must be functional and cater for the needs of both male and female players, coaches, referees, officials, volunteers, and spectators. Where possible, the building should be multi-purpose and cater for alternate uses (e.g. presentation nights, training courses etc.).

The main pavilion/amenities building should be centrally located to allow for good viewing of the entire field (or fields), ideally on the western side.

The building materials must be robust and durable, and be able to withstand high usage associated with sport to minimise repairs and maintenance costs. Environmentally friendly design is encouraged including natural light and ventilation wherever possible, as well as water harvesting and energy saving initiatives to minimize ongoing operational costs.

Field of Play

The dimensions of the field of play should align to the specifications in the "Rugby League Laws of the Game" document, which stipulates a field width of 68m and field length of 100m (with additional in goal areas of 8m in length). Adequate run off areas for Rugby League Touch Football game play (i.e. beyond sidelines and in-goal areas) should be factored into planning.

A strong focus in the planning and development of the field of play is the quality of the surface, including drainage design and turf performance. Appropriate drainage design must be specific to the location and aimed at limiting cancellation of matches and field closures.

Synthetic turf playing fields may be used for rugby league games, provided they meet the synthetic turf field standards outlined in the "National Rugby League's Performance and Construction Standards for Synthetic Turf" document. Synthetic fields may allow for higher usage than that of natural turf fields (especially during inclement weather conditions).

Appropriate sports floodlighting will increase programming and participation opportunities and reduce localised turf damage.

Additional Facilities

Additional facilities are often desirable to support both the functional requirements of the game as well as enhancing the player, coach or spectator experience at the facility.

In some cases, functional areas or other items not listed may be included in the planning and development of a facility, however should be assessed on a case by case basis depending on need.

Main Pavilion/Amenities Building

Component	Preferred Minimum Sizes (m ²)			Comments and Specifications
	State	Regional	Local	
Changing Rooms	45m ² x 4 (2 home team and 2 away team)	45m ² x 2	30m ² x 2	At a State level facility, four changing rooms (two home team and two away team) should be provided. To offer flexibility, the changing rooms should include operable walls that can be configured in either four separate changing rooms or two large changing rooms. At a Regional and Local level, two changing rooms (one home team and one away team) are essential, with four changing rooms desirable. The use of football boots, and the impact of soil and dirt, high humidity, moisture, heat, steam and other unique factors needs to be taken into account when choosing appropriate building materials.
Showers	20m ² x 4	15m ² x 2	15m ² x 2	Each changing room requires its own wet area (showers) with no direct sight lines to adjoining areas. State level facilities should incorporate a minimum of four shower points, whereas Regional and Local level facilities should incorporate a minimum of four and three respectively. To accommodate wheelchair access, avoid raised thresholds. To improve flexibility and to cater for mixed use, all showers should be cubical showers with lockable doors and provide enough space for users to get changed in.
Toilets	20m ² x 4	15m ² x 2	10m ² x 2	The provision of toilet facilities should be based on the following minimum requirements: four WCs and two washbasins for State level facilities, two WCs and two washbasins for Regional level facilities and one WC and one washbasin for Local level facilities. To cater for additional usage requirements, players can make use of the public toilet facilities in Local level facilities.
Massage/ Strapping Room	15m ² x 4	10m ² x 2 (Desired)	NA (Non-essential)	A massage and strapping area is required at State level, however not essential at a Regional or Local level. At Regional and Local level, massage and strapping can be performed in the change room area.
Medical/ Doctors Room	15m ²	10m ² (Desired)	NA (Non-essential)	At a State level facility, a medical/doctor room is required. The room should include a desk area, lockable medical cabinet and a washbasin and a suitable, adequate light source.
General	For all of the above components; natural light, ventilation sources should be considered in the design, floor coverings should be non-slip, easily cleaned and maintained.			

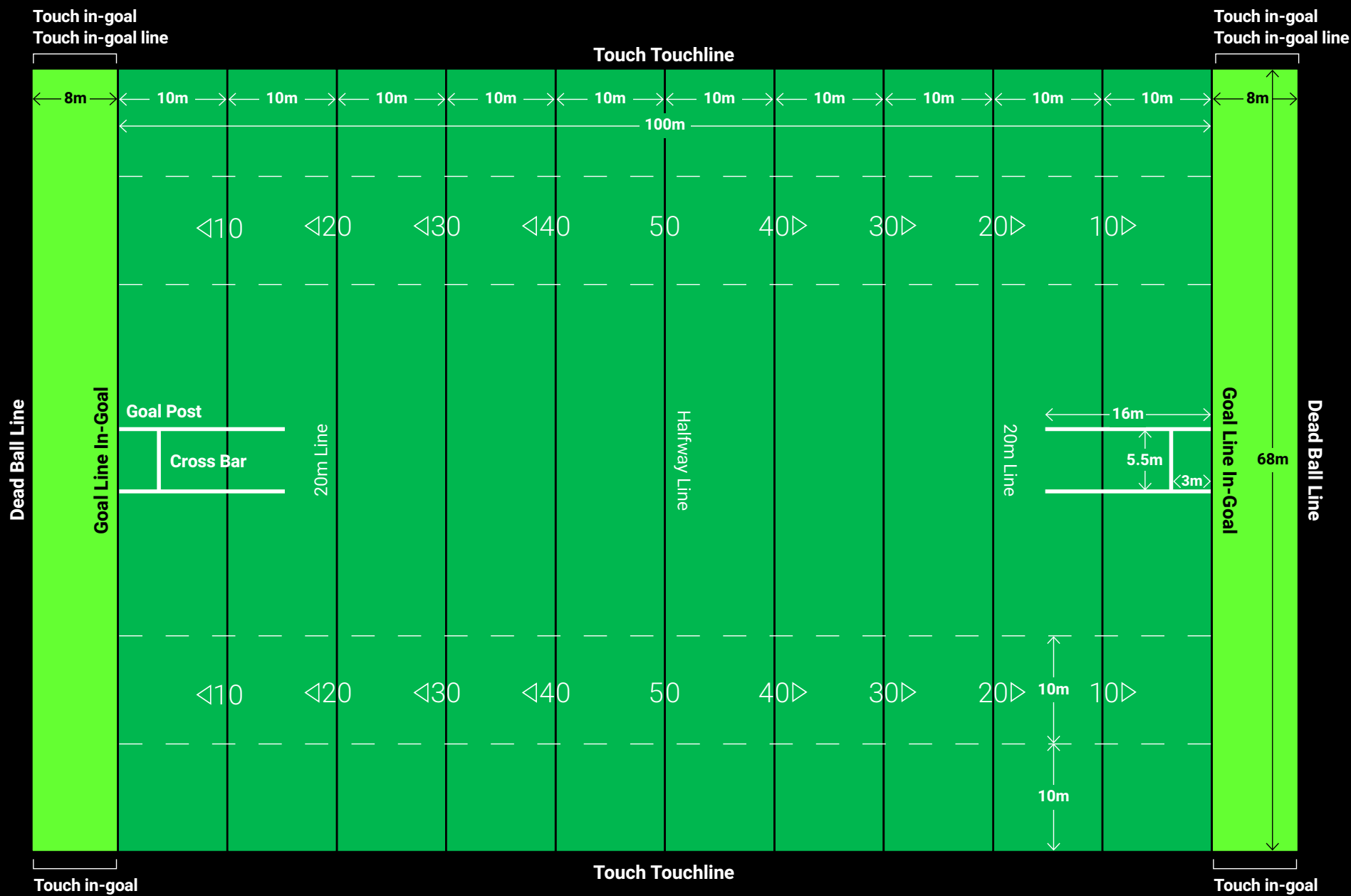
Component	Preferred Minimum Sizes (m ²)			Comments and Specifications
	State	Regional	Local	
Drug Testing Room	10m ²	NA (Non-essential)	NA (Non-essential)	At a State level facility, a Drug Testing room is required. The room should include toilet, a washbasin and a bench area.
Strength and Conditioning area	60m ²	40m ² (Desired)	NA (Non-essential)	A strength training area or gymnasium is required at a State level, however is not essential at Regional or Local level facilities. Ideally, the gymnasium would be an open floor space area with appropriate rubber flooring, light and ventilation.
Referee's Room (including shower and toilet)	30m ²	20m ²	20m ²	The pavilion should include a gender neutral self-contained changing room for use by officials. The room should include an operable wall that can be configured in two separate changing rooms to cater for both male and female officials at the same time and include a cubicle shower with lockable doors, cubicle toilet, washbasin and bench space. Secure locker storage is required when the room is used by more than one official.
Scorer and Timekeeping Box	15m ²	15m ² (Desired)	NA (Non-essential)	The scorer and timekeeping box needs to have a clear view of the playing field and ideally located in line with or near the centre line. It can be incorporated in the main pavilion or separately as a stand-alone structure. The timekeeper's area must include a siren.
Kitchen and Kiosk	40m ²	30m ²	20m ²	An appropriate standard kitchen and kiosk facility is required to allow catering and food and beverage sales. These facilities are essential in supporting revenue generating opportunities and club sustainability.
Social/ Community Rooms and outdoor covered spaces	175m ²	120m ²	75m ²	The social/community room is an important element of the facility that will enable social interaction as well as provide a source of revenue and sustainability for the club. The area should be used for post-match gatherings or presentations, as well as club committee meetings or education/training courses. The social/community room should have large windows for viewing the game. Social areas may include specialised bar facilities and/or access to appropriate kiosk/kitchen servery. Planning should consider the range of potential uses and flexibility of the space.

Component	Preferred Minimum Sizes (m ²)			Comments and Specifications
	State	Regional	Local	
Administration Area/ Competition Office	20m ²	15m ²	15m ²	An administration area for the management of competitions and club administration and paperwork. The room should include a desk/bench area and appropriate office storage.
Accessible Public Toilets	45m ²	35m ²	35m ²	Public toilets are a vital amenity when having large numbers attending training and weekend events. The size of public toilets should be based on crowd history and relevant planning and/or building codes and cater for males, females and people with disabilities.
Storage—Internal	15m ²	10m ²	10m ²	Adequate internal (dry) storage is essential for club materials and equipment (e.g. uniforms, merchandise and stock).
Storage—External	15m ²	10m ²	10m ²	Adequate externally accessible storage is essential for sport related equipment (e.g. balls, tackle bags, goal post padding), and other necessary maintenance equipment (e.g. line marking machines).
Utilities/ Cleaners Room	5m ²	5m ²	5m ²	A separate utilities/cleaners room should be provided for any essential facility services.

Field of Play

Component	Preferred Minimum Sizes (m ²)			Comments and Specifications	
	State	Regional	Local		
Coaches Boxes	Elevated position for 4 people	Touchline seating for 4 people (separate to Substitutes Bench) (Desired)	Touchline seating for 4 people (as part of Substitutes Bench) (Desired)	Separate coaches' boxes should be provided for the home and away teams, ideally on the western side of the ground close to the halfway line.	
Substitutes Bench	Seating for 8 people	Seating for 6 people	Seating for 6 people (Desired)	Home and away team substitute benches are to be factored into planning. Portable/ movable structures provide flexible usage and are typically more cost effective than permanent structures.	
Goal Posts	Height: 16m Width: 5.5m Crossbar: 3m	Height: 16m Width: 5.5m Crossbar: 3m (Desired)	Height: 16m Width: 5.5m Crossbar: 3m (Desired)	At a State level facility, goal posts must be 16m in height, 5.5m apart with a crossbar at 3m from the ground. The bottom 2m of the uprights should be padded. At a Regional and Local level facility, a reduced goal post height is permissible. Mini League: 3.5m High and 3m wide, crossbar is located 2m above the ground.	
Playing Field Run-off	5m	4m	3m	There must be adequate run-off area between the field of play and any perimeter fencing, light masts and other permanent or potable structures (i.e. substitute benches). Where possible, any new fields should aim for the highest run-off area (i.e. 5m).	
Playing Field Markings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Field width: 68m Field length: 100m (excluding in goal areas)	In goal areas: 8m x 68m Refer to Section 18: Ground Markings and Dimension Guidelines in "Rugby League Laws of the Game".
Playing Field Quality	High	High – Medium	Medium	The playing surfaces of State level facilities must be of high quality, with an even coverage of turf and no obvious undulations. At Regional and Local levels, a high to medium standard playing surface is required including an even cover of turf and limited to no undulations. Each playing field should have a planned maintenance program relative to the standard of competition and should consider seasonal top-dressing, aeration, fertilisation, irrigation system maintenance and weed and pest control measures.	

Component	Preferred Minimum Sizes (m ²)			Comments and Specifications
	State	Regional	Local	
Playing Field Drainage	Excellent—Good	Excellent—Good	Good	Appropriately designed surface and sub-surface drainage and the development of a good overall maintenance plan for sports field drainage is critical in enhancing the participant experience and maximising the use of the facility (meaning fewer cancelled games). Installing sub-surface drainage systems in existing playing fields may be required to improve surface quality, reduce cancellations and maximise use of existing facilities.
Scoreboard	Yes	Yes	Yes (Desired)	Scoreboards should be positioned appropriately and visible to players, coaches and spectators. At a State level facility, electronic scoreboards are encouraged but not essential.
Grounds Maintenance Store	Yes	Yes (Desired)	NA (Non-essential)	Adequate storage for playing field maintenance equipment is required and may include storage for mowers, line marking equipment and other field of play maintenance materials.
Emergency Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	The playing field must have an accessible point for ambulance or any related access in the event of an emergency.
Sports Floodlighting	Training: 100 Lux Competition: 200 Lux	Training: 50 Lux Competition: 150 Lux	Training: 50 Lux Competition: 100 Lux	Appropriate playing field lighting is essential in maximising facility use and therefore participation. High quality lighting will also reduce localised overuse of the playing field. Preferred minimum requirements for playing field lighting will vary depending on the level of competition and therefore facility. The Australian Standards (series 2560.2.3) contains recommendations and requirements specific to the lighting of Rugby League. The Standards contain information highlighting the maintained horizontal illuminance (lux) required for training and club competition at a recreational, amateur, semi-professional and professional level. Light-emitting diode (LED) lighting are preferred to metal halide lighting due to energy savings, reduced maintenance and other benefits including instant on/off control. To reduce maintenance costs, consideration should be given to installing hinged or base hinged masts where feasible.



Additional Facilities

Component	Preferred Minimum Sizes (m ²)			Comments and Specifications
	State	Regional	Local	
Spectator Seating	Grandstand or tiered seating	Grandstand or Bench seating (Desired)	Bench seating (Desired)	At a State level facility, tiered spectator seating in a grandstand or similar structure is essential to cater for expected large crowds. At Regional level, the provision of a grandstand or bench seating around the field of play is highly desirable. Where seating is provided, undercover seating is preferred. The total number of spectator seats should be determined on a case by case basis. Any new builds should effectively utilise embankments and provide adequate shade structures and plantings.
Broadcast Area	Yes	Yes (Desired)	NA (Non-essential)	Broadcast facilities are required at State level facilities. Position should be elevated off ground level and have an unobstructed view of the playing field, ideally undercover.
Public Address System	Yes	Yes (Desired)	Yes (Desired)	State level facilities must include an appropriate public address system for ground announcements.
Time Clock	Visible time clock	Visible time clock	NA (Non-essential)	An approved match time clock that can be seen by spectators, players and officials should be provided at all State level facilities.
Car Parking	In accordance with local gov't standards	In accordance with local gov't standards	In accordance with local gov't standards	Adequate car parking is required to support facility use. Although no specific car park numbers are prescribed, parking should cater for the anticipated regular weekly demand. Off street parking is considered advantageous. Car park lighting is an important safety and surveillance measure. Car parking may be sealed or unsealed where appropriate. Disabled parking bays should be signed and as close as possible to the main pavilion and include accessible curbs and pathways leading to the pavilion and spectator areas.
Reserve Fencing	No specific standards	No specific standards (Desired)	No specific standards (Desired)	Appropriate reserve fencing is required at State level facilities and desired at Regional level facilities to control crowd access and management, including the potential to collect entrance fees.



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