



SELECTION POLICY

2026



WHEELCHAIR
RUGBY LEAGUE

WHEELCHAIR RUGBY LEAGUE AUSTRALIA

NATIONAL TEAM SELECTION POLICY

2026 Edition

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a transparent, fair, flexible and official framework governing the selection of athletes and staff to represent Wheelchair Rugby League Australia (WRLA) in domestic and international competition, including Rugby League World Cup (RLWC) campaign activities and any approved lead-up fixtures, camps and programs.

This document intentionally combines both (a) the policy position (principles, authority, scope) and (b) the operating selection process (committee structure, documentation, records, appeals and review).

This policy ensures:

- Integrity in the selection process
- Performance-based selection by appropriately qualified personnel
- Independence and transparency in decision making
- Governance oversight without compromising competitive integrity
- Alignment of national team selection with WRLA's strategic and high-performance objectives
- Protection of the integrity, reputation, athletes and staff of the national program
- Procedural fairness, defensibility and clear communication
- Appropriate risk controls to mitigate disputes or legal challenge
- Long-term sustainability and success of the national program

Selection to represent Australia is a privilege earned through performance, commitment, professionalism and alignment with WRLA values and strategic objectives. Selection is not an entitlement, nor does previous representation guarantee future selection.

This policy is supported by applicable WRLA governance, integrity, safeguarding and conduct frameworks, including policies adopted or recognised by WRLA from NRL, NRL Wheelchair or other governing bodies from time to time.

2. AUTHORITY & DELEGATION

2.1 Delegation

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The WRLA Board delegates the operational responsibility for national team selection to a High-Performance Selection Panel / Selection Committee (the Panel), established in accordance with this policy.

2.2 Board role (governance oversight)

The WRLA Board retains governance oversight and does not participate in day-to-day merit-based scoring or voting. The Board's governance role includes:

- Appointing (or endorsing) the Panel structure and its remit
- Ensuring compliance with this policy and procedural fairness
- Ensuring conflicts of interest are declared, recorded and managed
- Monitoring safeguarding, integrity, legal and reputational risks
- Ratifying final selections recommended by the Panel

For the avoidance of doubt, the appointment of the Head Coach is a Reserved Matter of the WRLA Board and requires formal Board ratification.

2.3 Ratification and exceptional intervention

The Board will ratify the final selections recommended by the Panel. The Board may request reconsideration only in exceptional circumstances, including where:

- A material procedural breach is identified
- A safeguarding or integrity concern is identified
- A legal, compliance or material reputational risk is present

The Board will not substitute its own merit-based judgement for the Panel's performance-based recommendations.

Transitional provision: The appointment of the Head Coach, Assistant Coach and any support staff made prior to the adoption of this policy remains valid, and this policy applies prospectively to future appointments, replacements and selection cycles only.

2.4 NRL / NRL Wheelchair alignment

Where appropriate, WRLA may seek input from NRL / NRL Wheelchair to support integrity, high-performance alignment and capability development. Any such input does not displace WRLA's delegated governance responsibilities.

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3. HEAD COACH SELECTION COMMITTEE

3.1 Selection Committee

The Head Coach Selection Committee (for appointment of the Head Coach) will consist of:

- WRLA Board Member (Chair)
- No fewer than two (2) and no more than four (4) independent members with high-performance experience, with preference for wheelchair rugby league, rugby league and/or other wheelchair-based sports.

Each voting member holds one (1) vote and must declare conflicts of interest, abstain where required, maintain confidentiality, and act in good faith.

Decision making

A quorum is required for any vote. Decisions are determined by majority vote. Where the Committee is deadlocked, the WRLA Board Member (Chair) will exercise a casting vote. Voting outcomes and rationale will be documented.

The Head Coach Selection Committee acts in an advisory capacity only, and provides recommendations to the WRLA Board.

3.2 Board Approval and Ratification of Head Coach Appointment

The Head Coach Selection Committee supports the WRLA Board by conducting an assessment process and making a recommendation based on merit, capability, safeguarding and strategic alignment.

The appointment of the Head Coach is not effective unless and until approved and ratified by the WRLA Board.

The WRLA Board's role is limited to governance oversight and ratification and does not include substituting its own merit-based assessment for the Committee's recommendation, except in exceptional circumstances involving procedural breach, integrity, safeguarding, legal or reputational risk.

The WRLA Board retains full discretion in the appointment of the Head Coach.

4. STAFF SELECTION (EXCEPT HEAD COACH)

4.1 Panel

The Staff Selection Panel (for all staff appointments other than Head Coach) will consist of:

- Head Coach (recommendation lead)
- Up to two (2) independent members endorsed by WRLA for integrity and objectivity purposes

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- One (1) WRLA Board delegate (procedural oversight member)

4.2 Principles

The Head Coach may recommend staff based on operational needs and performance requirements; however, the Head Coach does not have unilateral autonomy to appoint staff. All staff appointments are subject to Panel decision making and WRLA governance requirements.

4.3 Decision making and endorsement

A quorum is required for any vote. Decisions are determined by majority vote. Where the Panel is deadlocked, the independent member endorsed by WRLA as the Panel Chair (or, if not appointed, the WRLA Board delegate) will exercise a casting vote to resolve the deadlock on procedural grounds.

All staff appointments must satisfy safeguarding and compliance requirements and be recorded with a brief appointment rationale. Staff appointments are submitted to the WRLA Board for ratification where required by WRLA delegations, or where integrity / reputational risk considerations apply.

5. REPLACEMENT OF STAFF (EXCEPT HEAD COACH)

The Replacement Staff Selection Panel will consist of:

- Head Coach (recommendation lead)
- Up to one (1) remaining staff member (voting member), where appropriate
- Up to one (1) independent member endorsed by WRLA (voting member)
- One (1) WRLA Board delegate (procedural oversight member; non-merit-based role)

A quorum is required. Replacement decisions are determined by majority vote. Where the Panel is deadlocked, the independent member (if appointed) will exercise a casting vote. If no independent member is appointed, the WRLA Board delegate may exercise a casting vote on procedural grounds only.

Where time constraints exist (e.g. tournament travel or medical withdrawal), the Panel may convene urgently and record a short written rationale for the replacement decision. All replacement appointments must be notified to WRLA and, where required, ratified by the WRLA Board.

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6. PLAYER SELECTION PANEL

6.1 Composition

The Player Selection Panel will consist of:

- Head Coach (technical lead)
- Assistant Coach(es)
- Up to two (2) Independent High-Performance Selectors endorsed by WRLA for integrity purposes
- One (1) Independent Panel Chair (endorsed by WRLA; may be one of the independent selectors)
- One (1) WRLA Board delegate (procedural oversight member)

6.2 Independence and appointments

Independent selectors and the Independent Panel Chair are nominated in consultation with the Head Coach and endorsed by WRLA to support independence, transparency and defensibility.

6.3 Voting and decision making

Each voting member holds one (1) vote. A quorum is required. Selection decisions are determined by majority vote.

The Independent Panel Chair moderates the process and may exercise a casting vote where required to resolve a deadlock.

All Panel members, including the WRLA Board delegate, hold one vote unless otherwise determined by the WRLA Board.

6.4 Role clarity (Board vs Panel vs Coach)

- The Head Coach provides performance and tactical input and is accountable for competitive outcomes.
- The Panel applies the published criteria, ensures decisions are evidence-based and documented, and makes selection recommendations.
- The WRLA Board delegate participates in Panel deliberations and may contribute to discussions and decision-making, while maintaining a governance perspective. The Board delegate must at all times act in accordance with principles of procedural fairness, integrity and conflict management.

6.5 Conflict of interest

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All Panel members must declare conflicts of interest in writing prior to deliberations. Conflicted members must abstain from discussion and voting where the conflict is relevant. WRLA will maintain a Conflict-of-Interest Register in accordance with its governance practices for Panel appointments and selection cycles.

6.6 Documentation

Voting outcomes and a Selection Rationale Summary will be recorded for each final touring party selection. Where a Performance Squad athlete is not selected, a short feedback summary will be prepared to support athlete development and procedural fairness.

7. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Extended Training / Development Squad
- Performance Squad
- Event-Specific Playing or Touring Parties
- National Team Coaching and Support Staff

World Cup and lead-up applicability

This policy applies to selection for the RLWC campaign and any Board-approved lead-up fixtures, camps and programs. Where event regulations impose additional requirements, those regulations will be applied in conjunction with this policy.

8. POLICY PRINCIPLES

The following principles underpin all selection decisions:

- Transparency - The selection framework and criteria are publicly available.
- Objectivity - Decisions are grounded in documented criteria and observable performance.
- Accountability - Decisions are documented and defensible, with those accountable for performance outcomes holding primary selection authority.
- Consistency - Criteria are applied uniformly.
- Integrity - Conflict of interest must be declared and managed.
- Flexibility - The framework accommodates fluctuating calendars and competition structures.
- High-Performance Focus - The primary consideration is competitive success.

9. SQUAD STRUCTURE (FLEXIBLE MODEL)

Recognising that the number of competitions and representative opportunities may fluctuate significantly year to year, WRLA operates a flexible tiered model.

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9.1. Extended Training / Development Squad

An annually determined squad (recommended range: 12-20 players). Determined annually by the Player Selection Panel.

Purpose:

- Talent identification
- Serves as the primary athlete monitoring and development pathway group
- Depth management 1 may include emerging athletes and experienced players
- Provides succession planning and injury depth
- Long-term succession planning

Inclusion indicates potential but does not guarantee future selection.

Athletes may be added to or removed from the Extended Squad throughout the year based on:

- Performance trajectory
- Commitment levels
- Behavioural standards
- Fitness compliance

9.2. Performance Squad

Selected from the Extended Squad.

Size determined annually based on:

- Confirmed event schedule
- Budget and funding
- Strategic objectives and goals
- Classification balance
- Injury considerations

Performance Squad status does not guarantee selection to a touring party.

9.3. Event-Specific Playing / Touring Party

Selected from the Performance Squad, or in exceptional circumstances, from outside it.

Team size and selection determined by:

- Tournament regulations and format

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- Financial constraints
- Specific tactical role and requirements
- Classification composition
- Climate and travel demand

Advancement through squad levels is not automatic. The final team may vary from event to event depending on strategic objectives.

10. YEARS WITH LIMITED OR NO REPRESENTATIVE EVENTS

In any calendar year where:

- No formal representative games occur, or
- Limited evaluation opportunities exist

Selection decisions may rely on:

- Historical performance data
- National competition performance
- Video analysis
- Physical testing benchmarks
- Training camp performance
- Behaviour and cultural alignment
- Ongoing monitoring by coaching staff
- May utilise sports science metrics and profiling
- Review of other wheelchair-based sports to include talent identification

The absence of representative matches does not obligate WRLA to stage formal trials. However, formal trials are suggested when no representative matches are present.

Selection decisions remain valid even where evaluation opportunities are limited.

11. MANDATORY EVENT PARTICIPATION

Participation in the WRLA National Championships is a mandatory eligibility requirement for consideration for selection to any Rugby League World Cup (RLWC) campaign, including extended squads, training camps, lead-up fixtures and final touring parties.

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An athlete who does not participate in the WRLA National Championships will be ineligible for RLWC selection, unless an exemption is approved in advance and in writing by the Player Selection Panel in accordance with this policy.

Approved exemptions are limited to exceptional circumstances (including verified injury, employment obligations, or family emergency) and must be supported by appropriate documentation.

Exemption decisions are eligibility determinations only; the granting or refusal of an exemption does not guarantee selection.

For the avoidance of doubt, decisions regarding eligibility exemptions under this section are the responsibility of the Player Selection Panel and form part of the documented selection record.

This requirement applies notwithstanding participation in any other domestic or international competitions.

12. TEAM COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS

Where applicable:

- A minimum of 65% disabled athletes will be maintained across squad and touring party
- Maximum of two able-bodied players permitted on playing court during games at any one time
- International governing body rules will take precedence where conflicting.

Compliance with international tournament regulations is mandatory.

13. SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection decisions will consider, but are not limited to:

13.1 On-Court Performance

- Technical proficiency
- Tactical execution
- Game awareness and adaptability
- Positional role clarity, positional discipline, and competence
- Decision-making
- Physical capacity
- Performance consistency
- Defensive and offensive contribution

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13.2 Tactical Fit

- Role suitability
- Team and opposition-specific requirements
- Team chemistry
- Classification strategy

13.3 Physical Readiness

- Conditioning standards
- Injury history
- Medical clearance
- Rehabilitation compliance
- Strength, endurance, speed
- Load tolerance

13.4 Behaviour & Culture

• Compliance with WRLA's Code of Conduct and any applicable codes adopted or recognised by WRLA, including those of the NRL or NRL Wheelchair.

- Leadership and professionalism
- Contribution to team environment
- Respect toward dignitaries, teammates, officials and opponents
- Social media responsibility and conduct

Exceptional on-court ability does not override serious behavioural risk.

13.5 Commitment and reliability

- Attendance and history of attendance
- Communication standards
- Compliance with team expectations and directives
- Responsiveness to feedback

Meeting criteria does not guarantee selection.

13.6 Leadership & Influence

- Informal leadership
- Mentoring capacity
- Cultural stabilising influence

Meeting selection criteria does not guarantee selection.

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14. MEDICAL & FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

All selected athletes and staff must:

- Disclose injuries honestly
- Obtain medical clearance for return to train and play
- Meet conditioning standards
- Comply with rehabilitation protocols

Failure to comply may result in removal.

15. REDUCTION FROM EXTENDED SQUAD TO TOURING PARTY

Progression from Extended Squad to Touring Party is not automatic. Reduction is expected to occur progressively based on:

- Tactical refinement and role specificity
- Classification needs
- Injury status
- Team cohesion and dynamic
- Training and event-specific requirements and compliance
- Roster restrictions
- Budget and financial constraints
- Cultural alignment
- Strategic analysis of competition and/or future planning

Selection is based on an athlete's ability to contribute to the performance objectives of the national team at the relevant competition.

16. REPLACEMENT & LATE ADDITION POLICY

If a selected player or staff member:

- Withdraws
- Is medically ruled out
- Fails conduct standards
- Becomes unavailable
- Is removed under disciplinary action

The Selection Panel may:

- Elevate a named reserve
- Select the next highest-ranked eligible athlete
- Reopen selection within the Performance Squad

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- Reconvene for targeted review
- In exceptional circumstances, select outside the current squad

Where time constraints exist, replacement decisions may be expedited without full panel reconvening.

Staff replacements may be nominated by the Head Coach, subject to selection panel approval and WRLA support.

17. DISQUALIFICATION & REMOVAL

A player or staff member may be removed if they:

- Breach the Code of Conduct
- Engage in conduct detrimental to the program
- Fail mandatory standards
- Become medically unfit
- Pose cultural or reputational risk
- Demonstrate repeated non-compliance

Removal decisions will be documented and communicated respectfully.

18. CONFIDENTIALITY & RECORD-KEEPING

All Panel members and staff must maintain confidentiality of selection deliberations, individual scoring and sensitive personal information.

The following must be documented and securely retained by WRLA:

- Panel membership and appointment endorsements
- Conflict of interest declarations and the Conflict-of-Interest Register
- Voting records (where voting occurs)
- Selection Rationale Summaries for touring party selections
- Feedback summaries provided to non-selected Performance Squad athletes
- Board ratification (where required) and any reconsideration requests
- Appeals documentation and findings

Individual scoring sheets remain confidential. Selection discussions are not subject to public disclosure; however, WRLA may publish selection criteria and high-level process information to support transparency.

19. APPEALS PROCESS

Appeals are limited to procedural matters only. Grounds for appeal include:

- Failure to follow this policy
- Undeclared or unmanaged conflict of interest
- Evidence of bias impacting procedural fairness
- Procedural irregularity

Appeals cannot be made solely on disagreement with merit, coaching discretion or tactical decisions.

Appeals must be lodged in writing within seven (7) days of the selection announcement, specify the alleged procedural breach, and include supporting evidence.

An independent Appeals Panel, separate from both the Selection Panel and WRLA Board governance, will review the documentation, determine procedural compliance and issue written findings within fourteen (14) days. The Appeals Panel may recommend procedural remedies (including reconsideration by the Selection Panel) but does not select the team. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

Where applicable and subject to jurisdictional requirements, appellants may have access to external dispute resolution mechanisms, including the National Sports Tribunal. Such avenues do not alter the scope or grounds of appeal under this policy. Appeals will be managed in accordance with this policy and any applicable WRLA governance or integrity practices.

20. DISCRETION CLAUSE

The Selection Panel retains discretion to recommend the team it believes is best positioned to achieve the performance objectives of the national program, provided decisions are made in accordance with this policy.

Discretion must be exercised:

- Consistently with the published criteria and principles
- With documented rationale (Selection Rationale Summary)
- In a manner that is transparent, defensible and free from unmanaged conflicts of interest

Where discretion is applied to select an athlete outside the usual squad pathway, the rationale must be explicitly recorded.

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21. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required (including post-major campaign review).

Any amendments must be developed through a WRLA Board-appointed sub-committee or Board-appointed delegate (in consultation with the Head Coach and relevant High-Performance personnel) and presented to the WRLA Board for approval.

Where appropriate, WRLA may seek NRL / NRL Wheelchair input to support alignment with best practice and integrity frameworks. Amendments take effect only once approved by the WRLA Board.

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