

RUGBY FOR LIFE[®]

CHARITABLE TRUST

2025

Q2 REVIEW



CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

Rugby has a way of showing what a community stands for. In June we watched Hikurangi's U16 girls defend their title - their second on the trot - and saw a sideline packed with parents who had raffled fish and baked pies to get the team there. A week later, Otamatea's wāhine ran out 30-strong for a crunch match, proof that their "bring-a-mate" policy and firewood raffles are working.

Off the field our clubs kept lifting the bar. Western Sharks' Heritage Day welcomed 200 plus supporters; old jerseys auctioned for upgrades to the junior shed. In Ruawai, 26 new juniors pulled on boots this season - so many that coaches chalked extra field lines and borrowed hit-shields from neighbours. And over in Onerahi, volunteers poured a concrete pad to store gear, freeing up the clubroom for study sessions after training.

These snapshots matter because they show rugby doing what it does best: creating places where young people learn discipline, where whānau feel they belong, and where communities raise money for their own solutions. Thank you to every coach, coordinator, trustee, funder and volunteer who backed the kaupapa this quarter.

Your efforts turn line-breaks into life-chances.



Ajit Balsingham
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
RUGBY FOR LIFE





A Comeback Fuelled by Culture, Connection, and Community

In 2020, the Otamatea Hawks fielded their last women's team in the Northland rugby competition. Fast forward to 2025, and the wāhine of the Kaipara have not only returned to the field - they've returned with purpose, passion, and power in numbers.

Bron Hames approached the club with the idea of reigniting an Otamatea Hawks Women's team. The committee was fully behind it. With her extensive rugby knowledge, determination, and ability to bring people together, they knew if anyone could make it happen - it was Bron.

What started as a hopeful rebuild almost didn't happen. With low player numbers early on, the team was close to pulling the pin. But through sheer dedication, the story changed dramatically. As of this season, 41 wāhine have registered to play - with over half having never played rugby before! A huge milestone for the club and its community. Among the squad are three mother/daughter combos and three players who have earned invitations to the Northland Women's HP wider training squad - a testament to the passion and potential within this team.

"I wanted to use rugby as a way to empower the wāhine of my community."

– Bron, Coach

THE CHALLENGES



Rebuilding from the ground up hasn't come without its challenges. With players joining throughout the season, keeping the team moving forward while making sure everyone was brought up to speed was a balancing act.

WHAT'S NEXT?



Looking ahead, Bron is excited to keep the momentum going. *"I'm really looking forward to continuing to build this amazing culture. We'll keep working on solid basic skills, and above all, have fun."* And the vision doesn't stop with the current squad.

GOAL FOR 2026:



Launch an Under 16s Girls Team. The future of women's rugby in Otamatea is bright — and it's just getting started.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

The Rugby Education, Training, and Employment project is dedicated to empowering young people, and others not in work, through structured pathways into education and employment. By collaborating with rugby clubs, local businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations, the project seeks to create a supportive environment that fosters skill development, career readiness, and sustainable employment.



Welcome **MATT DENNIS**

Project Manager for the ETE project, to the Rugby for Life team. Keen to offer apprenticeships or work-experience?

✉ matt@rugbyforlife.nz

KEY OUTCOMES



- 1. ENGAGEMENT WITH RUGBY CLUBS**
Work closely with rugby clubs to identify members who can benefit from the program. Provide clubs with resources and support to facilitate the participation of their members.



- 3. COLLABORATION WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**
Collaborate with schools, polytechnics, and training providers to offer educational pathways that complement the employment opportunities. Provide access to courses, workshops, and certifications.



- 2. PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES**
Establish partnerships with local businesses to create job opportunities and internships for young people. Ensure that these opportunities align with the participants' interests and career goals.



- 4. ONGOING SUPPORT AND MENTORSHIP**
Provide ongoing support and mentorship to participants throughout their journey. Offer pastoral care, career advice, and regular check-ins to ensure their progress and well-being.

FIONA RAYMOND ONERAHI RFC



Fiona Raymond's influence at Ōnerahi stretches from the classroom to the flood-lit training paddock.

Each Tuesday she meets her rangatahi leadership group to review plans, and every Friday she takes them into Raurimu Primary where they run age-group coaching sessions before cooking a celebratory lunch for the school on the programme's final day. Off the field she used the club's hāngi facility to support an Ōtamatea Marae fundraiser that brought in \$1,500 and then turned to paperwork - preparing accountability reports for Tū Manawa and Māori Wellbeing grants while drafting new applications to Grassroots Trust.

Safety is another priority. In late June she hosted Ki Ora Limited's Sideline-Safety workshop, guiding fifteen participants - one as young as ten - through first-aid drills and concussion protocols. The same week she confirmed installation dates for upgraded flood-lights, including extra lamps on the back field so every team can train under lights next season. When junior coaches were unavailable she stepped in to run trainings herself, ensuring continuity for players.

Her focus on youth pathways is already paying off: an under-18 club member she mentors refereed two senior matches and earned formal praise for *"professionalism and maturity... second to none"*. Meanwhile, twice-weekly planning meetings have produced a new rangatahi logo and uniform concept that will debut next term, and the freshly poured concrete pad now awaits a 20-foot storage container - funding she secured after the first bid fell short.

By weaving coaching, fundraising, facility upgrades and youth leadership into a single, relentless schedule, Fiona has turned Ōnerahi RFC into a genuine community hub - one where tamariki gain skills, whānau feel welcome, and rugby remains the thread that holds it all together.

**OVER \$100K SECURED BY RFL TO SUPPORT
COORDINATORS AND PROGRAMS THIS QUARTER**

CLUB IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

KEY CLUB HIGHLIGHTS

HIKURANGI

- ✓ **AUCTION NIGHT**
Raised \$9,455
U16 Girls defended title
- ✓ **CLUB MAINTENANCE**
Kitchen refit completed

WHANGARURU

- ✓ **RAFFLE FUNDRAISING**
Two raffles raised \$2,200
- ✓ **CLUB MAINTENANCE**
Kitchen refit completed
- ✓ **COMMUNITY**
100-person Matariki Hikoi & tree planting

WESTERN SHARKS

- ✓ **HERITAGE DAY**
Drew 200 + guests;
jersey auction made \$3,000
- ✓ **CLUB MENTORING**
Senior players mentored juniors
- ✓ **CLUB JERSEYS**
Merch sales surged

KAEO

- ✓ **IWI DONATION**
Secured \$5,000 for roof
- ✓ **RUGBY FINALS**
Senior men into Bay semis
- ✓ **CONNECTION**
Community day planning underway

RUAWAI

- ✓ **REGISTRATIONS**
Junior registrations up to 86 (+26)
- ✓ **COMMUNITY**
Free sausage-sizzle mid-week match
- ✓ **CLUB COLLABORATION**
Matariki Cup collaboration with Hikurangi

SOUTHERN UNITED (SURF)

- ✓ **CLUB JERSEY SALE**
Merch fire-sale netted \$4,300
- ✓ **RUGBY FINALS**
2 high-school girls' teams reached finals
- ✓ **SOLAR INITIATIVE**
Solar-panel feasibility study began

OTAMATEA HAWKS

- ✓ **GROW THE GAME**
Women's roster 30 +
- ✓ **NORTHLAND TRIALS**
3 wāhine in Northland trials
- ✓ **FUNDRAISING PLAN**
Fund-raiser series for youth tournaments

65%

of all RFL engaged participants identified as Māori



tamariki and rangatahi engaged in RFL Club initiatives this quarter



\$31,000 RAISED
by Clubs over the past 3 months

Thank You

TO OUR SPONSORS, PARTNERS, FUNDERS, AND SUPPORTERS

Our progress this quarter is the direct result of collective generosity.

Whether the support arrived as grant funding, sponsorship, multi-year partnerships, in-kind expertise, volunteer hours, or a gold-coin donation at the gate, every contribution helped clubs stay open, coaches stay equipped, and players feel valued. Your commitment ensures that training sessions run safely, community events gather momentum, and new pathways open for the next generation.

From everyone at Rugby for Life, thank you for standing with us and proving that when a community backs its clubs, the impact reaches far beyond the try-line.

Ngā mihi nui,



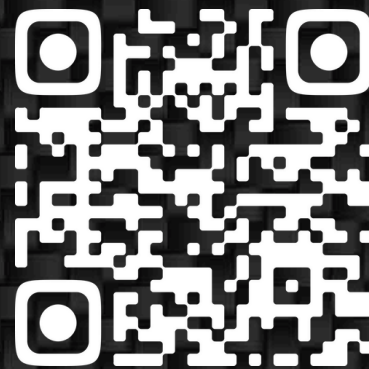
Ashleigh Wihongi
RFL General Manager



RUGBY **FOR LIFE**

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**WE APPRECIATE
YOUR SUPPORT**



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