MEMO

Date: 22 April 2026
To: NSWTF Affiliates, Regions, Members and Stakeholders
From: Chair Anthony Dudeck and Chief Executive Officer Daniel Rushworth
Subject: A Message to the NSW Touch Football Community

Dear NSW Touch Football Community,

It is with a mix of sadness, gratitude and deep respect that we write to advise that Dean Russell will be concluding his time with NSW Touch Football (NSWTF), bringing to a close one of the most significant and enduring contributions in the history of our organisation.

After 32 years of service to NSWTF across two stints with the organisation, Dean has made the difficult decision to resign from his role and conclude his time with NSW Touch Football as he takes up a new opportunity with Touch Football Australia. Since rejoining the organisation in 2002 as General Manager, Dean has played a central leadership role in the growth, evolution and success of NSWTF. His return came at a critical time in the organisation's history, when NSWTF was at one of its lowest points and its future required the greatest diligence, determination and resilience. Dean stepped into that environment and provided the leadership, stability and resolve needed to guide the organisation forward. While we are proud that the sport will continue to benefit from Dean's experience and commitment at a national level, there is no question that this is a significant moment for NSWTF and one that carries real emotion for all who know the contribution he has made.

More than three decades of service to one organisation, across different periods of its history, is extraordinary. It speaks not only to longevity, but to loyalty, commitment, resilience, and genuine love for the sport and its people. Dean has given a remarkable part of his life to NSWTF. He has been part of its journey across generations. He has served through periods of growth, challenge, change and success. He has helped shape the sport in this state, and he has done so with a passion and dedication that has never been in doubt.

Dean's contribution to NSWTF cannot be measured simply by position title, years of service or a list of achievements, although each of those is substantial. His impact is also found in the relationships he built, the people he supported, the standards he upheld, the pride he brought to the organisation, and the way he continually gave of himself in service of the game. For so many across our community, Dean has been a constant. He has been a familiar face, a trusted voice, a fierce advocate for the sport, and someone who has cared deeply about the future of NSWTF.

Throughout his time with the organisation, Dean has also been a strong believer that people should be recognised properly for what they give to the sport. Under Dean's leadership, NSWTF strengthened the way it celebrates and honours those who have built our game. This included the instigation of the NSW Touch Football Awards, the Hall of Fame, and a range of recognition awards designed to ensure that players, referees, coaches, selectors, volunteers, administrators and officials received the acknowledgement they deserved. Those initiatives were not simply ceremonial. They reflected something Dean has always understood at a deep level: that strong organisations value their history, respect service, and honour those whose work laid the path for others.

One of the things Dean has so often reflected on is his appreciation for those who came before him and the foundations they laid for where our organisation stands today. He has consistently recognised that NSWTF did not arrive here by chance, but through the efforts, sacrifice and commitment of generations of people

who built the sport from the ground up, often with little recognition and always with great care. That perspective says a great deal about Dean himself.

As CEO, I want to say that Dean has led with that same respect for history and for people. He has understood that our responsibility in leadership is not only to drive progress, but to honour what has been built, protect what matters most, and leave the organisation stronger for the next generation. That is something I have always respected in Dean, and it is one of the reasons his contribution has carried such weight over such a long period of time.

Dean's legacy is also reflected in the success of some of our most important programs. A major highlight has been the sustained strength of the NSW State of Origin Program. Under Dean's watch, NSW has kept the Origin Shield from our Queensland rivals for nearly a quarter of a century in the State of Origin series. For a sport and a state that holds that contest so dearly, this is an achievement of enormous pride. It reflects not just performance on the field, but culture, preparation, leadership and an unwavering belief in what the Blues jersey represents.

And nobody embodies that pride more than Dean.

Dean is fiercely NSW through and through. His passion for this organisation, for this state, and for the coveted Blues jersey has always been unmistakable. He has worn that pride in everything he has done. He has cared deeply about what it means to represent NSW and about ensuring that our athletes, officials and teams understand the privilege and responsibility that comes with it. His love for the Blues jersey, and for what it stands for, has been genuine, visible and deeply felt.

Dean's leadership was also especially significant during the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the most challenging periods our sport and community have ever faced. In a time marked by uncertainty, disruption and constant change, Dean led the organisation with resilience, composure and determination. One of the defining achievements of that period was helping bring Touch Football's representative calendar back onto the field when many other sports were still trying to find their way forward. That did not happen easily, and it did not happen without strong leadership. It required persistence, belief, close coordination and an unwavering commitment to ensuring our community could reconnect with the sport they love. It was a major achievement during a very difficult time, and an important part of Dean's legacy.

Dean has also been an important leader in ensuring our sport continued to grow in the right way. He has played a significant role in lifting women's and inclusion pathways to the level of focus, support and recognition they deserve. That leadership has mattered. It has helped broaden opportunity, improve visibility, and strengthen the future of the game by ensuring more people can see themselves in it, belong within it, and aspire within it. The organisation and the sport are better for that work.

For many within NSWTF, this announcement will feel deeply personal. Dean's contribution has not been distant or abstract. It has been lived out alongside people across our Boards, Affiliates, Regions, representative pathway athletes, committees, referees, coaches, selectors, staff and volunteer networks. He has shared in the highs, stood steady in the challenges, and remained invested in the success of the sport and its people.

On behalf of the Board and staff of the organisation, we want to say thank you to Dean in the fullest possible sense.

Thank you for your loyalty.

Thank you for your leadership.

Thank you for your care for the people and the sport.

Thank you for the standards you upheld and the pride you carried in NSWTF.

Thank you for the contribution you have made to generations of participants and volunteers.

And thank you for investing so much of your life to this organisation.

Service of this scale and significance is rare. It deserves not only acknowledgement, but genuine appreciation. Dean Russell has been part of the heartbeat of NSWTF for 32 years, and his contribution will not be forgotten.

While this is the end of one chapter, we are pleased that Dean will continue to serve the sport in his new role with Touch Football Australia. We congratulate him on that appointment and wish him every success. We know the game will continue to benefit from his experience, his knowledge and his passion.

Dean will conclude with NSWTF on 22 May 2026. As that date approaches, we know the entire Touch Football community will join us in recognising his extraordinary service and in thanking him for all he has given to our organisation and to the sport in New South Wales.

Dean, your contribution to NSWTF has been immense. Your passion has been obvious. Your service has been exceptional. And your place in the story of this organisation is assured.

With sincere gratitude and respect, we thank you and wish you all the very best for the next chapter.

NSWTF will be deservedly honouring and recognising Dean on the evening of 16 May, with information to be provided to the community in the coming days.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Dudeck
Chair, for and on behalf of the
NSW Touch Football Board

Daniel Rushworth
Chief Executive Officer
NSW Touch Football