

WYNNUM MANLY WOMEN'S RUGBY LEAGUE AT IONA ... BREAKING THE BIAS



As I walked onto the oval at the Wynnum Manly Rugby League Club, the first person I saw was a young woman wearing a Seagulls jersey, pushing a baby in a pram. She had a football under one arm and a kit bag over her shoulder ... statistically speaking, this young woman was probably a mother dropping off her son's gear to footy, wearing the team shirt to support him. But she wasn't, was she? Who I was *actually* looking at was Shanay Taylor, one of the players in the club's first women's open team; an athlete, a mother, a team mate, and one of many women changing the stats ... history in the making, right then, right now.



The Wynnum Manly Seagulls Women's team is competing for the very first time in the Queensland Rugby League Women's Premiership (aka the BMD Premiership), and by being part of the greater movement of Women in Rugby League, they are well and truly 'Breaking the Bias', which is the 2022 theme for International Women's Day.

Since its beginnings in 1908, Rugby League has been marketed as a men's game, but did you know that the first Australian Women's Rugby League game was played in 1921? It sadly didn't catch on for another fifty years or so, and despite having the Jillaroos as our Australian Women's Rugby League team, football's gender gap has been slow to close. Clubs like the Wynnum Manly Seagulls, however, are crossing their arms against gender bias.

All over Australia, female players compete in the National Rugby League Premiership (NRLW). In Queensland, we have the QRLW, which is the highest level of competitive women's open-age Rugby League football in the state. It's now known as the BMD Premiership because the values and vision of its sponsor support inclusion, diversity and community engagement.

BMD is proud to be partnering with QRL and fully support them in their strategy to increase participation and engagement in female Rugby League. The inclusion of women in the engineering and construction industry remains a key focus for our business, so we feel that this partnership with QRLW is a fantastic alignment of our shared vision and objective to improve participation and pathways for women in our respective industries, both of which are currently underrepresented.

Scott Power – BMD Group Director and Chief Executive Officer

Another symbiotic community relationship of significant importance is between the Seagulls and Iona College. Always a supporter of the Seagulls men's teams, Iona has now committed to providing its grounds and facilities to the female players, easing the way for the Wynnum Manly Seagulls Women's team to represent women in Rugby League, and make history for Brisbane's Bayside in the 2022 season.

On Saturday, 26th March, Round 1 of the BMD Premiership commences for the QRL (Qld Rugby League) Women's Competition. This will be the first time the Seagulls have a QRL Women's team, and we are excited to start that tradition at Iona College.

Tom Cosgrove – Commercial & Marketing Manager, BMD Wynnum Manly Seagulls



We are very excited and proud to extend our partnership with Iona College through to 2024. This partnership will support both the Men's and Women's programs at the Seagulls.

The Seagulls Women's Program is forging a path in Rugby League for female athletes and provides opportunities to ALL sportspersons. All of this is possible thanks to the wonderful support of our partners, especially Iona College.

**Hanan Laban – Chief Executive Officer
BMD Wynnum Manly Seagulls**

Iona College has enthusiastically welcomed the Wynnum Manly women's Rugby League team to play their very first game in a supportive and inclusive environment.

At Iona we believe that diversity is a fact and inclusion is an act. When the opportunity presented for us to formally support the Wynnum Manly Women's programme from its infancy, we enthusiastically embraced it. We are role modelling the support for women and our local community to our boys. By making the College facilities available to a wide range of people, we have the opportunity to share our culture and values as well. Wynnum Manly and Iona have an incredibly close bond and this new partnership further cements that.

Fr. Michael Twigg, OMI – Iona College



Angie Watego in action for Wynnum Manly Seagulls

The players are delighted to be playing on Iona's immaculate fields and using their state-of-the-art facilities.

*Iona has a beautiful field to play on. The seating area around it is awesome and it is a top atmosphere for family and friends to come and support us!
We are looking forward to it!*

Patrice Chambers and Angie Watego



Having the first open women's team to represent their club in the BMD Premiership is very important for the Seagulls, and the Club Managers have high hopes for the team's future in the QRLW.

Our Women's program is very important for the Club and aligns with our Club vision to be the best community club in Australia. We have had great success in developing future NRL players and now we are putting the same focus to develop NRLW players of the future.

We are very proud to have Jayde Herdegen (Broncos), Jacinta Carter (Broncos) and Jayda Lofipo (Titans) who played in our inaugural Harvey Norman Women's U19s team last season, and are now members of our BMD Premiership squad, earn NRLW training opportunities this season.

We look forward to many more players following in their footsteps in the future!

**Hanan Laban – Chief Executive Officer
BMD Wynnum Manly Seagulls**



Jayda Lofipo originally started playing Under 14s Rugby League with some friends from school. Her rise to the position of Captain of her team no doubt comes from her skill, strength and gutsy determination to, “stick it out until the end” and “never surrender easily”. Every week, Jayda personally works on the learnings from the previous weekend's game and is committed to working together with her fellow players to make this incredible team go their hardest.

The Iona College community lives and breathes the New Zealand Maori value of **Kia Kaha**, which means **Be Strong, Get Stuck In, Keep Going** ... the exact sentiment the College has in common with the Women's Seagulls' Captain as she prepares with her team for their first game.



Rease Casey

Patrice Chambers thinks it's of particular significance for the club to play at Iona College because they're one of their main sponsors, and said, "A few of their Old Boys play for the Seagulls - it's really important for them to be still a part of the community and take the game to their grounds."

Old Boys from Iona have a long legacy relating to the Seagulls, not only because several of them were, and still are, club players, but because one of them was a particularly famous supporter.

Situated at the opposite end of the field from Wondall Road, the Wynnum Manly Rugby League Chook Pen is where local supporters gather to cheer on their mighty Seagulls. It is named after Iona Old Boy, Anthony "Chook" Schweitzer, one of the club's favourite characters, who helped raise the voices of supporters in this enclosed area. Anthony's 6' 8" height gave him the ability to use the advertising boards as drums, which helped the crowds chant their Wynnum war cries.

The Seagulls are relocating their famous Chook Pen to Iona Hill on 26 March for the occasion and are inviting anyone from the greater Bayside community to come and join them in support of the games this weekend.



The Chook Pen, Wynnum Manly's BMD Kougari Oval

The Seagull's Women's match on Saturday has even attracted the attention of former Rugby League great, Darren Lockyer. Lockyer was an Australian international and Queensland State representative Captain, who played his entire professional career with the Brisbane Broncos.

Congratulations to the first Open Women's team representing the Seagulls, playing at Iona this weekend! It's a huge achievement and a big occasion, history in the making. I wish you all the best for your first game and hope you win – Up the Gulls!

Darren Lockyer



The Iona College theme for 2022 is GROW. Growth in spirit, achievements, physicality, community involvement, as well as team and individual development. Their biggest strength as a school is their community spirit, and their passion for supporting the people around them, in and out of the school. All of which is just what they want to provide for the Wynnum Manly Seagulls Women's Open Rugby League Team's very first QRLW season!



Principal Trevor Goodwin, Fr Michael Twigg OMI and the team at Iona have been wonderfully supportive of our vision to provide equal pathways and opportunities in Rugby League to young boys and girls on the Bayside. It is special and significant that our first ever Senior Women's game in the BMD Premiership will be held at Iona College.

This match is free to the community and offers the chance for everyone in the community to attend the match and see our teams in action. We are expecting a crowd of 3,000-4,000 people on the weekend which shows the huge support on the Bayside for the Seagulls!

**Hanan Laban – Chief Executive Officer
BMD Wynnum Manly Seagulls**

Iona College is hosting four games on Saturday 26 March from 10.30am at Davine Oval, including the Women's game at 1.20pm vs Burleigh Bears (BMD Premiership season kick-off) and the Main Game at 3pm ... Seagulls vs Northern Pride (Host Plus Cup).

Entry to this event will be free of charge and we look forward to sharing in the occasion with our local community.

The Wynnum Manly Seagulls and Iona College would love your support!

SUPPORT
Wynnum Manly Seagulls
 4 GAMES FROM 10.30AM
SAT 26 MAR

HOSTPLUS CUP BMD PREMIERSHIP *free entry* IONA



Female players at Wynnum Manly Seagulls club grounds