

Mr James Savage  
Former President, Director and Chief  
Executive Officer  
Erina Rugby League Football Club Limited

Mr Darren Duke  
A/Director of Compliance & Enforcement Unit  
NSW Department of Creative Industries,  
Tourism, Hospitality and Sport

Our ref: DOC26/172092

29 June 2026

Dear Sir

## Decision regarding a complaint about Mr James Savage under section 57F of the *Registered Clubs Act 1976*

### Ground of complaint

On 28 May 2025, Mr Darren Duke (A/Director, Compliance & Enforcement, Liquor & Gaming NSW (**L&GNSW**) as a delegate of the Secretary, Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport) (**the complainant**) made a complaint against Mr James Savage (**Mr Savage**) under two sections of the *Registered Clubs Act 1976* (**the Act**):

- that the requirements specified in section 10(1) are not being met, or have not been met, by the club or the person – section 57F(3)(a) of the Act.
- the secretary of the club or any member of the governing body of the club is not a fit and proper person to act as such - section 57F(3)(g) of the Act.

### Our decision

We are satisfied that only the ground of complaint under section 57F(3)(g) is established and have determined to:

- **declare** that Mr Savage is ineligible to stand for election or to be appointed to, or to hold office in, the position of either secretary or member of the governing body of all registered clubs for 12 months under section 57H(2)(g)(ii) of the Act.
- **order** Mr Savage to pay a monetary penalty of 10 penalty units (\$1,100) to the Secretary within 60 days of receiving this notification under section 57H(2)(a1) of the Act.
- **order** Mr Savage to pay the amount of \$31,147.96 for costs incurred by the Secretary in conducting any investigation or inquiry under section 35A of the Act in relation to the club or person, under section 57H(2)(i)(i) of the Act within 60 days of receiving this notification.

### Background

Mr Savage is the former Director, President and CEO at Erina Rugby League Football Club Limited at 18 Ilya Avenue, Erina NSW 2250 (the **Club**). Mr Savage held the following positions between 2011 to 2022:

- Director of the Club from 30 August 2011;
- President of the Club from May 2018;
- CEO and Secretary of the Club from 19 January 2022 to 8 February 2022.

Meeting minutes from the Club's Board Meetings dated 14 June 2023 show that Mr Savage was the President of the Club up until at least June 2023.

On 14 March 2023, L&GNSW received a complaint from the CEO of the Club from 17 October 2022 to 7 March 2023 referring to:

- invoices totalling \$80,870 for the period from 9 October 2022 to 8 January 2023 that were paid to SavBuilt Pty Ltd (**SavBuilt**) and Master of all Handyman Services businesses owned by Mr Savage and [REDACTED] without any tenders or quotes being provided to the Club's Board for approval prior to work being undertaken; and
- the construction of the deck at the Club in 2017 by Savbuilt and JDS Building Services, another company owned by Mr Savage, for which a quote of \$90,000 was submitted for approval, but the actual cost of the finished deck was over \$450,000.

### Submissions

On 25 September 2025, a show cause notice was issued to Mr Savage and L&GNSW.

On 24 November 2025, Mr Savage provided his formal submission comprising a letter and 208 attachments. In his submissions Mr Savage noted:

- Though not directly relevant to the grounds of complaint brought forward by the complainant, Mr Savage claimed that the Club was left in a poor state when he took over as CEO and had outstanding debts, which he worked towards paying down (from \$1 million to \$400,000).
- He purchased building supplies from suppliers at lower prices by buying materials under his clients' names to save the Club money.
- The cost estimate report prepared by Donald Cant Watts Corke (**DCWC Report**), from the complainant material is incorrect due to the DCWC Report not including all the relevant information.
- Spreadsheets, which he claimed showed works amounting to tens of thousands of dollars not included in the DCWC Report and submits he suffered financial loss.
- That tenders were called for major works and not minor works or occupational health and safety issues, and it was rare for quotes to be obtained, for example a tender for the deck by the former CEO of the Club.

On 22 December 2025, L&GNSW provided a submission in response, as summarised below:

The submission:

- Disputed Mr Savage's claim in respect of the inaccuracy of the DCWC Report and noted that Mr Savage did not provide evidence to substantiate his claim.
- Noted the spreadsheets Mr Savage referenced in his submission, *'lack sufficient context to substantiate his claim of incurring a financial loss and instead reinforce L&GNSW's position that his inadequate bookkeeping contributed to the Club's governance failures.'*
- Noted that Mr Savage provided one tender document and two quotes relating to kitchen floors and air conditioning. L&GNSW submitted that this reflects poor governance and business practices in the Club.
- Advised that Mr Savage did not address his failure to comply with disclosure requirements in circumstances where his business was engaged to complete works for the Club.
- Disputed Mr Savage's claim that his conduct was motivated by the Club's best interests.
- Noted that Mr Savage's submissions do not mitigate the serious governance failures identified in L&GNSW's investigation. L&GNSW claimed that Mr Savage's submission *'confirms breaches of the Registered Clubs Accountability Code, including failure to record conflicts of interest, disclosures, and implement procurement policies.'*
- Recommended that the Authority:
  - Make a declaration under section 57H(2)(g) of the Act to declare Mr Savage ineligible to stand for election or to be appointed to, or to hold office in, the position of secretary and/or member of the governing body of all registered clubs.
  - Order Mr Savage under section 57H(2)(i) of the Act to pay the amount of any costs incurred by L&GNSW in conducting its investigation or inquiry under section 35A of the Act in relation to Mr Savage.

### Submissions in reply

Mr Savage provided his submissions in reply in three tranches.

In his submissions provided 27 January 2026 he noted:

- He would provide an independent quantity surveyor's report and auditor's summary.
- The lack of governance knowledge among directors of small clubs is a large problem.
- The Club's current board support him and are attempting to recover deleted Club information from hard drives.

On 2 March 2026 he submitted:

- He was finalising a quantity surveyor's report, which experienced delays due to the amount of detail in the report.
- His disappointment in L&GNSW's claim that he stole money from the Club.
- He has support from the management, board and members at the Club.
- The timelines for response as a result of the disciplinary complaint took a personal and financial toll on him.
- He was the only person with the resources and ability to make changes and modifications to the Club, and the seven directors knew about the required urgent changes.
- He had no issue with the Authority removing him as CEO, as he did not want the role and had no training in the area.

Mr Savage provided his final submissions in reply on 5 April 2026, as summarised below:

- Mr Savage provided an Independent Cost Estimate prepared by Muller Partnership for various refurbishment works to the Club. The works were estimated in the report to amount to \$1,339,000 (excluding GST). The works were carried out between 2017 and 2023 based on requests by the Club at different times throughout the years as needed. The works included demolishing, replacing, altering, modifying, repairing and refurbishing sections both inside and outside of the Club.
- Mr Savage provided a spreadsheet of repairs that were not invoiced.

### **Further notices and submissions**

On 15 May 2026, a further notice was issued to Mr Savage under section 57J(2) of the Act inviting him to show cause why a declaration under section 57H(2)(g)(ii) of the Act that he is ineligible to stand for election or to be appointed to, or to hold office in, the position of secretary or member of the governing body of all registered clubs for 12 months should not be made.

On 4 June 2026, Mr Savage provided a response to the show cause notice declaration in which he submitted:

- He has responded to requests to unfounded and damaging allegations for three years, at considerable personal and financial costs.
- He has dedicated 30 years of service to the Club and accepted a position he did not seek to assist in protecting and stabilising an organisation that is important to him.
- He has worked with the board of the Club to turn the Club around from substantial debt to a sustainable operation. Mr Savage believes this shows his commitment, integrity and suitability to serve.
- The statement that he is 'not a fit and proper person' is not supported by the facts.

### **Our findings**

We are satisfied that the ground of complaint under section 57F(3)(g) of the Act has been established on the balance of probabilities.

Mr Savage, in his role of former President, Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Club, failed to comply with his duties and obligations as a member of the governing body of a

registered club and his behaviour demonstrated a failure to understand and comply with legislation.

Mr Savage failed to properly record conflicts of interest and should have been aware and disclosed the direct conflict of interest using his companies for the construction works at the Club. Mr Savage also failed to obtain competitive quotes and failed to follow tender processes for the construction works carried out at the Club.

Mr Savage lacked awareness of his duties and the proper processes required to be a member of the governing body of a registered club.

Mr Savage's conduct demonstrates that he does not have the required knowledge and competency to be considered a fit and proper person to be the secretary or a member of a governing body of a registered club.

In consideration of all the circumstances of this complaint, we are of the view that disciplinary action is warranted.

### **Relevant legislation**

Part 6A of the Act.

### **Prescribed ground of complaint**

We are satisfied that the complaint was validly made.

### **The material we considered**

In determining the disciplinary complaint, the following material was considered:

- disciplinary complaint from L&GNSW, received 28 May 2025
- additional material provided by L&GNSW, received 6 August 2025
- a submission from Mr Savage, received 24 November 2025
- a submission received from L&GNSW, received 22 December 2025
- a submission from Mr Savage, received 27 January 2026
- a submission from Mr Savage, received 2 March 2026
- a submission from Mr Savage, received 5 April 2026
- a submission from Mr Savage in response to the show cause notice issued under section 57J(2) of the Act, received 4 June 2026

### **If you are dissatisfied with this decision**

The respondent or complainant may apply to NCAT for a review of this decision under the *Administrative Decisions Review Act 1997*.

For more information, please contact the NCAT Registry at 1300 006 228 or visit the NCAT website.

This decision will be published on the website.

### **If you have any questions**

Please contact the Office of ILGA at [office@ilga.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@ilga.nsw.gov.au) if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely



Jeff Loy  
**Chair, Disciplinary Matters Committee**  
**NSW Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority**