



COMMUNITY RUGBY LEAGUE

# Ground Manager Handbook

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Creating a positive environment for both home and visiting teams and spectators



 **Play Your Part. Protect The Game.**

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## Duties of a Ground Manager

As a Ground Manager, you will be responsible for the off-field environment of matches, and the compliance of the NRL National Code of Conduct, including managing spectator behaviour (both home & visiting) at games, and always ensuring the safety and wellbeing of everyone.

Ground Managers must have completed the online Ground Manager Induction Course

Ground Managers should ALWAYS be wearing the supplied RED Ground Manager vest/shirt. Ground Managers should set a reasonable standard of dress, including closed in footwear.

Ground Managers must not consume alcohol whilst on duty and should decline the role if they have consumed any alcohol prior to the game.

If at anytime you need clarity or reassurance on a ruling, matter or incident, you should contact your Local League Administrator

## What are the ideal attributes of a Ground Manager?

- **Knowledgeable** - understand competition rules, policies, procedures, facility layout, emergency contacts etc
- **People Skills** - Excellent communication skills, a cooperative and positive attitude, and a friendly manner, along with the confidence to navigate a range of situations and work effectively with diverse personalities.
- **Organisational Skills & Time Management** - ability to manage game days to ensure a positive, safe and family friendly environment that functions smoothly and efficiently
- **Conflict Resolution** - Ability to effectively deal with difficult people and personalities, and to manage challenging or unwanted situations involving your club, the visiting club, or both
- **Observation & Perception** - Demonstrated observation and perception skills, with the ability to maintain situational awareness, recognise potential triggers, and interpret verbal cues and body language to identify situations that may present a risk

## As a Ground Manager, you are bound by the following Club Officials standards

- Uphold the integrity of the game of Rugby League at all times
- Make a decision in the best interests of the game of Rugby League
- Place the safety and welfare of the players and officials as the top priority
- Accept responsibility for all decisions made
- Always act in a sportsmanlike manner, respecting opposition players, team, club officials and spectators

## Local League Rules

- It is the responsibility of the Ground Manager to make sure that they have a good working understanding of Local League rules
- Your Local League will have rules around sign on procedures and also rules and by-laws that you as Ground Manager will be responsible to implement
- Have a copy of Local League Rules on hand, in case you have questions raised on game day

Do everything possible to ensure the safety and wellbeing of players, officials and spectators while they are at the venue

# Play Your Part

## Supporting Match Officials – the Ground Manager should do the following:

- Ensure the safety and welfare of match officials
- Introduce themselves to all individuals officiating on the day
- Supervise (accompany if necessary) match officials to and from the field, at all breaks
- Monitor the environment to identify any potential risks to match officials
- Liaise with club duty official to identify and diffuse negative spectator behaviour
- Liaise with referee regarding game status (continue/terminate)
- Ground Managers should address any individuals who are directing comments towards the match officials, and communicate the consequences for this type of behaviour.

## Key roles of a Ground Manager:

- Manage the sidelines
- Monitor coaching staff behaviour
- Closely observe interchanges
- Manage and report sin bins and send offs
- Implement the mercy rule (as per local league rules)
- Undertake crowd control
- Identify and defuse negative spectator behaviour

## Managing Game Day

- Ensure all equipment is present
- Ensure teams are on the field on time
- Ensure games start on time
- Ensure rules are enforced
- ENSURE EVERYONE IS HAVING A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

In the case of serious incident and emergencies, is it better to be over cautious, than have people in an unsafe environment.



If there is a hazard on the field that cannot be rectified, contact your President first, then together, contact the League Administrator or land owner as soon as practical to arrange relocation of the days games.

## Check of Playing Surface Facilities

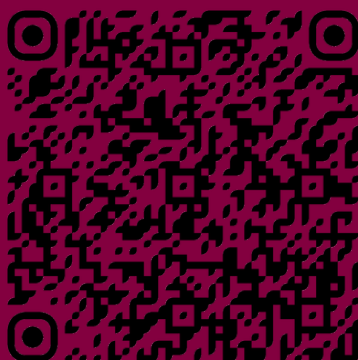
Ground Manager undertakes an inspection of the venue and the playing surface. A simple walk over the playing surface will allow you to identify:

- Trip hazards - any large holes, divots, sprinkler heads etc on field
- An overly wet or dry surface
- Materials on the field that could cause injury - glass, plastic, rocks
- You should ensure that the field is marked appropriately and post pads, field markers and ropes are in place

## Fencing – to keep spectators at a safe distance from field of play

- Do fields have permanent fencing?
- Fields with temporary fencing (roped off) – area of a playing field is constructed at a minimum three (3) metres from the external perimeters of the field of play

## On Field Safety Personnel



Scan Me  
On Field Report

AGE	MINIMUM PERSONNEL REQUIRED	MINIMUM ACCREDITATION REQUIRED
U6-7	One (1) x First Responder for up to four (4) matches being played on an International Field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• League First Aid; or</li> <li>• NRL Level 1 Sports Trainer; or</li> <li>• NRL Level 2 Sports Trainer</li> </ul>
U8-9	One (1) x First Responder for up to three (3) matches being played on an International Field.	
U10-12	One (1) x First Responder per match	
U13-15	One (1) x First Responder per team for each match.	
U16+	One (1) x First Responder per team for each match.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRL Level 1 Sports Trainer; or</li> <li>• NRL Level 2 Sports Trainer.</li> </ul>

- Each venue has appropriate safety personnel in attendance
- Each team has appropriate safety personnel in attendance
- On field safety personnel are marked on the sign on sheet
- On field safety personnel have signed the sign on sheet, prior to commencement of the game

## To Do

Before games commence the Ground Manager is to ensure that the following Game Day Equipment is on hand to facilitate the days games:

GOAL POST PADS, CORNER POSTS, OFFICIALS TABLES, CLOCKS (RECOMMENDED 3 - GAME CLOCK, SIN BIN CLOCK & TIME OFF CLOCK), OFFICIALS VESTS, SIRENS (TO SIGNAL TIME), BENCHES, FIRST-AID KITS, ICE, MODIFIED RULES VESTS, FOOTBALLS

## Checking players/officials identity

- Sign on sheets for all home and visiting teams (if you are not using digital versions)
- Check appropriate accreditations and player identification (team manager should present to the Ground Manager to show their MySideline player cards and also identification/accreditations for associated team staff, at the prescribed time from the League Administrator)
- Do not allow games to commence without the necessary, suitably qualified sports trainer and coaches as per the NRL On Field Policy.

Rules can change each year – you should ensure that you read the Laws each season



## Managing the Sideline

- Reserve players should be seated on their respective sides of the officials table. They should be seated (on benches), not standing, and they should not impede the view of the table officials
- Coaches should remain at the bench at all times and should not directly comment to any match official or opposition, during games
- First responders and Leagusafes are to be seated at the reserves bench, unless they are performing their duties in accordance with the rules and NRL On Field Policy.
- They are not to pace up and down the sideline, unless they are performing an approved duty

## Player Interchange

When players are being interchanged during a match, the Ground Manager should ensure the correct procedures are followed:

- Interchange may only occur during general play
- A maximum of two (2) interchange players may take place at any one time
- A replaced player must cross the touchline or dead ball line, prior to their replacement taking the field and do so from an on-side position
- An interchange must not be made after the referee has ordered a scrum, until the scrum has been completed unless it is to replace a bleeding player and the referee has:
  - ~ Signalled a stoppage in play
  - ~ The trainers have advised the referee that the interchange is to take place
  - ~ The scrum is a result of a touchline stoppage



**Best practice – 3 Ground Manager's**  
**1. Centralised Ground Manager (must have)**  
**2. Roaming Ground Manager - clockwise**  
**3. Roaming Ground Manager - anti-clockwise**



## Sin Bin

- **When a player is sin binned, they are required to sit out of the game for 10 minutes or the required time as per local league competition rules**
- **The Ground Manager should have a designated place where sin binned players can sit during their time off field (unless requiring medical attention)**
- **The Ground Manager should ensure that the player remains in the designated place during their time off the field**
- **The sin bin clock should be started when the player has crossed the sideline and the referee has signalled time back on**
- **The player should be notified when there is one minute remaining on their sin bin clock**



## Send Off

- **When a player is sent off by the referee, they are unable to take any further part in the game**
- **The player should be directed to leave the enclosed playing area and remove their playing jersey immediately**
- **The send off, should be marked against the player on the sign on sheet**
- **The Ground Manager should ensure the player does not re-enter the enclosed playing field**
- **The Ground Manager should also maintain harmony between any sent off players and the opposition, when the game is finalised and all players leave the enclosed playing field area**



## Mercy Rule

**In community Rugby League, matches can be terminated when there is a very large points differential. Please check with your Local League to know the correct number. If that number is achieved, the Ground Manager should ensure that full time is signalled as soon as the differential is reached. Should both coaches agree to continue play, the game may continue, but no further scores will be recorded.**

## Incidents

- **Incident (breach of NRL National Code of Conduct) – provide a detailed recount of the incident to your League Administrator by completing a Incident Reporting Form**
- **Encourage witnesses to complete a detailed written account of the incident, by completing a Incident Reporting Form**
- **Ensure written records of all ‘authorised persons’ (except coaches, trainers, team managers & players) allowed inside the spectator fence, are kept and present them upon request to the League, if required**

## Crowd Control

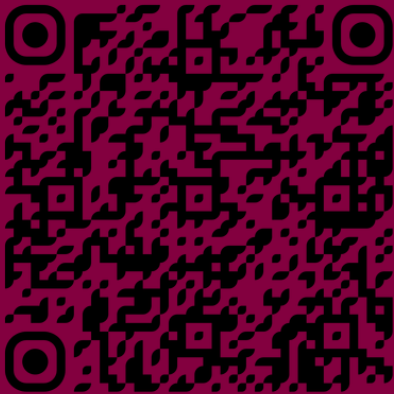
- **Spectators should be kept outside of the playing enclosure, at all times**
- **The only people allowed inside the playing enclosure, are players, match officials, accredited coaches, sports trainers, and team managers, who are participants in the current match**
- **The safety of referees, officials and players is paramount, when it comes to crowd control**
- **Should anyone enter the field of play without permission, the referee should be alerted immediately and the game should be stopped, until the offending person has been removed**
- **In the event of an on field injury, especially to a junior player, parents should be reminded to stay outside of the playing enclosure while the player is assessed by a first responder**

## Inclement Weather

- **The Ground Manager should confer with the referee with regards to continuation of play**
- **The Ground Manager should uphold Heat Guidelines – consult with sports trainers and referee - to negotiate breaks**
- **In the event of localised electrical storms, games can be terminated or suspended for a period of time, if the referee and/or Ground Manager are concerned about lightning**

## Termination of Games

- The Ground Manager has the authority to request the termination of a game by the referee, due to safety or security issues
- If there is a breach of the rules of the NRL National Code of Conduct that cannot be rectified, or that is repeated after notification by the Ground Manager, the nearest touch judge should be approached and asked to alert the centre referee to the situation. If there are no touch judges, you will need to gain the attention of the referee as soon as it is safely possible
- If a match is terminated, the Ground Manager should complete an incident report



Scan Me  
2026 Incident  
Reporting Form

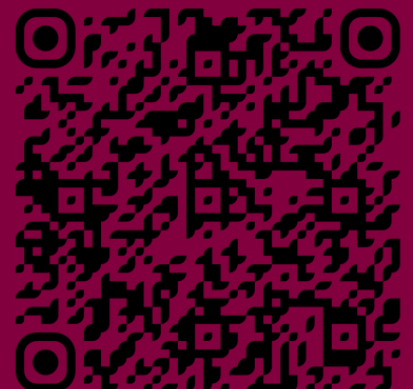
## Identification of Team Staff or Spectators

- To identify a person that commits a breach of the rules, the Ground Manager is authorised to approach the coach, sports trainers and team management of the team that the offending person is supporting, and request the offenders name/details
- If the coach, sports trainers or team management refuse to identify the person concerned, or if they hinder efforts to obtain the identity of the person, they will be in breach of the NRL National Code of Conduct



Always approach people in a warm and friendly manner

Scan Me  
Code Of Conduct





## **Suspended Person in Attendance**

**If you become aware that a suspended person is in attendance you should:**

- **Take a photo of the suspended person, if possible**
- **Approach the suspended person, with another club official, and ask them to leave the venue**
- **If they refuse to leave, approach the nearest touch judge, have them alert the referee, and request that the game be stopped**
- **Again, approach the suspended person, and inform them that the game will not recommence until they leave the venue**
- **If they still refuse to leave, call the police**
- **In all circumstances, even if the suspended person leaves immediately upon request, the incident should be reported to the League Administrator**



## **Serious Incident Reporting**

**Although extremely rare, as a Ground Manager, you may need to deal with a serious incident at your ground. It is important to ensure:**

- **If a person requires medical attention, that people are providing the relevant first aid. Ensure they are removed from danger and stop the game if required**
- **Move people away from incident and return teams to dressing shed, if required and safe**
- **As Ground Manager, if an ambulance is required, call 000. Ensure the venue is accessible and not obstructed by vehicles and crowd. Enlist people to help manage this process**
- **As Ground Manager, oversee the incident. Reassure people and parents. If police are required, call 000**
- **Remember, the safety of all participants is paramount, so ensure teams, match officials and everyone is safe**
- **If the incident is of a serious nature, the League Administrator should be informed immediately**
- **As Ground Manager, be vigilant in monitoring who has witnessed the event, as you may need to get reports from these people**
- **If there are offenders involved in an incident, the Ground Manager will need to try and identify these people or speak to witnesses to ascertain their identity**
- **Ground Manager should also obtain any footage of the incident to assist with disciplinary matters**
- **The Ground Manager should ensure that everyone is cooperating and assisting the emergency services teams**
- **In all cases, incident reports, match reports and photos, should be provided to relevant League Administrator**

**Many tasks to juggle!! Be confident, direct people, ask for help when required**

# Situational Awareness and De-Escalation:

*Be proactive not reactive.*

**The role of the Ground Manager is critical in setting the standard for behaviour at our venues. What is accepted, ignored, or dismissed as “just part of the game” quickly becomes normalised. Ground Managers play a key role in challenging this mindset by being proactive, visible, and confident in addressing inappropriate behaviour as it occurs. By intervening early, reporting incidents, and reinforcing expectations aligned with the Code of Conduct, Ground Managers help shape a positive, safe, and inclusive environment. Culture is defined by what we tolerate—Ground Managers help ensure unacceptable behaviours are neither overlooked nor excused.**



# Situational Awareness

**Seeing issues before they escalate isn't always easy. We can't predict what might trigger an outburst from a parent or spectator, but there are key things to be mindful of:**

## ➤ Potential Triggers

- **Environment, temperature, noise, long wait lines**
- **Communication difficulties**
- **Cultural differences and discrimination**
- **Entitlement mentality**
- **Anxiety, past trauma, financial difficulties or excessive physical/emotional pain**
- **Physical or mental illnesses**
- **Influence of drugs and/or alcohol**

## ➤ Verbal cues

- **Raised voice – outburst, crankiness**
- **Inconsistent tone of voice**
- **Rapid speech – sentences are shorter and sharper**
- **Slurred speech – could indicate drug and alcohol affected**
- **Interruptions – not allowing you to get a word in**
- **Inappropriate language - swearing, sarcasm**
- **Verbal abuse and/or threats – including self-harm**

## ➤ **Body language**

- **Signs of stress such as pacing up and down the sideline, fidgeting, tapping feet**
- **Displays of tension such as clenching fists/jaw and strained facial expressions, muscle tension**
- **Emotional outbursts**
- **Breathing changes, breaths become more laboured, or breaths are deeper**
- **Staring**
- **Banging, stamping feet**

## ➤ **Instincts – follow your gut**

- **Instincts can be wrong, but it is better to be safe than sorry**

## ➤ **Spatial Awareness**

- **Have you got an easy exit**
- **What is the reach of the person you are speaking with**
- **Is there a barrier between you and the person**
- **Have you got support – pair up!**

The above are applicable to the GM too.

What are their triggers, how are there verbal cues and body language?



# De-escalation

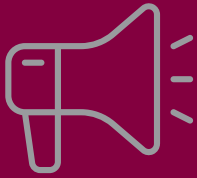
*You find yourself in a situation where you need to speak to a parent/spectator*

➤ **Ask yourself - are you the right person to deal with the situation or should you engage someone else? Know your limitations of what you can and can't handle**

- **having a member of their club present**
- **cultural awareness**
- **male and female**

**WHAT IS THE INTENT OF THE BEHAVIOUR?**





# ASK, WARN, ACT, REPORT

## ASK

- **Polite**
  - how are you approaching the situation – are you being passive aggressive – how is your tone?
- **Acknowledgment**
  - Acknowledge emotions, not blame
- **Active listening**
  - Paraphrase what you hear to show you are listening
  - Use calm, neutral language
  - focus on the real issue e.g. the issue isn't that they are getting kicked out of the ground, the issue is they will miss out on supporting their family member
- **Body language**
  - Keep a safe distance
  - Open stance (opens peripheral vision)

## WARN

- **Authority**
- be calm, clear, and confident, set plain expectations, set firm boundaries with consequences, offer a clear choice
- Ask, tell, warn, act, report
- Questions, solutions, options & choice

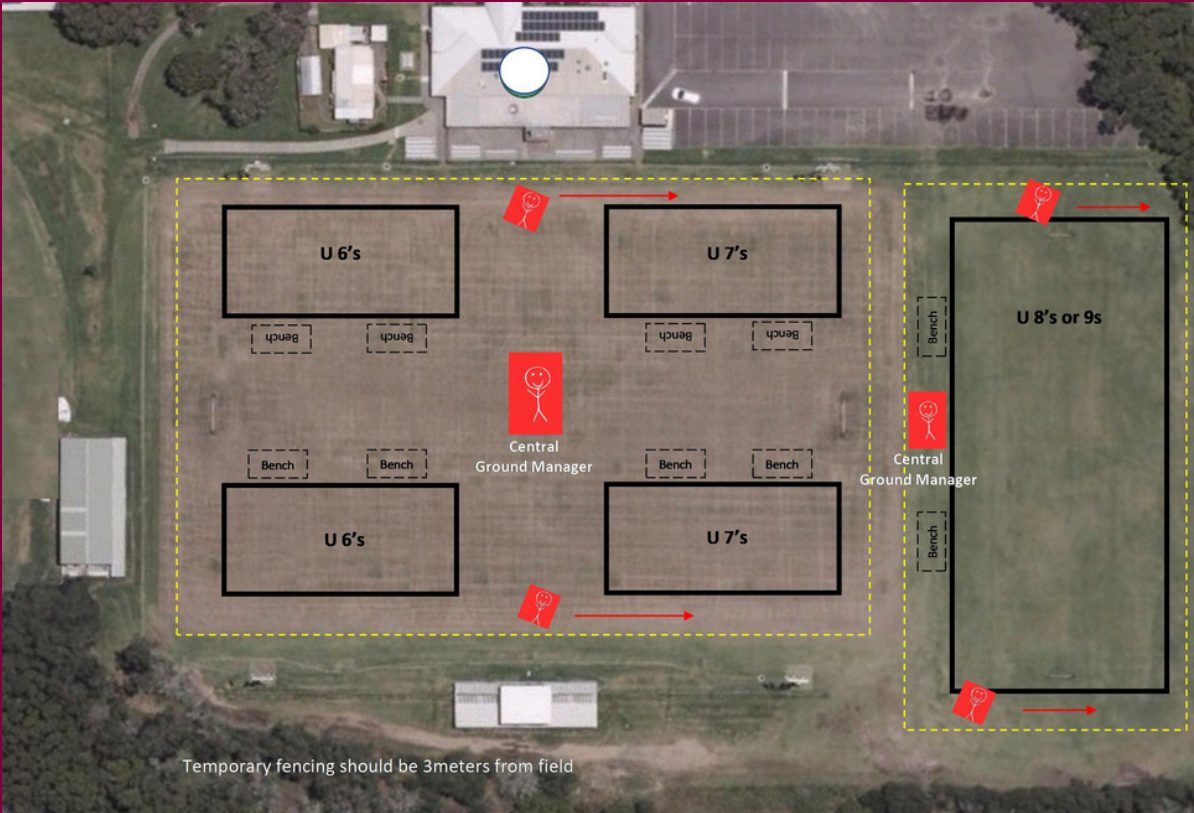
## ACT

- Instincts - follow your gut
- Don't act outside of your capacity
- Annoyance or frustration = respond and deescalate
- Behaviour is unacceptable = disengage, seek assistance
- Concerns for safety = code/duress initiated

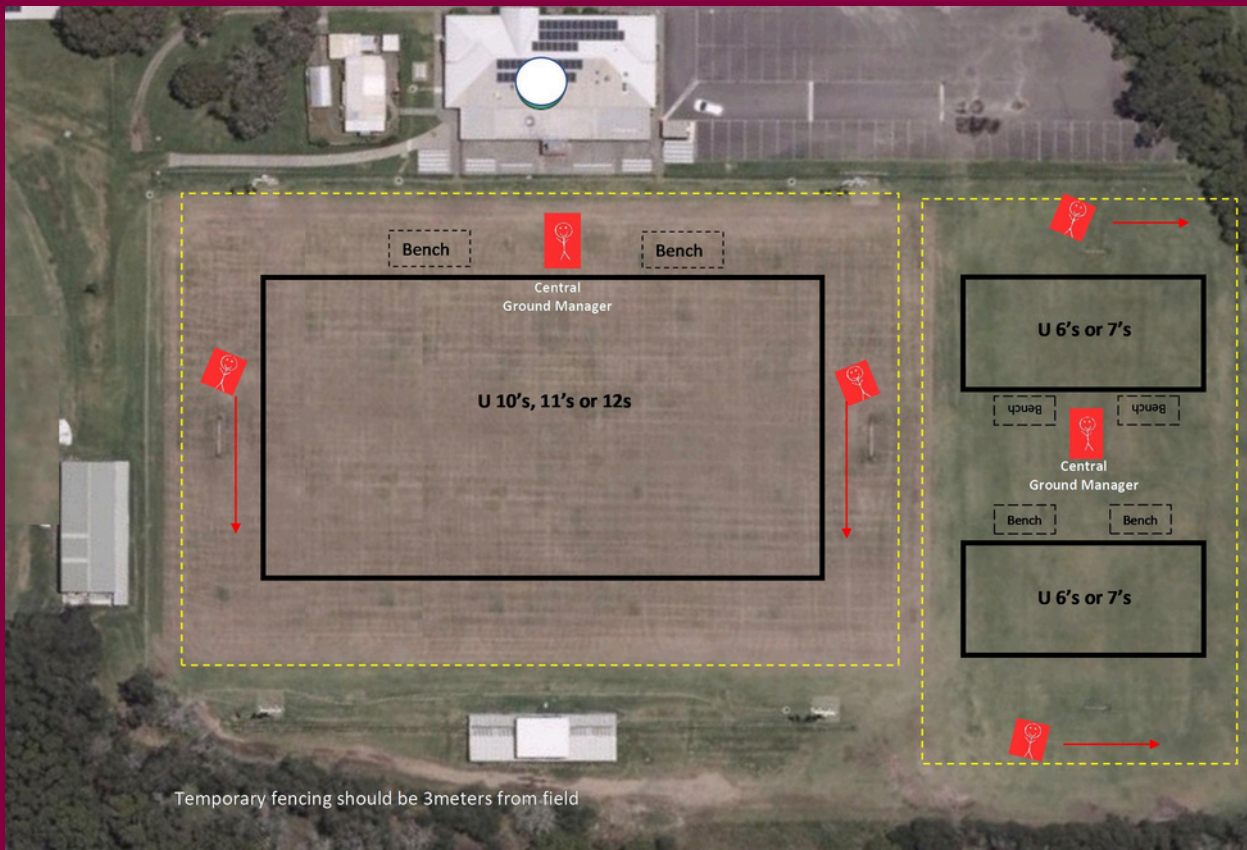
## REPORT

- Reporting good and poor behaviours using the Incident Reporting Form or Positive Experience Reporting Form

# Field Layout - Ground Manager Presence



# Field Layout - Ground Manager Presence



# Field Layout - Ground Manager Presence



NRL Code of  
Conduct



QRL Code of  
Conduct  
Demerit Point  
Program -  
PDF



QRL Incident  
Reporting Form



QRL Positive  
Experience  
Reporting Form



Junior  
League Laws  
(U6-U12)



International  
Laws (13+)



Other Laws  
of the Game



NRL On Field  
Policy



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## References and Resources

- [NRL Code of Conduct](#)
- [QRL Positive Environment Program](#)
- [PEP Incident Reporting Form](#)
- [PEP Program Brochure](#)
- [Junior League Laws \(6-12's\)](#)
- [International Laws \(13+\)](#)
- [Other Laws of the Game](#)