



**2022**

**QUEENSLAND RUGBY LEAGUE  
MEMBER PROTECTION POLICY**

(Reviewed 12 December 2023)



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## Welcome

The Queensland Rugby League (QRL) is committed to providing a safe, welcoming environment for everyone in our community.

The QRL Member Protection Policy (MPP) is an essential part of our proactive approach to promoting and embedding our cornerstone values of Positivity, Unity, Inclusivity and Discipline. The QRL MPP outlines expectations we hold for the attitudes, behaviours, conduct and obligations of our members and participants.

The protection of our members is paramount, especially junior and other vulnerable participants and as such, this policy is influenced by Human Rights frameworks and legislation, as well as the latest research, evidence and best practice in sport. In the development of the QRL MPP, consideration was also given to how the sport of rugby league will grow into the future, ensuring the individual needs of our participants are supported and valued. The processes and guidelines detailed in this MPP, have been designed to create a positive duty practice and promote positive action to prevent inappropriate conduct.

The QRL takes all inappropriate conduct seriously and is committed to addressing issues based on the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. We are also committed to referring issues on to appropriate authorities where relevant and abiding in their professional advice and support.

We are incredibly grateful to all our staff, volunteers, parents and spectators to assist in upholding our values, as well as Member Protection Information Officers who provide invaluable support across multiple domains.

Thank you all for helping us uphold the community spirit of our great game.

Ben Ikin  
Chief Executive Officer  
Queensland Rugby League



## Policy Purpose

This Policy clearly outlines the Queensland Rugby League's (QRL) commitment to creating a safe, fair and inclusive environment whereby participants are expected to respect and uphold the dignity of all. This Policy aims to protect participants from bullying, discrimination, vilification, harassment, abuse or any other inappropriate or illegal conduct. It further details how breaches of this Policy and complaints can be made, and how these are handled in a fair and consistent manner. This Policy has been incorporated into the QRL By-Laws.

To meet these objectives the QRL will communicate this Policy to all relevant parties to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities, with specific regard to conduct with children. This Policy will be publicly available and internally promoted. This Policy will be read in conjunction with the QRL Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy and all other relevant QRL and National Rugby League (NRL) policies, strategies and frameworks.

This Policy is created from a positive duty perspective detailing the proactive action that should be taken to prevent inappropriate conduct.

From herein, references to the QRL will include any rugby league, association, club, or affiliates played under the auspices of the QRL.

### Legislation and guiding principles

#### Universal Conventions

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- International Convention against Doping in Sport
- The Macolin Convention

#### Commonwealth Legislation

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Racial Hatred Act 1995
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Sport Integrity Australia Act 2020

#### Queensland Legislation

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
- Criminal Code Act 1899
- Human Rights Act 2019
- Liquor Act 1992
- Major Events Act 2014
- Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998
- Child Protection Act 1999
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000



#### Reports, policies, frameworks and governing bodies

- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- Sport Integrity Australia
- *Sport Australia 2030* Report
- Australian Rugby League Commission
- NRL (including all frameworks & policies)
- QRL (including all frameworks & policies)
  - › QRL Constitution and By-Laws
  - › QRL Reconciliation Action Plan
  - › QRL Diversity and Inclusion Framework
  - › QRL Female Strategy
- World Anti-Doping Code

#### Scope

All individuals involved under games or training facilitated or supported by the QRL must abide by this Policy. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Participants and members
- Players and athletes
- Parents and guardians
- Spectators
- Sponsors
- Coaches and assistant coaches
- Managers, volunteers, referees and other officials
- Support persons (i.e., physiotherapist, doctors)
- Board, Committee and Sub-Committee members, or any individual sitting on a Board
- Peak and affiliated clubs, associated organisations
- Any other person or organisation that is a member or participant of, or affiliated to, the QRL.

**NOTE:** If disciplinary action against an individual has commenced, they will continue to be bound by this Policy even if they are no longer affiliated or employed (even in a voluntary capacity) with the QRL. Once all matters are finalised the individual is released from obligations under this Policy.

**This does not include QRL paid staff:** internal human resource policies and procedures are in place to guide their conduct.

#### Participant responsibilities:

- Be aware of this Policy, including knowledge of how to make a complaint or report a breach
- Contribute to a safe, fair and inclusive sporting environment by consistently upholding the behaviours and attitudes expected within this Policy, including compliance with the Code of Conduct
- Report all child protection concerns and prioritise the safety of children above all other considerations
- Consent to the Blue Cards screening process or advise if this cannot occur
- Provide information on any changes to police status if they occur
- Comply with decisions or disciplinary measures that may arise from a breach of this Policy.



#### State and club responsibilities:

- Provide a safe, fair and inclusive environment, including the promotion of behaviours and attitudes expected of all bound by this Policy
- Embrace and implement all elements of this Policy without fear or favour
- Promote and communicate this Policy to all within scope, ensuring easy access to whom this Policy applies
- Identify and appoint appropriate Member Protection Information Officers
- Deal with breaches of this Policy in a consistent, fair, impartial, confidential and timely manner
- Impose and enforce penalties that may arise from a breach of this Policy
- Conduct annual or post incident reviews.

#### Member Protection Information Officer

Member Protection Information Officers (MPIO) are available at each club. They provide information and guidance on this Policy and the complaints procedure. Individuals are encouraged to speak to their MPIO as the first point of contact to address issues related to this Policy.

MPIO's will be provided training and support to fulfil their obligations under this Policy.

For more information on MPIO role and responsibilities see Position Description.

#### Endorsed and Review

This Policy and associated procedures, forms and governance will be reviewed annually or when a significant incident occurs, whichever comes sooner.

QRL Member Protection Policy		
Version	Date	Endorsed by
1	24 September 2021	QRL Board
To be reviewed <b>annually</b> or <b>post incident</b> Next review is due <b>September 2022</b>		



## Definitions

*Abuse* means to treat another person or animal with cruelty or violence, especially regularly or repeatedly.

*Affiliated club* means an organisation that is affiliated with the QRL or its affiliated state leagues.

*Child* means a person who is under the age of 18.

*Complaint* means a complaint made under this Policy.

*Complainant* means the person making a complaint.

*Harassment* is any type of unwelcome behaviour which has the effect of offending, humiliating or intimidating the person harassed. Unlawful harassment can be based on any of the personal characteristics covered by anti-discrimination law (see the list under "Discrimination").

*Discrimination* on the basis of certain attributes is unlawful under Queensland and Australian legislation. These attributes include:

- sex;
- relationship status;
- pregnancy;
- parental status;
- breastfeeding;
- age;
- race;
- impairment;
- religious belief or religious activity;
- political belief or activity;
- trade union activity;
- lawful sexual activity;
- gender identity;
- sexuality;
- family responsibilities;
- association with, or relation to, a person identified on the basis of any of the above attributes.

*Direct Discrimination:* when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group because of a particular attribute.

*Employment* for the purpose of this policy, is employing another person if the first person has an agreement with the other person for the other person to carry out work. Definition as per *Working with Children (Risk Management) Act 2000* and includes paid or voluntary, one occasion or ongoing basis.

*Indirect Discrimination:* an unreasonable rule or policy that is the same for everyone but has an unfair effect on people who share a particular attribute.

*Gender identity* means the gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person's designated sex at birth.<sup>i</sup>

*LGBTQI* is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and intersex. It is used to refer collectively to these communities. The 'LGB' refers to sexuality/sexual identity; the 'T' refers to gender identity; and the 'I' refers to people who have an intersex variation. 'Q' can refer to either gender identity or sexuality.<sup>ii</sup>



*Member or participant* means a natural person, body corporate or incorporated association admitted to membership of the QRL in accordance with the QRL Constitution.

*Member Protection Information Officer* means a person appointed by us to be the first point of contact for a person reporting an issue or a complaint under, or a breach of, this Policy. Referred to as an MPIO.

*Mixed Gender Policy*: Rugby League (tackle) competitions where male and female competitors can participate in the same teams. There is no exclusion based on gender or gender identity.

*National Rugby League* referred to as NRL.

*Queensland Rugby League* referred to as QRL and includes any rugby league, association, club, or affiliates, played under the auspices of the QRL.

*Policy, policy and this policy* means this QRL Member Protection Policy.

*Racial Discrimination* means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.<sup>iii</sup>

*Religious discrimination*: Discrimination on the basis of religious belief or religious activity can be direct or indirect. Direct discrimination is treating a person less favourably because of their religious belief or religious activity (including not having a religion) than someone without that religious belief or religious activity, in similar circumstances. Indirect discrimination happens where there is unreasonable requirement that people with a certain attribute (or characteristic) would have difficulty complying with, compared to others without that attribute.

*Sexual discrimination*: Where a person discriminates against another person (the aggrieved person), directly or indirectly, on the ground of the sex of the aggrieved person based on:

- the sex of the aggrieved person;
- a characteristic that appertains generally to persons of the sex of the aggrieved person; or
- a characteristic that is generally attributed to persons of the sex of the aggrieved person.

*Volunteer* as per *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening Act 2000)* is a person who is employed by another person and does not carry out any work for the other person for a financial reward. This includes volunteers who may receive an honorarium.

*Vilification* means behaviour that occurs in public which incites hatred towards, serious contempt for, or revulsion or severe ridicule of a person or group of people because that person or persons have a particular personal characteristic.





## Code of Conduct

All participants bound by this Policy will abide by the NRL Code of Conduct.

*'The NRL Code of Conduct provides all participants – players, parents, coaches, referees, spectators and officials – with some simple rules that assist in delivering a safe and positive environment to everyone involved in the game.*

*Within that safe environment, every Rugby League participant has the best chance to enjoy the game. By accepting the standards of behavior in the Code, we provide opportunities for young boys and girls to grow on the field - we build good players, good citizens and good communities in which Rugby League is a social asset. It is strongly recommended that everyone connected with Rugby League adopts these rules as an essential part of the way they contribute to our great game.*

*According to the general principles of the code, participants are encouraged and expected to:*

- *show positive acts of sportsmanship,*
- *demonstrate the greatest levels of respect*
- *lead by positive example*
- *celebrate the "good news" stories*
- *accept that the integrity of the sport is of paramount importance.*

*To view or download a copy of the code please click below'*

[NRL Code of Conduct](#)



## Child Safeguarding

### Policy Statement

All children participating in programs and events associated with the QRL have a right to participate in an environment which protects their interests, wellbeing and safety, and protects them from harm.

The QRL is committed to implementing and maintaining the Australian National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. To effectively achieve this the *QRL Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy* has been developed.

The QRL holds a zero-tolerance approach to the abuse or harm of children, and any such conduct will be reported to appropriate authorities.

### *QRL Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy*

### Guiding Principles

- All children who engage in rugby league have a right to safety and protection from harm
- Child safety and protection is the responsibility of all
- The QRL prioritises the safety, health and well-being of children above all other considerations
- The QRL welcomes all children, irrespective of gender, culture, religious or sexual orientation, and abilities/disability to participate in QRL activities
- The QRL is established upon a culture to reduce the likelihood of harm
- The QRL will appropriately respond to all allegations, disclosures or suspicions of harm and, appropriately respond to breaches of the QRL Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy
- The QRL recognises some children have increased risk and vulnerability including those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and children with disabilities
- The QRL strives for continuous improvement in leadership, governance and accountability around child protection matters.

### How we will achieve this

- Adhere to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, Queensland child protection legislation and employ effective risk management strategies
- Senior leaders will work towards creating a safe and inclusive environment and embed child protection in leadership, governance and culture
- Improve children's participation in understanding ways to protect themselves, pathways to report feeling unsafe and education that no one has the right to invade their privacy or make them feel unsafe
- Regularly seek child, parental, guardian and community feedback on ways to improve policy and procedures to ensure the safety of children and participants
- Rigorous screening, selection, training (annually) and management of all QRL individuals, especially those working directly with children
- The Clubs and Leagues will undertake an annual review of staff and volunteers who participate in child related services including coaching, assistant coaching and first responders
- Ensure the environment is conducive to minimising risk i.e., physical spaces, online activities, upholding privacy and confidentiality.



- Take immediate action if a complaint is made and implement temporary and necessary safeguards.
- Reporting of harm or suspicions of harm is completed in line with legislated requirements and best practice recordkeeping.
- Ongoing review of legislated requirements and evidence based best practice.
- A person charged or convicted of child related abuse is managed in accordance with risk. If it is determined that the QRL cannot adequately manage the risk, then the individual may be prohibited from attending or engaging in activities.
- This Policy is made available.

For more information see the *QRL Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy*. This includes information on breaches, complaints, reporting practices and all other aspects of ensuring children remain safe.



## Discrimination, Vilification, Harassment and Abuse

### Policy Statement

The QRL welcomes all people to participate in and enjoy rugby league, and is committed to promoting equal opportunity, inclusivity and fairness of all persons. We expect all individuals bound by this Policy to conduct themselves with integrity, and in a manner consistent with the QRL Beliefs – *We are Positive, We are Inclusive, We are United and We are Disciplined*.

The QRL has zero tolerance for the discrimination, vilification, harassment or abuse based on a person's attributes, and any such conduct will be taken seriously.

### Scope

The QRL expects participants bound by this Policy to consistently engage in pro-social behaviours and respectful relationships whether this be in person, online or via any other mediums.

Appropriate conduct is expected on and off the playing field including game days, events and training sessions. Appropriate conduct is further expected on online platforms, with specific regard to social media. The QRL acknowledges the value of social media to promote and value our sport and our people, including individual and collective achievements. The QRL strictly prohibits the use of social media for inappropriate conduct.

Any inappropriate conduct may be considered a breach of this Policy and attract criminal or other civil litigation action.

### Exemptions

Legislation allows for a person or group of people to be differentiated against in some circumstances to balance the complex needs of society. Exemptions exist for the purposes of sport.

As rugby league is a physical contact sport which has regard to a person's strength, stamina and physical attributes, some individuals may be restricted from playing or training in certain teams, or modes of the game. Other restrictions can exist based on people who can effectively compete, people within a specific age or age group and/or those with specific or general impairments.

These restrictions do not apply to:

- sporting activity for children under 12 years of age
- individuals who are coaches, referees, first responders or administrators
- a sporting activity prescribed by regulation.

Some groups may receive 'special measures' for the purpose of achieving equality.

### Complaints

If you experience or witness any form of discrimination, vilification, harassment, or abuse based on the above attributes then a complaint should be made. The QRL takes all such matters seriously and may report inappropriate conduct to relevant authorities.

Complaints can also be made to the Queensland Human Rights Commission.

See the Complaints Procedure for further information.



## Culture

### Policy Statement

The QRL welcomes people from all culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to participate in and enjoy the game of rugby league.

The QRL is committed to promoting environments free from any form of racism, discrimination, vilification, harassment or abuse based on a person's culture or ethnicity. There is no room in rugby league for any such conduct, it is strictly prohibited. Participants face serious consequences including lifetime bans.

The QRL acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Australia and recognises their connection to land, wind, water and community. The QRL recognises the great contribution First Nations People have given rugby league and are committed to celebrating and recognising these communities and individuals at all levels of the game. The QRL is committed to improving outcomes for First Nation People, which is reflected through a number of initiatives.

We are committed to promoting and embedding reconciliation in all we do, and will work with First Nations Peoples, and those from other CALD backgrounds to create culturally safe and inclusive environments in our sport.

### Definition

Racial Discrimination means *any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.*<sup>iv</sup>

### Culture further explored....

The QRL will continue to promote and facilitate cultural diversity, through avenues such as the National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC) week, National Harmony Day and multicultural tournaments. These provide opportunities for communities and individuals from CALD backgrounds to participate in teams that represent their community, culture or nation of origin; fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

The QRL will proactively educate all participants on culture and diversity, and in some instances, this may form a mandatory element of player or participant contracts. There are several strategies, policies and frameworks to ensure racism has no place in rugby league, participants are expected to be familiar with these.

All participants (including between players on the field, and between spectators and players) are expected to demonstrate tolerance, acceptance and understanding of cultural differences. Language shall never be used to belittle, abuse, humiliate, threaten or shame another person especially in relation to a person's culture.

### Complaint

If you experience or witness any form of racism, discrimination, vilification, harassment or abuse based on culture or ethnicity then a complaint should be made. The QRL takes all such matters seriously and may report inappropriate conduct to relevant authorities.



## All Abilities

### Policy Statement

The QRL acknowledges all people have equal right to participate in recreation, leisure and sporting activities irrespective of their abilities.

The QRL is committed to removing barriers, and will encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of people with disabilities to take part in rugby league.

There may be risks involved in participating in rugby league, however the QRL believes the individual, along with their medical professionals, are best placed to determine these risks and subsequent level of involvement.

To ensure the health and safety of all persons, the QRL will exercise a duty of care when people with disabilities participate in rugby league, whilst adhering to professional medical advice.

The QRL has zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, or abuse based upon a person's physical or mental ability or disability, whether this is direct or indirect. Any such conduct is likely to breach this Policy and, in some circumstances, may attract legal action.

### Definitions

Disability Discrimination: *when a person with a disability is treated less favourably than a person without the disability in the same or similar circumstances.*<sup>v</sup>

Disability legislation provides a broad definition of **disability** but seeks to include:

*...physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities. It also includes physical disfigurement and the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms, such as the HIV virus.*

*...(it) covers disabilities that people have now, had in the past, may have in the future or which they are believed to have.*<sup>vi</sup>

### All Abilities further explored....

According to legislation, discrimination in sport is unlawful unless the following criteria are met:

- a person is not reasonably capable of performing actions reasonably required in relation to the sporting activity;
- people who participate in the sporting activity are selected by a method which is reasonable on the basis of relevant skills and abilities; or
- a sporting activity is conducted only for persons who have a particular disability and the person does not have that disability.<sup>vii</sup>

The QRL endorses modified games and training to provide sporting opportunities for those with differing abilities, especially children. We will continue to educate ourselves and our participants to promote inclusive attitudes, behaviours and the use of appropriate terminology. Open communication between the QRL, All Abilities participants, academics and professionals will ensure informed decision making occurs at all levels of the game.

As far as possible, the QRL will provide access to appropriate sporting venues, facilities and training equipment to assist those with disabilities participate in rugby league.



Individuals are encouraged to speak to the local QRL League and Club Co-Ordinator to assist in accessing the most appropriate training and matches. The QRL holds the right to seek independent medical advice to ensure a duty of care is upheld.

### Complaint

If you experience or witness any form of discrimination, harassment or abuse based on a disability then a complaint should be made.

The QRL takes all such matters seriously and may report inappropriate conduct to relevant authorities.



# Sexual Orientation and Gender identity

## Policy Statement

The QRL supports individual choice for gender identity and sexual orientation.

The QRL sees individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and intersex (LGBTQI) as important participants of our sport and community. The QRL will continuously seek ways to promote inclusivity for these individuals.

The QRL has zero tolerance for any discrimination, vilification, harassment or abuse based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Any such conduct is likely to breach this Policy and, in some circumstances, may attract legal consequences.

### Definition

Sexual discrimination is where a person discriminates against another person (the aggrieved person), directly or indirectly, on the ground of the sex of the aggrieved person based on:

- the sex of the aggrieved person;
- a characteristic that appertains generally to persons of the sex of the aggrieved person; or
- a characteristic that is generally attributed to persons of the sex of the aggrieved person.<sup>viii</sup>

Gender identity means the gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person's designated sex at birth.<sup>ix</sup>

LGBTQI is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and intersex. It is used to refer collectively to these communities. The 'LGB' refers to sexuality/sexual identity; the 'T' refers to gender identity; and the 'I' refers to people who have an intersex variation. 'Q' can refer to either gender identity or sexuality.<sup>x</sup>

Sexuality refers to whether people are heterosexual, homosexual (gay or lesbian), or bisexual.

Sexual Orientation refers to a person's emotional or sexual attraction to another person, including, amongst others, the following identities: heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual or same-sex attracted.

### Sexual orientation and gender identity further explored

The QRL supports transgender persons to play in the team they identify with.

Where a transgender person has, or is likely to, obtain an advantage from playing in a certain team, then individual performances and circumstances may be reviewed. As this matter is likely to be unique to the individual and complex, advice on the application of state or federal discrimination laws may be sought. Participants are assured the matter will be handled with confidentiality, care and sensitivity i.e., male individual transitions to a female, and requests to play in a female team.

Under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) discrimination based on sex, gender identity or intersex status is unlawful except in 'any competitive sporting activity in which the strength, stamina or physique of competitors is relevant'<sup>xi</sup>. This exemption is limited to competitive sporting activities and does not





apply to coaching, refereeing, administration, prescribed sporting activities, or sporting activities by children younger than 12 years of age (see *Mixed Gender Competition*).

The QRL and those bound by this Policy will *not* request information from a person for the purpose of discriminating against them.

As far as possible, and in line with legislation and our Beliefs, the QRL and affiliated clubs will provide equal access to goods, services and facilities to assist those who identify as LGBTQI participate in and enjoy rugby league.

Drug testing procedures and prohibitions apply to people who identify as transgender. A person receiving treatment involving a Prohibited Substance or Method, as described by the World Anti-Doping Agency's Prohibited List, should apply for a standard Therapeutic Use Exemption through Sport Integrity Australia.

- Information on banned substances can be found at the Global Drug Reference Online site
- <https://www.globaldro.com/AU/search>
- Individuals should speak to the QRL MPIO for further information.

The QRL is aware the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has established criteria for selection and participation in the Olympic Games. Where a transgender person intends to compete at an elite level, they will be encouraged to obtain advice from the IOC and this may differ from the QRL's position.

#### Complaint:

If you experience or witness any form of discrimination, vilification, harassment or abuse based on gender identity or sexual orientation then a complaint should be made.

The QRL takes all such matters seriously and may report inappropriate conduct to relevant authorities.



## Sexual Harassment

### Policy Statement

The QRL is committed to facilitating environments where all people can feel safe, supported and have the freedom to enjoy our sport in any capacity. The QRL expects all participants and members bound by this Policy to act with integrity, dignity and respect for all persons.

The QRL has zero tolerance for sexual harassment and takes all matters of inappropriate conduct seriously.

### Definition

Sexual harassment refers to any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that is done either to offend, humiliate or intimidate another person, or where it is reasonable to expect the person might feel that way.<sup>xii</sup>

### Sexual harassment further explored

Sexual harassment can take various forms and may be obvious or subtle, physical or verbal. It includes uninvited physical intimacy such as touching in a sexual way, uninvited sexual propositions, and remarks with sexual connotations.

Sexual harassment is conduct completed without mutual attraction nor consenting behaviours, with the intent of offending, humiliating or intimidating someone, or where a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that someone would be offended, humiliated or intimidated by those actions.

Sexual harassment is illegal and can include:

- unwelcome touching, kissing, staring or leering, unnecessary familiarity such as deliberately brushing up against someone
- suggestive comments or jokes
- sexually explicit pictures or posters
- unwanted repeated invitations to go out on dates, or requests for sex
- insults, taunts or intrusive questions about a person's private life or body
- sexually explicit emails, text messages and social media posts, and
- any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.

### Complaints

If you experience or witness any form of sexual harassment, then a complaint should be made.

The QRL takes all such matters seriously and may report inappropriate conduct to relevant authorities.



## Religion

### Policy Statement

The QRL recognises Australia as a multi-faith society and welcomes people from all religions to participate in and enjoy the game of rugby league. The QRL promotes respectful relationships, as well as tolerance, understanding, coexistence and cooperation of differing religious values.

Vilification or discrimination on the basis of religion is strictly prohibited by all participants bound by this Policy. This includes any public act that incites hate, contempt or ridicule based on an individual's belief system.

The QRL will work to include all differing religious beliefs and practices, whilst balancing the safety and fairness of the game.

### Definitions

Religious discrimination: Discrimination on the basis of religious belief or religious activity can be direct or indirect. Direct discrimination is treating a person less favourably because of their religious belief or religious activity (including not having a religion) than someone without that religious belief or religious activity, in similar circumstances. Indirect discrimination happens where there is unreasonable requirement that people with a certain attribute (or characteristic) would have difficulty complying with, compared to others without that attribute.<sup>xiii</sup>

Religious belief means having or not having a religious belief.

Religious activity means engaging in, not engaging in, or refusing to engage in lawful religious activity.

### Religion further explored...

The QRL will encourage sensitivity and inclusivity for people practicing their faith including, but not limited to:

- where possible and practicable, the provision of prayer or religious observation spaces
- allowing for and having an understanding of those engaged in fasting practices
- accommodating different dress codes (see below)
- where possible, providing single sex change rooms
- consideration of branding, rewards and awards that may contradict religious practices i.e., alcohol as man of the match award for player observing Ramadan
- mixing of genders
- promoting games or training sessions for specific minority groups

The QRL recognises headwear as an important element of religious practices. In this, or other similar circumstances, the QRL requires players to submit playing and training uniform alteration requests to Local QRL Area Manager. Only upon approval from the Local QRL Area Manager will players be able to alter their uniform.

### Complaint

If you experience or witness any form of discrimination, harassment or abuse based on a religious belief then a complaint should be made.

The QRL takes all such matters seriously and may report inappropriate conduct to relevant authorities.



## Mixed Gender Competition

### Policy statement

The QRL welcomes and strongly promotes the inclusion of girls and boys in rugby league. Children can participate in mixed gender competitions (tackle), if they choose to and depending on club/competition availability, up to and including the calendar year (1 January to 31 December) in which they reach 12 years of age.

Girls will not be discouraged from playing with boys however the QRL, where possible, will assist and promote girls-only competitions to broaden the female participation footprint across the QRL.

Lawful exclusions are applicable after participants reach this age based on their strength, stamina and physique; attributes which are deemed relevant to playing rugby league.

### Definition

Mixed Gender Competition: Rugby League (tackle) competitions where male and female competitors can participate in the same teams. There is no exclusion based on gender or gender identity.

### NRL Mixed Gender Policy.

### Mixed Gender further explored

To ensure safety and equality of all players, a range of factors should be considered by coaches, managers, parents and participants when determining an individual's participation in mixed gender competition (tackle). This is relevant only until the end of the season (including the following off-season) in which the player turns 12 years of age.

Considerations may include:

- physiological capabilities; strength, stamina and physique
- motivation for playing
- skill level
- competitiveness
- club support and ability to manage any safety issues
- risk of injury or harm

### Complaint

Should concerns around player participation in particular teams arise, then individuals are encouraged to speak to their MPIO or review the NRL Mixed Gender Policy.

A complaint can also be made.



## Pregnancy

### Policy Statement

The QRL respects a woman's right to safely participate in sporting activities and exercise whilst pregnant and recognises the great benefits this has to her and her unborn child/ren.

The QRL is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, harassment or abuse based on a woman's pregnancy status.

Due to the physical nature of rugby league and to ensure the safety of a woman, her unborn child and all others, a pregnant woman will be required to meet certain criteria (see below).

### Definition

Pregnancy discrimination happens when a woman is treated less favourably than another person because she is pregnant or because she may become pregnant. It is also discrimination when there is an unreasonable requirement or practice that is the same for everyone but has an unfair effect on pregnant women.<sup>xiv</sup>

### Pregnancy further explored

The QRL advises there may be risks involved in participating in rugby league. However, we recognise a pregnant woman and her medical doctor/s are best placed to determine and mitigate these health and safety risks. The QRL will follow advice of a medical professional and, where possible, modify training regimes or competition practices to support a pregnant woman.

To ensure the safety of a pregnant woman (or woman who becomes aware she is pregnant), her unborn child and others, the QRL may request certain criteria are met including, but not limited to:

1. Advise the QRL when she becomes aware of her pregnancy;
2. Receive medical clearance to continue playing and/or training;
3. Have read and understood the QRL Insurance Policy in relation to what is and is not covered when participating in QRL related activities whilst pregnant.
4. Provide written confirmation of points 1-3 to the relevant QRL Region Manager prior to participating in any further rugby league related activities including training and matches.

Contact details are:

QRL North - [northern@qrl.com.au](mailto:northern@qrl.com.au)

QRL Central - [central@qrl.com.au](mailto:central@qrl.com.au)

QRL South East - [seq@qrl.com.au](mailto:seq@qrl.com.au)

The QRL and those bound by this Policy must adhere to the [NRL Pregnancy Policy](#). Further details on clearances and other criteria can be found within this policy.

### Complaint

If a woman believes she has been harassed, discriminated against or abused based on her pregnant condition by someone else bound by this Policy, she should make a complaint.



## Bullying and Abusive Behaviour

### Policy Statement

Rugby league is a sport that can incite strong emotions and passionate supporters. The QRL is committed to creating an environment where individuals are free to voice their opinions and feelings in respectful ways.

The QRL expects members and participants bound by this Policy to consistently engage in pro-social behaviours and respectful relationships whether this be in person, online or via any other mediums.

The QRL has zero tolerance for any abuse or bullying on or off the playing field. Any such conduct is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

### Definition

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm<sup>xv</sup>

Bullying behaviour is not just one type of behaviour. It can involve abuse, violence, intimidation, ridicule, humiliation and making unreasonable demands. But it can also be less obvious and aimed at isolating a person.

Cyberbullying refers to the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature.

### Bullying and Abusive behaviour further explored

Bullying or abuse for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. The QRL is committed to promoting pro-social behaviours, identifying the signs bullying and abuse, preventing these acts and taking appropriate action if they occur.

Frustration towards a referee or match official, teammate, coach, or others should be addressed in respectful and appropriate ways. This can be done directly with the individual, or via written or verbal statements or complaints to relevant authorities (i.e., club, league or QRL).

The QRL is committed to creating a culture in which people feel safe to report bullying if they experience it or witness it.

The QRL is committed to a transparent process to address bullying, abuse and associated complaints.

### Complaints

If you experience or witness any form of bullying or abuse, then a complaint can be made.

The QRL takes all such matters seriously and may report inappropriate conduct to relevant authorities.



## Intimate Relationships

### Policy Statement

The QRL is an inclusive sport welcoming all people regardless of age and gender, and as such the QRL acknowledges that intimate relationships (including, but not limited to sexual relationships) between consenting adults may exist or develop.

The QRL recommends intimate relationships between coaches, officials and persons in a position of authority, and the athletes under their guidance be strongly discouraged and avoided.

Should a relationship exist or develop between consenting adults, bound by this Policy, they must not engage in any sexual behaviours (contact or non-contact) whilst participating in QRL events.

The QRL does not tolerate any sexual behaviour between, in the presence of, or with children and any such activity will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

### Definition:

Sexual behaviour needs to be interpreted widely, to encompass the entire range of actions that would reasonably be considered sexual in nature, including but not limited to:

- 'contact behaviour', such as sexual intercourse, kissing, fondling, etc.
- 'noncontact behaviour', such as flirting, sexual innuendo, inappropriate text messaging, inappropriate photography or exposure to pornography or nudity.

### Intimate Relationships further explored

Consensual intimate relationships between coaches or officials and the adult athletes they coach should be avoided. It is believed these can have harmful effects on the athlete, other athletes, coaches and the reputation of rugby league. These relationships may be perceived to be exploitative due to the differences in authority, power, maturity, status, influence and dependence between the coach or official and the athlete.

The QRL recommends, if an athlete attempts to initiate an intimate relationship with a coach or official, the coach or official should discourage the athlete's approach and explain why such a relationship is not appropriate.

If a consensual intimate relationship does exist or develop between an adult athlete and a person in authority, it is expected the relationship is appropriate and that it does not compromise impartiality, professional standards or the relationship of trust the coach or official has with the athlete and/or other athletes.

In assessing the appropriateness of an intimate relationship between a coach or official and an adult athlete, relevant factors must be considered and should include, but are not limited to:

- the relative age and social maturity of the individual
- any potential vulnerabilities
- any financial and/or emotional dependence that may exist
- the ability of the coach or official to influence the progress, outcomes or progression of the athlete's performance and/or career
- the extent of power imbalance between the athlete and coach or official; and the likelihood of the relationship having an adverse impact on the athlete and/or other athletes.



It will often be difficult for a coach or official involved in an intimate relationship with an adult athlete to make an objective assessment of its appropriateness. Accordingly, a coach or official is encouraged to seek advice from the MPIO or other official to ensure they have not involved themselves in inappropriate or unprofessional conduct.

### Complaint

If inappropriate sexual conduct, including sexual harassment, discrimination or abuse is exhibited by those bound by this Policy, whilst engaged in QRL activities, then a complaint should be reported.

If it is determined that an intimate relationship between a coach or official and an adult athlete is inappropriate or unprofessional the QRL may take disciplinary action against the coach or official up to and including a sanction following a Disciplinary Tribunal. Action may also be taken to stop the coaching relationship with the athlete. This could include a transfer, a request for resignation or dismissal from coaching duties.





## Smoking

### Policy Statement

The QRL acknowledges the harmful impacts of smoking and second-hand smoke, especially on children.

The QRL is committed to improving the health and well-being of all and keeping our community safe and clean. We will achieve this by adhering to relevant legislation and employing policies that promote healthy choices and effectively reduce the risk of exposure to smoking products.

### Smoking further explored

In Queensland smoking is prohibited or restricted in many areas of public life. Smoking is prohibited at all major sports events and facilities, and at or within 10m of a sporting ground or viewing area during an organised rugby league event for children, inclusive of training and intervals.

Local governments can authorise smoking bans at outdoor public places not already covered by legislation. Therefore, clubs are encouraged to speak to their local governments to ensure compliance with any local bans and, where possible, obtain assistance in creating smoke free places and events.

Coaches, officials, trainers, volunteers and players will refrain from smoking and remain smoke-free whilst involved in an official capacity, both on and off the field.

Smoking is prohibited at social events which are endorsed or held by QRL, except for approved designated outdoor smoking areas that do not conflict with state or local government bans.

No pictures of participants smoking will be used in promotion materials or social media images.

Smoking covers the use of all smoking products, including electronic cigarettes.

Major sports facilities currently include:

- The Gabba (Brisbane Cricket Ground)
- Suncorp Stadium
- Metricon Stadium
- Cbus Super Stadium
- Sleeman Sports Centre
- Queensland Tennis Centre
- Queensland Country Bank Stadium
- Brisbane Entertainment Centre
- Queensland Sport and Athletic Centre

Smoking is also prohibited at major events held at various locations, except in designated outdoor smoking areas.

### Complaint or breach

If you become aware of non-compliance, you are encouraged to advise the MPIO. Local authorities may also be made aware of any breaches to legislation.



## Alcohol

### Policy Statement

Rugby league has an inherent social element and the QRL is proud of the way in which our sport brings people together. At times, socialising may include the service and consumption of alcohol.

To ensure the health and safety of all, the QRL prohibits inappropriate or illegal consumption or service of alcohol, and any inappropriate conduct as a result of intoxication.

The QRL will implement practices to reduce risks around alcohol use and consumption.

### Alcohol further explored

The QRL endorses events and celebrations, including end of season festivities, that are alcohol free or involve the responsible consumption of alcohol. Where possible, the sale of full-strength beer, and similar, will be limited or unavailable. Excessive or rapid consumption of alcohol is prohibited.

The QRL is committed to protecting vulnerable underage participants and as such strictly prohibits the consumption of alcohol by those under 18 years.

When facilitating or endorsing social events for children, young people and families it is QRL policy that alcohol should not be served or allowed within the designated area or footprint of the rugby league facility during any sanctioned matches/carnivals involving children (under 18).

N.B. that venues where there is an adjacent licensed Leagues Club, patrons may be allowed to consume alcohol according to the provisions outlined in that club's Liquor License

Alcohol branding will not be used on playing or training uniforms for those under 18 years.

Where possible, alcohol will not be used as reward, bonus or prize.

Alcohol will only be served in accordance with legislation, liquor licenses and QRL policies and procedures. All licenses will be displayed in obvious locations on, next to or near the service area.

A club president/game day manager/appointed committee member must be present at any events and only individuals with appropriate training will supervise volunteers/serve alcohol. Food and non-alcoholic beverages will be available where alcohol is being served.

Safe transportation will be promoted and encouraged, and those who display signs of unduly intoxication will be directed to leave via such methods.

### Complaint or breach

If you become aware of non-compliance, you are encouraged to make a complaint or speak to the MPIO. Local authorities may also be made aware of any breaches to legislation.



## Anti-Doping

### Policy Statement

QRL is committed to facilitating sport that is clean, fair and honest.

To safeguard the integrity of our sport and our participants, the QRL adheres to the Australian National Anti-Doping Policy and strictly prohibits the use, attempted use, trafficking or attempted trafficking of any substance banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

Those found to be involved in any doping related activities will be in breach of this Policy and may be reported to relevant authorities.

### Definition

Doping means to administer drugs to (a racehorse, greyhound, or athlete) in order to inhibit or enhance sporting performance.

Non-members: board members, directors, officers, specified employees of the Sport and any participant or affiliate organisation<sup>xvi</sup>

### Anti-doping further explored

All players, support persons (coaches, managers) and those deemed as 'non-members' bound by this Policy must know their rights and responsibilities in relation to anti-doping. Ignorance will not be considered a defense; participants must know where to find anti-doping related information and processes.

The QRL upholds the principles of strict liability, whereby players are solely responsible for what is found in their system, regardless of how it got there or whether there was any intention to cheat.

If required to, players will cooperate with relevant authorities and make themselves available for testing. Players will provide samples that are true and accurate. Any conduct to the contrary, including failure to provide a sample, tampering with a sample etc., will be considered a breach of this Policy and any associated policies and contracts.

The QRL will afford member's natural justice including a fair, timely and impartial hearing, non-bias processing and judgments made only on sufficient evidence.

All participant's bound by this Policy will uphold the privacy and confidentiality of players, including testing regimes and results, until such time appropriate authorities deem public disclosure is required and/or beneficial. Individuals may receive welfare support from the QRL.

Anyone who becomes aware of doping is responsible for reporting and failure to do so may be considered a breach of this Policy. The QRL and those bound by this Policy will not discourage nor retaliate against an individual for reporting doping related conduct.

The QRL recommends players should avoid the use of supplements.

### Complaint or Breach

It is the responsibility of all participant's bound by this Policy to promote anti-doping. If you are aware of any doping related activity, you must report this confidentially to Sports Integrity Australia.



## Match Fixing

The QRL is committed to facilitating sport that is played with integrity, and upholds the ideals of fair play, good sportsmanship and honest competition. We are committed to preventing, detecting and sanctioning any manipulation of competition in rugby league.

The QRL strictly prohibits any form of match fixing, corruption or illegal gambling. All such conduct is considered as a threat to our sport and participants. The QRL expects all participants bound by this Policy to play within the rules and spirit of our game.

Those found to be involved in match-fixing in any QRL held or endorsed game will breach this Policy, be referred to a Disciplinary Tribunal and reported to relevant authorities for possible criminal prosecution.

### National Policy on Match Fixing in Sport

#### Definitions

Match-fixing involves the manipulation of an outcome or contingency by competitors, teams, sports agents, support staff, referees and officials and venue staff.<sup>xvii</sup>

#### Match fixing further explored...

Any participant who may have business interests or connections with Betting Operators should disclose this information to the QRL Managing Director. Any conflicts of interest will be recorded and monitored by QRL Chief Operating Officer.

Betting operator branding will not be used on playing or training uniforms for those under 18 years.

The QRL restricts participants from:

- betting, gambling or entering into any other form of financial speculation on matches or events under the auspices of the QRL; and/or inducing or encouraging anyone else to do the same;
- 'tanking' or encouraging others to tank, other than for legitimate tactical reasons within the rules of rugby league;
- provide 'insider information' or that which is considered information not publicly known;
- any other form of corrupt conduct; and,
- conduct that may bring an individual or the sport into disrepute.

The QRL acknowledges betting as a legal pastime and is committed to providing ongoing education to participant's that promotes healthy lifestyles and pro-social choices. Only legal betting, which complies with legislation will occur.

In the event match fixing has been alleged the QRL, and those bound by this Policy, will aid authorities and welfare support for the party involved. The QRL will afford participant's natural justice including a fair, timely and impartial hearing, non-bias processing and judgments made only on sufficient evidence.

All participant's bound by this Policy will uphold the privacy and confidentiality of individuals subject to allegations of match fixing until such time appropriate authorities deem public disclosure is required and/or beneficial.



Anyone who becomes aware of match fixing is responsible for reporting and failure to do so may be considered a breach of this Policy. The QRL and those bound by this Policy will not discourage nor retaliate against an individual for reporting match fixing related conduct.

### Complaint or Breach

It is the responsibility of all participant's bound by this Policy to promote honest sport. If you are aware that match fixing or illegal gambling has, is, or is about to occur than you must report this confidentially to MPIO. If you are approached or aware that someone has been approached in relation to any of the inappropriate match fixing conduct described above, you must promptly disclose this to the MPIO.

Those who are found to be involved in any match fixing conduct may face a life ban from rugby league as well as criminal charges.



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- <sup>i</sup> Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) s 4(1) (definition of 'gender identity').
- <sup>ii</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission. 2019. *Guidelines for the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse people in sport* <<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/publications>>.
- <sup>iii</sup> United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965
- <sup>iv</sup> United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965
- <sup>v</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, [https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/know-your-rights-disability-discrimination?\\_ga=2.164055933.334080024.1609807355-2130379448.1599535982](https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/know-your-rights-disability-discrimination?_ga=2.164055933.334080024.1609807355-2130379448.1599535982)
- <sup>vi</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, [https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/know-your-rights-disability-discrimination?\\_ga=2.164055933.334080024.1609807355-2130379448.1599535982](https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/know-your-rights-disability-discrimination?_ga=2.164055933.334080024.1609807355-2130379448.1599535982)
- <sup>vii</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, [https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/know-your-rights-disability-discrimination?\\_ga=2.164055933.334080024.1609807355-2130379448.1599535982](https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/know-your-rights-disability-discrimination?_ga=2.164055933.334080024.1609807355-2130379448.1599535982)
- <sup>viii</sup> Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) s5 (definition of sex discrimination)
- <sup>ix</sup> Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) s 4(1) (definition of 'gender identity').
- <sup>x</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission. 2019. *Guidelines for the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse people in sport* <<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/publications>>.
- <sup>xi</sup> Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) s 42(1).
- <sup>xii</sup> Queensland Human Rights Commission, 2019. *Sexual Harassment Fact Sheet* [https://www.qhrc.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/19863/QHRC\\_factsheet\\_ADA\\_SexualHarassment.pdf](https://www.qhrc.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/19863/QHRC_factsheet_ADA_SexualHarassment.pdf)
- <sup>xiii</sup> Queensland Human Rights Commission, 2019, *Religious Belief or Activity Discrimination Fact Sheet*. [https://www.qhrc.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/19858/QHRC\\_factsheet\\_ADA\\_RaceDiscrimination.pdf](https://www.qhrc.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/19858/QHRC_factsheet_ADA_RaceDiscrimination.pdf)
- <sup>xiv</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020. <https://humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12080>
- <sup>xv</sup> Bullying No Way. 2020. <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/understanding-bullying>
- <sup>xvi</sup> Sports Integrity Commission, <https://www.sportintegrity.gov.au/what-we-do/anti-doping/2021-world-anti-doping-code>.
- <sup>xvii</sup> National Policy on Match-Fixing in Sport, 2011, [https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/687CADCF3C1BEF8ACA257C310021CD5C/\\$File/national\\_policy\\_match-fixing.pdf](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/687CADCF3C1BEF8ACA257C310021CD5C/$File/national_policy_match-fixing.pdf)