



QUEENSLAND RUGBY LEAGUE

# POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

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EMPOWERING VOLUNTEERS BY  
PROVIDING A FRAMEWORK TO  
TACKLE BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES



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The Queensland Rugby League recognises the positive involvement that all attendees must have at community Rugby League matches. This program provides the framework to positively influence the environment in which our game takes place

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Rohan Sawyer'.

**Rohan Sawyer**  
Queensland Rugby League chief executive officer



# WHAT IS THIS PROGRAM?

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A fully aligned statewide program that empowers volunteers to proactively tackle behaviour issues and create a positive environment at Community Rugby League games.

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A program that consistently reminds everyone of the positive influence they can have at our matches through consistent messaging, ambassadors, awareness campaigns and education programs.

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A zero-tolerance, evidence-based program to support volunteers and help prevent issues.

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Supplying key resources and utilising the National Code of Conduct to address repeated poor behaviour via a demerit system.

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A program that rewards teams and clubs for creating a positive environment at Community Rugby League.

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A program that allows competition points to be deducted for consistent poor behaviour from players, officials or the team's spectators.

# WHY DO WE NEED IT?

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We need this program to prevent poor behaviour and violence before it escalates and continue to allow our game to be promoted as a safe, positive and inclusive sport.



We need this program to provide a consistent and structured approach to managing behaviours in the community rugby league environment.



Anyone attending matches needs to be aware that if they behave poorly the team on the field may have their game abandoned, lose competition points or be removed from the competition.



We need this program to provide a consistent and coordinated approach to sentencing. Consistent sentencing will alleviate frustration and with greater awareness promote positive behavior.



We need this program to support our volunteers by providing valuable resources they can utilise to tackle behaviour issues and create a positive environment at their clubs.



In a similar program with awareness campaigns the total number of offences charged by the judiciary dropped 41.7 per cent; and among those, the number of charges for offensive language towards a match official, dropped by 42.4 percent. We need this program to support referees.

# NATIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT - SUMMARY OF OFFENCES

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**NOTE** – Clubs are responsible for the conduct of their players, parents/ carers of players, coaches, officials and spectators.

No person(s) attending a match, function, or Club related event or activity shall:

- A** Use offensive or obscene language to any participant.
- B** Enter the Field of Play or the Playing Area during the course of a match without the prior approval of the Ground Manager appointed by the home Club and/or League.
- C** Excessively dispute the decision of a Referee or Touch Judge either during or after a match.
- D** Assault, or act with aggression, to any person/s.
- E** Behave in a way contrary to the Code of Conduct and/or the spirit of the game.
- F** Behave in a way which disturbs the enjoyment of a match, function, activity or event by any person/s, or brings discredit to any Club, League or the game.
- G** Act in such a way as to exhibit racial intolerance, by language or other conduct, to any person/s.
- H** Refuse to accept the reasonable direction of the Ground Manager, official of the team/ Club which that person is supporting, or official of the home Club and/or League.
- I** No person/s may make comment or take actions that bring discredit to any person, Club or league through any social media outlet.

Clubs are responsible for the conduct of their players, parents/carers of players, coaches, officials and Club supporters.

Breaches of the Rugby League Code of Conduct may result in penalties, including but not limited to:

- › Suspension of a match and/or
- › Termination of a match (including potential forfeiture of competition points) and/or
- › Monetary fines and/or
- › Suspension of a participant on a temporary or permanent basis and/or
- › Suspension of a Club, League or Association on a temporary or permanent basis

These penalties are in addition to any penalty which may be imposed by the relevant governing League bodies.

# HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?



## Enforcement of the existing National Code of Conduct

All initiatives are currently available under the National Code of Conduct.



### Tougher penalties for anti-social behaviours

Standard penalty schedule to ensure consistency across the state.



### Demerit Points for repeat offences

Additional points allocated to repeat offenders to hold them accountable for their actions.



### Merit Points to recognise good behaviour modelling

Additional points allocated to repeat offenders to hold them accountable for their actions.



### Awareness campaigns

Topical campaigns to provide awareness and keep the subject front of mind.



### Field signage with QR-code links

Visual reminder for participants, spectators, clubs and teams, with links to relevant topics or campaigns.



### Participant, Parent, volunteer engagement

Ability for individuals to buy-in and show their intention to support the campaigns.



### Cognito form reporting

Reporting functionality ensures anti-social behavior can be easily reported.



### Play Well Triple P

A program that promotes positive parental involvement and decrease negative parent behavior in junior rugby league.



### Ambassador messaging

High profile players and administrators to reinforce our messaging.

# CODE OF CONDUCT - BREACHES

The table below provides the recommended minimum penalty to be applied for each offence.

Normal match review, judiciary and disciplinary process applies as per the QRL rules for an offender to be found guilty.

	Offence	Recommended On-field action	Recommended minimum penalty	Recommended 2nd offence penalty	Recommended Team / club penalty (tracked by QRL)
1	<b>Striking</b> (to make deliberate, forceful contact with someone)	Send off	Grade 1 striking		<b>**NORMAL MATCH REVIEW AND JUDICIAL PROCESS APPLIES FOR STRIKING CHARGES**</b>
	Aggressor (attacks another first by striking)	Send off	Grade 3 striking	12 months	
2*	Interchange players entering the field of play during an incident or melee	Send off	6 weeks		Loss of competition points that is equal to a win (2 or 3) and the match may be classed as a forfeit.
3*	Player or official leaving the playing area during an incident or melee	Send off	6 weeks		Loss of competition points that is equal to a win (2 or 3) and the match may be classed as a forfeit.
4*	Spectator field intrusion		12 months		The match will be classed as a forfeit by the offending team.
5*	Abandoned games	Two or more players from the same team are deemed to be involved in an on-field fight, the match to be abandoned and that team will be deemed to have forfeited the match.  If both teams are deemed responsible for the abandonment of the game, no competition or for / against points will be awarded for the match.			
6*	Referee / match official abuse - Touching	Send off	12 months		Loss of competition points that is equal to a win (2 or 3).
7*	Referee / match official abuse - Offensive language	Send off	2 weeks		
8*	Referee / match official abuse - Offensive language from spectator / team official		4 weeks	12 months	
9*	Suspended persons				Fine \$1000 and team ineligible to play finals.  League may deregister dependants or family members of that person.
10*	Suspended players		12 months		If a suspended player takes the field whilst serving a suspension a further 12 months will be added after the current suspension ends.



## Demerit points table

Proven Breach	Demerit points	Guide
Low judiciary charge	1	Abusive
Medium judiciary charge	2	Threatening
High judiciary charge	3	Physical
Disciplinary low charge	1	Abusive
Disciplinary medium charge	2	Threatening
Disciplinary high charge	3	Physical
Competition rule breach	1	Any

Demerit points are accumulated during each season and additional sanctions will apply as per the table below once these milestones are reached.

Level	Offences or Points	Penalty
1	2 proven offences or 5 demerit points	A warning letter will be sent to the club and team concerned. The team and club will need to provide details of how the issue is being addressed
2	4 proven offences or 8 demerit points	The team concerned will be docked three competition points. Clubs will be required to video every game this team participates in thereafter. Failure to comply will result in disqualification from the competition
3	6 proven offences or 12 demerit points	The team concerned will be docked six competition points. The club will need to show cause as to why the team concerned should stay in the competition

# **POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM - FULL DETAILS**

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The Positive Environment Program (PEP) applies to all age groups from under 13 to Open (community rugby league) competitions\*. A zero-tolerance approach to abuse and violence will be implemented across all QRL community rugby league competitions.

Leagues may also choose to apply (some or all) parts of this program and its associated penalties to any QRL community rugby league competitions from under 6s to under 12s.

Participants found guilty of breaching rules two-ten (2-10), may also have team and club demerit points accrued during the current season.

## On field striking / punching

1. Any player who throws a punch or "strikes" (to hit forcibly and deliberately) another person during a match, it is recommended that they are sent from the field. If that player is subsequently found guilty at a judiciary hearing, (in the absence of mitigating circumstances), the MINIMUM penalty will be a Grade 1 – striking charge.
  - 1.1 The Player(s) deemed to be the "Aggressor" (attacks another first) in punching or striking another person, they will have their judiciary charge graded as (at a minimum) Grade 3 - Striking.
  - 1.2 Any player found guilty of breaching rule 1.1 for the second time in a season will incur an automatic MINIMUM 12-month suspension from the game.

## Participant (player or official) entering the playing area

Over the past few seasons there has been an alarming increase in the number of team replacement players who illegally take to the field (leaving the team bench etc), when a melee begins, or when a perceived unfair decision or occurrence has taken place. As a deterrent to this type of behaviour, a zero- tolerance approach will be taken. The following penalties will apply for the player(s), team official(s) and team(s) concerned:

2. Any participant (player or official) who enters the field of play illegally during an incident or melee will automatically be sent from the field.
  - 2.1 Any participant (player or official) found guilty of infringing Rule 2 will be suspended for a minimum of (6) six weeks.
  - 2.2 The offending player's team will be penalised the number of competition points that constitutes a win (2 or 3 competition points), and the current game may be called off and considered a forfeit by the offending team.

## Players or officials leaving the playing area

The following penalties will apply for any player or team official that leaves the playing area to become involved in any altercation or melee. Penalties will be imposed on both the player(s), official(s) and team(s) concerned:

3. Any participant (player or official) who leaves either the playing area or the team bench to become involved in any altercation or melee that is occurring outside the playing area (behind the fence or rope where spectators are located) will automatically be sent from the field.
  - 3.1 Players or Officials found guilty of infringing Rule 3 will be suspended for a minimum of (6) six weeks.
  - 3.2 The offending player's team will be penalised the number of competition points that constitutes a win (2 or 3 competition points), and the current game may be called off and considered a forfeit by the offending team.

## Spectator field intrusion

4. Any spectator who enters the playing area or field of play with intent, or without the permission of the Ground Manager, will automatically be banned from attending Community Rugby League matches for a minimum period of 12 months. Should a spectator contravene any such penalty, the League reserves the right to suspend any siblings of the parent or family involved from playing in any QRL- related competitions. A bond / fine may be attributed to the spectator to allow them to resume attending matches after the expiry of the suspension imposed.
  - 4.1 Failure to identify - Should a club fail to identify a person(s) who has breached Rule 4, the league reserves the right to suspend the team the spectator was supporting, until such time as the person is identified.
  - 4.2 Teams and Clubs will be liable for the behaviour of their spectators. If a breach of Rule 4 has been proven, the match concerned will be considered a forfeit by the offending team.

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### **Abandoned games**

5. In the event that there are two or more players from the same team that are deemed to be inciting and / or involved in an on-field fight, the match should be abandoned, and the following penalties will be applied.
  - 5.1 If only one team has more than 2 players involved in the on-field fight, the opposition shall be awarded the win on forfeit. For and against will be recorded as per the competition rules and / or by-laws.
  - 5.2 If there are two or more players involved from each team the match will be considered abandoned and neither team will receive any competition points, or any points for or against
  - 5.3 Individuals from both teams may be required to attend a judiciary hearing

### **Referee / Match official abuse**

6. Any player / team official / spectator found guilty of touching a referee or official in an aggressive or inappropriate manner will be disqualified from the game for a recommended minimum period of 12 months. Further, the team in which the person concerned is playing for, supporting or assisting may be penalised the number of competition points that constitutes a win (2 or 3 competition points).
7. Any player who is dismissed from the field and is subsequently charged with offensive language directed towards a match official, would be referred directly to the Judiciary and charged with a Grade 3 - Contrary conduct. If found guilty of the charge, will incur a minimum penalty of a 2 match suspension.
8. Any team official / spectator who is charged with, and subsequently found guilty of abusing a referee will be disqualified from the game for a minimum period of a 4 weeks. If the individual is found guilty of breaching rule 8, for the second time in a season will incur an automatic MINIMUM 12-month suspension from the game.

### **Suspended persons**

9. Clubs are responsible for ensuring any suspended person who is associated with their club, does not act in any capacity which is contrary to the terms of such a suspension. Terms of suspensions are issued with all judiciary and disciplinary notification of outcome. Should a suspended person be found guilty of acting acting contrary to the terms of their suspension, the club concerned may be deemed liable. The club may be fined \$1000.00. Further, if the person concerned is associated in any capacity with a particular team within the club, that team may be ineligible to play in any Finals Series Matches.

The QRL reserves the right to de-register any siblings or relatives of a suspended person, should that person to be found to be acting contrary to the terms of such suspension.

### **Suspended players**

10. Participants are responsible for ensuring they do not take to the field of play as a player whilst they are serving a suspension. Should a suspended player take to the field of play whilst they are suspended, the player concerned will incur a further 12-month suspension which will be added to the end of the original suspension expiry date.

### **Finals series matches**

11. Any breach of Rules 2, 3, 5, 6 or 10 that are identified and proven in finals series matches will result in the offender's team being disqualified from the competition, therefore will be eliminated from any remaining finals fixtures.

### **Team and club demerit point system**

12. As part of this Positive Environment Program (PEP), a demerit point system has been designed to allow leagues and clubs to identify problem teams within their structures. This system will be enforced across all QRL community competitions with a view for refinement and expansion into the future. It is hoped through club awareness and education, standards of respect, discipline and behaviour are raised throughout the game.

### Team and club demerit point table

13. The demerit points will be calculated based on judiciary, disciplinary and competition rule breaches. Only offences where a charge has been proven will attract demerit points.

13.1 Each proven offence will accumulate demerit points. For example, if (3) three charges occur within a single incident and all are found guilty, the team will receive demerit points for each breach.

13.2 The table below outlines how demerit points are calculated:

Proven Breach	Demerit points	Guide
Low judiciary charge	1	Abusive
Medium judiciary charge	2	Threatening
High judiciary charge	3	Physical
Disciplinary low charge	1	Abusive
Disciplinary medium charge	2	Threatening
Disciplinary high charge	3	Physical
Competition rule breach	1	Any

### Team and club demerit point accumulation

14. Team and club demerit points are accumulated during each season and additional sanctions will apply as per the table below once these milestones are reached.

14.1 The table below outlines the actions to be taken once one of these milestones are:

Level	Offences or Points	Penalty
1	2 proven offences or 5 demerit points	A warning letter will be sent to the club and team concerned. The team and club will need to provide details of how the issue is being addressed
2	4 proven offences or 8 demerit points	The team concerned will be docked three competition points. Clubs will be required to video every game this team participates in thereafter. Failure to comply will result in disqualification from the competition
3	6 proven offences or 12 demerit points	The team concerned will be docked six competition points. The club will need to show cause as to why the team concerned should stay in the competition

15. \*Leagues must apply to QRL if they do not wish the Positive Environment Program (PEP) and associated penalties to apply in their Open Age Competitions.







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