

# NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY

## PARTICIPANT SAFETY



### POLICY #01 PARTICIPANT SAFETY

#### BACKGROUND

As with many sports, rugby does involve an element of risk to the physical wellbeing of participants. New Zealand Rugby is committed to making the game as safe as we practically can for participants, ensuring they continue to enjoy playing rugby and have a lifelong love of the game.

#### POLICY

The first consideration in all decisions must be the safety of all participants.

This requirement overrides all others.

It applies to:

1. Grade compositions
2. Dispensations
3. Domestic Safety Law
4. Development Models
5. Coaching practises
6. Sideline behaviour

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

All

#### SANCTION(S)

See specific policies



# NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY

## RUGBYSMART SAFETY COURSE



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### POLICY #02 RUGBYSMART SAFETY COURSE FOR REFEREES AND COACHES

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#### BACKGROUND

In 2000 the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU) Board mandated that all referees and coaches of full contact tackle grade teams must attend the compulsory RugbySmart safety coaching course. Since the RugbySmart course was introduced catastrophic injuries have fallen from an average of nine per year, to two per year. This policy statement reaffirms the original NZRU Board mandate.

#### POLICY

All coaches and referees of U14 level rugby and above, including assistant coaches, position specific coaches and technical assistants must attend a RugbySmart coaching course prior to the commencement of competition games each season.

For completeness, this includes all professional coaches, professional referees and representative coaches.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

New Zealand Rugby will:

- Provide the course content and materials each year.
- Train Provincial Union Course presenters each year.

Provincial Unions will:

- Nominate course presenters, venues and course timings.
- Keep accurate records of teams in competitions, coaches involved and cross reference to attendance at RugbySmart courses.
- Remove teams from competitions should any coaching personnel, who have not attended RugbySmart, engage in coaching activity once the competition commences.

#### AUDIT

New Zealand Rugby reserves the right to undertake spot audits of RugbySmart attendance lists and club and school team coaching lists.

#### SANCTION(S)

*For coaches*

Failure to attend the course will see the designated coach stood down from all coaching activity until they have completed the course.



# **NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY**

## **RUGBYSMART SAFETY COURSE**



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*The coach's team will be withdrawn from its relevant competition if any of its coaches fail to attend RugbySmart prior to the season commencing until such time as the requirement has been fulfilled.*

### ***For referees***

Any referee who has not completed the RugbySmart course is not to be appointed to any fixture.

*This requirement is to be monitored by the Provincial Union in conjunction with the Provincial Union Rugby Referees Association (RRA) and cross-referenced between registration lists and RugbySmart attendance lists.*

### ***For social teams***

A social team with no coach must designate a player/coach who must fulfil RugbySmart requirements.



# NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY

## COMPULSORY COACHING COURSE



### POLICY #03 COMPULSORY COACHING COURSE

#### POLICY

Coaching is the most critical component of our players' rugby experience. A good coach coaching the right skills and tactics in an engaging way at the right time will do more to enhance the player's development and enjoyment than any other single factor. Having well qualified and well trained coaches is vital.

A coach is defined as anyone who imparts technical or tactical rugby knowledge at an organised training session.

#### *Teenagers*

For all coaches of U14 to U19 grades all coaching staff must attend the NZ Rugby Coaching Teenagers Module at the commencement of each season. The course content, resources and training will be provided by NZ Rugby and delivered by the Provincial Union presenters.

#### *Small Blacks*

All coaches, including assistants, actively engaged in the coaching process must attend the relevant Small Blacks coaching course at the commencement of each season.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

New Zealand Rugby will provide course content, resources and training for presenters.

#### Provincial Unions:

- Will run the required courses and provide the presenters
- Will keep accurate records of course attendees and cross reference against team records

#### SANCTION(S)

Failure of any coach to attend the course by the commencement of the season will require the coach to stand down from coaching until they have completed the course.

*Should the team not have a coach that has completed the course, it will be withdrawn from the competition until the requirement is fulfilled.*



# NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY

## DISPENSATIONS



### POLICY 04 DISPENSATIONS

#### BACKGROUND

When focussed on ensuring rugby is available to as many players as possible, organising bodies have traditionally offered dispensations to players who may not meet grade criteria on either weight or age grounds. Not allowing a dispensation may prevent those players from playing and could impact an organisation's ability to field a team in a competition thereby affecting the meaningfulness of that competition.

Allowing dispensation of players may pose a risk to safety and enjoyment of the grade eligible players. This still has to be the first consideration deciding whether to allow a dispensation or not.

Dispensations may also allow "win" motivated adults to have players play down and influence results.

#### POLICY

Dispensations in rugby below Under 19 are permissible, subject to the following:

- Safety of all grade eligible players is paramount and must be considered by the competition organisers
- Provincial Unions are to determine the dispensation criteria, processes and procedures. These must be submitted to NZ Rugby for approval/sign off
- For any weight grade dispensation an upper age must be nominated
- For any age grade an upper weight limit must be stated (these are to be determined by the Provincial Union taking into consideration player safety and local demographics).
- Dispensated players must be viewed playing by a Provincial Union official or nominee in a preseason game to ensure they are suitable for the grade
- All parents of participants in grades where dispensations are allowed must be notified

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

New Zealand Rugby will approve or authorise Provincial Unions' criteria

#### Provincial Unions will:

- Formulate dispensations criteria
- Supply grading letter to parents
- View players who have received dispensations



# **NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY**

## **DISPENSATIONS**



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### SANCTION(S)

Coaches, Managers and Administrators knowingly playing or allowing players to play outside dispensation policies and procedures will face Provincial Union disciplinary procedures.



# NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY

## POLICE VETTING



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### POLICY #05 POLICE VETTING

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#### BACKGROUND

The safety and welfare of children and young people involved in rugby is paramount.

Children in New Zealand look up to sports stars, coaches, team captains and referees as heroes. Children regularly play sport and develop close relationships with their team members, coaches and support staff.

As part of New Zealand Rugby's focus on ensuring a safe environment for Small Blacks Rugby, all coaches registering for Small Blacks Rugby (aged 12 and under) and referees registering solely for Small Blacks Rugby from 2013 are required to undergo Police vetting.

Police vetting provides parents, families and whanau with the confidence that children are participating in sport supported by coaches and referees who do not pose a risk to their safety.

#### POLICY

All coaches, including assistants, must undergo the Police vetting process when they initially become involved at a Small Blacks level. This vetting is valid for three consecutive years at the start of every fourth year thereafter, they must re-submit to the vetting process.

#### *The Vetting Process*

The vetting process, procedures relating to failure to submit to vetting, and the appeals process are documented in the Police vetting documents available from [www.communityrugby.co.nz/safety](http://www.communityrugby.co.nz/safety)

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

New Zealand Rugby will:

- Provide vetting rationale and process literature
- Undertake vetting and notification on failed results
- Manage database records
- Organise and facilitate the appeals process

Provincial Unions:

- Notify all coaches of their requirements
- Provide required information to New Zealand Police including required ID and approval to vet forms



# **NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY**

## **POLICE VETTING**



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- Notify clubs if coaches who have failed the vetting process refuse to stand down on their own accord, and ensure such coaches are removed from any coaching role.

### **SANCTION(S)**

Failure to agree to be vetted and provide the required signed form and ID will result in automatic removal from any coaching role.



# NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY

## HALF GAME RULE



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### POLICY #06 HALF GAME RULE

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#### BACKGROUND

Following two pieces of significant research it has been identified that lack of game time is a significant cause of players leaving the game and low retention rates.

Having sought the players' views, and looking to honour the 'player first' sentiments of the Community Rugby Strategy, a minimum half game for every player policy has been introduced following a trial and an introductory year.

#### POLICY

At all rugby below First XV and including all representative rugby below Under 18 grades, it is compulsory for all players to play a minimum half game.

For players at the Small Blacks level this can consist of two quarters.

As part of this policy it is re-stated that rolling subs are not allowed, although substitutions at quarter time, half time or three-quarter time will be permitted.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

New Zealand Rugby:

- Will ensure supporting rationale information is available in various forms and formats

Provincial Unions:

- Will actively implement the Half Game Rule in all required grades in competitions that fall under their control
- Proactively educate adults on the rationale for the Rule
- Sanction organisations and individuals who are failing to comply with the policy at the discretion of Provincial Unions

#### SANCTION(S)

Sanctions can be applied when breaches of this policy occur. It is noted that the sanction should apply to the adults involved rather than penalise the players.

Sanctions are to be determined by each individual organising body/Provincial Union.

*New Zealand Rugby's recommendation is as follows, on the next page:*



# **NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY**

## **HALF GAME RULE**



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1. *First Offence. Formal letter to individual/organisation informing that any future breach will result in disciplinary action*
  2. *Second offence. Disciplinary hearing with starting point a one week stand down from coaching for offender*



# **NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY**

## **MIXED TEAMS & OPPOSITION**



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### **POLICY 07 MIXED TEAMS AND OPPOSITION**

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#### **BACKGROUND**

For safety reasons, both physical and emotional, there needs to be an age limit for when males and females cease to play in the same team and on opposing sides.

World Rugby guidelines suggest the appropriate boundary is age 12.

#### **POLICY**

Mixed gender teams are suitable for all levels of Small Blacks rugby (Under 13 and down).

Post the Under 13 grade the teams must be single gender and can only play against the same gender teams i.e. male versus male and female versus female.

This applies at all levels of rugby above Under 13.

#### **SANCTION(S)**

- Game is not to commence until single gender team (of the appropriate gender) is fielded. Failure to field a single gender team results in default
- Continued non-compliance the team is to be removed from the competition



# **NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY**

## **AGE TO PLAY SENIOR RUGBY**



### **POLICY #8 AGE TO PLAY SENIOR RUGBY**

#### **BACKGROUND**

In some provinces, small towns and rural areas, there is only one team available for players to join. Invariably this means that young school leavers have to play senior rugby as soon as they move from a school to club environment.

Given the inherent safety risks of teenagers playing against adults, the following policy applies. This policy is designed to be specific to the New Zealand rugby environment, and does not adhere World Rugby guidelines.

#### **POLICY**

- All senior rugby is classed as Under 19 and above for this policy
- Subject to Provincial Union right to withhold approval if a safety issue exists, 16 year olds at 1 January can play senior rugby in the backs only
- Subject to Provincial Union right to withhold approval if a safety issue exists, 17 year olds at 1 January can play senior rugby in the forwards
- Players 15 years old or younger at 1 January cannot play senior rugby
- Parent/guardian must sign an acknowledgement form

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

New Zealand Rugby:

- Will provide parent/guardian acknowledgement form

Provincial Unions:

- Will view all players aged under 18 years at 1 January who wish to play senior rugby. Approval to play will not be given if the Provincial Union considers a significant risk to the player's safety exists
- Will monitor and administer acknowledgement forms

Clubs:

- Advise Provincial Unions of players aged under 18 years at 1 January who wish to play senior rugby

#### **SANCTION(S)**

None



# **NATIONAL RUGBY POLICY**

## **AGE BANDS FOR AGE GRADE RUGBY**



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### **POLICY #09 AGE BANDS FOR AGE GRADE RUGBY**

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#### **BACKGROUND**

In some provinces, particularly small towns and rural areas with small populations, the qualifying age or playing ability may warrant players play in higher age brackets than their current age. This policy follows World Rugby guidelines.

#### **POLICY**

Players may play a maximum of two years above the lowest grade for which they are age-qualified. For instance, an Under 14 player may play U14, U15 or U16 only.

NZ Rugby recommends Provincial Unions obtain a parental approval acknowledgement form particularly where a two year age difference occurs.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

New Zealand Rugby:

- Will provide parent/guardian acknowledgement form

Provincial Unions:

- Will monitor and administer acknowledgement forms if used

Clubs/Schools:

- Adhere to policy when forming teams
- Will monitor age of players in age grades and instruct member teams to remove players outside of the age band

#### **SANCTIONS**

To be determined by Provincial Unions

