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*More than just a game*

## **NZRL Player Policies:**

### **Minimum age requirements to participate in open age, open weight rugby league grades.**

***The player has attained or will have attained at least seventeen (17) years of age by 31 December in the year preceding the commencement of the season.***

- This policy shall apply equally to male and female Rugby League Players.
- There are no grounds for exemption from this policy.
- Districts and or zones shall be required to implement this policy within their areas of control.
- This policy shall be enforced by the NZRL within National provincial competitions and national representative selections.

This policy shall be active from the 23rd of August 2008.

### **Rationale:**

The NZRL Rugby League Board based on the recommendation of the NZRL Medical Council the NZRL board passed the policy amendment in late 2008.

Medical and scientific experts on the NZRL medical council detailed the risk that young footballers under the age of 17 face sustaining serious and or long term injury as a result of competing against fully grown adults in full contact competition.

The risk factors are:

- The continuing physical and mental development of adolescent males and females from the ages 13 to 16 (including the setting of growth plates. Do you need this?)
- Considerable increases of the impact forces generated and required to be absorbed by participants in open age Rugby League competition.

The risk of a young person sustaining serious injury from an increase of impact forces in open age Rugby League may not only affect bone structure development, but also impact on musculoskeletal systems and permanent brain injury. This is a risk factor too high to be ignored by the national sports body.

The NZRL has a required duty of care to take all practicable steps to ensure the safety of all people who participate in the sport of Rugby League.

This policy brings the NZRL into line with other Rugby Codes and Australasian Standards.



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## **Maximum age for mixed gender full contact Rugby League**

### ***Males (Boys) and Females (Girls) may not participate in mixed gender rugby league once international rules (10m rule) commences.***

For clarity the maximum age for girls and boys to play in mixed gender full contact rugby league is 12 years of age. That being the player is to turn 12 years of age on the 31st of December in the year preceding the commencement of the season of play.

#### **Rationale:**

The Medical and Scientific Experts on the NZRL Medical Council recommended to the NZRL board amendments to the policy as detailed above based on the increased risk and the potential for serious and long term injury. Particularly for girls competing with boys above the age of 12 where the international rules of Rugby League apply in New Zealand.

Research suggests that the dramatic increase in risk of serious and long term injury for girls at this age are possibly due to hormonal changes in females during puberty, and also the physical development of boys at this same age.

Adding to the increased risk of serious and permanent injury is the increase of the 5 metre offside rule to 10 metres. The result of this change is a large potential increase in the impact forces in tackles and collisions.

The overall result of the physical and developmental changes in males and females of this age bracket, and the potential increase in impact forces that a player has to absorb, places female participants at a significant risk of serious and long term injury.

The NZRL has a required duty of care to take all practicable steps to ensure the safety of all people who participate in the sport of rugby league.