



FACT SHEET

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL VILIFICATION

Anti-discrimination laws in Australia make it illegal to incite hatred, ridicule, contempt or revulsion towards another person because of their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.

In the rules of Rugby League, this type of prohibited conduct is known as *Sexual Vilification*.

The National Rugby League (NRL) Member Protection Policy is also clear that harassment - any type of unwelcome behaviour that aims to offend, humiliate or intimidate - has no place in Rugby League.

NSW Rugby League (NSWRL) has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, discrimination and vilification. This includes forms of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

In line with the NRL Code of conduct, which lists 'inclusion' as a core value, NSWRL is committed to building a sporting culture where everyone feels welcome in our game, and where we respect and celebrating diversity in culture, gender, sexuality and social background.

WHAT ARE PHOBIC BEHAVIOURS?

Any language or behaviour which targets a participant's gender identity (i.e. male, female, non-binary or transgender), gender expression (the way a person dresses, speaks or behaves) or sexual orientation (i.e. gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual) is prohibited conduct. This includes:

- slurs such as 'fag**t', 'po*f', 'd*ke', 'les*o' and 'tr*nny'
- deliberate misgendering, such as describing strong women as "bl*kes"
- deliberate acts of violence
- policing access to changerooms and toilets
- discrimination in the selection or promotion of athletes or administrators
- isolating or excluding athletes or administrators from social events
- implementing processes or policies which only apply to those who are (or are assumed to be) LGBTQ+

Intent is irrelevant. "I was just having a laugh" is not an excuse.

These behaviours are unacceptable. In some cases, these behaviours are illegal.

Our Zero-tolerance Policy applies to all people involved in Rugby League whether they be athletes, coaches, administrators or spectators (including parents and families).

REPORTING SEXUAL VILIFICATION

The NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual (S4.5) outlines the process for identifying and responding to instances of sexual vilification during a game.

When a participant indicates to the Referee that they have been subjected to verbal vilification, the Referee will:

1. Signal time off
2. Ask the participant to state the offending remark(s)
3. Ask the participant to identify the alleged offender
4. Call on to the field the Touch Judge who is situated on the official table side of the ground (or the Ground Manager if Touch Judge not assigned)
5. Call both Captains and the alleged offender to hear the allegation
6. The Referee will ask the alleged victim if they wish to proceed with the allegation. If the response is affirmative the complaint cannot be withdrawn
7. The Referee shall then inform participants that he / she will complete a formal complaint form after the game regarding the incident
8. The Touch Judge on the official side of the ground (or Ground Manager if Touch Judge not assigned) will report the alleged offender's jumper number and the complainant's jumper number on the game sign on sheet
9. Play will then resume
10. Following the match:
 - a. The Referee and Touch Judges will complete an Incident Report / Match Report form indicating the nature of the complaint, and stating the alleged remarks.
 - b. The Referee will notify the Executive Officer of the Complaint that evening
 - c. The Executive Officer shall then forward the report to the relevant League Manager who will issue relevant Notice of Charge forms.

TRIBUNAL PROCEEDINGS CONCERNING SEXUAL VILIFICATION

In order to be a truly inclusive sport, instances of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia must be recognised and responded to appropriately.

Language and behaviour which intimidates, minimises or ridicules people with diverse genders and sexualities is a contributing factor to the overrepresentation of LGBTQ+ youth who report mental illness and psychological distress.

SUPPORT FOR COMPLAINANTS

Across Australian sport, less than half of all instances of sexual vilification in sport are reported. Many victims do not feel their complaints will be taken seriously, or fear the stress of a tribunal process.

Participants who are subjected to sexual vilification may or may not identify as LGBTQ+, and may or may not be open about their diverse gender or sexuality. For this reason, a range of external support providers should be recommended to complainants.

These include:

- Beyond Blue | beyondblue.org.au | 1300 22 4636
- Lifeline | www.lifeline.org.au | 13 11 14
- QLife | qlife.org.au | 1800 184 527
- ACON Pride Counselling | acon.org.au/support-services/pride-counselling | 1800 063 060
- Black Rainbow | blackrainbow.org.au

SANCTIONS

To foster an environment of acceptance and respect, NSWRL incorporates 'LGBTQ inclusion education' as an integral component of any sanction or disciplinary action which involves individuals or groups implicated in such behaviour. By doing so, we demonstrate our commitment to combating discrimination and fostering a culture that embraces diversity.

This initiative, involving a 15-minute e-learning module, not only serves as a deterrent to discriminatory conduct but also ensures that individuals involved in disciplinary matters gain a deeper understanding of the importance of LGBTQ inclusion. Through education and awareness, we aspire to create a sports community that values and celebrates the contributions of all its members, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

This proactive approach aligns with our commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone involved in our sport.

More information about education programs is available by contacting NSWRL Head of Corporate Affairs Tracie Edmondson tedmondson@nswrl.com.au

EDUCATION FOR TRIBUNAL MEMBERS

To ensure processes are fair, transparent and well-informed, NSWRL recommends that any tribunal arbitrating matters of sexual vilification includes at least one member with lived experience or specialist training in LGBTQ+ inclusion.

NSWRL offers LGBTQ+ Awareness training on a monthly basis with Pride in Sport. It is recommended that any tribunal member or official who will be dealing with integrity matters concerning sexual vilification should complete this 90-minute workshop.

More information about Pride in Sport training is available by contacting NSWRL Head of Corporate Affairs Tracie Edmondson tedmondson@nswrl.com.au

Other online education is available:

[Coach for All](#)

[Play by the Rules](#)

[Pride in Sport Language and Terminology Guide](#)

FURTHER READING

Out on the Fields outonthefields.com

The world's largest study into experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual athletes.

Out for Sport [A detailed analysis of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and community attitudes towards inclusive sport in Scotland.](#)

Rainbow Laces Toolkit [A best-practice guide for sports inclusion produced by Stonewall UK.](#)

Come out to Play [A report examining The Sports experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender \(LGBT\) people in Victoria.](#)

Sport Australia [Guidelines for the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse participants in Australian sport.](#)

The Australian Human Rights Commission humanrights.gov.au

An independent statutory organisation, established by an act of Federal Parliament to protect and promote human rights in Australia and internationally.

Play by the Rules playbytherules.net.au

Provides information, resources, tools and free online training focusing on discrimination, harassment, child safety, inclusion and integrity issues in sport.