



NEW ZEALAND RUGBY LEAGUE PLAYER PARTICIPATION POLICY

Updated 01/12/20

The NZRL has a required duty of care to take all practical steps to ensure the safety of all players participating in the sport of Rugby League. As a result of the duty of care, the NZRL based on recommendations received from the NZRL Medical Council have put in place the following policies. Medical and scientific experts on the Medical Council detailed the physical and mental risk that young players under the age of 17 face of sustaining serious and or long-term injuries as a result of competing against older and heavier players and in particular to players competing in grades more than **two** age groups above their eligible date of birth grade.

The risk factors are:

- The continuing physical and mental development of adolescent males and females from the age 5 to 17 years.
- Considerable increases of the impact forces generated and required to be absorbed by players when playing against older and heavier opposition in competition.

The policies are as follows:

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

Policy: The player has attained or will have attained at least seventeen (17) years of age by the 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.
- Zones and District Leagues shall implement this policy within their areas of control.

2. Maximum age that players may play above their registered age.

Policy: Players, male and female can only play above their eligible age in age restricted grades to a maximum of 2 years as at 1 January in the year of participation. For example, if a player in a clubs U13's team is called up to play in the U15's team, the player **MUST** have turned 13 before they are eligible, **NOT** be turning 13. This policy varies for a player being eligible to play up to U20's.

The following exemptions will apply:

- Players participating in open age, but restricted weight competitions will have attained at least seventeen (17) years of age by the 31 December in the year **preceding** the commencement of the season.
- Players participating in an under 20-year age competition, **must attain the age of 17 years** before being eligible to participate in a 20s competition.

- This policy shall apply equally to male and female players

3. Maximum age for mixed gender full contact Rugby League.

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 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.

Policy: The maximum age for males and females to play in mixed gender full contact Rugby League is 12 years of age. That being the players are to attain the age of 12 years during the year of the competition.