

## Whistleblower Policy

### Background

As a company limited by guarantee, New South Wales Rugby League is required under law to have a Whistleblower Policy that complies with the Corporations Law. The following policy is New South Wales Rugby League's policy.

In administering that policy, NSWRL has regard to its unusual circumstances. In the case of NSWRL in its role as the governing body for Rugby League in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, its activities are wide and far ranging and include the overview of many separate competitions.

Each of these competitions is subject to its own set of rules and regulations and each of those competitions has many participants, clubs and officials who while affiliated with NSWRL are not NSWRL. Each of these competitions also has procedures for appeal. Many of the activities which will be the subject of dispute in relation to these competitions relate to club officials and persons other than the NSWRL, notwithstanding that NSWRL has a role in governing those competitions broadly.

The NSWRL website contains all of its policies relating to community and major competitions.

In receiving a complaint which is purported to be made under the Whistleblower Policy, the NSWRL will seek to establish whether the alleged reportable conduct relates to the conduct of NSWRL or some other club or competition official or participant in relation to whom the rules of competition and the various appeals processes apply. It is not intended that the Whistleblower Policy be used as a forum of last resort for any individual who is dissatisfied with an outcome relating to a competition under the auspices of NSWRL.

### 1. Purpose and scope

New South Wales Rugby League's (**NSWRL, us, our, we**) Whistleblower Policy ("**Policy**") has been put in place to ensure that NSWRL (and its related bodies corporate) Personnel can raise concerns regarding Reportable Conduct (as defined in section 4 below) which may amount to breaches of statutory, regulatory or codified obligations without being subject to victimisation, harassment or discriminatory treatment.

This Policy aims to:

- encourage our Personnel to report an issue if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that someone has engaged in Reportable Conduct;
- outline how we will deal with reports of Reportable Conduct; and
- set out the avenues available to our Personnel to report Reportable Conduct to us.

This Policy should be read together with our Anti-Bribery & Anti-Corruption Policy.

We aim to address all concerns in a manner that is fair, prompt, sensitive and confidential (to the extent possible).

### 2. Scope

This Policy does NOT cover matters that are regarded as personal work-related grievances. Such issues should be reported to the Head of Human Resources under the relevant applicable policies.

However, a disclosure about a work-related grievance may qualify for protection where:

- (a) the disclosure also includes information about Reportable Conduct (as defined in section 5 below)
- (b) the disclosure suffers from or is threatened with detriment for making a disclosure;
- (c) the discloser seeks legal advice about the operation of whistleblower protections;
- (d) the disclosure relates to the breach of employment (or other) laws punishable by imprisonment for a period of 12 months or more;
- (e) the disclosure relates to conduct that represents a danger to the public; or
- (f) the disclosure relates to information that suggests misconduct beyond the discloser's own personal circumstances.

### **3. Application**

All current and past NSWRL workers, including directors, officers, employees, contractors, sub-contractors, suppliers, associates, service providers (such as consultants) and their employees ("NSWRL Personnel") may raise concerns regarding Reportable Conduct under this Policy, as well as their relatives and dependants

### **4. Duties of NSWRL Personnel in relation to Reportable Conduct**

NSWRL Personnel who become aware of known, suspected, or potential cases of Reportable Conduct must make a report under this Policy or under other applicable policies as a matter of priority.

### **5. Matters that should be reported**

Any matter which a NSWRL Personnel member suspects, on reasonable grounds, concerns misconduct or an improper state of affairs or circumstances in relation to NSWRL or our related bodies corporate (or the conduct of our officers or employees), should be reported in accordance with this Policy (**Reportable Conduct**).

Reportable Conduct may include any conduct that involves:

- misconduct or an improper state of affairs;
- dishonest behaviour;
- fraudulent activity;
- unlawful, corrupt or irregular use of company funds or practices;
- illegal activities that may constitute an indictable offence under Federal, State, or Territory Law;
- unethical behaviour, including anything that would breach our Anti-Bribery & Anti-Corruption Policy;
- improper or misleading accounting or financial reporting practices;
- a breach of any legislation relating to NSWRL's operations or activities;

- a matter set out in section above; or
- tax avoidance behaviour and other taxation-related impropriety – this is discussed further in section 6.

A disclosure which does not relate to Reportable Conduct will not qualify for protection under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) ("**Corporations Act**") or the *Taxation Administration Act 1953* (Cth) ("**Taxation Administration Act**"). However, a disclosure made to a legal practitioner for the purposes of obtaining legal advice will always be protected under legal professional privilege.

We rely on our Personnel to help maintain and grow its culture of honest and ethical behaviour. We will not tolerate conduct that should be reported under this Policy. It is therefore expected that any NSWRL Personnel who becomes aware of such Reportable Conduct will make a report as a matter of priority.

We take reports made under this Policy very seriously – false or frivolous reports or claims may have serious consequences, including reputational damage to NSWRL and individuals who are the subject of allegations. Disciplinary action may be taken against any employee who makes a false or frivolous report without having reasonable grounds. This is discussed further in section 7.

## **6. Tax Whistleblowers**

A disclosure in relation to tax avoidance behaviour and other taxation-related impropriety may be made to NSWRL's internal auditor and registered tax agent in addition to a legal practitioner or any NSWRL directors, officers or senior management employees. A disclosure may also be made to the Australian Taxation Office where the individual believes the information to be disclosed may assist the Commissioner of Taxation in performing its duties and functions.

NSWRL Personnel who make a disclosure relating to NSWRL's tax affairs will qualify for whistleblower protections under the *Taxation Administration Act 1953* (Cth) as discussed in section.

## **7. How to make a report and who you can report to?**

### **Internal Reporting**

In the first instance, you are encouraged to make an internal report concerning Reportable Conduct under this Policy to the Head of Human Resources to determine whether serious misconduct has occurred. This is an opportunity to clarify the incident, ask questions and determine whether the matter comes under this Policy. At all times these discussions will remain confidential.

### **External Reporting**

If an internal report is not appropriate or you do not feel comfortable using our internal reporting services, you may make a report to NSWRL's independent whistleblowing service provider, KPMG, using any of the following methods:

- KPMG FairCall Service 1800 500 956 (7:00am to 5:00pm AEST Monday to Friday)
- Online: <https://www.kpmgfaircall.kpmg.com.au/NSWRugbyLeague>
- Mail: The Fair Call Manager, KPMG Forensic, PO Box H67, Australia Square, Sydney, NSW, 1213

If desired, you may remain anonymous when making a report with our independent whistleblowing service provider. However, this may impact our ability to investigate the matters reported.

You may also report to officers and senior managers of NSWRL's related entities, audit or actuarial teams (as applicable), a legal practitioner and to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission ("ASIC") and other Commonwealth authorities. However, we encourage you to use our internal processes in the first instance.

A disclosure of Reportable Conduct which is not made to a recipient specified in this section or section 9. below will not qualify for protection under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) or the *Taxation Administration Act 1953* (Cth).

### **Anonymity**

A report can be made anonymously - Protected Disclosure Officers will keep the identity of all reporters confidential (subject to applicable laws). However, it may be difficult for us to properly investigate anonymous reports. If authorities take further legal action in relation to the reported matter, it may become necessary for a reporter to identify themselves to these authorities.

Anonymous reporters will qualify for protection under the *Corporations Act* and we will continue to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the reporter is treated fairly and protected against discrimination or detriment in respect of their employment.

## **8. Protection for Whistleblowers**

Eligible whistleblowers who report disclosable matters to eligible recipients are entitled to certain protections under law, such as protection against the commencement of certain legal proceedings or actions in relation to the report.

NSWRL Personnel who have information which they suspect, on reasonable grounds, relates to Reportable Conduct and make a report of that information in accordance with this Policy ("**Whistleblower**") will not be discriminated against or disadvantaged in their employment or engagement with NSWRL, even if the report is subsequently determined to be incorrect or not substantiated.

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that a Whistleblower will not be subject to any form of victimisation, discrimination, injury, harassment, demotion, dismissal or prejudice, because they have made a report. However, this Policy may not protect the Whistleblower from liability to the extent they are also found to have been involved in or connected to the Reportable Conduct.

### **(a) Confidentiality and protection of your identity**

Subject to compliance with legal requirements, upon receiving a report under this Policy, NSWRL and our Protected Disclosure Officers are legally prohibited from disclosing any particulars that might identify, or are likely to lead to the identification of, the individual reporting conduct, without first obtaining the relevant individual's express consent. Unless required by law, any disclosure will be done on a strictly confidential basis. However, the Protected Disclosure Officer is able to disclose the complaint without your consent to ASIC, APRA or the Australian Federal Police, to an Australian legal practitioner for the purposes of obtaining legal advice, or otherwise as permitted by law.

### **(b) Protection of files and records**

All files and records created from an investigation into Reportable Conduct reported under this Policy will be securely stored and retained by us. No information pertaining to the Reportable Conduct will be released to any person not involved in the investigation (other than to our senior managers or directors requiring access in order to action the report or for corporate governance purposes) without the relevant Protected Disclosure Officer's authority and your consent.

(c) **Support for Whistleblowers**

We are committed to supporting individuals who wish to make a report of Reportable Conduct under this Policy. If you are considering making a report under this Policy in person, you can ask to do so with a support person present. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that NSWRL Personnel who make a report of Reportable Conduct receive appropriate support and engagement.

Additional Support is available via:

- The NSWRL Head of Human Resources; or
- Relevant independent support service providers.

(d) **Fairness:**

It is a priority for us that individuals who make a report under this Policy do not suffer detriment or adverse treatment as a result. Detriment or adverse treatment may include actual or threatened:

- (i) dismissal, demotion, suspension or alteration of an employee's position;
- (ii) discrimination between NSWRL Personnel;
- (iii) damage to property, reputation or financial position; or
- (iv) harassment, intimidation, harm or injury.

We do not tolerate any form of unfair treatment, threat, retaliation or other action against any individuals who have made or assisted in the making of a report under this Policy and will take steps to ensure that these individuals do not suffer detriment as a result of reporting. Any such treatment, threat, retaliation or other action must immediately be reported to the Head of Human Resources to investigate.

In addition, if you make a report of Reportable Conduct under this Policy, you are entitled to additional protections under law. These protections ensure that eligible persons who make eligible disclosures are protected against civil, administrative and criminal liability or the enforcement of certain contractual remedies in respect of those disclosures. We encourage Whistleblowers to seek independent legal advice.

Whistleblowers are entitled to seek compensation and other remedies for loss, damage or injury suffered as a result of a disclosure or if NSWRL has failed to take reasonable precautions and exercise due diligence to prevent the detrimental conduct from occurring.

(e) **False or frivolous reports**

A report may have serious consequences, including potential damage to the career prospects and reputation of people who are the subject of allegations of Reportable Conduct. Therefore, it is very important that Whistleblowers who make a report under this Policy do so with reasonable grounds to suspect the Reportable Conduct has, or will shortly, take place, and that all underlying information and facts concerning the Reportable Conduct are true and correct.

We take reports made under this Policy very seriously. Disciplinary action may be taken against any employee who makes a false or frivolous report without having reasonable grounds to suspect that the Reportable Conduct has, or will shortly, take place. A Whistleblower will not be considered to have made a report with reasonable grounds to suspect that the Reportable Conduct has, or will shortly, take place, if the report is frivolous, raised for a malicious reason or ulterior motive, or if it is

not based on facts and/or circumstances that provide a reasonable basis for the report. Repeated reports about trivial matters may also be considered not to be made with reasonable grounds to suspect that the Reportable Conduct has, or will shortly, take place.

## **9. Public Interest and Emergency Reporting**

In circumstances where you make a report of Reportable Conduct to ASIC, APRA or a prescribed Commonwealth authority and:

- (a) you have reasonable grounds to believe the report concerns a substantial and imminent danger to the health and safety of one or more persons or the natural environment; or
- (b) at least 90 days have elapsed since the date of that report and you do not have reasonable grounds to believe that action has been taken in respect of that report (providing that you have contacted the person to whom the report has been made to check on the status of the investigation) and you have reasonable grounds to believe that making a further disclosure would be in the public interest;

a further report may be made to a member of parliament or journalist but only if the Whistleblower has given prior written notice of the intention to make a secondary report to the original recipient of the report. In such case the further report may be entitled to the protections conferred by law.

We will take reasonable steps to ensure that a Whistleblower is not victimised as a result of making a protected emergency report.

## **10. How we investigate Reportable Conduct**

We will investigate all Reportable Conduct reported under this Policy as soon as possible after the matter has been reported. The relevant Protected Disclosure Officer will have responsibility and oversight for the investigation (unless we determine that a more suited Protected Disclosure Officer should take control of the investigation). The Protected Disclosure Officer may, subject to confidentiality and Whistleblower's consent requirements, appoint a person internal or external to NSWRL to assist in the investigation of a matter raised in a report. Where appropriate, we will provide regular feedback to the Whistleblower regarding the investigation's progress and/or outcome (subject to considerations of the privacy and confidentiality considerations of those against whom allegations are made).

The investigation will be conducted expeditiously, in an objective and fair manner, and otherwise as is reasonable and appropriate having regard to the nature of the Reportable Conduct and the circumstances. At the conclusion of an investigation into Reportable Conduct, a confidential report will be provided to NSWRL's Chairman of the Board of Directors. A copy of the report will not be shared with the Whistleblower.

Substantiated reports of Reportable Conduct may result in disciplinary action in respect of the persons against whom substantiated allegations are made, up to and including termination of employment or engagement (as relevant).

Any Whistleblower who is found to have made a frivolous or vexatious report may also be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or engagement (as relevant).

## **11. Training and Accountability**

We will ensure that this Policy (or a summary of it) is circulated to NSWRL Personnel, made available to NSWRL Personnel and to the public via our website and take reasonable steps to ensure that

NSWRL Personnel are aware of, and understand this Policy, and the types of behaviour or scenarios that are reportable, including through internal communications and training.

Any disclosures of Reportable Conduct will be retained in our confidential 'Whistleblowing Register' as required by law, which will be maintained by our Head of Human Resources.

## **12. Review of this Policy**

This Policy will be reviewed annually by NSWRL's Risk & Governance Committee to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to NSWRL, and that it continues to comply with all relevant legislative requirements.

## **13. Version Control**

**Date:** January 2021

**Amendment/Variation:** Policy updated

**Responsible:** NSWRL Risk & Governance Committee