

5.5 Melee Escalation & Associated Crowd Invasion Policy

This Policy applies to all age groups in Community Rugby League competitions where NSWRL has control of Code of Conduct Tribunals. It operates alongside the Tough Love in League Policy (Section 5.4) and adds a team-level breach for melee escalation. Where silent, Section 5.4 prevails.

1. **Zero Tolerance.** A zero-tolerance stance applies to any Player or Team Official who becomes engaged in a melee, regardless of stated intention (including peacemaking, separating teammates or restraining others). Engagement is the test — not intent.
2. **Mandatory Retreat.** When an Incident involving any level of violence or foul play occurs, no Player or Team Official other than those already part of the Initial Incident is permitted to engage. All other Players and Team Officials must immediately retreat and allow Match Officials to manage and de-escalate the situation.
3. **Initial Incident Defined.** The Initial Incident comprises the Player(s) directly engaged at the point Match Officials begin to intervene. Any Player or Team Official who subsequently walks, runs or moves toward the Incident is in breach of this Policy, whether or not they engage physically.
4. **Adjudicated Breach Notice.** Where NSWRL identifies a breach of clauses 1–3 — whether on the basis of a Match Official report, Ground Manager report, video footage, photographs or any other evidence NSWRL considers reliable — an Adjudicated Breach Notice will be issued to the Team(s) concerned. NSWRL has absolute discretion to determine whether a breach has occurred, the grading of the breach and the penalty imposed. The Team may respond by:
 - a) accepting the adjudicated breach and the penalty issued; or
 - b) pleading not guilty, in which case a Club Executive member AND the Coach of the Team involved are both required to attend the NSWRL Tribunal Hearing. Failure of either to attend will result in the Adjudicated Breach being deemed accepted.
5. **Team Penalty & NSWRL Discretion.** The minimum penalty under this Policy is a one (1) match stand-down for the Team concerned (recorded as a forfeit of the next scheduled fixture). NSWRL retains absolute discretion in the application of this Policy — including the determination of what constitutes an Incident, Engagement or escalation, the evidence relied upon, the grading of any breach and the penalty imposed — and may impose any greater penalty it considers appropriate (additional match stand-downs, competition points deductions, monetary fines, Club bonds, suspension or disqualification of the Team from the competition). Where any situation arises that is not expressly covered by this Policy, the determination of NSWRL shall be final.
6. **Associated Crowd Invasion.** Where a melee is associated with one or more spectators or non-participants entering the Playing Area or Field of Play, the Club concerned is jointly responsible. Spectator penalties under Section 5.4 Rules 11–14 apply in addition to the team penalty under clause 5 of this Policy.
7. **Targeted Escalation.** Where NSWRL determines, at its sole discretion, that a Melee Escalation by one Team (Team A) was committed or orchestrated to deliberately provoke or draw in the opposing Team (Team B) — for example where Team B Players retreat but multiple Team A Players engage, forcing Team B Players to engage passively to protect a teammate — NSWRL retains the right to sanction Team A only. Team B Players who engage passively may be excused from clauses 1–3. Individual judiciary charges against any Player from either Team continue to apply. Targeted

8. Escalation is an aggravating factor against Team A. Neither Team may assert Targeted Escalation as a defence or expectation.
9. **Individual Penalties Preserved.** This Policy does not displace individual penalties for Players or Team Officials. Charges under the NRL Offences Index 15.1.i (Coming from a distance to become involved in a fight), Section 5.4 Rule 1 (On-Field Striking) and Section 5.4 Rule 7 (Leaving the Playing Area) continue to apply to individuals in addition to the team-level penalty under this Policy.
10. **Finals Series.** Any breach of this Policy in a Finals Series match may result in the offending Team being disqualified from the competition and ruled ineligible for premiership honours for the season, consistent with Section 5.4 Rule 9 and Metro Conference Competitions By-Laws Section 29.6.
11. **Club Responsibility.** Clubs are responsible for the conduct of their Players, Team Officials, parents, carers and supporters (NSWRL R&R Rule 8). Clubs must brief all Players, Coaches, Team Managers and Trainers on this Policy and must identify any person involved in an Incident on request from a Match Official, Ground Manager or NSWRL.