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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This study was conducted on behalf of the NSW Rugby League Academy (NSWRL), and was assisted by funding from the NSW Sporting Injuries committee.

The author would like to thank Northern Sydney Health for providing the ‘Sports Safety Audit Tool’ that was used to carry out this study, along with the first audit results that helped shape this report.

The NSWRL is recognised for their assistance throughout all stages of this study. In particular, Lyndal Blom (NSWRL First Aid Coordinator), Martin Meredith (NSWRL coaching and development manager), and Wayne Portlock (NSWRL Development Manager) are thanked for their time, support and contributions to the study. As well Rod Hughes (ARL Risk Manager), Dave Norman (NSWRL Operations Manager), and David Nissen (NSWRL Finance Manager), are recognised for their time and effort during consultation.

The following districts are acknowledged for their contribution and support toward this research; Canterbury Bankstown District Junior Rugby League (JRL), Penrith District JRL, Balmain District JRL, Parramatta District JRL, St George District JRL, South Sydney District JRL, Western Suburbs District JRL, Canberra & District JRL, Newcastle and District Rugby League, Manly - Warringah District JRL, Cronulla-Sutherland JRL, Sydney Roosters District JRL, North Sydney District JRL. In particular Andrew Hill (Coach Education and Development Manager) from the Parramatta District JRL and Rod Gorman (Chief Executive Officer) from South Sydney District JRL are thanked for the time they gave during interviews.

The author would also like to thank Rob Bower (Lecturer) and Steve Frawley (Lecturer) from the University of Technology in Sydney for their contribution and support during the early data collection and draft stages of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Definition of the problem

To date the NSWRL does not have a suitable structure in place for the maintenance, delivery and implementation of draft policy and procedures for its members. This inability to produce a policy on request is an issue the academy has recognised as a problem and intends to address.

Objectives

In light of the above, this study was commissioned to examine current policy and safety practices existing within the NSWRL, by identifying their current use by Junior Rugby League Clubs. Specifically, the study aimed to identify implemented policy / procedures held by individual clubs, whether these be written club policies (WC), written association policies (WA), unwritten club policies (UC) or unwritten association policies (UA). As well the study was focused on the identification of current policies and safety practices in place within these same clubs.

Methods / data sources

A suitable survey or “Sports Safety Audit Tool”, provided by Northern Sydney Health, was used to gather data, and contained 71 questions split into two sections; section one covered safety policies held by clubs, whilst section two covered safety practices currently in place within the clubs. In order to obtain a valid and truly representative cross section of information, all 198 clubs were invited to participate in this study, with surveys mailed out across 13 different districts in Sydney. A total of 57 Junior Rugby League Clubs replied through either mail or email correspondence; with 53 of those clubs taking part in the study (i.e. returning a completed survey).

Key findings

Audit results indicated that:

- 66% of respondents would like assistance in developing a sports safety / risk management plan

- Only 32 % (8 out of 25) of policies put forward for response were currently strongly endorsed, with greater than 65% of responses indicating that the following policies were in place, and had been incorporated into club structures in *written* form.
 - o A child protection policy
 - o A policy on the qualification of umpires and referees in charge of matches
 - o A policy regarding the qualifications of coaches for club teams
 - o A policy regarding the attendance of qualified first aiders / sports trainers at matches
 - o A code of conduct / fair play policy
 - o A code of conduct on the acceptable behaviour of people attending matches
 - o A safe play / modified rules policy for juniors
 - o A formal sports insurance policy

- Junior Rugby League Clubs were more likely to incorporate safety practices and procedures into club structures, even though many safety policies were not in written form.

- The use of safety practices and procedures can be linked to the various programs promoted by the NSWRL (i.e. coaching and FAO courses).

- Record keeping of injuries was poorly implemented into club structures with only 42% of respondents claiming to record all injuries. The importance of this issue should be examined by the league to determine why all injuries aren't reported and the relationship between injury reporting and insurance claims.

Conclusion

There is a general recognition that the legality of such issues relating to negligence and duty of care is an ever growing concern in today's sport market (Healey 2005). In this environment, and given the survey results, it is considered that the concern of the

NSWRL in relation to its inability to provide approved policies on request is justified. A problem exists, and the situation needs to be addressed in the short term.

It is considered that any move to provide uniform draft or outline policy documents for distribution throughout the League would be well accepted by Clubs, and quickly implemented, which is supported by survey results that show:

- 1) 66% of survey respondents have indicated that they would like assistance in putting together a sports safety/risk management plan
- 2) The 8 safety policies confirmed as being held in written form by in excess of 65% of responding Clubs can be clearly linked to a ready availability of information through easy access to League documentation and sponsored publications, including safe play / code of conduct policies.

From the above it is clear that a minimum 66% of clubs would obtain direct benefit from a NSWRL decision to provide ongoing support by way of draft sports safety policy documentation.

However, various elements that need further examination in order to completely understand what protocols are taking place within the structure of Rugby League include:

- Did the nature of questions within the survey prompt responses based on theory rather than true practice?
- Are proper communication channels available to the Junior Rugby League Clubs from their District Associations?
- Do the District Associations have difficulty in consulting with the NSWRL?
- Does the ARL actively create and promote policy development within the NSWRL?

Recommendation

The following are recommendations for incorporation into the league:

1. Creating a Policy Handbook that incorporates all aspects of sports safety and risk management for District Association administrators.
2. Creating a Policy Booklet that can be distributed to the Junior Rugby League Clubs, their members and stakeholders including parents, coaches, players etc.
3. Regular consultation between the different tiers in Rugby League including the ARL, NSWRL, District Associations and Junior Rugby League Clubs.
4. Continual updating of the ARL / NSWRL web site, including a section on risk management that identifies all policies and practices as they become available.
5. An open-book test for current courses (i.e. Coaching, FAO), thus reiterating the importance and relevance of the course as well as encouraging and teaching learners to use their manuals and workbooks.

INTRODUCTION:

The Northern Sydney Health sponsored '*Sports Safety Practices of Community Rugby League Clubs*' report provided the foundation for this study and outlined the importance of implementing sports safety policies and practices into the structure of Rugby League. The report emphasised important aspects of sports safety that needed to be addressed in order for the league to guard its members from harm and injury.

The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of the current position of the NSW Junior Rugby League, in relation to the management of sports safety practices and policies. This study was designed to identify the current policies and practices that are implemented in the day to day / game to game activities of each Junior Rugby League Club. In addition, a major aspect of this study focused on what kind of policies were held by these Clubs, and the supplier of those policies.

By identifying those policies and practices that have been accepted and incorporated into the management of Junior Rugby League Clubs, this study hopes to establish what measures have been taken and can be taken to further ensure the safety, protection and well being of Rugby League members.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The survey or “*Sports Safety Audit Tool*” was provided by Northern Sydney Health.

Lyndal Blom contacted the District Associations to obtain Club information and contact details for the Junior Rugby League Clubs in each district. In all, 13 Districts across Sydney were contacted, including Canterbury Bankstown District Junior Rugby League (JRL), Penrith District JRL, Balmain District JRL, Parramatta District JRL, St George District JRL, South Sydney District JRL, Western Suburbs District JRL, Canberra & District JRL, Newcastle & District Rugby League, Manly - Warringah District JRL, Cronulla-Sutherland JRL, Sydney Roosters District JRL, North Sydney District JRL.

As a result 198 surveys were either mailed or emailed to the Junior Rugby League Clubs and were collected at the NSWRL Academy in Narrabeen and stored in folders. 57 clubs replied to the mail out and 53 of those participated in this study (i.e. completing the survey).

Microsoft excel was used to collate and compare all information for this report with each question compared between the participating Junior Rugby League Clubs. The results were then put into graph format to gain better understanding and present the results within the report.

Strengths of the research:-

- The entire league was given a chance to participate
- Over 25% of the Clubs participated
- The study covered a wide range of participants
- Information provided was detailed
- Spread of data

Limitations of the research:-

- Question 13 prompted an invalid response from participants, and could not be included in the final report
- A number of Clubs provided more than one response to individual questions, which may have impacted to a minor degree on some percentage results.
- Confusion some participants had with the wording of various questions
- Some questions were missed or not answered
- Nature of questions and source of survey may have prompted response based on theory rather than true practice.

Northern Sydney Health recently conducted research in relation to sports safety policies and practices in the Northern Sydney area. The research conducted highlighted the importance of the implementation of safety policies and procedures within sporting organisations with results published in *'The Sports Safety Practices of Community Rugby League Clubs'* report that was produced in February of 2002.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

CLUB MANAGEMENT

Structure and support:

- *Club position of respondent*

From the 53 returned surveys a total of 55 individuals participated in this study. Secretaries contributed to 70% of responses, with the remaining 30% of contributors represented by Presidents, Treasurers, and others (First Aid Officer, Administrator, Senior Vice President, Vice President and life member).

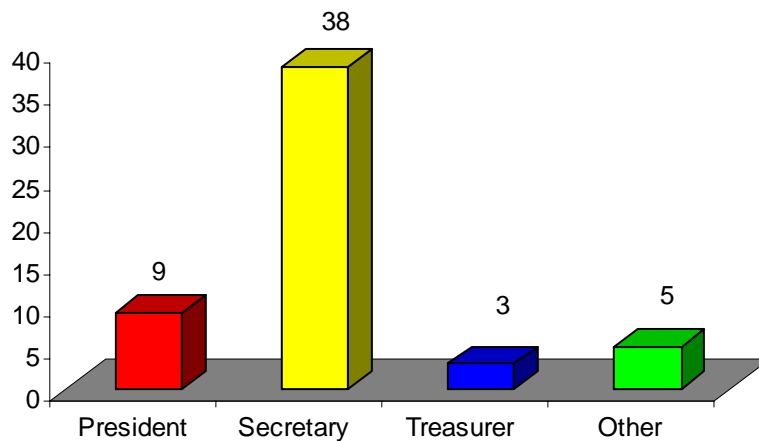


Figure 1 - Administrative position of survey respondents

This 'sports safety audit tool' was directly mailed or emailed to the Junior Rugby League Clubs Secretaries which is reflected in the high response rate from these individuals in the survey results.

- *Approximate number of registered players*

Survey results indicated that there are currently over 10,000 players registered within the 53 clubs that took part in this study. Also revealed was the fact that 86% of these players are under the age of 18.

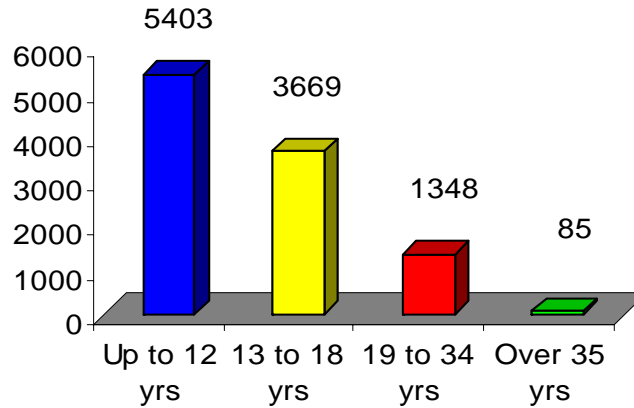


Figure 2 - Approximate number of registered players covered by survey

The survey results indicate that the game of Rugby League has a heavy junior participation base with over 85% of participants under the age of 18. Throughout these years young individuals are still growing and developing. Therefore, the need to ensure the safety and well being of these children is of paramount importance and can be achieved through the implementation of safety policies, practices and procedures.

Rugby league safety and risk management:

- *Sports Safety and Risk Management policies*

Of those responses that indicated Clubs have a comprehensive sports safety / risk management policy (n=64): 45% of responses specified the incorporation of either written club or association policies, a further 30% incorporate either an unwritten club or association policy (UA=3, UC=13, UDK=3), while 25% didn't know (DK=3), have no policy (NO=12) or did not respond (DR=1) to this question.

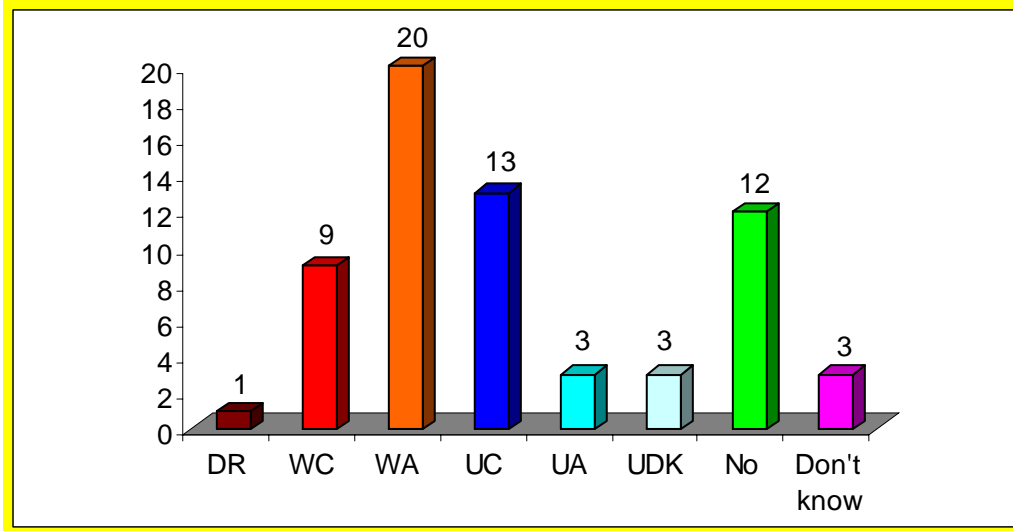


Figure 3 - Comprehensive Sports Safety and Risk Management policy held by the clubs

The area of risk management is believed to be a crucial element in the current management of sporting organisations. [Healey \(2005\)](#) suggests that these organisations should take a more active role in both insurance coverage and risk management in order to reduce the probability of incidents. Country Rugby League (CRL) have identified this area of management as a potential threat to the structure of Rugby League in outback regions, and has put in place a risk management handbook relating to issues in this area. This handbook incorporates practices and procedures that can aid Junior Rugby League Clubs in identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating and monitoring potential risks and hazards.

- Formal sports insurance policy

The results showed that 98% of respondents had a formal sports insurance policy, while the remaining 2% of candidates didn't know whether their club had this policy.

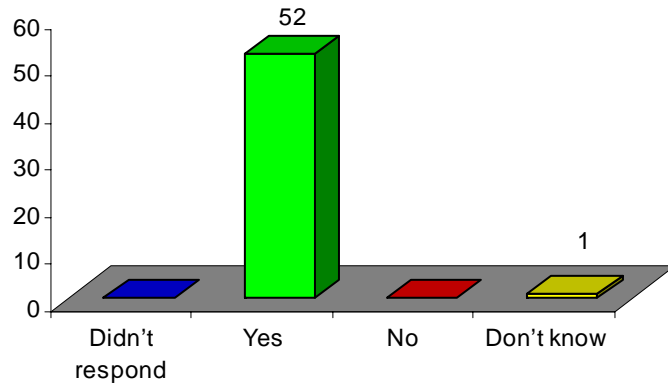


Figure 4 – Proportion of clubs that have a formal Sports Insurance Policy

The League strongly suggests individual clubs incorporate a formal sports insurance policy into the management of Junior Rugby League Clubs which is evident in the survey results. Sports insurance is crucial in ensuring the survival and cover of individual Clubs as well as individuals when faced with adverse circumstances.

- *Specific safety budget*

The results indicated that 66% of respondents didn't have a specific safety budget, compared to the 13% of respondents who did. The remaining 21% either did not know if they had this policy (n=9) or did not respond to this question (n=2).

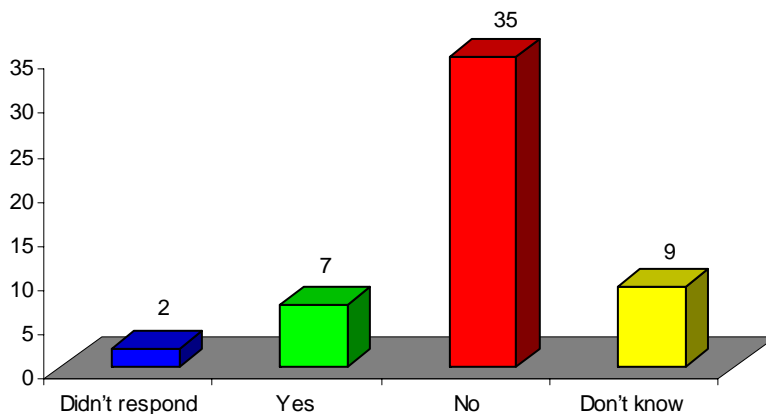


Figure 5 – Proportion of clubs that have a specific safety budget

It is not always possible for Junior Rugby League Clubs to put aside a specific safety budget, due to lack of available funds. However, it is still their responsibility to ensure that adequate and affordable safety equipment is provided at all club fixtures. As well, the League should provide a guideline for clubs, ensuring that a full understanding of what first aid and safety equipment is required regardless of their safety budget.

- ***Committee / coordinator specifically responsible for safety***

The results indicated that 43% of respondents have a committee or coordinator specifically responsible for safety, while the remaining 57%, didn't respond (n=2) to this question, didn't know (n=7) or didn't have (n=21) a committee specifically responsible for safety.

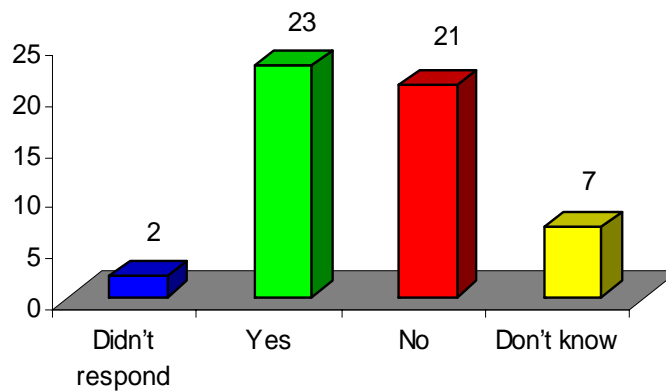


Figure 6 - Proportion of clubs that have a committee / coordinator specifically responsible for safety

If left to individuals participating at the Junior Club level there is the possibility that this issue may be overlooked. The need for an individual or committee that has knowledge and experience in this area is an essential part of any risk management plan and should be promoted by the governing bodies. It should be recommended that all District Rugby League Clubs set up a committee or individual responsible for safety in their district.

- *Are sports safety policies regularly reviewed*

The results indicate that 56% of respondents regularly review safety policies, while the remaining 44% either didn't respond (n=2) to this question, did not know what process were in place (n=3) or do not regularly review safety policies at their club (n=18).

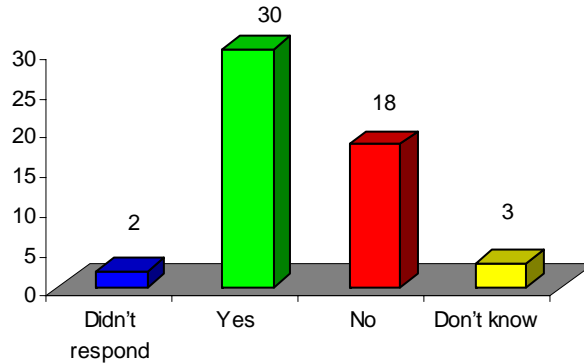


Figure 7 - Proportion of clubs that regularly review sports safety policies

This process should be undertaken by all levels within the league and implemented through the appropriate channels. It should not be left to the clubs to regularly review sports safety policies and practices, they can have their input, and if they want to review them they can, but ultimately this process should be controlled and monitored by the ARL and NSWRL.

- *Satisfaction of clubs with their stakeholders*

The responses (n=53) as to how well informed clubs think their stakeholders are with respect to safety policies are displayed below:

Administrators:

60% are very well informed

38% could be better informed

2% are poorly informed

Coaches:

51% are very well informed

43% could be better informed

6% are poorly informed

Players:

32% are very well informed

55% could be better informed

13% are poorly informed

First aiders:

71% are very well informed

25% could be better informed

4% are poorly informed

Parents:

25% are very well informed

56% (n=30) could be better informed

17% (n=9) – poorly informed

2% (n=1) didn't respond

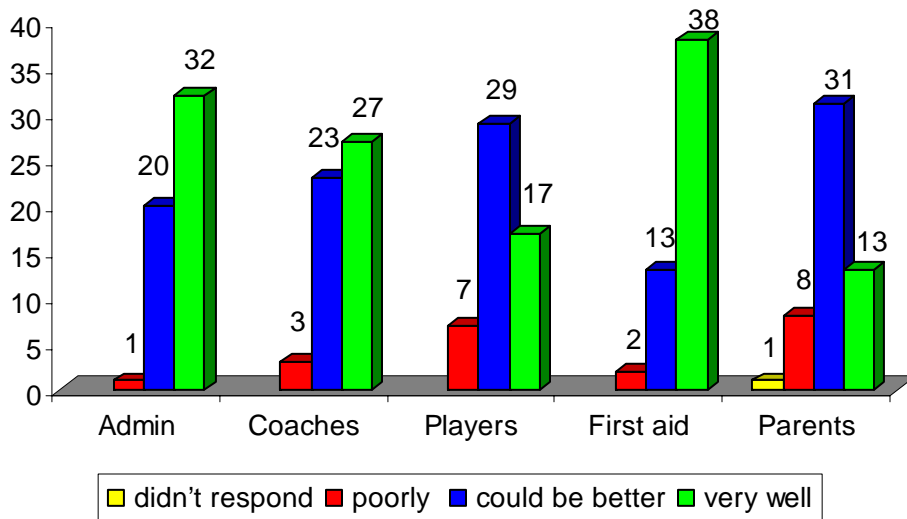


Figure 8 - Level of reported satisfaction with stakeholders' knowledge of club/association safety policies

If various stakeholders are not fully informed about the club or association safety policies they will not be able to contribute by reinforcing implementation and adding to the success of the club in the area of risk management. Further, by informing these stakeholders the club is taking the necessary steps to ensure the safety of its members.

- **Reporting injuries**

Of the respondents that replied to keeping records of injuries a total of 125 responses were recorded. Many respondents indicated yes to various methods of recording injury.

The responses indicated that:

- (A) 42% record all injuries.
- (B) 32% only record injuries that required first aid
- (C) 11% only record injuries which resulted in the participant missing a match
- (D) 34% only record injuries requiring the participant to attend a medical practitioner
- (E) 28% only record injuries that required admission to hospital
- (F) 26% only record injuries that generated an insurance claim
- (N) 8% indicated that injuries were not recorded at all
- (DK) 2% indicated that they weren't sure as to the method of the clubs recording procedures.

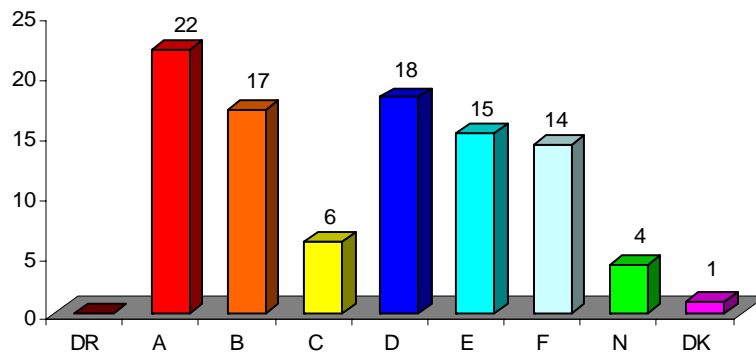


Figure 9 – Proportion of clubs that report injuries and the type of injury reported

The First Aid Officer's National Accreditation Scheme Suggests that all First Aid Officers (FAO) record all injuries attended to, as well as the management of, advice given and any other relevant information the FAO thinks appropriate (FAO handbook). This strategy may be able to highlight areas of concern for coaches and trainers and aid in the development of safety programs to help combat injuries with proper training techniques; as can be seen in the Coaching Council's establishment of safe landing techniques provided by Peter Kelly and Billy Sutherland.

- ***Promoting attendance at relevant safety or training programs to your members***

In relation to whether or not clubs actively promote attendance at relevant safety or training programs to their members 89% indicated that they do, with only 11% indicating that they either didn't know (n=1) or did not promote safety or training programs (n=5).

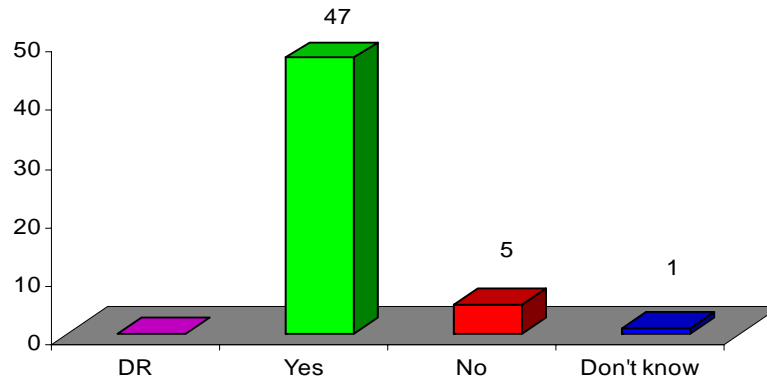


Figure 10 - Proportion of clubs that actively promote the attendance of members at relevant safety or training programs

The support shown by individual Junior Rugby League Clubs in promoting attendance at relevant safety and training programs is evident in the survey results. This also highlights that when given the opportunity to participate in and incorporate appropriate safety practices and procedures into club management, Junior Rugby League Clubs do in fact support these programs.

- ***Procedures taken to inform relevant stakeholders of sports safety policies***

Results concerning whether, and when, clubs inform relevant stakeholders about sports safety policies indicate that Junior Rugby League Clubs generally inform members upon joining the club, at monthly meetings or as they become available. The results are as follows:

- 64% inform stakeholders upon joining the club
- 45% inform stakeholders at monthly meetings
- 40% inform stakeholders as policies become available
- 15% inform stakeholders on a yearly basis
- 8% inform stakeholders don't inform stakeholders

- 6% don't know whether or not stakeholders are informed
- 2% didn't respond to the question

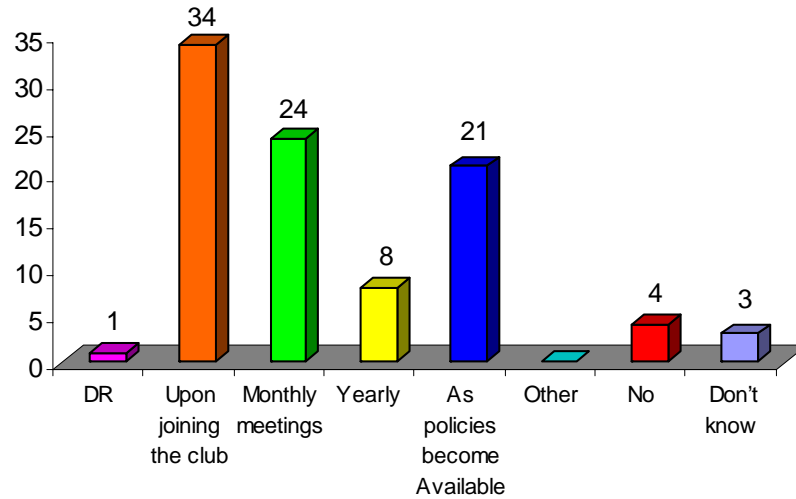


Figure 11 - Method used to regularly inform relevant stakeholders of sports safety policies

Providing that policies are readily available to Junior Rugby League Clubs, the survey results suggest that these policies would be distributed regularly to the relevant stakeholders upon joining the club, monthly meetings, and as policies become available. Therefore, it is evident that the incorporation of sports safety policies into Junior League Club management is reliant upon the ease of access from the governing bodies.

- ***Emergency action plans***

A total of 65 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with 37% of responses indicating either a written club or association policy (WA=10, WC=13) was incorporated into the club structure, whereas 55% of responses suggested an unwritten club or association policy (UA=5, UC=26, UDK=3) was used. The remaining 8% suggested respondents either did not know (DK=1) if they had this policy or did not have this policy (NO=4).

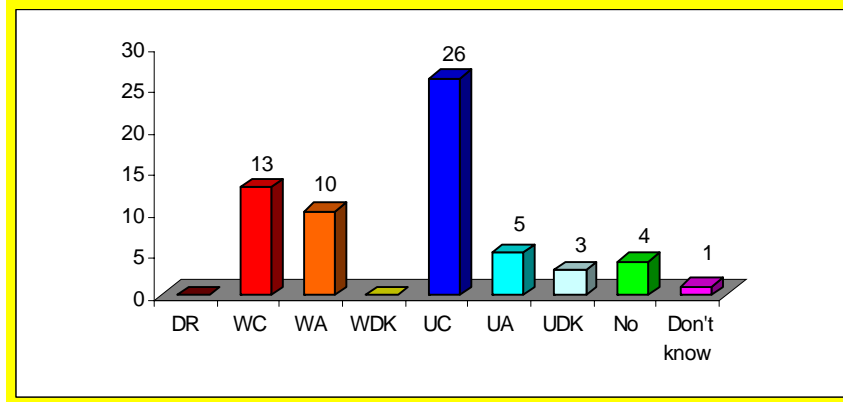


Figure 12 – ‘Emergency Action Plan’ policy held by the clubs

The First Aid Officer’s National Accreditation Scheme recommends all FAO’s adhere to certain guidelines. One of those guidelines states that the FAO ‘develop and carefully follow an emergency plan’ (FAO manual, pg 6); which should ensure the individual is fully prepared for any outcome that may arise during matches and training.

- Access to a telephone in the case of emergency at matches and training

Of those respondents who replied 96% and 88% were reported to have availability of a phone at both matches and training respectively. The remaining 4% of respondents were reported to have either a phone available most of the time (n=1) of half of the time (n=1) at matches. While the remaining 12% of respondents either had a phone most of the time (n=2), did not respond (n=3), or did not (n=1) have a phone available at training.

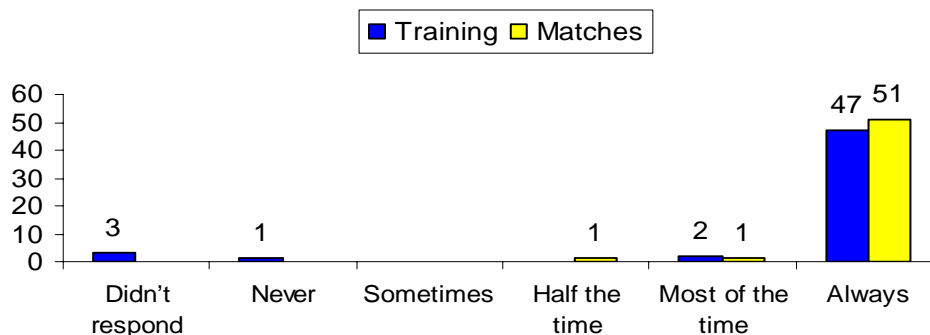


Figure 13 - Emergency availability of telephones at matches and training

The importance of being able to contact emergency services is of paramount importance in providing appropriate first aid support for the FAO. Having a phone available in case of emergencies should be an integral part of any emergency action plan policy.

- ***Emergency services access at matches and training***

Of the respondents who replied 92% and 75% were reported to always have clear and unlocked access available for emergency services at both matches and training respectively. Only 8% of respondents were reported as having access for emergency services most of the time at matches. Whereas the remaining 25% of respondents, replying to providing clear and unlocked access at training, suggested that access was either available most of the time (n=8), sometimes (n=2) or never (n=2), with one respondent not replying.

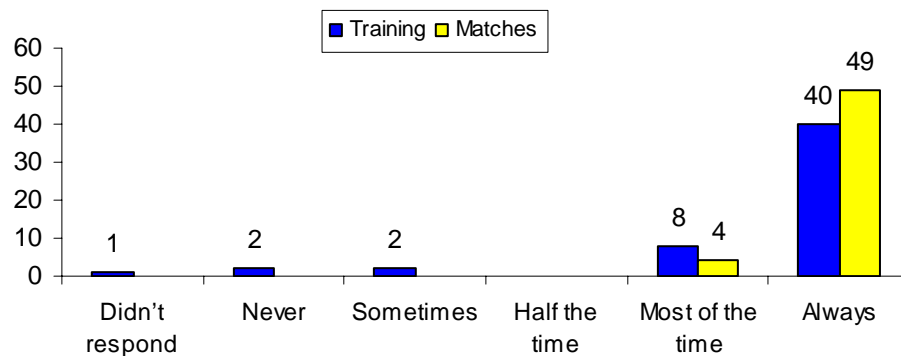


Figure 14 - Availability of clear and unlocked access for emergency services at matches and training

Ensuring that clear and unlocked access is available for emergency services at both matches and training is part of the job description for the ground manager as stated on the ARL Development website (appendix 5). This element should be incorporated as part of the emergency action plan and part of the risk management plan as a whole.

PLAYER SAFETY

Injury prevention, control and treatment:

- *Warming up before matches and training*

The survey results showed that 69% and 54% of respondents indicated all players warm up and stretch before both matches and training respectively. Only 8% of respondents indicated either half of their players (n=2) or some of their players (n=2) stretch or warm up before matches. While 14% of respondents indicated about half of their players (n=3) or only some of their players (n=4) warm up and stretch before training.

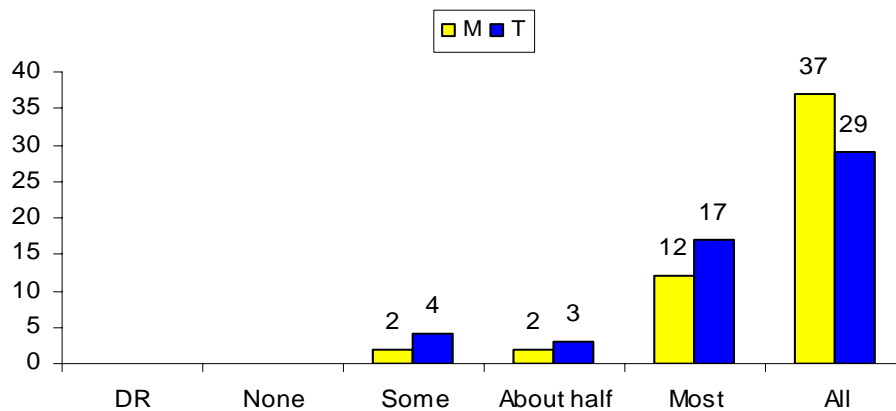


Figure 15 - Proportion of players that warm up / stretch for at least 10 minutes before matches and training

- *Cooling down*

Only 23% of respondents indicated all players cool down and stretch for at least 10 minutes after either a match or training. Over 48% of respondents indicated half of their players (n=8), some of their players (n=9), or none of their players (n=4) cool down / stretch after a match, with only one respondent not answering this question. While over 40% of respondents indicated half of their players (n=3), some of their players (n=14), or none of their players (n=3) stretch after training, with only one respondent not answering this question.

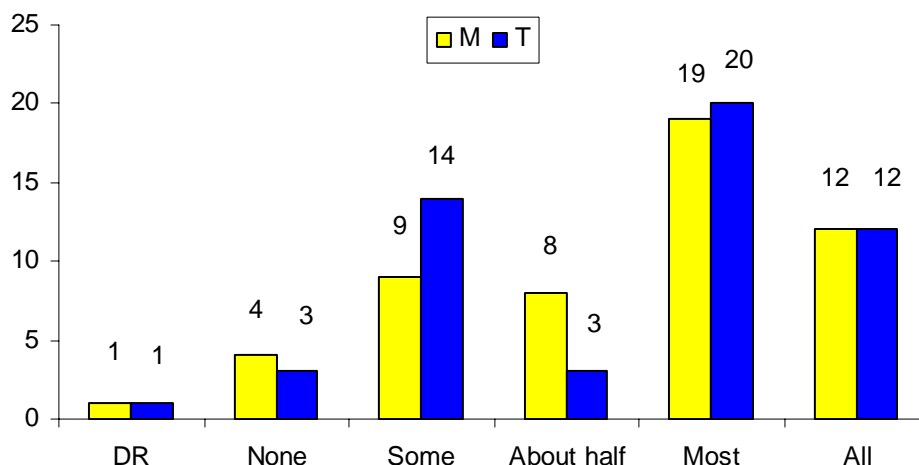


Figure 16 - Proportion of players that cool down / stretch for at least 10 minutes after matches and training

- Training or coaching techniques that specifically target injury prevention

The results indicated that 60% of respondents always provide training and coaching specifically targeted at preventing injury, while the remaining 40% replied that they provided these techniques either sometimes (n=1), half of the time (n=7), or most of the time (n=13).

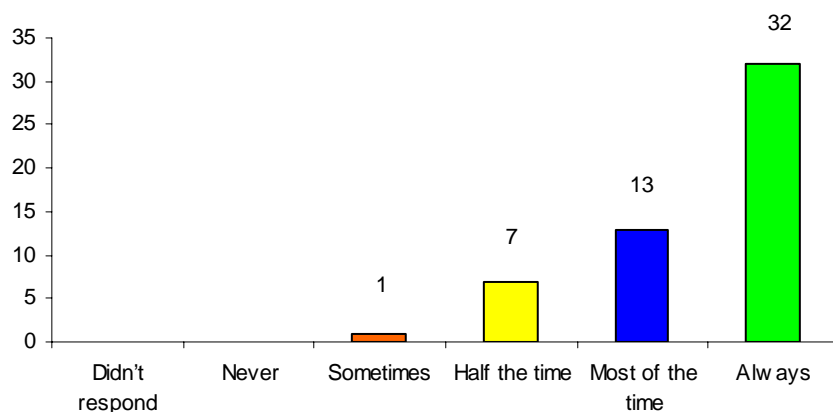


Figure 17 - Frequency at which techniques specifically targeting injury prevention are provided at training or coaching

The 4th edition Coaching Rugby League Manual and Rugby League Coach’s Handbook on CD Rom highlights training techniques that are targeted specifically at preventing injury. The manual includes factors relating to medical conditions, warming up / cooling down, protective equipment, as well as safe tackling techniques. Also the Coaching Council (including Peter Kelly and Billy Sutherland) are designing programs for safe practices relating to game situations in Rugby League. Therefore, these safety practices and procedures are covered well throughout the various programs within the League.

- Policies for the management of head injuries

From the 53 returned surveys a total of 63 responses were recorded, with 38% of responses indicating either a written club or association policy (WA=11, WC=13) was incorporated into the clubs structure, while 51% use either an unwritten club or association policy (UA=8, UC=22, UDK=2). Only 11% of responses indicated that the club had no policy

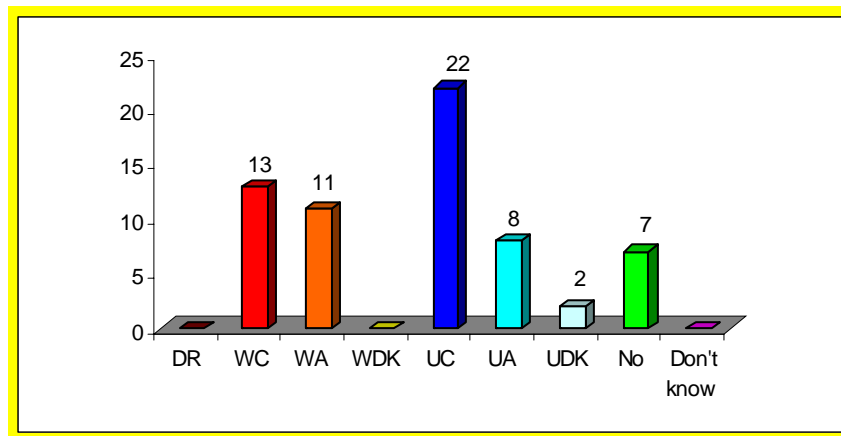


Figure 18 - Policy in relation to the management of head injuries

According to FAO Accreditation Scheme ‘any head injury that is sustained by a player must be treated as serious until proven otherwise by a doctor’ (O’Halloran pg 119). John O’Halloran’s policy on head injuries also outlines signs, symptoms and management of concussion, brain damage, fracture of the skull as well as scalp and facial lacerations.

- **Pre-participation health screening**

There were a total of 55 responses from the 53 returned surveys with 45% of responses claiming that either a written club or association policy (WA=1, WC=22) was incorporated into the management of the club and 9% of responses claiming that either an unwritten club or association policy (UC=4, UDK=1) was used. However, 49% of responses indicated that clubs didn't know, or have this policy (DK=2, NO=23) with one respondent not answering this question (DR=1)

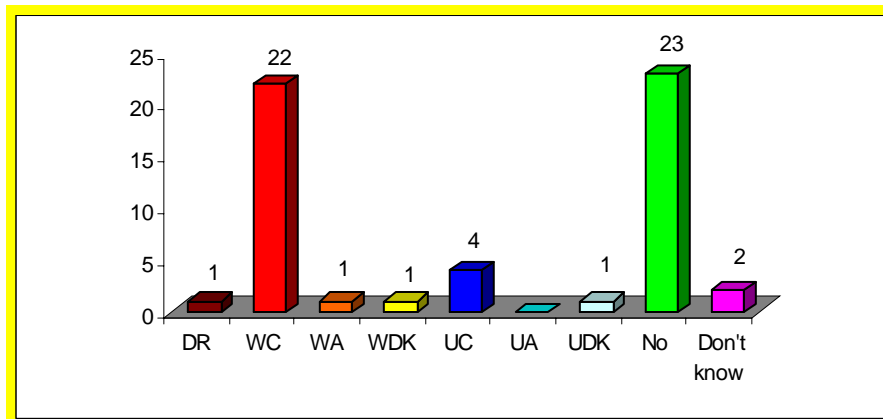


Figure 19 - 'Pre-participation health screening' policy held by clubs

The National First Aid Officer's accreditation scheme level one manual states that 'one of the major responsibilities is the **total care and welfare of the players under your care**' (pg 11) and that to assist FAO 'It is of the utmost importance that a medical advice card system be implemented by you within your club' (pg 11). Also this importance is outlined in the Coaching Rugby League Manual discussing that 'awareness of past medical problems and any problem areas can give rise to appropriate considerations at training and games' (pg 158). Factors may include coaching individuals with Asthma, Epilepsy, and Diabetes.

- **Blood rule policy**

Of the 69 responses that were recorded from the 53 returned surveys 52% of responses claimed that either a written club or association policy (WA=25, WC=11) was held by the club with a further 38% of responses claiming to have either an unwritten club or

association policy (UA=15, UC=10, UDK=1). Only 10% of responses reported no policy at all.

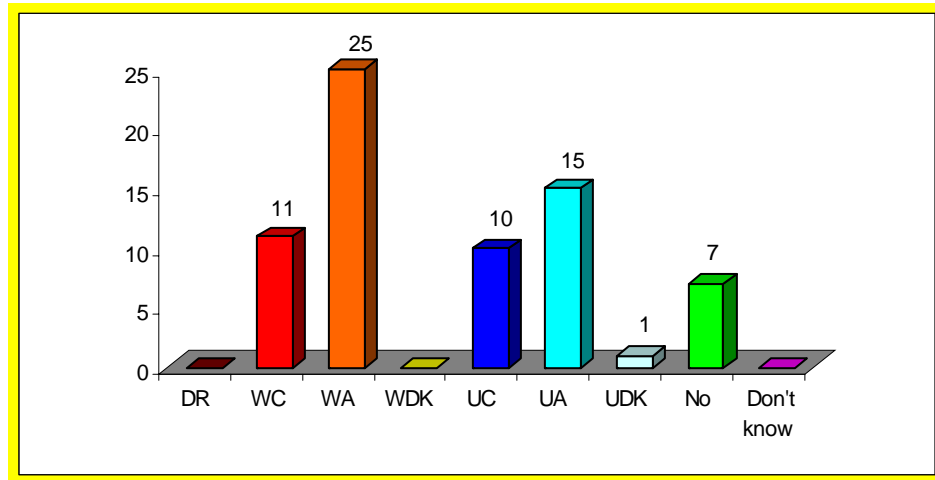


Figure 20 - Blood rule policy held by clubs

Control practices for bleeding players:

- *Is the player removed from the field?*

From the 53 returned surveys 87% of respondents indicated they always remove players from the field of play while the remaining 13% of respondents claim to remove players from the field of play most of the time.

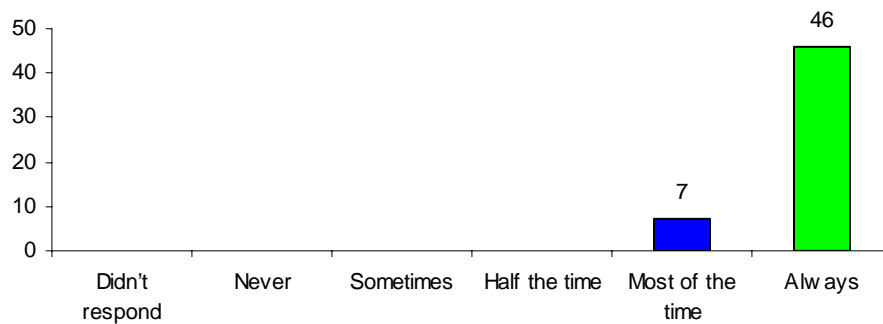


Figure 21 - Frequency at which bleeding players are removed from the field

- *Is the injury immediately covered?*

From the 53 returned surveys 75% of respondents indicated that the injury is always immediately covered to prevent infection and to stop the bleeding. A further 23% of respondents indicated that the injury is covered most of the time, while the remaining 2% of respondents indicated that injuries are covered half of the time.

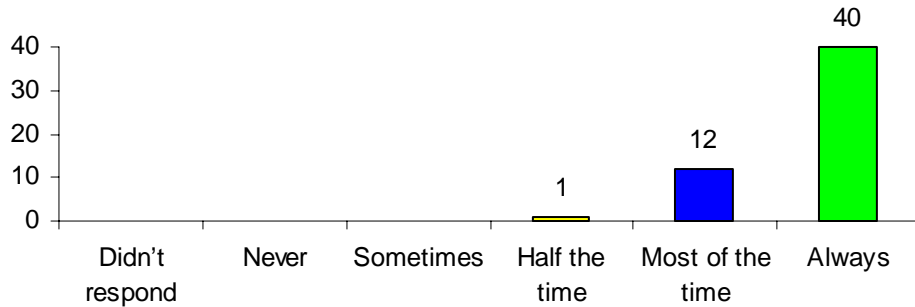


Figure 22 – Frequency at which an injury is immediately covered to prevent infection and stop bleeding

- *Are rubber gloves worn?*

From the 53 returned surveys 81% of respondents claim that rubber gloves are always worn, with a further 13% indicating they are worn most of the time. Only 6% of the respondents wear gloves half of the time (n=1), sometimes (n=1), with one respondent not answering.

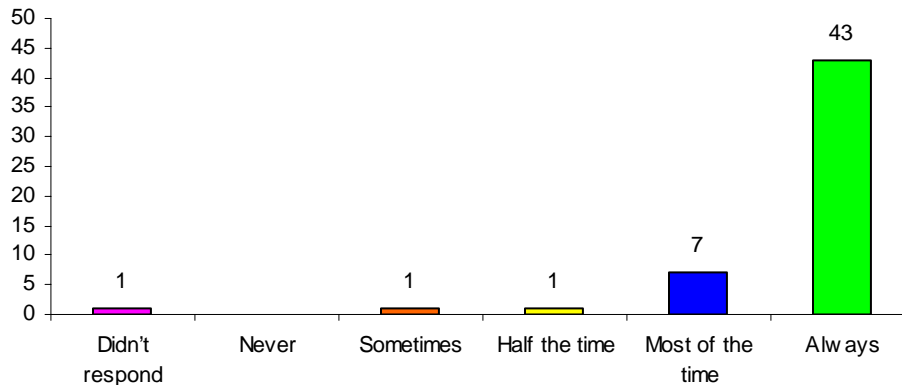


Figure 23 - Frequency at which rubber gloves are worn by the attending personnel

- *Is all bloodstained material disposed of in a sealed container?*

From the 53 returned surveys 48% of respondents indicated they always dispose of blood stained material, with 19% indicating most of the time. A further 8% indicated half of the time and 25% indicated sometimes (n=7), never (n=4), with two respondents not replying (n=1).

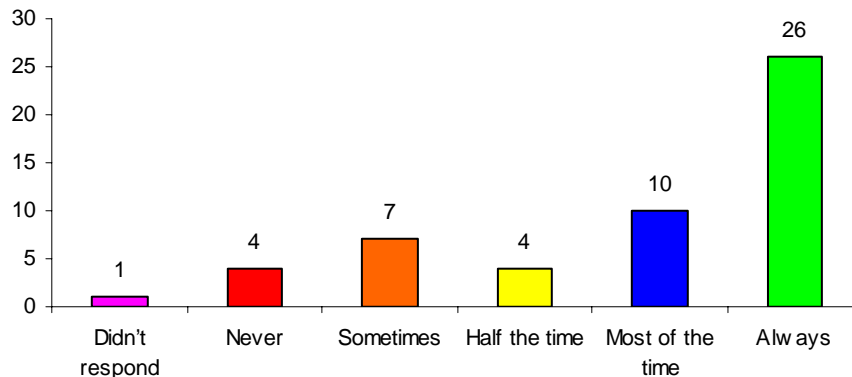


Figure 24 - Frequency at which all bloodstained material is disposed of in a sealed container

As outlined in the FAO National Accreditation Scheme, the procedures regarding correct management of a bleeding player both stop infection to a particular wound and also prevent the transmission of blood borne viruses such as hepatitis A, B, and C as well as HIV. Therefore, a blood rule policy would ensure that the above mentioned areas are implemented most of the time / always when the attending person is dealing with blood.

- *Infectious disease policy*

From the 53 returned surveys a total of 57 responses were recorded with 33% of responses reporting they had either a written club or association policy (WA=11, WC=8) with a further 12% of responses suggesting that respondents had an unwritten club or association policy (UA=2, UC=5). However 55% of responses indicated that respondents didn't have this policy or didn't know if they had this policy (DK=5, NO=26).

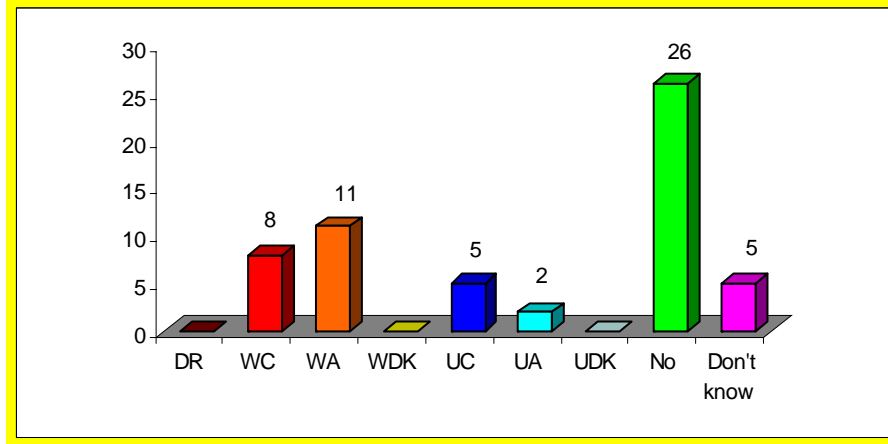


Figure 25 - Infectious disease policy held by the clubs

The ARL have only recently developed an infectious disease policy (appendix 2), which may not have been made available to district clubs at the time of this study. This fact is represented through the poor survey results.

In effect, having an infectious disease policy is an indicator that the club is following and incorporating elements of the blood rule policy into club management; and an indicator that the club is taking the appropriate steps in preventing the spread of infectious diseases. Therefore, it would be appropriate to state here that both blood and infectious disease issues could be covered in the one policy.

- Are participants encouraged to use their own drink container?

From the 53 returned surveys 47% of respondents always encouraged participants to use their own drink container, 25% of respondents encouraged participants most of the time, 9% of respondents encourage the use of individual drink containers about half of the time, 9% of respondents never encourage the use of individual drink containers, 8% of respondents sometimes encourage participants to use their own drink containers, 2% of respondents didn't reply.

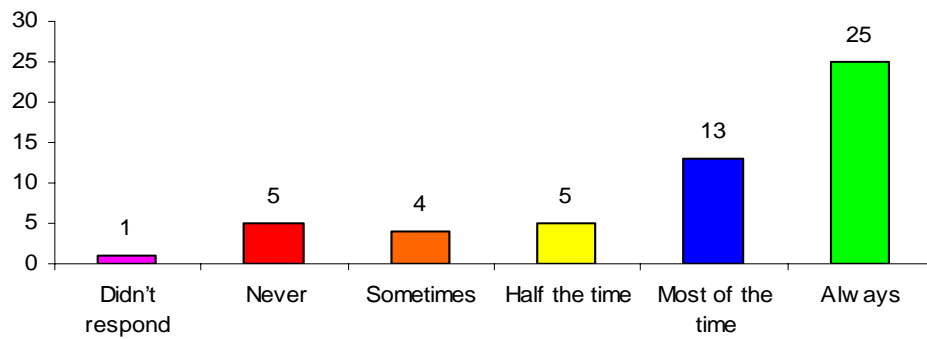


Figure 26 - Frequency at which participants are encouraged to use their own drink container

Findings from Sports Medicine Australia indicate that infectious disease can spread through not only blood, but also saliva. Therefore, by encouraging participants to use their own drink containers Junior Rugby League Clubs are ensuring these individuals are further protected from issues relating to infectious diseases.

Health and safety precautions:

- Sun protection

From the 53 returned surveys 4% of respondents indicated they had a written policy (WA=1, WDK=1) and 11% of respondents had an unwritten club policy, however 85% didn't have or didn't know if they had a policy (DK=4, NO=41).

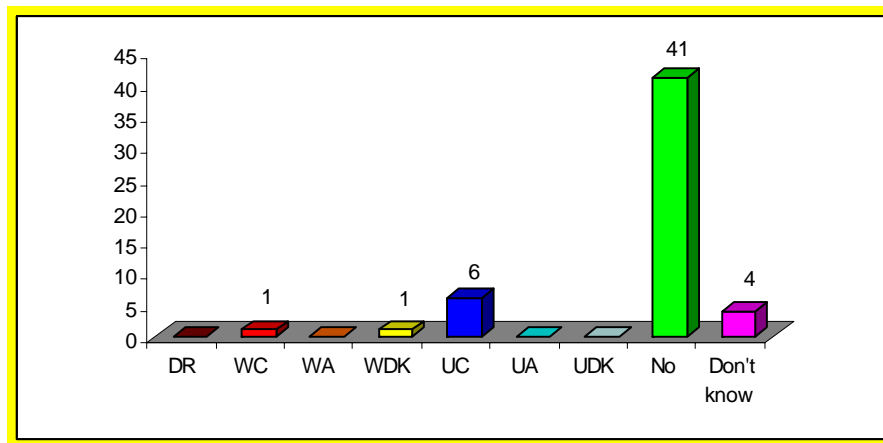


Figure 27 - Sun protection policy held by the clubs

Although one individual thought that sun protection was not an important factor due to Rugby League being played during winter, Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. The need to highlight this factor to Junior Rugby League Clubs is an important step in ensuring these clubs begin taking the appropriate steps to attend to the safety and well being of their members.

However, in relation to practices implemented by the participating Junior Rugby League Clubs, the following information was gathered to determine what methods they do use.

- Sun protection measures used by the club

From the 53 returned surveys a total of 86 responses were recorded with 75% of respondents indicating that shade is provided, 42% encourage appropriate clothing to be worn, 21% provide sunscreen, and 25% either didn't reply to the question (n=8), rescheduled matches (n=2) or provided other methods (n=3), including an increase in the amount of water breaks and availability of water.

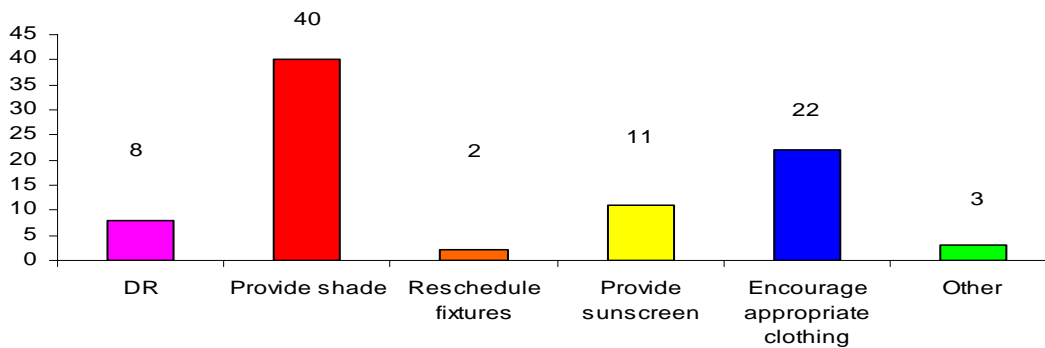


Figure 28 – Sun protection measures promoted through the clubs

Fluid replacement:

- Provision of drinking water at both matches and training

From the 53 returned surveys 94% as well as 87% of respondents indicated that they always ensure drinking water is available at both matches and training respectively. The remaining 6% of respondents provide water most of the time at matches, while the

remaining 13% of those who responded indicated that they provide water either most of the time (n=6) or half of the time (n=1) at training.

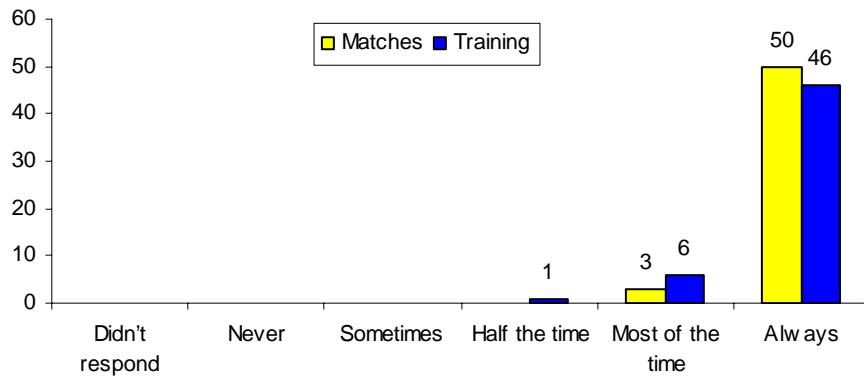


Figure 29 - Frequency at which the club ensures the availability of drinking water

This element of player safety contradicts previous suggestions that individuals should provide their own drink containers. It may also cause confusion between members regarding who should actually be accountable in relation to the availability of drinking water.

- Encouragement of participants to drink in at least 20-30 minutes intervals or more frequently during matches and training

From the 53 returned surveys 75% of respondents always encourage participants to drink at regular intervals during matches, while the remaining 25% of respondents encourage participants either most of the time (n=10), or half of the time (n=2), with one candidate not responding to this question. Additionally 68% always encourage participants to drink at regular intervals during training, while the remaining 32% of respondents encourage participants either most of the time (n=10), or half of the time (n=6) with one not responding.

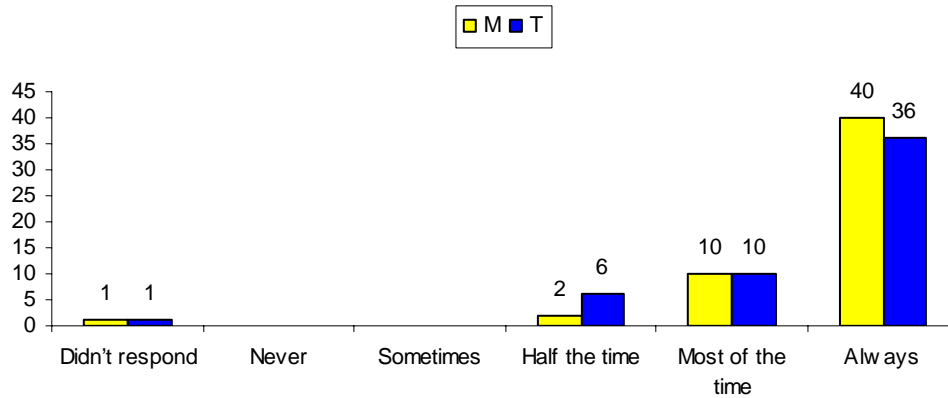


Figure 30 - Frequency at which participants are encouraged to drink in at least 20-30 minutes intervals or more frequently during matches and training

Dehydration is a factor that affects many individuals in sport. It is however highly preventable with frequent fluid replacement (Heyward 2002). The Coaching Rugby League manual extensively covers this area of player safety and suggests that 'dehydration can lead to serious health problems' (pg 190).

Fair and safe conditions of play:

- Code of Conduct / Fair Play policy for players

A total of 75 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with 97% of responses indicating either a written club or association policy was adopted by the club (WA=49, WC=24), while the remaining 3% of responses indicated that an unwritten association policy was adopted.

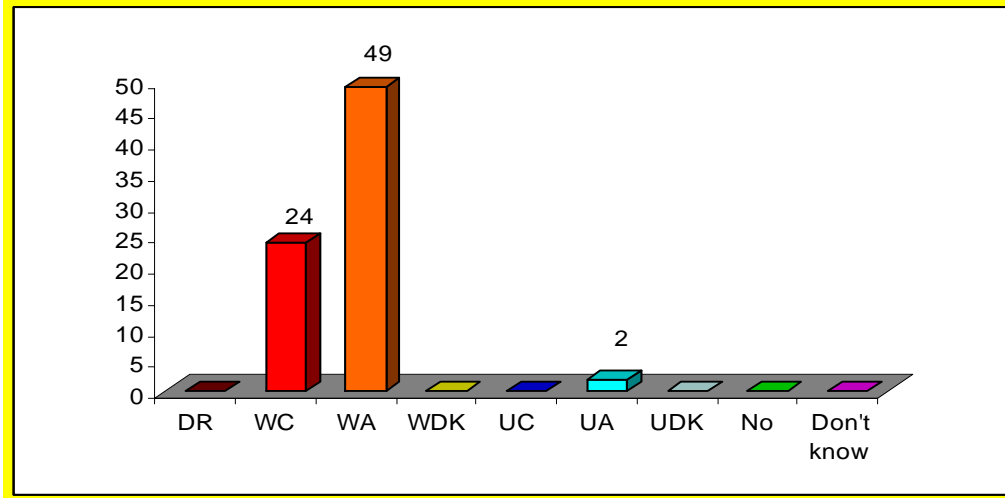


Figure 31 – Fair play / code of conduct policy held by clubs

The high positive response rate highlights that the safeplay code is the best-advertised policy the League has. This policy emphasises safety issues as well as good conduct within the game of Rugby League.

- Code of conduct for people attending matches

A total of 76 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with 99% of responses suggesting that clubs incorporated either a written club or association policy (WA=48, WC=27) while only 1% of the responses indicated no policy was included.

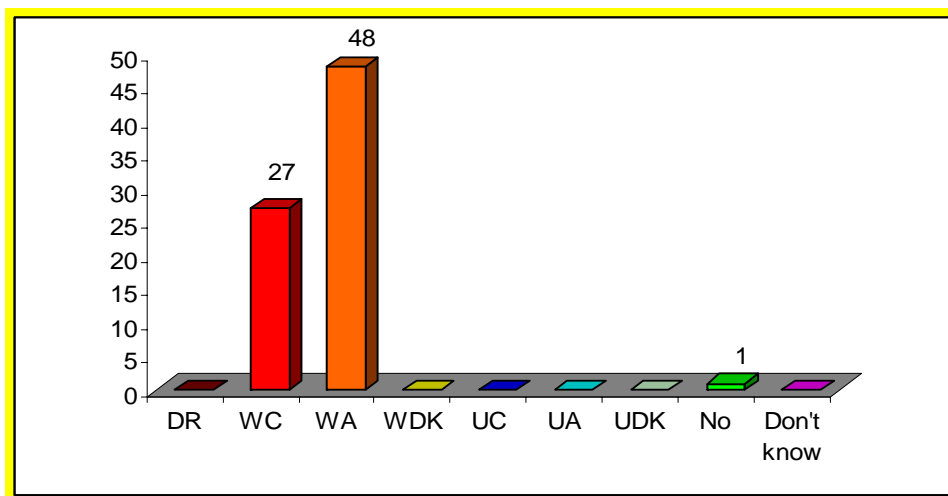


Figure 32 - Code of Conduct policy relating to the acceptable behavior of people attending matches

This is another policy that is promoted well by both the ARL / NSWRL and is clearly advertised by the league. This important section covers how players, coaches, parents, and spectators should behave during Rugby League fixtures.

- *Adequate separation of spectators and officials from the field of play*

From the returned surveys 92% of respondents indicated that they always provided adequate separation between spectators and officials from the field of play while the remaining 8% suggested that they provide this separation most of the time.

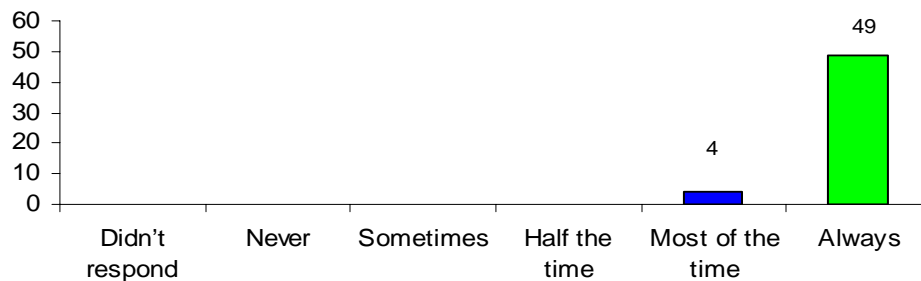


Figure 33 - Frequency at which the club ensures adequate separation of spectators and officials from the field of play

- *Women / girls in Rugby League*

From the returned surveys 48% of respondents indicated that they did promote the awareness of the specific needs of women and girls in sport, while the remaining 52% indicated that they either didn't think it was applicable to their club (n=7), didn't know (n=5) and did not promote this awareness to its members (n=15). One respondent did not answer this question.

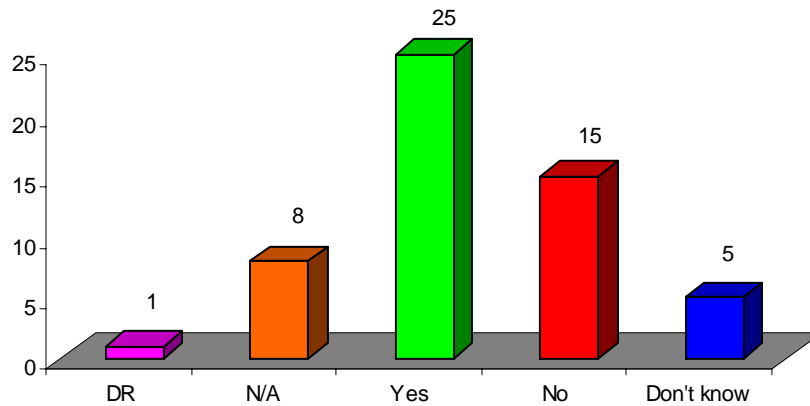


Figure 34 - Proportion of clubs that promote awareness in relation to the specific needs of women and girls in sport

Although Rugby League is predominantly a male dominated sport, the need to promote the specific needs of women in Rugby League, both on field and off field is an important issue that should be addressed to all members and stakeholders within the league. This issue will ultimately determine participation levels of women / girls in the game of Rugby League.

- Safe Play / modified rules policy for juniors

A total of 63 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with 96% of replies showing that clubs include either a written club or association policy (WA=49, WC=12), with the remaining 4% of responses indicating clubs use either unwritten policies (n=1) or have no policy at all.

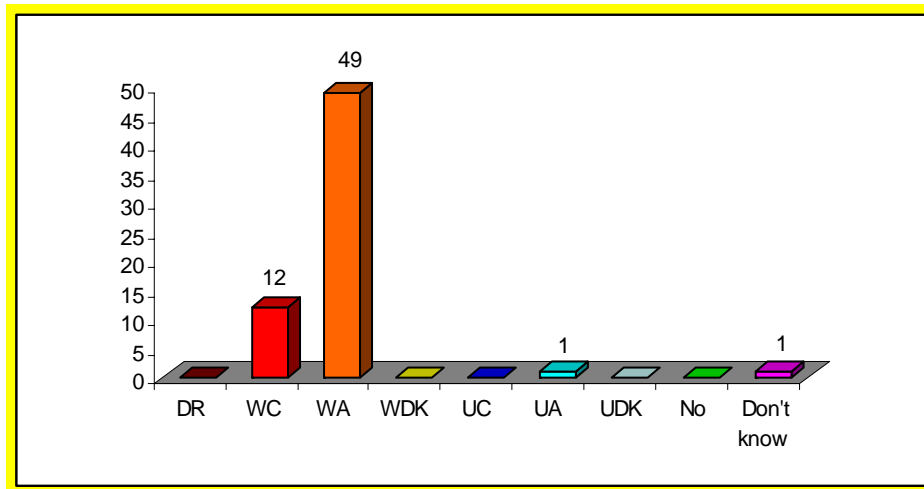


Figure 35 - Safe Play / modified rules policy for juniors used by clubs

The safe play code implemented by the League and the adoption of mini, mod, and other rules for appropriate age groups indicate that this area is covered well and incorporated into Junior Rugby League Club structures. The Coaching Rugby League manual covers the different developmental stages that children go through and how to approach their coaching to accommodate this factor. In addition the new coaching CD ROM covers all levels of Rugby League suggesting different methods and practices for each level of development.

- Modified rules and equipment used for juniors

The results from the survey indicated that 98% of respondents always incorporate modified rules and equipment into the club with only 2% not knowing (figure 36).

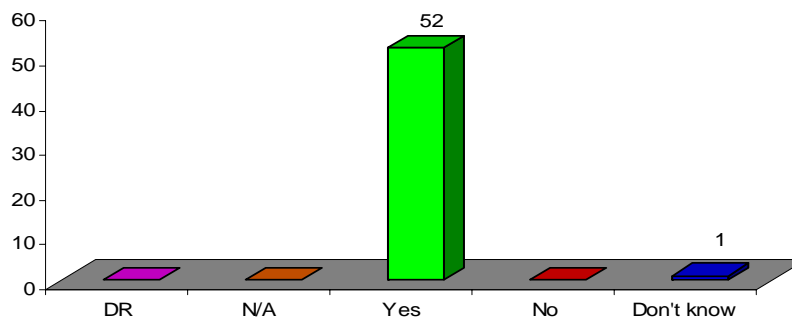


Figure 36 - Proportion of clubs that incorporate the use of modified rules and equipment for juniors

This is again highlighted by the various programs supplied to coaches and officials by the NSWRL and ARL; programs including the coaching and FAO accreditation schemes as well as the manuals and teaching aids that accompany these courses.

- ***Physical development and build of players***

The results from the survey indicate that 60% of respondents always take into account the physical development and build of a player when assigning team positions, and 32% consider this most of the time. The remaining 8% take this into account either half of the time (n=2), sometimes (n=1) or never (n=1).

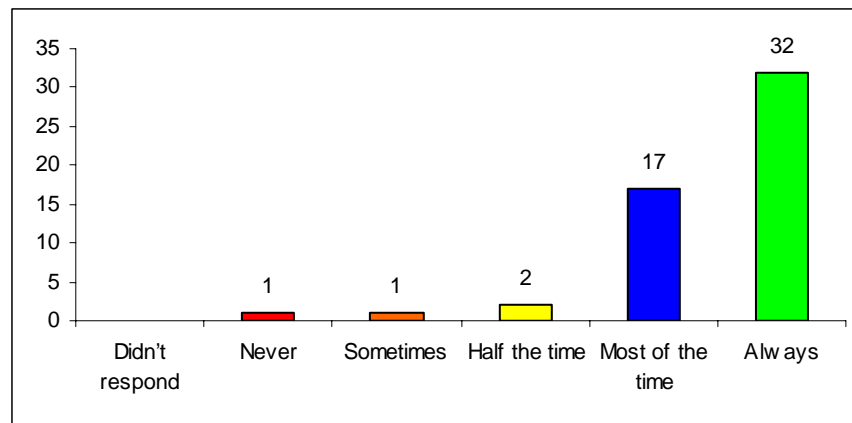


Figure 37 - Frequency at which the physical development and build of players is taken into account when assigning team positions

The Coaching Rugby League Handbook includes the different forward positions and suggests the proper build of player to suit each position (pg 147), which aids the coach in the selection of the team. Providing the coach has his coaching accreditation and understands his role as a coach, this issued will always be enforced at the Junior Club level.

- ***Child Protection***

From the 53 returned surveys a total of 67 responses were recorded with 93% of responses indicating candidates adopted either a written club or association policy (WA=45, WC=27), as well 3% of the responses indicated that respondents used an

unwritten association policy. However 4% of responses indicated clubs either didn't have or didn't know if they had this policy, with one respondent not answering this question (NO=1, DK=1, DR=1).

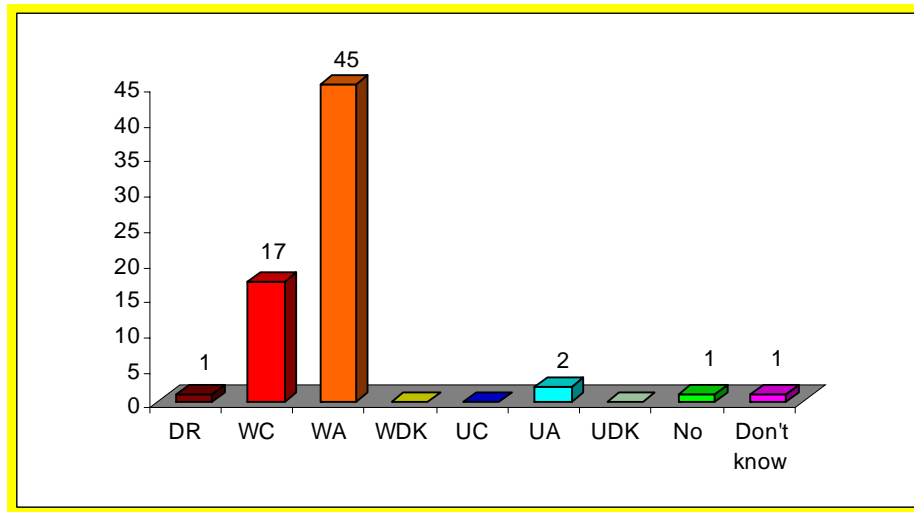


Figure 38 – Type of child protection policy used by clubs

It is a requirement of law that the safety and wellbeing of every minor is accounted for under the child protection act. This area is an essential element in the protection of minors participating in the game of Rugby League and according to survey results is strongly implemented into Club structures at the junior level.

- Parental permission for minors

The results from the 53 returned surveys indicated that 86% of respondents require parental permission for minors participating at their club. However, 14% of respondents didn't think this was applicable, didn't know if their club endorsed this practice, as well as one club not enforcing this practice.

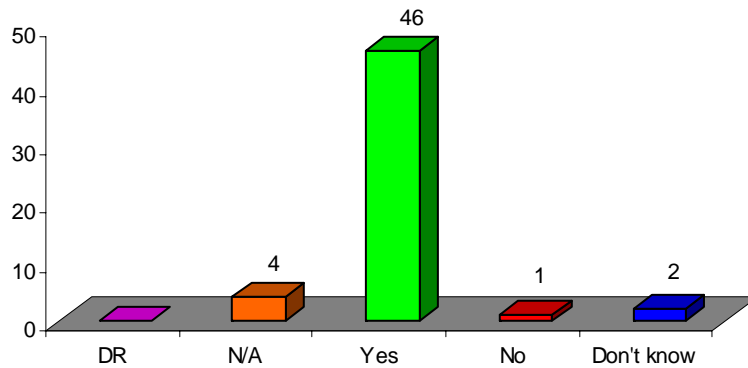


Figure 39 - Proportion of clubs that require parental permission for minors to participate in club activities

The survey results indicated that the majority of clubs do ensure that parental permission is obtained before a minor is permitted to actively participate in club activities. This is an important area as this should be a requirement for all junior participants, to ensure their safety as well as protect the League from adverse incidents.

- Adverse weather and safe conduct of play policy

A total of 66 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys 62% of responses indicated that a either written club or association policy (WA=26, WC=15) was incorporated into the clubs structure and 17% of responses indicated that either an unwritten club or association policy (UA=4, UC=6, UDK=1) was used. The remaining 21% of responses suggested that clubs either didn't know or didn't have this policy (DK=3, NO=11)

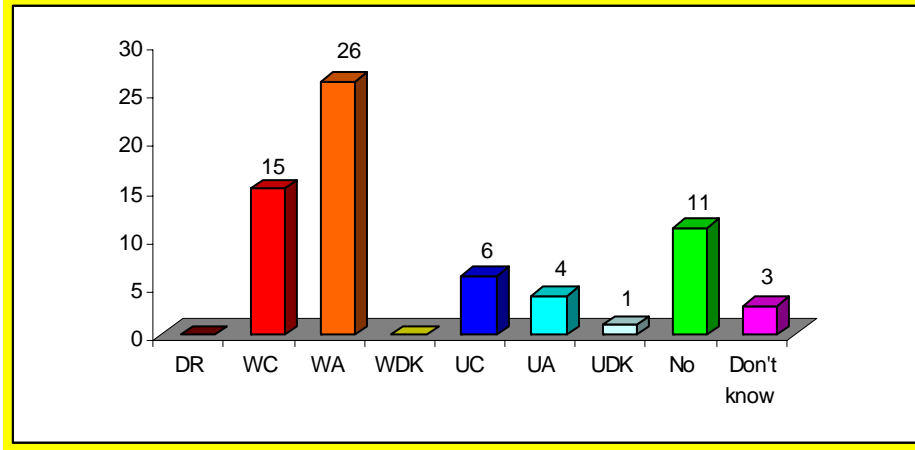


Figure 40 - 'Adverse weather and safe conduct of play' policy that is held by the clubs

According to the soccer NSW lightning safety policy (appendix 3) there have been on average 10 documented deaths in relation to lightning strikes per year in Australia, with statistics showing 25% of these individuals were participating in sporting activities at the time. Country Rugby League have also established procedures regarding this area of safety in their risk management handbook, which follow similar procedures to those found in the NSW lightning policy.

Drugs in sport:

- Participation of players under the influence of alcohol

From the 53 returned surveys a total of 68 responses were recorded with 44% of responses indicating that either a written club or association policy (WA=15, WC=15) was incorporated into club management, 46% of responses indicated that either an unwritten club or association policy (UA=4, UC=27) was used. Only 10% of responses indicated that no policy relating to this issue was used, with one respondent not replying to this question.

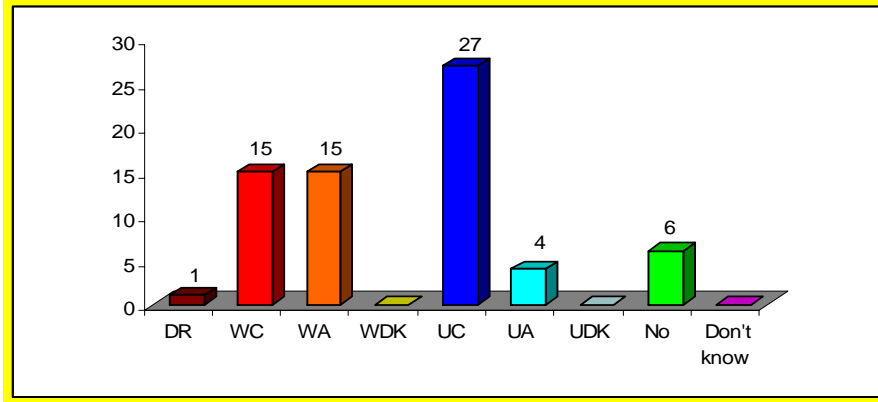


Figure 41 - Policy relating to the participation of players under the influence of alcohol at both matches and training

Any insurance claim made by an individual who has injured themselves whilst under the influence of alcohol will be disregarded under the insurance policy that covers the league. In addition, Wilmore and Costill (2004) suggest that alcohol can also have an impact on an individual's health as well as performance.

- *Drugs in sport policy*

A total of 68 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with 52% of replies indicating that a written club or association policy (WA=19, WC=11) was used and 24% of the replies indicating that either an unwritten club or association policy (UA=2, UC=11, UDK=1) was incorporated into the club structure. The remaining 24% of responses indicated that they didn't have, or didn't know if, the club had this policy.

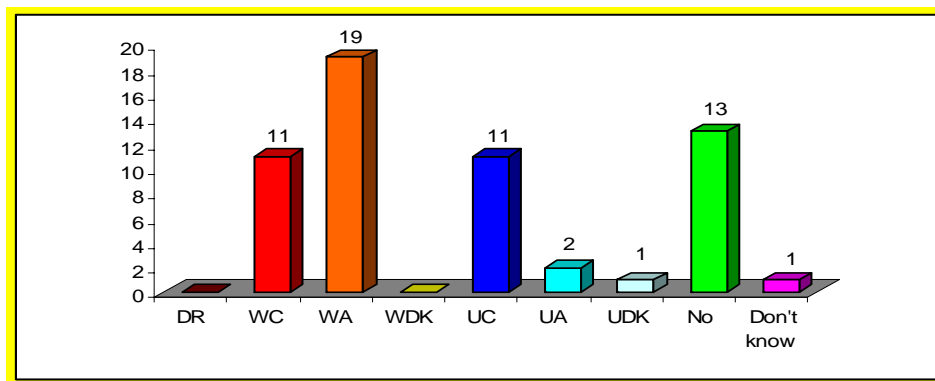


Figure 42 - 'Drugs in sport' policy held by the clubs

The issue of drugs in sport is covered in the Coaching Rugby League Handbook (page 191) and includes performance enhancing drugs, medications and social drugs. While medications are sometimes necessary for the appropriate care of an athlete's recovery from injury or sickness, performance enhancing and social drugs sometimes raise issues relating to health, ethical and legal implications.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Wearing and using protective equipment:

- The policy

Results from the survey indicated 57 responses from 53 returned surveys with 23% of those responses suggesting that either a written club or association policy (WA=5, WC=7) regarding the use of protective equipment at matches is used, and 23% of responses suggesting that an unwritten club or association policy (UA=1, UC=11, UDK=1) is used. However the remaining 54% of responses indicated that respondents didn't have (n=29) or didn't know if they had this policy (n=2).

The results regarding a policy for the use of protective equipment at training suggested that 9% of responses indicated that a written club policy is used and 19% of responses indicated that unwritten club or association policies (UA=1, UC=8, UDK=1) are incorporated into the club. The remaining 72% of respondents either didn't have or didn't know if they had a policy (NO=37, DK=1).

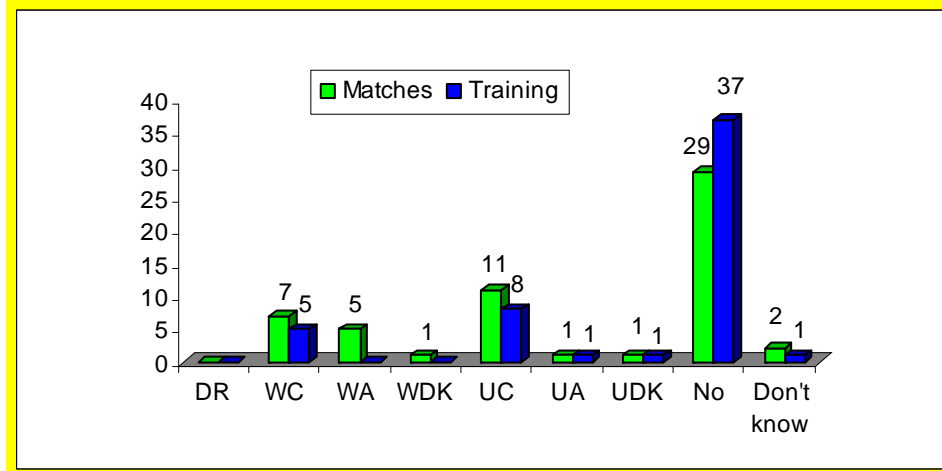


Figure 43 - Policy held by the clubs relating to 'the wearing or use of protective equipment' during both matches and training sessions

The FAO handbook suggests that if used in the correct manner protective equipment can decrease the chance of injury, and advises this practice be undertaken at both matches and training. In the main, the use of protective equipment is optional to participants. However, the use of a mouth guard is essential for insurance purposes. If an individual makes a dental claim and was not wearing a mouth guard the Rugby League's insurance policy will not cover them. It should also be noted that children playing Rugby League are still developing and any potential injuries could damage their teeth for life.

- The practice

The following results relate to the implementation of the previous safety equipment policy:

Matches:

- Headgear	- Mouthguard	- Shoulder pads
2% - All the time	17% - All the time	2% - All the time
6% - Most of the time	47% - Most of the time	8% - Most of the time
32% - Half of the time	19% - Half of the time	38% - Half of the time
58% - Sometimes	17% - Sometimes	50% - Sometimes
2% - DR		2% - DR

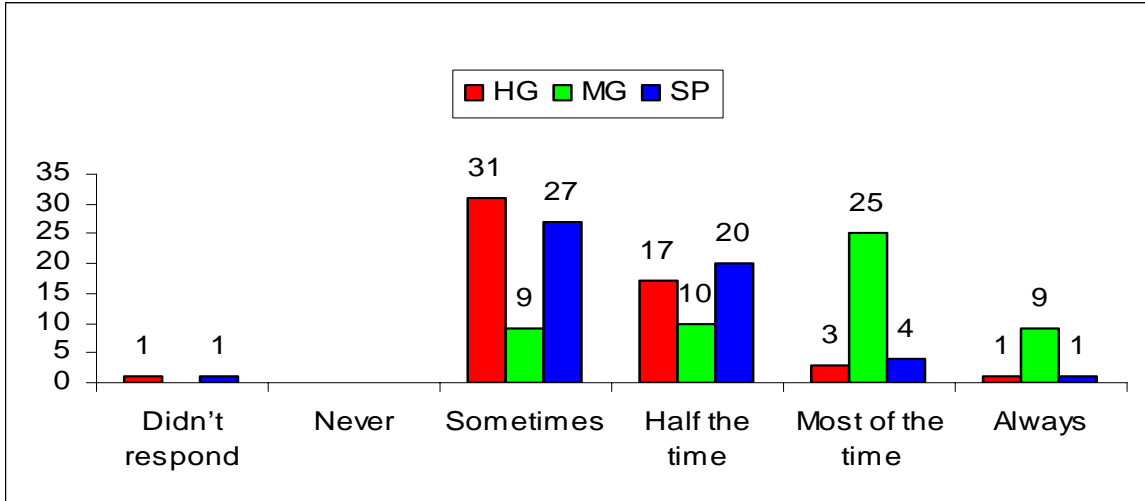


Figure 44 - Proportion of players at the clubs that wear protective equipment during matches

Training:

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| - Headgear | - Mouthguard | - Shoulder pads |
| 2% - All the time | 4% - All the time | 2% - Half of the time |
| 50% - Sometimes | 11% - Most of the time | 45% - Sometimes |
| 42% - Never | 4% - Half of the time | 47% - Never |
| 6% - DR | 47% - Sometimes | 6% - DR |
| | 30% - Never | |
| | 4% - DR | |

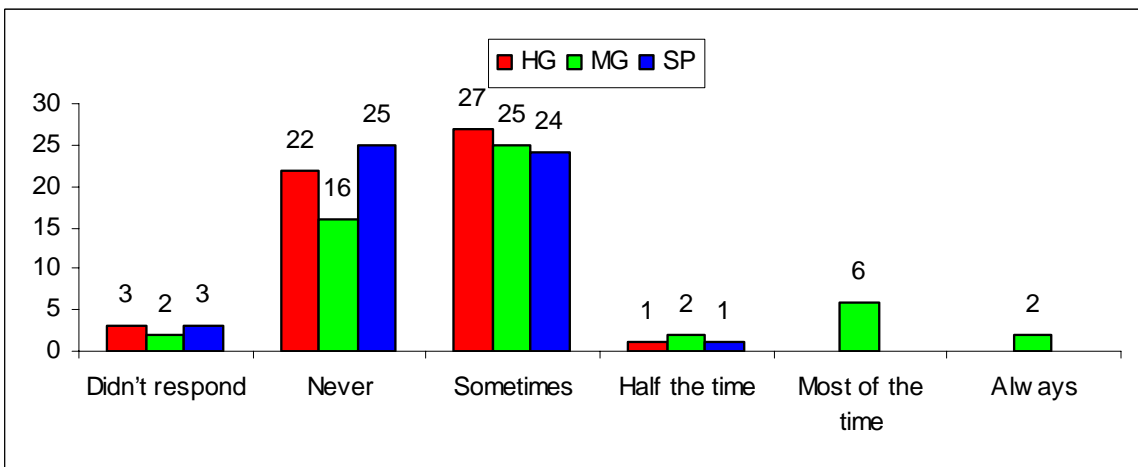


Figure 45 - Proportion of players at the club that wear protective equipment during training

These results indicate that the use of protective equipment on a whole is not implemented into the Junior Rugby League Club Structure. What's more alarming though is the fact that mouth guards are not regularly used during matches, which again highlights the risk of damage to junior league participants. The need to clarify with the Leagues insurance provider what exactly is covered is an important factor that will help outline to Rugby League Club stakeholders the issues surrounding insurance cover.

QUALIFICATION AND ATTENDANCE OF PERSONNEL

Referees:

- *Qualifications policy for umpires and referees*

A total of 57 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with 75% of responses incorporating either a written club or association policy (WA=39, WC=4) into the management of their club. A further 11% of responses used an unwritten association policy, while the remaining 14% didn't have or didn't know if they had this policy (NO=6, DK=2).

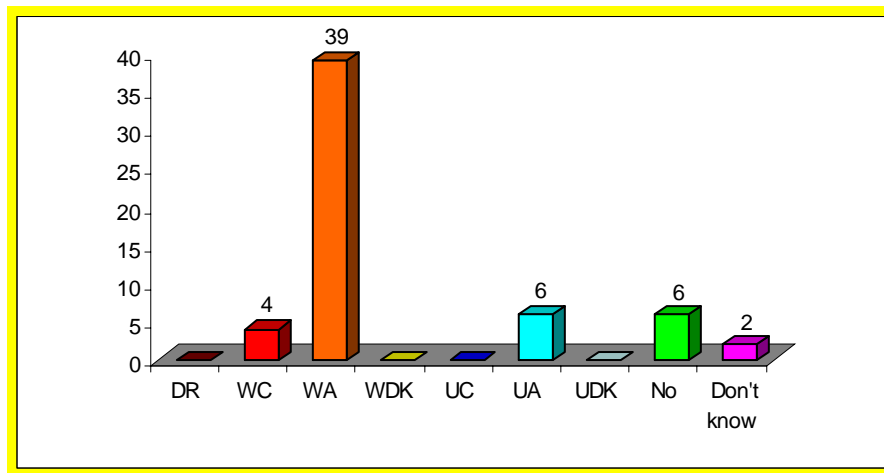


Figure 46 - Policy held by the club regarding the qualifications of umpires & referees in charge of matches

The umpires and referees in charge of matches are appointed by the District Junior Rugby League associations. Therefore, this policy should be aimed at the District association

rather than the Junior Club. Each umpire or referee should carry with them an ID card so that the coaches and officials on the day know he / she is qualified to oversee matches.

- *Checking qualifications of referees*

The returned survey results indicated that 74% of respondents check qualifications every season, 18% never check qualifications of referees, 2% check most seasons while 6% didn't respond.

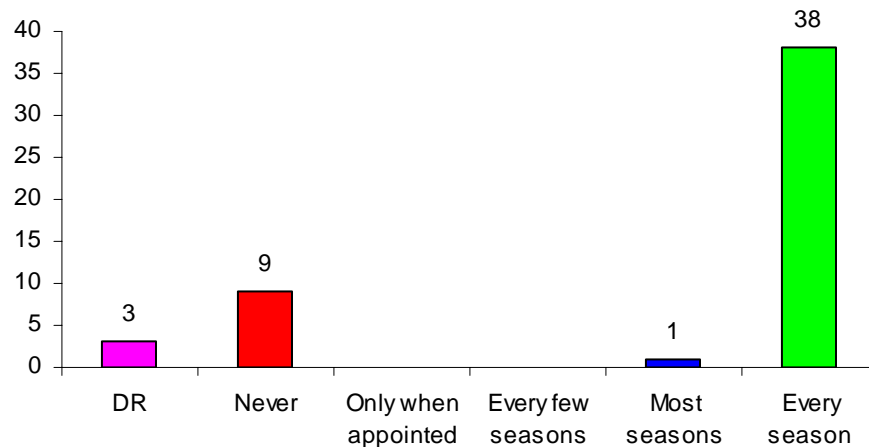


Figure 47 - Frequency at which qualifications of referees are checked

The survey results indicate that clubs regularly check qualifications of these individuals. However, in order to make this job easier for the Junior Rugby League Clubs, referees should carry with them a registration card, much like the players do. Thereby, ensuring the check is easily carried out.

- *Proportion of referees and umpires that are accredited*

From the 53 returned surveys 89% indicated that all referees and umpires are accredited, 2% indicated that this was not applicable while the remaining 9% didn't respond to this question.

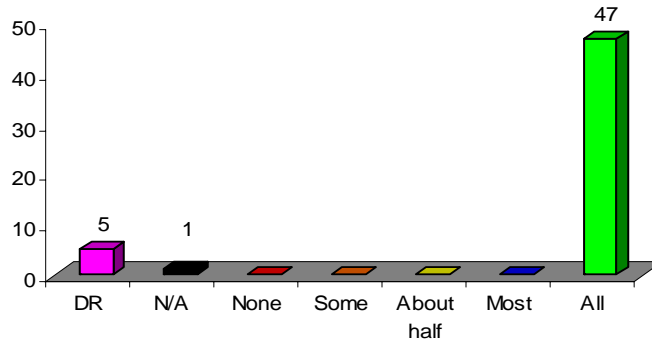


Figure 48 - Proportion of accredited referees and umpires in charge of club matches

The importance of these individuals being accredited is crucial in that they are applying the rules and standards of the game to the players on the field. If the referee does not know what they are doing they could cause harm, or damage, and reduce the quality of the game.

Coaches:

- *Qualifications policy for club coaches*

A total of 72 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with 91% of the responses indicating that clubs had either a written club or association policy (WA=47, WC=18). A further 8% of the responses indicated clubs had either an unwritten club or association policy (UA=4, UC=2), while the remaining 1% of didn't know if they had the policy.

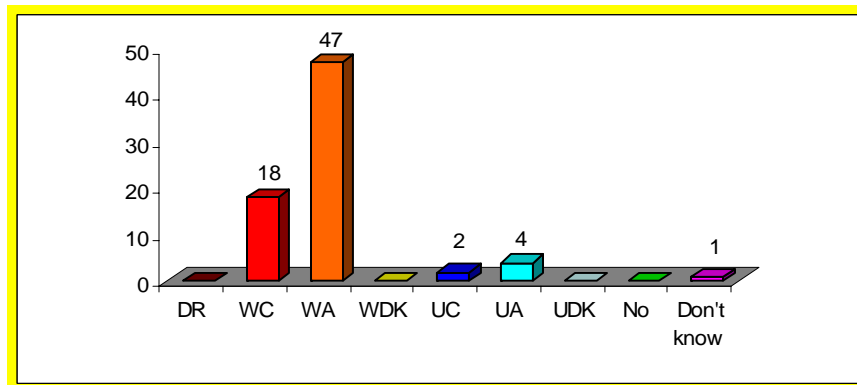


Figure 49 - Policy held by the club regarding the qualifications of coaches

Club coaches play a crucial role in the development of the junior players within the structure of Rugby League, which has been represented through the development of the coaching accreditation scheme. The strong support shown for this policy is indicated through the survey results and the enforcement by District Clubs regarding Club Coach Courses.

- *Checking qualifications of club coaches*

From the 53 returned surveys 90% of respondents indicated that qualifications are checked every season with a further 4% checking qualifications most seasons, 2% check every few seasons while 2% check these qualifications only when appointing coaches. The remaining 2% didn't respond to this question.

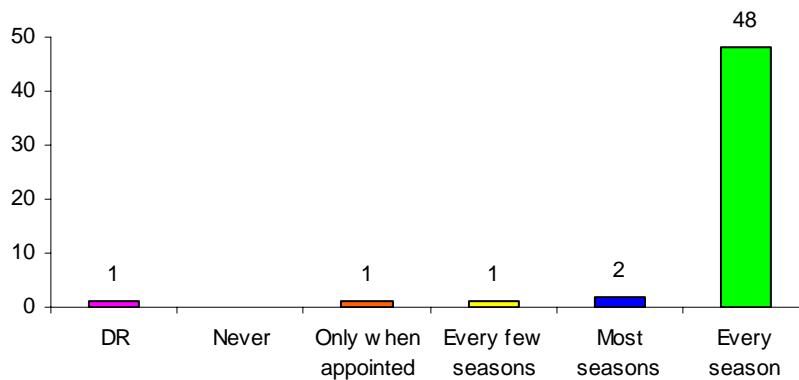


Figure 50 - Frequency at which qualifications of club coaches are checked

As represented in the survey results, Junior Rugby League Clubs frequently ensure that all coaches have the current and appropriate qualifications. The incorporation of the Coaching Accreditation Scheme has encouraged all Junior League Clubs to ensure that their coach's qualifications are up to date and that all clubs continually enforce this issue.

- *Proportion of club coaches that are accredited*

From the 53 returned surveys 87% of respondents indicated that all club coaches at their club are accredited with the remaining 13% indicating that most club coaches are accredited.

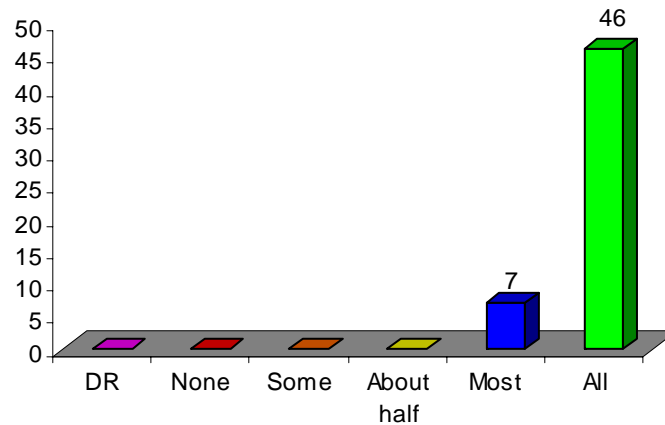


Figure 51 - Proportion of accredited coaches active in clubs

The introduction of the Rugby League Coaching Accreditation Scheme is an indicator of the importance placed on the skills and knowledge of the club coach. The support given to the coaching accreditation scheme is evident from the responses in the above mentioned areas of research, which suggest that this scheme is an important element in the management of Junior Rugby League Clubs.

First aiders / sports trainers:

- *Qualifications policy on attendance of first aid officers / sports trainers at both matches and training sessions*

From the 53 returned surveys a total of 73 responses were recorded with 89% of the responses indicating that clubs incorporated either a written club or association policy into the club (WA=45, WC=20). A further 10% of responses indicated that clubs were reported to have either an unwritten club or association policy (UA=4, UC=2, UDK=1), while the remaining 1% of responses indicated that clubs didn't know if they had a policy.

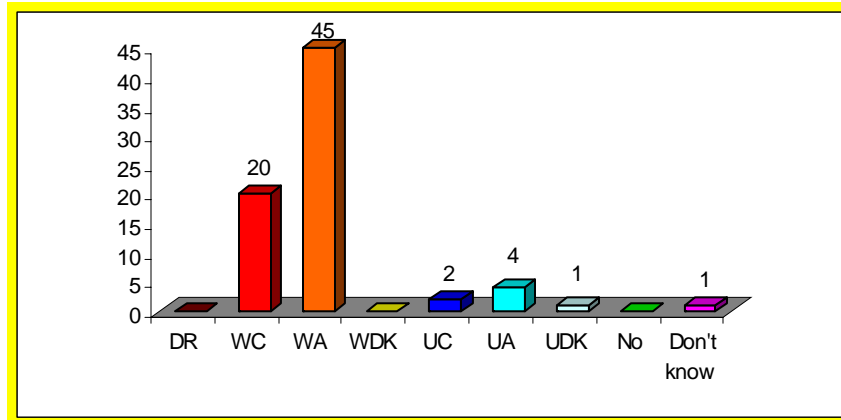


Figure 52 - Qualification policy held by the clubs regarding the attendance of first aid officers / sports trainers at matches

The survey results indicate that Junior Rugby League Clubs strongly support the need for first aid officers to be present at matches. In addition the National FAO accreditation scheme level 1 manual suggests that all Rugby league teams be accompanied by an accredited FAO, from juniors right through to the senior level.

- Attendance of qualified first aid trainers at matches and training

From the 53 returned surveys 92% and 56% of respondents indicated that these individuals were always present at both matches and training respectively. The remaining 8% of respondents who provided first aiders at matches did so either most of the time (n=3) or sometimes (n=1). The remaining 44% of respondents who provided first aiders at training did so either most of the time (n=13), half of the time (n=6) or sometimes (n=3), with only one respondent claiming to never provide first aiders at training.

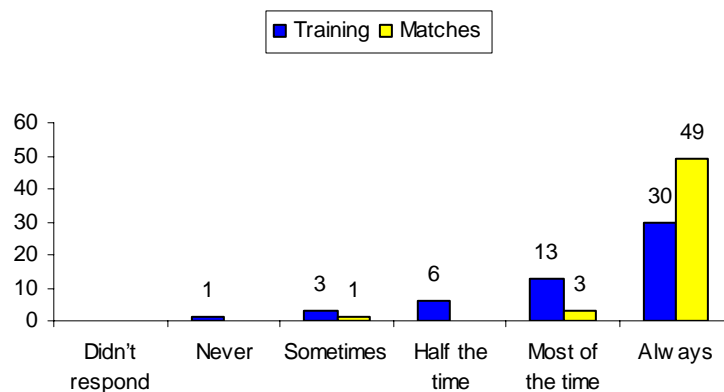


Figure 53 - Frequency at which first aid providers are present at matches and training

The league is taking the appropriate steps to ensure that FAO's are present at all matches and training. The on-field personnel policy implemented by John O'Halloran is a good indication that the governing bodies within Rugby League realise the need to ensure these individuals are present at club fixtures.

- *Checking qualifications of club sports trainers and first aid officers*

The results from the survey suggest that 90% of respondents indicated that they checked these qualifications every season with a further 4% checking most seasons. The remaining 6% checked these qualifications every few seasons (n=2) or only when appointing these members into their staff (n=1).

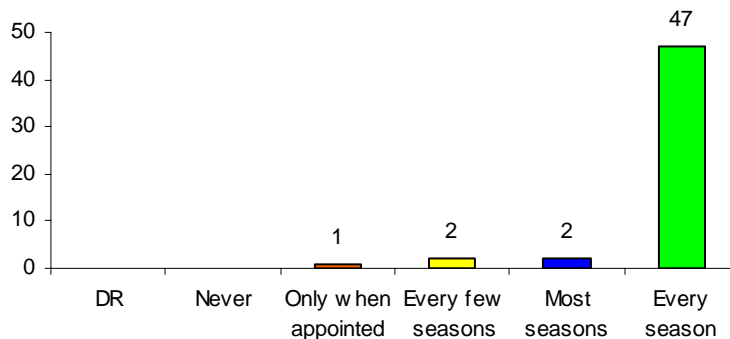


Figure 54 - Frequency at which qualifications of club sports trainers and first aid officers are checked

The results indicate that clubs frequently ensure that qualifications of sports trainers and first aiders are regularly checked. Ensuring these individuals are accredited is an important element that ensures players are receiving appropriate medical support at both matches and training.

- The provider of first aid at matches and training

The results suggested that 79% and 83% of respondents indicated that the club trainer / first aid officer provided first aid at both matches and training respectively. The remaining 21% of respondents who provide first aid at matches indicated that first aid was given by either the St Johns ambulance (n=8), a doctor (n=2) or registered nurse (n=1), with only one respondent not replying. In relation to the provision of first aid at training the remaining 18% of respondents indicated that first aid was supplied by either coaches (n=6), registered nurse (n=1), or a doctor (n=1), with one respondent indicating that no first aid was provided at all.

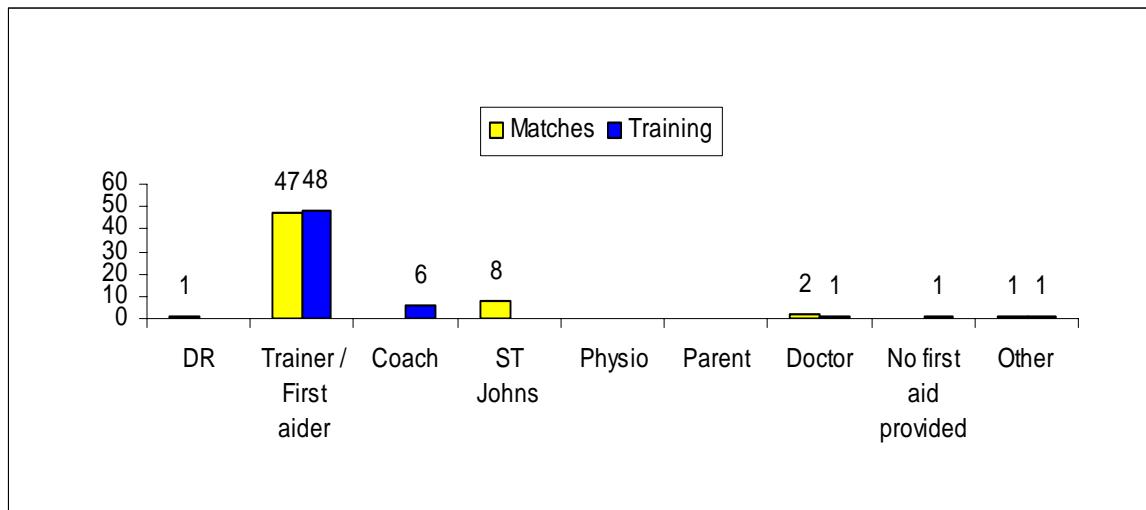


Figure 55 - Source of first aid services for the club at matches and training

The high response rate indicates that the FAO National Accreditation Scheme is implemented and supported by the Junior Rugby League Clubs, and that these clubs are ensuring the safety and well being of their players.

- ***Club first aid treatment area***

A total of 65 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with respondents indicating that the sideline was the most common place for first aid treatment 33%. Other areas included first aid rooms 12%, change rooms 23%, club rooms 12%, no designated area 12% and other areas 8%, referees change room (n=1), ‘where ever required’ (n=1) or the canteen (n=2).

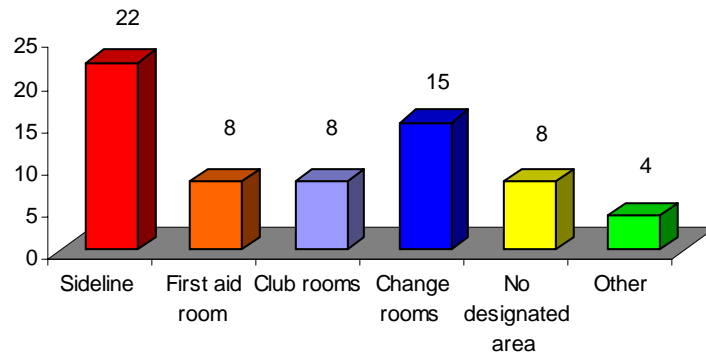


Figure 56 - Designated location for first aid treatment

The survey revealed no clear indication as to where appropriate first aid was administered and in two instances first aid was reported as being treated in the canteen. This inappropriate manner in which clubs administer first aid could be rectified with the incorporation of the risk management plan. Having a designated area for the treatment of first aid can lessen the spread of infection and aid control procedures.

- ***Accessibility of first aid equipment at matches and training***

The results indicated that 92% of respondents always provide first aid equipment at matches with the remaining 8% of respondents indicating first aid equipment was available most of the time. Moreover 78% of respondents indicated that first aid treatment was always available at training, with 8% claiming this equipment was available most of the time. The remaining 14% claim to have this equipment available either half of the time (n=2), sometimes (n=3) or never (n=1). One respondent didn't reply to this question.

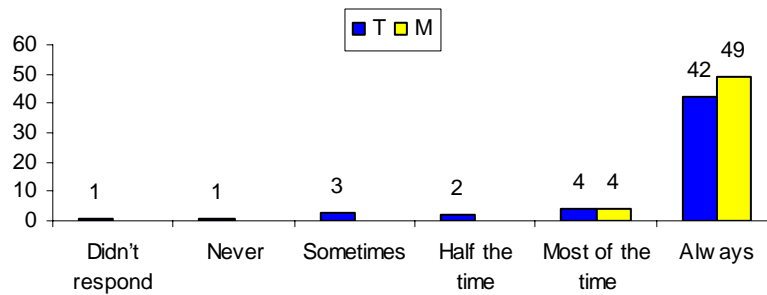


Figure 57 - Frequency at which first aid equipment is provided at matches and Training

Sports Medicine Australia suggest a list of necessity items, items that are good to have as well as items that are thought to be a luxury depending on the sport, budget, length of season as well as the number of athletes or teams in a club. This list is provided in appendix 4. In addition, the first aid officer's level 1 manual sets out a list of necessary items to be incorporated into the medical kit of the rugby league first aider. The survey results indicate that first aid equipment is regularly provided, however, not only is this equipment important in the treatment of first aid, but specific equipment should be outlined within the risk management plan.

Applicant Screening:

- *The screening of applicants for positions using criminal record checks*

Results from the 53 returned surveys indicated that 42% of respondents screen applicants every season and 4% screen most seasons. However 44% claim to never screen applicants for positions at their club using a criminal record check.

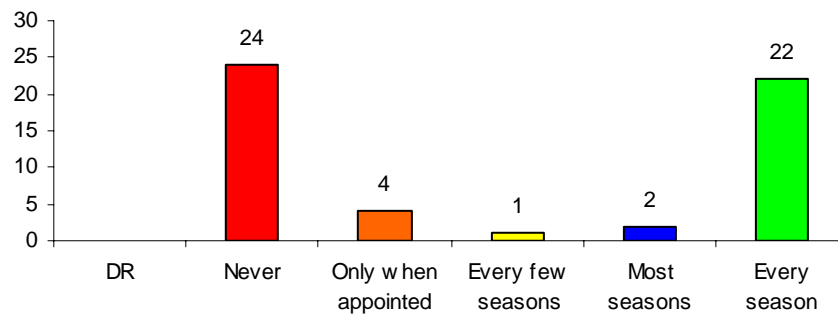


Figure 58 - Frequency at which attending personnel are screened using criminal record checks prior to approval as an active club member

The DSR record check is the main component used by the Junior Rugby League in ensuring that all personnel assigned to positions within their club are checked. It is believed however that many clubs get employees to fill out these forms, but never follow through and check these forms through the appropriate channels. Therefore, further research needs to identify if those individuals who indicated they never used criminal record checks did so because they knew the forms were not checked using the appropriate resources; or whether they answered never because they do not get individuals to fill out the DSR forms.

FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Sporting facilities:

- Safety inspection policy for home ground facilities

A total of 60 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with 45% of responses indicating that either written club or association policies (WA=13, WC=14) were incorporated into club management. A further 38% of responses indicated that clubs used unwritten policies (UC=20, UDK=3), while the remaining 17% (n=10) indicated that clubs didn't answer this question, didn't know if there was a policy or didn't have this policy (DR=1, DK=2, NO=7).

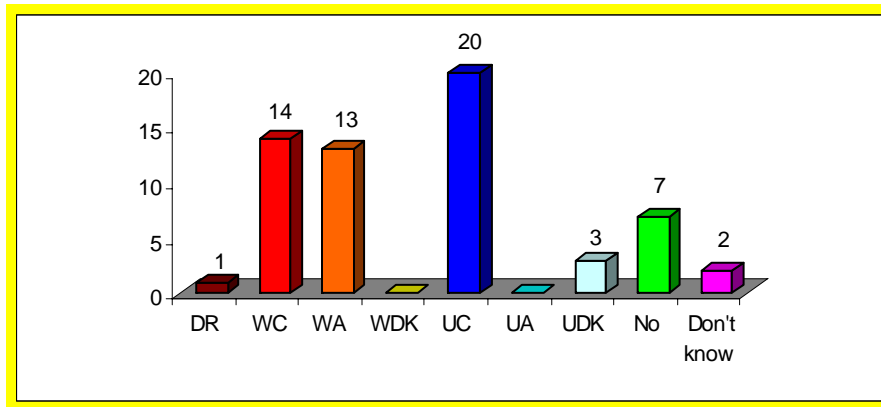


Figure 59 - 'Safety inspection' policy used by clubs on home ground facilities

As stated on the ARL development website the inspection of home ground facilities is part of the ground manager's job description (appendix 5). However, the survey results indicate there is a need for a written policy that can be implemented across all clubs. Many clubs have their own view on this topic, with many not even having this policy in written form.

- *How frequently home ground facilities are checked*

Of the 53 surveys that were returned 70% of respondents conduct weekly checks. The remaining 30% either conducted these checks monthly (n=4), half yearly (n=2), yearly (n=2) or used other methods (n=2) the remaining respondents didn't know when these checks were carried out (n=6).

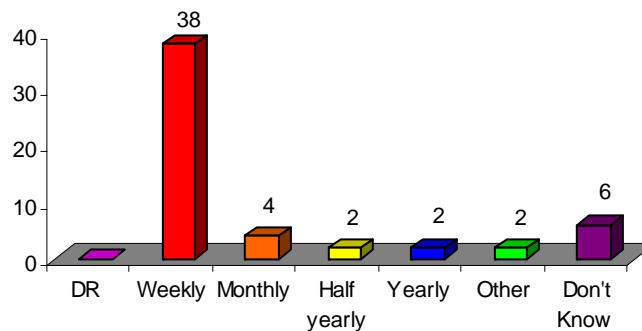


Figure 60 - Frequency at which home ground facilities are checked

The survey results indicated strong support shown by clubs who regularly check home ground facilities even though there was no significant form of policy for this inspection. This element should be regarded as part of risk management as a whole and incorporated into the Junior Rugby League Club structure.

- ***Individual responsible for safety inspection checks***

From the 53 returned surveys 59% of responses indicated that the club was responsible for checking home ground facilities, with a further 29% of responses indicating that their local council was responsible for these checks. The remaining 12% indicated that either their local association was responsible (n=2), the team was responsible (n=3) or that other individuals were responsible (n=3), with one respondent not replying.

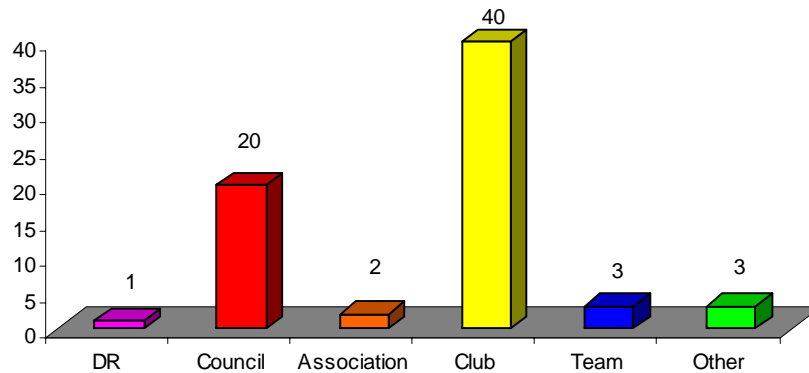


Figure 61 – Individual responsible for ensuring safety inspection check is completed

These results suggest that the individual clubs are taking responsibility for the inspection of home ground facilities, which supports the policy believed to be in place by the majority of clubs.

Playing surfaces:

- ***Inspection policy for playing surfaces***

A total of 64 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys with 57% of responses indicating that either a written club or association policy (WA=20, WC=16, WDK=1) was used for the incorporation of a safety inspection of playing surfaces

immediately before matches. A further 38% of responses indicated clubs had either an unwritten club or association policy (UA=2, UC=20, UDK=2), with the remaining 5% of the responses indicating clubs either didn't have or didn't know if they had this policy (NO=2, DK=1).

In relation to training schedules 35% of the responses indicated clubs had either a written club or association policy (WA=7, WC=14) with a further 38% of responses indicating clubs had either an unwritten club or association policy (UA=1, UC=21, UDK=1). The remaining 28% indicated that clubs didn't have or didn't know if they had this policy (NO=15, DK=1).

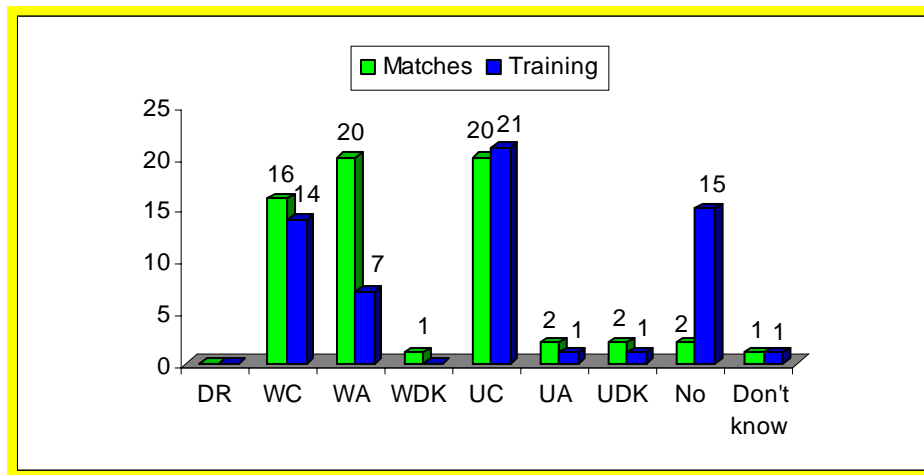


Figure 62 – Policy held by the club regarding the ‘safety inspection of playing surfaces’ before matches and training

The results indicate that either a written or unwritten policy is implemented for inspection of playing surfaces. Although this policy is believed to be supported well, there were a number of candidates that suggested no inspection was undertaken before training sessions.

- *Frequency of playing surface checks immediately before matches and training*

From the 53 returned surveys 82% of respondents indicated they always check playing surfaces immediately before matches and 8% indicated they conduct these checks most of

the time. The remaining 10% of respondents either conduct these checks half of the time (n=1), sometimes (n=2) or never (n=1) with one not responding to this question.

In relation to these checks being implemented immediately before training fixtures 45% of respondents indicated these checks are always performed and 28% indicated that they were performed most of the time. The remaining 27% either carried out this task half of the time (n=3), sometimes (n=6) or never (n=3), with two not responding to this question.

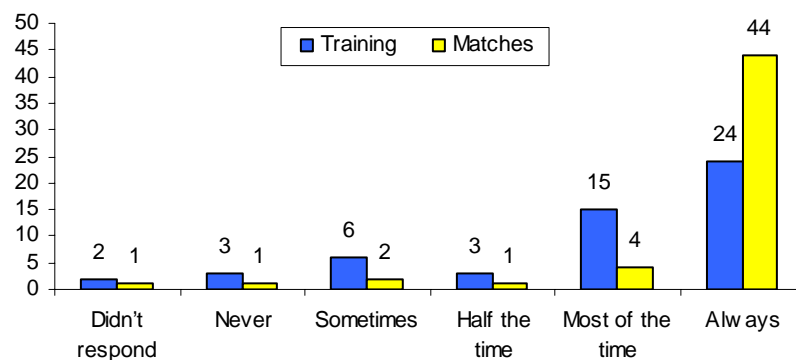


Figure 63 - Frequency at which playing surface checks are carried out immediately before matches and training

The survey results indicate that Junior Rugby League Clubs regularly carry out checks of playing surfaces before matches; however, these checks are not as regularly adopted for training sessions. This suggests that the policy in place for the inspection of playing surfaces before both matches and training is carried out on a regular basis before matches, but not so before training.

- Safe playing conditions at fields and ovals

From the 53 returned surveys 40% of respondents indicated surfaces are always in safe playing condition and 52% indicated they are in safe condition most of the time. The remaining 8% deem playing surfaces to be in safe condition either half of the time (n=1), sometimes (n=1) or never (n=2).

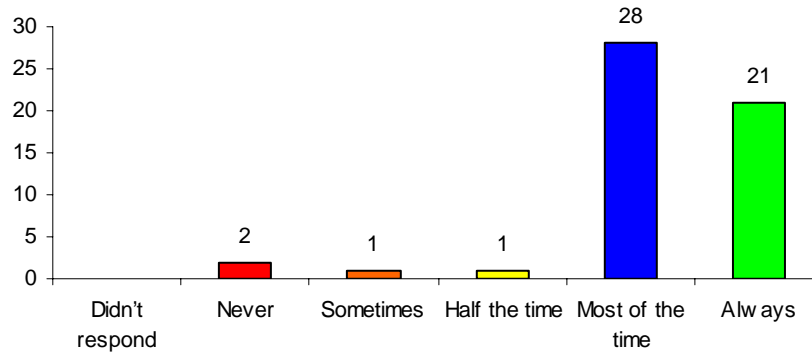


Figure 64 - Frequency at which fields and ovals are in a safe playing condition at time of use

The majority of respondents indicated that their fields are in safe playing condition either most of the time or always. However, due to a lack of funding available at the Junior Rugby League Club level, without council intervention some clubs may struggle to keep playing surfaces within a reasonable safe playing condition.

- ***Individual/s responsible for the inspection of playing surfaces immediately before matches and training***

A total of 110 responses were recorded in relation to the inspection on home ground playing surfaces immediately before matches with 43% of responses indicating that ground controllers were responsible, 16% indicating that the referee was responsible. A further 14% (n=15) and 11% were recorded as the responsibility of sports trainers and coaches respectively. The remaining 16% of responses indicated that either the team manager (n=7), other (n=6), local council (n=4) or the players (n=1) were responsible for these checks.

Where as, 99 responses were recorded in relation to the inspection of home ground playing surfaces immediately before training with 35% of responses indicating that the coach is responsible and only 19% of responses indicating that the ground controller is responsible. Sports trainers and team mangers returned responses of 15% and 11% respectively. The remaining 20% of responses indicated that either no inspection was

undertaken (n=6), local council checked playing surfaces (n=5), players checked the surfaces (n=3) or another method was used when checking playing surfaces.

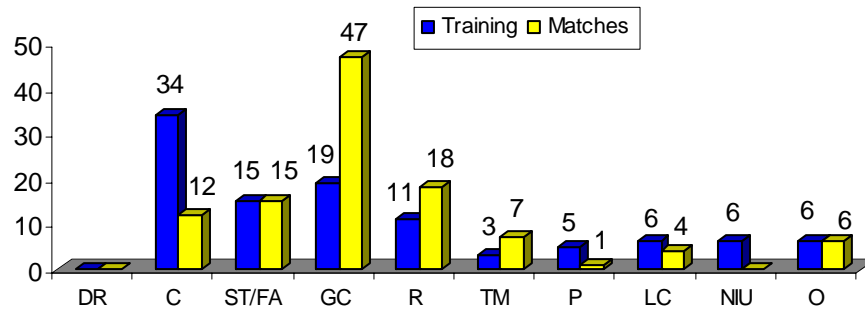


Figure 65 - Individual responsible for inspections of playing surfaces immediately before matches and training

Along with checking home ground facilities, it is suggested that the ground manager is also be responsible for the checking of playing surfaces and ensuring that they are in safe playing condition; according to the ground manager job description placed on the ARL development website.

- Safety of fixtures and fittings within playing fields

From the 53 returned surveys 96% of respondents always ensured that fixtures and fittings within playing surfaces were made safe for participants, and the remaining 4% of respondents indicated that conditions were safe ‘most of the time’.

In relation to safety standards at training only 48% of respondents indicated that fixtures and fittings were always made safe and 25% of respondents recorded that fixtures and fittings were never made safe. The remaining 27% of respondents suggested that fixtures and fittings were made safe either most of the time (n=3), half of the time (n=3) or sometimes (n=7), with one respondent not replying to this question.

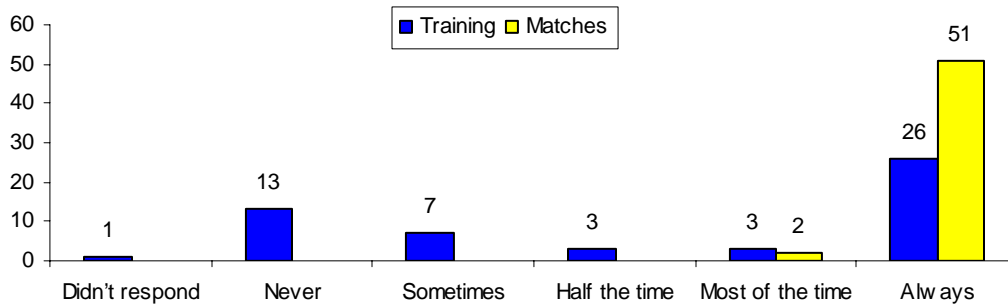


Figure 66 - Frequency at which fixtures and fittings within playing fields are made safe for players at both matches and training

Results suggest that fixtures and fittings are regularly made safe at matches, whilst these same precautions aren't taken for training. And again this area of management is suggested by the ARL as part of the ground manager's job. Therefore, by taking the job description from the ARL web site and redefining it, a policy can be written in relation to the area of risk management and the role of the ground manger within this plan.

- *Written checklists for pre - game/training*

Of the 53 returned surveys only 6% of respondents always incorporate a written checklist when safety inspections are undertaken; where as 74% of respondents never use a written checklist. The remaining 20% of respondents indicated that they used a written checklist most of the time (n=6) or sometimes (n=5).

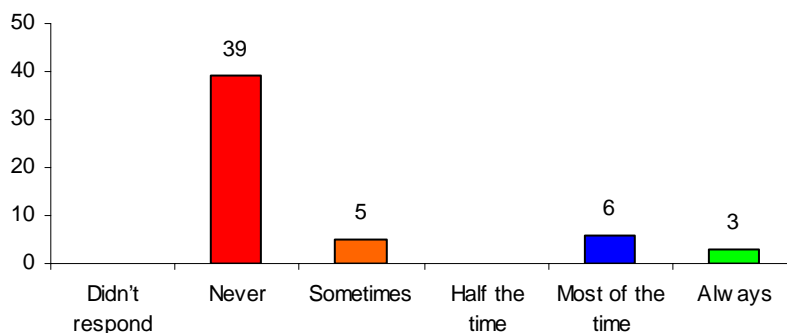


Figure 67 - Implementation of written checklists for pre - game/training safety inspections

The survey results indicate that a staggering 74% do not use a written checklist, which may suggest that these clubs do not have availability of a checklist. However, the CRL have incorporated a written checklist into their risk management handbook, which gives good indications as to what steps should be taken in order to ensure the safety and well being of members.

CLUB SUPPORT

Access and assistance:

- *Safety and training programs*

Survey results indicated that 85% of respondents would like more access to more safety and training programs (yes), whereas the remaining 15% either didn't want this offer (n=5) or didn't know if their club would be interested in more programs (n=3).

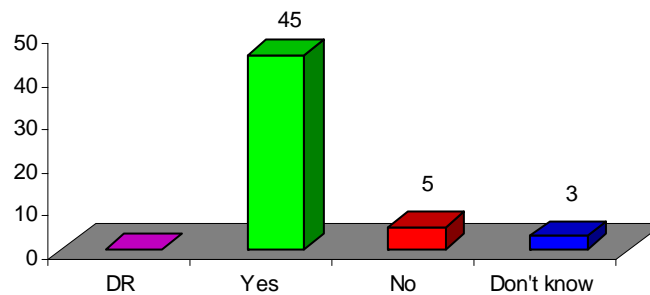


Figure 68 - Proportion of clubs that would like more access to safety and training programs

Research from this report suggests that those policies that are easily accessible to Junior Rugby League Clubs are incorporated into the management of the club. Therefore, of those clubs that would like more access to safety and training programs, 85% would actually benefit from this assistance and incorporate programs into club structures.

- *Sports safety and risk management assistance*

Survey results indicated that 66% of respondents would like assistance in developing a sports safety or risk management plan (yes), whilst 21% of respondents did not want assistance in this area (no). The remaining 13% either didn't know if their club wanted assistance (n=6) or didn't respond to this question.

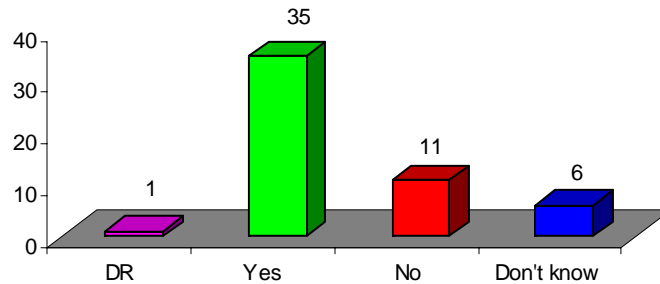


Figure 69 - Proportion of clubs that would like assistance in developing a sports safety or risk management plan

The survey suggests that over 66% of clubs would like assistance in this area, and from previous results in this research those policies that are easily accessible for Rugby League stakeholders are implemented into club structures, therefore, 66% of clubs would directly benefit from a risk management plan.

- *Support from the rugby league hierarchy*

A total of 161 responses were recorded from the 53 returned surveys. When asked who clubs thought should be actively supporting them in implementing safety practices and policies, 77% of responses indicated that local associations should be the primary supporter, followed closely by the NSWRL with 70% of responses.

NOTE: This is an area where multiple responses have impacted on percentage results.

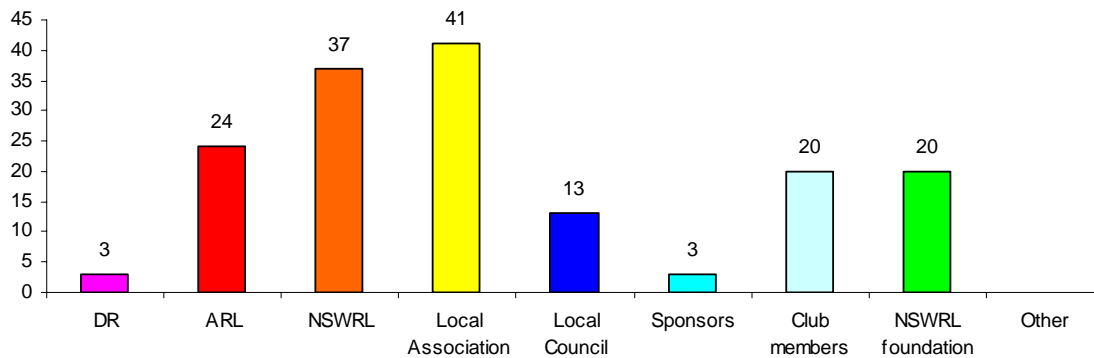


Figure 70 - Clubs identified preferred source for active support in implementing safety practices and policies

- How clubs think safety could be improved

The following are comments taken from the Sports Safety Audit. These are suggestions made by clubs when asked how they thought safety could be improved:

- “Introduce records for injury and treatment”
- “More people on the committee so we can have a proper safety committee”
- “Have at least one person who comes and talks to the club at least once a season”
- “By providing hand-outs to parents and players at the start of each season on the safety code”
- “If the club could have a set policy with strict guidelines to follow it would benefit the people involved immensely”
- “Having more volunteers to designate safety checks” “Monthly safety meetings”
- “Introduce clear guidelines to associations and follow up with on site audits”
- “More due diligence required and more education”
- “Hopefully the governing body will make all players up to the age of 13 wear headgears and mouthguards”
- “By setting up written policies”
- “More training for officials, parents and children available for on-site training”
- “Filling this survey out has made us aware, we do not do enough at training”
- “Safety procedures should be standardised and implemented across all junior leagues with support from the NSWRL”

- “With further training of individuals and making parents within the club aware of policies and their responsibilities”
- “More education by experts at training”
- “Awareness of the need for safety”
- “By actively informing stakeholders of the policies that exist. The policies exist, but they are not readily accessible by clubs”
- “I would like to implement all policies to make our club safer and reduce the risks to our players and club liability – these policies should be available and made mandatory by our associations”
- “Procedures need to be put in writing and enforced throughout the club. Prevention is much better than a cure”
- “By formalising our procedures via a written club document that would be available to all stakeholders”
- “Anything as long as it is association wide”
- “Stronger club / association policies. Formal safety training for all club officials”
- “Education and finance to purchase more safety equipment”

Satisfaction with support from rugby league hierarchy:

- *Satisfaction of support form ARL:*

11 % very satisfied, 51% moderately satisfied, 23% unsatisfied and 15 % didn't respond

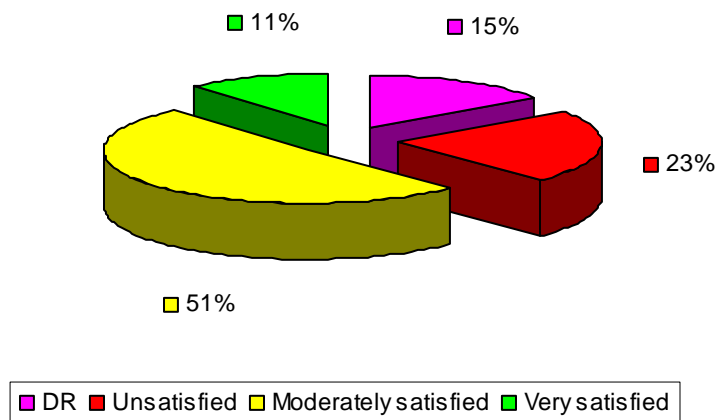


Figure 71 - Satisfaction with support in relation to safety issues provided by the ARL

- *Satisfaction of support form NSWRL:*

26% very satisfied, 42% moderately satisfied, 21% unsatisfied and 11% didn't respond

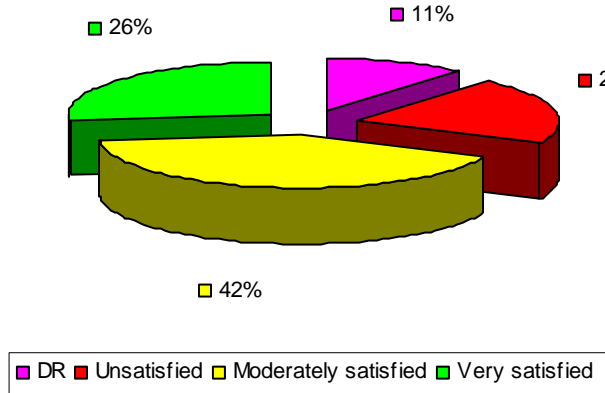


Figure 72 - Satisfaction with support in relation to safety issues provided by the NSWRL

- *Satisfaction of support from your local association:*

40% very satisfied, 45% moderately satisfied, 11% unsatisfied, and 4% didn't respond

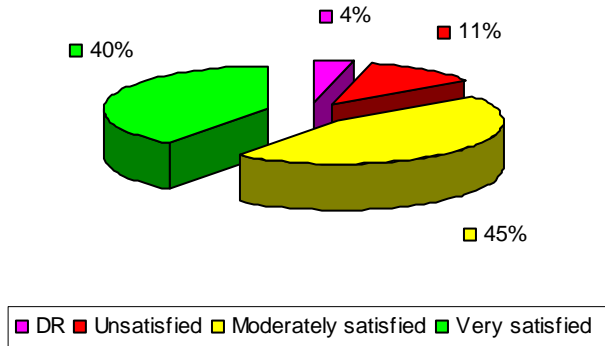


Figure 73 - Satisfaction with support in relation to safety issues provided by local associations

- *Satisfaction of support from club members:*

30% very satisfied, 54% moderately satisfied, 8% unsatisfied, 8% didn't respond

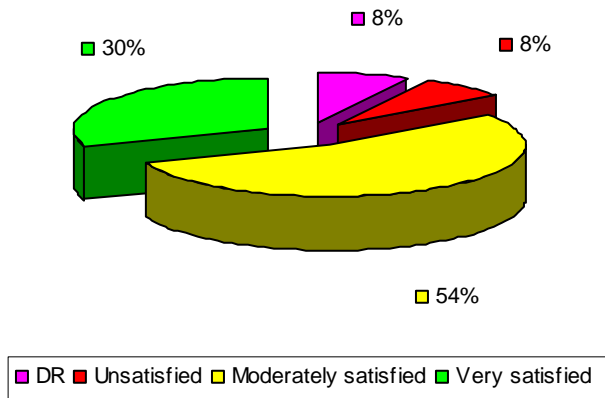


Figure 74 - Satisfaction with support in relation to safety issues provided by club members

- Satisfaction with support from local council

6% very satisfied, 42% moderately satisfied, 42% unsatisfied, 2% not applicable, 9% didn't respond

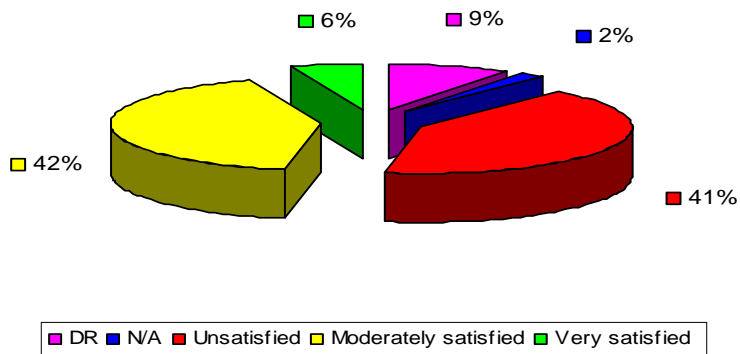


Figure 75 - Satisfaction with support in relation to safety issues provided by local council

- Satisfaction of support from first aiders / sports trainers

69% very satisfied, 19% moderately satisfied, 4% not applicable, 8% didn't respond

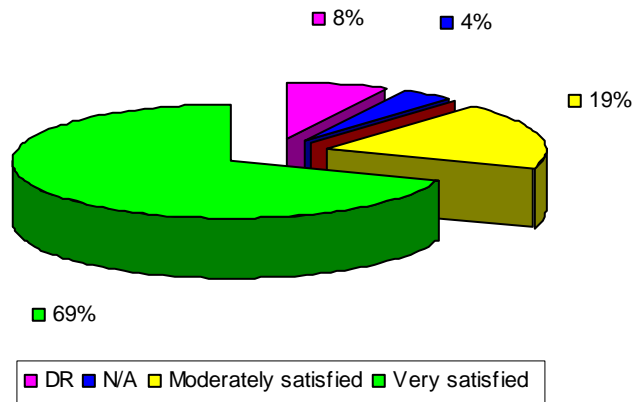


Figure 76 - Satisfaction with support in relation to safety issues provided by first aiders / sports trainers

- Satisfaction of support from parents

25% very satisfied, 46% moderately satisfied, 13% unsatisfied, 8% not applicable, and 8% didn't respond

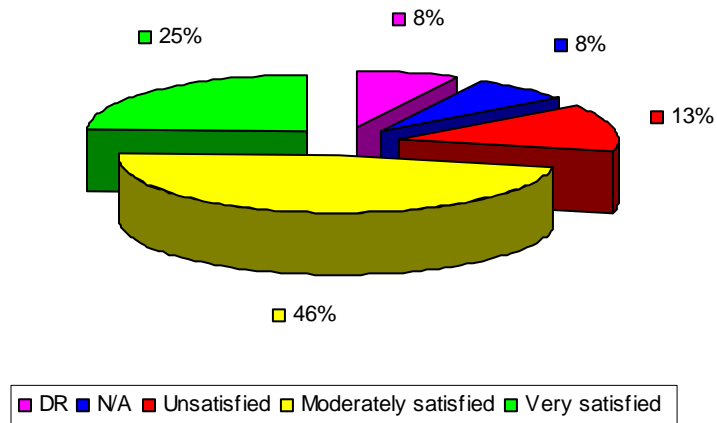


Figure 77 - Satisfaction with support in relation to safety issues provided by parents

The following table has been incorporated to provide a visual comparison between the different levels within the league and the satisfaction between them:

	Very Satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Unsatisfied	N/A	DR
ARL	11%	51%	23%		15%
NSWRL	26%	42%	21%		11%
Local Associations	40%	45%	21%		11%
Clubs members	30%	54%	8%		8%
Local council	6%	42%	42%	2%	9%
FAO / Sports trainers	69%	19%		4%	8%
Parents	25%	46%	13%	8%	8%

Table 1. Comparison between satisfaction of clubs with the Rugby League hierarchy

Therefore, it can be concluded that the greatest satisfaction lies with the effort that the FAO and sports trainers contribute to the game, followed by local associations then club members. The level that received the least satisfaction was the local council.

CONCLUSIONS:

The results indicate that every policy in this audit was held by at least one Junior Rugby League Football Club. However, the league to date, including both the NSWRL and district associations have only produced a limited amount of policies covered in this study.

Within the structure of Rugby League and through various programs including the National Coaching and First Aid Officer's Accreditation Schemes, the issues relating to sports safety practices within the league are well established and recommended as required knowledge for these personnel.

Summary of results:

- Safety policies:

Safety policies that were strongly supported by Junior Rugby League Clubs include:*

- A policy on the qualification of umpires and referees in charge of matches
- A policy of the qualifications of coaches for club teams
- A policy of the attendance of qualified first aiders / sports trainers at matches
- A code of conduct / fair play policy
- A code of conduct on the acceptable behaviour of people attending matches
- A safe play / modified rules policy for juniors
- A child protection policy
- A formal sports insurance policy

** Greater than 65% of responses indicating that either a written association or written club policy were incorporated into the management of the club*

Safety policies that were moderately* supported by Junior Rugby League Clubs include

- A comprehensive sports safety / risk management policy to address all aspects of injury prevention
- An emergency action plan in the event of severe injury
- A policy on the management of head injuries
- A policy on safety inspection of home ground facilities
- A policy on safety inspection of playing surfaces before matches
- A policy on safety inspection of playing surfaces before training
- A policy on participation of players at matches or training under the influence of alcohol
- A blood rule policy
- A policy on drugs in sport
- A policy regarding adverse weather and safe conduct of play

The above mentioned policies although covering a majority of issues are generally *unwritten* association or club policies.

** Greater than 65% of responses indicating that either a written or unwritten club or association policy was incorporated into the management of the club.*

Safety policies that were poorly* supported by the Junior Rugby League Clubs include:

- A pre-participation health screening policy for players
- An infectious disease policy
- A sun protection policy
- A policy on the wearing or use of protective equipment during matches
- A policy on the wearing or use of protective equipment during training
- A specific safety budget policy
- A policy designating a committee / coordinator specifically responsible for safety

- Regular review of sports safety policies of the club

** These policies received a combined percentage (written and unwritten policies) that was less than 65%*

There is a general recognition that the legality of such issues relating to negligence and duty of care is an ever growing concern in today's sport market (Healey, 2005). In this environment, and given the survey results, it is considered that the concern of the NSWRL in relation to its inability to provide draft policy/procedures is justified. A problem exists, and the situation needs to be addressed in the short term.

The major finding from this report is that only 32% (8 out of the 25) of the policies that were put forward for response in this audit were strongly endorsed through implementation within club structures, in *written* form.

It is considered that any move to provide uniform draft or outline Policy documents for distribution throughout the League would be well accepted by clubs, and quickly implemented, and this is supported by survey results that show :-

- 1) 66% of survey respondents have indicated that they would like assistance in putting together a sports safety/risk management plan
- 2) The 8 safety policies confirmed as being held in written form by more than 65% of responding Clubs can be clearly linked to a ready availability of information through easy access to League documentation and sponsored publications. These include safe play/ code of conduct/ child protection policies.

From the above it is clear that a minimum 66% of clubs would obtain direct benefit from a NSWRL decision to provide ongoing support by way of draft sports/safety policy documentation.

- **Safety practices:**

Practices that were strongly supported by Junior Rugby League Clubs include:*

- Qualified first aid trainers at matches and training
- Appropriate first aid equipment supplied at matches and training
- Removing bleeding players from the field
- Covering injuries immediately to prevent infection and further bleeding
- Wearing rubber gloves when attending a bleeding player
- Disposal of blood stained material into a sealed container
- The availability of a phone at both matches and training in case of emergencies
- Clear and unlocked access for emergency vehicles at both matches and training
- Checking the qualifications of referees, coaches, sports trainers and first aid personnel
- The proportion of accredited coaches, referees or umpires
- Checking home ground playing surfaces immediately before matches and training
- Making fixtures and fittings within the field of play safe for matches
- Ensuring adequate separation of spectators and officials from the field of play
- The wearing of mouth guards at matches
- Ensuring drinking water is available at both matches and training
- Encouraging participants to drink in regular intervals of 20-30 min at both matches and training
- Encouraging participants to use their own drink container
- Providing training or coaching that is specifically targeted at preventing injury
- Taking into account the physical development and build of a player when assigning team positions
- The proportion of players that warm up and/or stretch for at least 10 min before matches and training
- Providing modified rules and equipment for juniors at the club
- Ensuring parental permission is gathered for juniors
- Promoting attendance at relevant safety or training programs to club members

- Greater access to more safety and training programs
- Assistance in developing a sports safety / risk management plan

** Greater than 65% of the respondents answered yes/all/always/every season or most/most of the time/most seasons*

Practices that were moderately* supported by Junior Rugby League Clubs include:

- Screening applicants at the club using criminal record checks
- Making fixtures and fittings within the field of play safe for training
- The wearing of shoulder pads at matches
- The wearing of headgear at matches
- The proportion of players at the club that cool down and/or stretch for at least 10 minutes after both matches and training
- Promoting awareness of the specific needs of women and girls in sport
- Incorporating appropriate sun protection measures into club management
- Recording of injuries

** Less than 65% of respondents answered yes/all/always/every season or most/most of the time/most seasons*

Practices that were poorly* supported by Junior Rugby League Clubs include:

- Using a written checklist for pre-game/training safety inspections
- The wearing of headgear at training
- The wearing of mouthguards at training
- The wearing of shoulder pads at training

** Greater than 65% of the respondents answered no/none/never or some/sometimes/only when appointed*

Although only a hand full of written policies have been incorporated into the structure of many Junior Rugby League Football Clubs the safety practices are supported well and scored high throughout the audit results. This is mainly due to the implementation of coaching and FAO accreditation schemes which have highlighted the need for safety practices in rugby league.

However, various elements that need further examination in order to completely understand what protocols are taking place within the structure of Rugby League include:

- Did the nature of questions within the survey prompt responses based on theory rather than true practice?
- Are there proper communication channels available to the junior rugby league clubs from their district associations?
- Do the district associations have difficulty in consulting with the NSWRL?
- Does the ARL actively support the implementation of policies and procedures to the NSWRL?

These questions highlight the level of involvement needed between the four tiers of rugby league, including the ARL, NSWRL, district associations and Junior Rugby League Clubs, who all play an active role in developing, introducing, managing, controlling and evaluating safety / risk management in Rugby League. It should also be noted that to date, some policies are assumed knowledge that is, *things are done because they have always been done that way*.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations put forward in this report are a result of information gathered from the sports safety audit. The following are elements that should be incorporated into the structure of Rugby League:

- **Creation of a ‘policy handbook’**
- **Creation of a ‘policy booklet’**
- **Regular consultation between the different tiers in the league**
- **Up to date web sites / services**
- **Open book tests for current courses**

1. *Creating a policy handbook that incorporates all aspects of safety and risk management for district associations and club administration*

There is no doubt that some form of documentation needs to be produced that incorporates all areas of sports safety / risk management covering rugby league policies and safe practices. The ARL would be the best placed body to ensure the appropriate measures and taken to create these policies and make them more accessible at club level.

Country Rugby League has taken the initiative by producing a Rugby League risk management handbook that addresses an assortment of issues that encompass the game of Rugby League. This initiative is a good indication that governing bodies within the league realise the importance of this issue and are taking the appropriate steps to ensure the safety of its members. However, the manual does not incorporate all policies and practices outlined in the sports safety audit and could benefit from further input from other governing bodies within the league.

A policy handbook would be a useful tool that could be used by District Associations as well as Junior Rugby League Club administrators to help them better understand the management of Rugby League and create an even safer environment for their members.

2. *Creating a policy booklet that can be distributed between various members and stakeholders of district clubs, including parents, coaches, players etc*

The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) junior cricket policy was produced in November of 2002, with player development, guidelines to promote safety and prevent injury, as well as spirit and etiquette of the game all included. This 31 page document was produced to ‘provide a framework for all those involved in the game of cricket at the junior level and to allow for a consistent, safe, and nurturing environment for all junior players’ (pg 2).

The ARL should create its own policy booklet similar to the ACB format, supplied to the Junior Rugby League Clubs this booklet could provide safety practices and procedures for all Rugby League members. This *Junior Rugby League Safety Policy* should include the areas listed in the safety audit and would guide the appropriate members as to how to manage the game better.

An important area to highlight here is the high involvement of volunteers (coaches, trainers, administrators, etc) in the game of Rugby League, and the need to ensure that added pressure and stress does not cause them to withdraw their support from the clubs. With the incorporation of an easy to read manual at club level, volunteers will not see their job as a chore.

3. *Regular consultation between the different tiers in the league including the ARL, NSWRL, local associations and district clubs*

Another area the league should develop is the communication between all levels of Rugby League. Regular consultation between the ARL, NSWRL, District Associations, and Junior Rugby League Clubs would ensure safety issues are addressed at the appropriate time through the appropriate channels.

Already in place is the fact that most districts have monthly meetings, where each club has a chance to forward problems or issues it has with areas surrounding the game. From that meeting a member of each district could meet with a member of the NSWRL to put forward problems and suggestions they think need to be dealt with. The representative

from the NSWRL can then meet with a representative of the ARL to forward on the suggestions that may require action to be taken.

4. *Up to date web site with a section on risk management which provides all policies and practices as they come into existence*

The ARL has a section on its website for downloads of policies and rules; however, many policies are not yet available. By providing the policies on line when they come to hand the league will be ensuring that all clubs have up-to-date information regarding safety policies and practices recommended by the league.

Other items that could be included on the website are laws, bi-laws of the game, safety procedures as well as a data base of injuries. Injuries that are re-occurring could then be highlighted and addressed by incorporating safety programs into club structures, similar to the work that the Coaching Council are conducting at the NSWRL Academy.

5. *An open book test for the current courses, to reinforce the importance of subject matter to the individuals involved*

The FAO and coaching accreditation schemes both cover various aspects of safety practices and procedures within rugby league. By incorporating an open book test into these courses, not only is the instructor gaining a better understanding of the level of knowledge gained by the participant, but the participant gains a better understanding of the manuals, how to find information and what exactly the manuals cover.

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