

NRL To Launch Whistleblower Program

The Australian [National Rugby League](#) has come up with an eight-page whistleblower blueprint of the Whistleblower Protection Program (WPP) and the same has been circulated to all 16 clubs in the wake of the ASADA investigation.

The league recently established an integrity unit and a hotline to call with information about doping offenses and this policy makes it clear that whistleblowers will be granted immunity as an incentive. A few months back, there was a push by NRL salary cap auditor Ian Schubert to electronically audit clubs, inserting computer chips to download files from their hard drives just before Christmas.

The Whistleblower Protection Program may be implemented by the NRL to show to its stakeholders that every move is being reported or monitored and this latest development will be a drive towards self-policing, with officials, players, and even members of the general public encouraged to tip-off information about [doping violations](#), match-fixing or common disciplinary breaches. The blueprint reads: The NRL should promote a culture that encourages the reporting of (misconduct) by implementing a policy for granting administrative immunity for whistleblowers.

Meanwhile, the National Rugby League has justified the whistleblower program as another measure of good corporate governance and transparency and a spokesman said if you're going to set it up, then you have to go the whole way and put the right structures in place and this structure will include two new roles at League Central wherein a Whistleblower Protection Officer will be appointed to liaise with the informant and assure their complete anonymity while a Whistleblower Investigation Officer will then conduct an inquiry into the complaint before passing on his or her findings directly to NRL boss Dave Smith. The entire process would begin with a phone call to a 1300 hotline, an email to a dedicated address or letter to a specific post office box.

The document reads the importance of reporting corrupt and illegal practices and the NRL's reasons for such reporting should be part of a formalized training program and this should be done as part of any NRL induction and via ongoing training emphasizing the undesirability of malicious or vexatious reporting and those who come forward with false or vindictive complaints could find themselves in the firing line. Whistleblowers will be granted "administrative immunity" from disciplinary proceedings as long as they have not engaged in serious misconduct or illegal activity and players & officials will be regularly educated about the importance of reporting misconduct.

The league has already been approached with two companies with offers to collect the information, with STOPline the preferred provider thanks to its work with Victoria's Racing Integrity Commissioner. At this point of time, the document is adamant that the stakeholders must be indoctrinated from the moment they join the game. The trick will be to encourage players and officials to actually use the hotline. Meanwhile, many officials, players and agents were shocked and underwhelmed about the concept of the Australian National Rugby League encouraging a culture of dobbing. The NRL, however, remarked that the program won't be implemented until feedback is gathered from the clubs, who received the document last month.