

## Players take anti-violence message to the field

By Alex Arnold

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July is Purple Ribbon Month and this year the message of respecting women and opposing violence and abuse is being taken to sporting fields across the Shoalhaven.

The Berry-Shoalhaven Heads Magpies Rugby League Club is the first to sign up for the purple armband campaign started by the organisation Football Fans Against Sexual Assault.

In football terms armbands are a symbol of grief and respect, while purple is the colour for women's rights.

The Brisbane Broncos and Manly Sea Eagles first wore purple armbands in 2004 in response to sexual assault incidents surrounding the game of rugby league at the time.

Ninu Sethi from community health said sport had a tremendous influence on men's and youth culture.

She said purple armband games aimed to make it socially acceptable for the silent majority of men and women to speak out against violent and abusive behaviour towards women.

"The main idea behind the campaign came from the fact sportspeople are skilled, talented and admired," Ms Sethi said.

"They are seen as mentors to the young by playing by the rules on the field, but the message to come from this campaign is that they play by the rules off the field as well."

Ms Sethi said the recent documentary *Footy Chicks* highlighted the gender inequity that can exist in sport and the major influence that alcohol had on people's behaviour in the sporting environment, by those playing or even watching the game.

"It is really important that people don't let alcohol affect their judgment of what is right and wrong," Ms Sethi said.

The Magpies will dedicate their home games against Warilla-Lake South on Saturday, July 21 to the cause and Ms Sethi is inviting sporting clubs across the Shoalhaven to join the campaign.

Purple tape and information packs, even speakers who can talk to clubs about abuse and violence issues, can contact Ninu, Karen or Wendi at Crossroads Youth Health Service on 4423 1784.