Rugby players' union GMB responds to World Cup cancellations

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This is awful news, but not surprising, says GMB Union

GMB, the union for Rugby League players in the UK, have responded to the announcement that Australia and New Zealand have pulled out of the World Cup.

Peter Davies, GMB Senior Organiser and Rugby League lead, said:

“This is awful news. But fact is, despite strict rules which have seen players fined for celebrations, hugging, high fives and so on, a strict testing policy and tight socialising rules - and the fantastic discipline our players have shown - covid rates in the game have mirrored those of the communities where it’s played.

“The virus does not care about Government policy and the UK has failed to get a grip on the spread, failed to close our borders down quickly enough when it mutated into the delta variant and instead have now put the onus and responsibility on the public.

“In the Southern Hemisphere they close their borders if they get a hand full of cases.

“We have more than fifty thousand now and it’s rising by the day.

“The blame game between the governing bodies and the media is pointless.

> Maybe it’s time to involve the players in these decisions and planning, there certainly hasn’t been any move to bring the players unions from all codes together in any of this. After all, it’s their safety that everyone is focussing on.

Geoff Burrow, GMB RLPA branch secretary

“The RFL, the clubs, staff and players over here could not have worked any harder to make the World Cup as safe as possible.

“But we are not surprised Australia and New Zealand have pulled out on safety grounds.

“It is sad but it was half expected and we have to make the best of it regardless.

“There are alternatives no one seems to be considering though.

“The UK is relying on its vaccine, testing regime and the DCMS measures to run the World Cup safely.

“Down Under they have a different approach and put more emphasis on controlling the spread.”

Garreth Carvell, Former GB and Wales International Lead GMB Rep, said:

GMB UNION

“There are enough players from New Zealand and Australia already over here playing in our game to make a couple of highly competitive teams to represent their nations.

“It’s not perfect but it’s a compromise that no one seems to be discussing, certainly not with us anyway.”

Geoff Burrow, GMB RLPA branch secretary, said:

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"After all, it’s their safety that everyone is focussing on.”

Press office

07958 156846

press.office@gmb.org.uk

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info@gmb.org.uk