

## RelyOn podcast with Elaine Heaney FINAL.mp3

**Nathan Luker:** [00:00:01] Welcome to the RelyOn Podcast. A show that delivers practical insights for leaders to build better organisations where people can live, work and study. I'm Nathan Luker, co-founder at Rely, where we help some of the best known brands prevent, detect and respond to culture and conduct issues via our intelligent platform. Welcome back to the show. Today, I'm joined by Elaine Heaney, national manager of Play by the Rules. And we're exploring integrity in sport. Welcome, Elaine.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:00:32] Lovely to be here. Thanks for having me.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:00:34] Okay. To start at the beginning, you were born in the U.K. You started your career in criminal and regulatory law. You then moved to Australia in 2013, where you joined KPMG. Then you move to the Law Society of New South Wales in a policy role, and then you moved to child protection with the Scout Movement just after the Royal Commission. And then you've joined Play by the Rules in 2021. That's a lot on the scoreboard. You've made an impact all around the world. Can you tell us a little bit about where your passion for promoting ethical conduct has come from?

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:01:06] I think that's a really good question. I think you learn along the way the things that drive you. And I think justice has always been a big part of my life since I was 18 and decided I wanted to become a lawyer. I always feel like what's right and understanding what society perceives as being right is a really interesting sphere and then accountability attached to that. So obviously within criminal law, you learn what the government and legislation feels is correct conduct. And when someone falls short of that, how they get held to account by our laws and criminal justice system. And similarly, when you go into any sporting environment, you have to look at the environment people are operating in and what standard we want to hold them to account to. So it's all that similar level of how do we want humans to act or behave.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:01:54] Interesting. And when you were the child protection officer at Scouts New South Wales, I think from what you're saying that really came through because when we do a lot of our work, we try and promote leaders to make an impact.

Builds, creates a legacy and you pioneered know it, live it, log it for youth safety. It just came through. Where did you start? How did you do that? How did that start?

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:02:18] It's such a great campaign and we were so proud of it. It's about trying to inspire people to understand sometimes quite complex matters and then break them down into something that's more easy and tangible to understand. So we, you know, probably timing wise, I arrived at Scouts just post Royal Commission. Obviously, they were looking to look into their safeguarding measures, enhance their safeguarding measures, and make sure that they were putting forward policy and practice that was accessible to the wider audience. And so I worked with everybody there to make sure that we understood what risk was, what risk mitigation measures were, and then how could we get people who were out at events to make sure that they understood what was expected of them and to deal with anything that might come up where conduct fell short of that and so know it, live it, log it, was about knowing the code of conduct, living and breathing it in everything that you're doing and then logging if you had an issue. And I think once we got that messaging out to the adults and the young people, they really took that on board.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:03:25] We talk a lot about programs that are for show or for real. And a lot of these, unfortunately, are for show and from all the research we've done. This was very much a for real program that really cut a cord and got cut through into the DNA of the organisation. What was the moment where you knew it was working? Because that would have taken some time. As you said, you went through a pretty tough time as an organisation. Can you talk us through the evolution of the strategy and how did you know? Hey, hang on. There's some pattern recognition here. People are trusting the program. They're living it.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:03:59] Yeah, I think I think once people start saying the words back to you, I think when there's a concept that you've created, you know, and we had a really great team that kind of put it all together and worked through the different age groups and scouts and how we were going to try and attack that to make sure it was simple and clear enough for everyone. But when you're out at an event and you've got kids coming up to you and saying, know it, live it, log it, or you've got adults who understand the concept and the risk and how to say that back to you and understand the why. As much as anything, I think that's the most important thing of all, because

then you're not just educating with the policy, you're educating as the reason for the policy and allowing people to start making those risk decisions themselves. And that's really what we want to do, is empower people in those situations to understand what's expected of them and others, and to be able to take action where necessary. And if they can make that judgment in a more informed way, then that's where we've done our job.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:04:55] Yeah, exactly right. And I think the ripple effect from that with young persons infiltrating, I guess the way that they perceive situations, and it was wonderful to see that when in doubt, log it and it says the threshold for success here is pretty low. If something doesn't seem right, just let us know about it. You know, you don't need to be an expert to try and diagnose problems or anything, which is brilliant. And having it out at a student level, you know, that's building the leaders of tomorrow, particularly in the scout framework.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:05:24] Yeah, I hope so. Thank you. It's for me, it's all about a safe space as well. So it's a safe space, obviously, physically, but it's a safe space psychologically to be able to raise things, to be able to talk freely and to be able to work through things with people. Obviously, you know, fear of reprisal is very real. And we understand that people are worried and concerned when they have to bring something to the table. But what we want to say is that there's experts here for a reason who are here to help you with this stuff. Come forward, speak to us, put in a report, and then we'll help you work through that. And I think if people can see that you're a genuine person who really wants to help them and enter into a conversation with them, then it's not just sending a report off into the ether and the unknown. They know it's going to a real person. They understand the process that's attached to that, and then they know that we'll help them.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:06:13] One thing. We work with hundreds of schools, young persons and in sport as well. A common question is if we take that approach, if we lower that threshold and have when in doubt, log it type mentality, we're going to be inundated with vexatious reports. You know, kids being kids know you don't know where it's going to go. Was that your experience talking in general terms, and what guidance would you give our listeners who are in that position of how to approach that?

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:06:42] Yeah, it's a really good point, and I think it's understandable that there's many reasons why people might put in a report. You know, humanity is complex, situations are complex and people are complex. But what I would probably say is that would an organisation, rather than know what's going on, whatever the reason driving that might be, so that they can spot risks and patterns and behaviours and understand, you know, information is power. At the end of the day, if you don't know about a risk, you can't act on it. So number one, I would rather always just have all of the information and 1000 reports rather than one, no matter what the situation. And then number two is, I think you have to start from a point of belief. If someone has gone to the effort of putting in a report to say that there's a behaviour that they're not happy with. Start with the belief that that is true and that there's something there that needs to be addressed and then you can work through when you're listening to person A and listening to Person B and weighing up the evidence and thinking about where that sits and against your code of conduct as to a judgment as to the situation. And you can't make that judgment based on one report. You can make that judgment based off speaking to different people and working through what the situation is.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:07:56] And it's not always, you know, black and white, sometimes the shades of grey, Sometimes there's many different things that people don't realise are going on. And you as a person in that situation with responsibility and accountability, want to make sure that the people in your organisation, if there's an issue, you can help to resolve that and a low level that might just be that. There's been a disagreement somewhere along the line, probably because of a lack of communication in my experience, and you can sit people down and work through what the issue is. You might end up with a happier, you know, volunteer workforce than you had previously, because people have been listened to and have had that time taken to work it through. Now the flip side of that is the amount of work involved is obviously you have 1000 reports. It can be tricky, but I think if you start from that place of being welcoming and open and then you learn to triage effectively as you go after four years there, I certainly learned to kind of work my way through all of the different reports and triage them in a way that we felt was appropriate. So that's the job.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:08:59] Yeah, well said. Strong leadership is a regular part of the process that gets missed and overlooked. So you've just talked about a really strong personnel response, yet a strong team, yourself included. We were looking at

everything equally, had a process in place, had a continuous improvement plan and essentially understood. Yep. Okay, we're going to kick off. It's going to be large and a little bit messy, but we're going to take everything seriously and get better over time. A really important point I think gets missed regularly. There has to be a bit of pain before you can get the momentum going in the program where it's self sufficient in a way, especially working with young people, though it's nearly mandatory, it's a mandatory requirement. The system then takes care of itself. If you adopt that over time, the participants in that system know that there's a low threshold of reporting and that each report is going to be taken seriously and it self corrects itself. You know, our experience that leads to as a prevention mechanism to bad behaviour in itself, the very nature of a program.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:09:59] If you go back to that criminal law concept of if you have 1000 reports, are you still able amongst those thousand to spot any indicators of a level of criminal conduct or abuse that might be present? And if so, triage them to the right place, to the police, to the criminal protection agencies to make sure that the right other people are dealing with them, then that's the point of the system. You know, the lower level bullying type, especially adult to adult matters, is a whole sort of another facet. But that's not the really important stuff that we're looking for. What we're looking for is those flags, those indicators, creating that space so that people can come forward and tell us about the really serious issues, because those are the ones that you want to make sure that you're triaging off to the right place.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:10:41] I want to jump back to a point you made earlier about repercussions and reporting and reprisals. In our experience in sport in general terms, we track a lapse time. So when the incidents happened so victim survivors of violence, abuse or sexual harassment, when the actual incident or incidents occurred and when they told us and generally that elapsed time is quite long, it takes a long time for someone to choose to speak up for good reason. In your experiences then moving from scouts into sport, what do you believe creates the right environment where people feel they'll be seen, heard and believed without that fear of repercussions?

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:11:18] Yeah, I think it's really important to think about proactive versus reactive and Play by the Rules sits is very much in the proactive space. So the reactive space, just to kind of start there is where in incidents happen, there's been

some conduct that's an issue that gets reported to the right place and triage through the process and you can end up with enforcement and sanction at the end of it depending on what the system or process is that you're going through. Where Play by the Rules sits is we don't sit in that reactive space. We don't deal with the reports that come in to any sports. But what we do do is proactively try and educate the community particularly, but all levels of sport as to what appropriate behaviours are, what a code of conduct is. Upskilling yourself in human rights principles such as harassment and discrimination to make sure that you're not allowing anti-racist behaviour, any discriminatory behaviours, LGBTQ plus victimisation, for example. All of those ways in which you can upskill yourself allow you again to spot those behaviours, understand that they're unacceptable, and then triage them to the right place. And if we can even just set the tone in the first place to say that where you should start is a safe, fair and inclusive environment, which is the tagline for Play by the Rules and everything that it encompasses you as a community club need to think about who you are and who you want to be and what your values are. And I would hope and think that with most clubs that's about creating that safe and welcoming space for everybody to come into.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:12:50] And what we want to do is we know that volunteers are time poor. We know that there's a lot of admin involved in running community sports clubs. We want to try and make that process easier. So we want to try and create campaigns and create resources and create online free e-learning so that people at that community club level can upskill themselves to be able to proactively educate their community as to the type of behaviours they expect and want, and then make sure that people are abiding to those standards. So a good practical example of everything that I've just described is the Let Kids Be Kids campaign. So that's about sideline behaviour. When a sporting event is taking place, instead of having parents screaming at the kids or screaming at young referees, we can have 15 year old referees. For example, if you have a 40 year old on the sideline screaming obscenities at a young person who's refereeing, that's unacceptable on every level. It's unacceptable. And that should be called out and people should understand that that behaviour is unacceptable and then something should be done about it. But unless people are aware that they have the right to call people out in that situation, then people don't understand what that expected behaviour is. So that's where we sit is in that proactive space to try and get people to understand those kind of issues.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:14:09] You talked about sideline behaviour, and it seems to have never been more difficult at time to be managing this type of conduct or sector. 80% of Australians play sport. 40% of children. There's mobile phones, there's connectivity. There is. We were speaking to one school recently, referring to children. There's no children here. They're mini adults. You know, the speed of maturity, it's just is on hyperdrive. Do you think it's working? Because we say this regularly where at a club level there's bad behaviour, with sideline behaviour seems to be getting worse. It's also more complicated, more connected. Bullying is happening in the shadows. What data or information do you have to share with the campaign? I love Let Kids Be Kids, is a wonderful campaign.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:15:00] Yeah, absolutely. So I mean, I think if I start with the sort of concepts first and I'll come back to the, I would say data being from the UK afterwards. Yeah, I think that one thing we need to make sure we don't do is, is take sport and the sporting community and sporting environments and take them outside of normal community and normal humanity. You know, everything that happens on the sporting field should be is subject to the same expected behaviours of everybody in society, in the supermarket, at the park, walking down the road outside of school. All of those situations are no different to sporting situations. And I think the problem that we have is when some people walk into that environment thinking that they have an entitlement to do what they want because they've paid fees, because their kids go there, because they're passionate about sport and that's not correct. We need to make sure that people understand that sporting environments sit in that same sphere of having expectations attached to it. If you sign up your child or you buy a ticket to a match, you know you are entering into an environment that has expected behaviours and you're agreeing to abide by that club's code of conduct, their policy and processes in relation to behaviour. And so I think just making sure that people understand that criminal conduct applies just the same, child protection matters apply just the same as they would in any other aspect of community, and that you don't get to get away with things more just because it's related to sport and you might be passionate about your sport. And then the second point onto that is I don't have data in relation to incidents, but what I can tell you is that Play by the Rules has grown. So back in, I think it's 2014 we had about 15,000 people doing e-learning and in 2020 we had about 60,000.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:16:50] Wow.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:16:50] For me, that shows the appetite growth for the program and for helping people. Now, the problem with stats is you can go one way or the other. You could say on the plus side and the positive side, that's an incredible swell of people who want to help deal with this, work through these issues and upskill themselves. On the other side, you could say there's a growing problem enough for people to need to deal with it. I think both are true. I think nothing is ever straightforward. Nothing is black and white. So it's not just it's got worse or it's got better. For me, having worked in criminal law and in child abuse matters and in lots of other spheres of work, humanity exists. There will always be people who test boundaries and there will always be people who do things wrong. We can't eliminate that. But what we can do is create environments where those kind of behaviours are less acceptable, less likely to occur, and that they're called out and dealt with as and when they do so.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:17:48] It's great to hear about the growth and the e-learning adoption. So hopefully there's a broader level of preparedness at a club level and there's obviously a lot happening with the national integrity framework, etc. What would you recommend to club or organisations more broadly who are prepared but then don't receive any issues or don't know about them and now experience that grows a perception that we don't have any we don't have any problems here. How would you help a club at a grassroots level or an organisation continue to prepare? Continue to scratch the surface and get different types of data from their members or employees? What role does technology play?

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:18:30] Yeah, absolutely. And I think again, to start with that kind of concept of that it doesn't happen in our backyard is definitely a falsity because imagine that you took a school and said, well, there's never any bullying or harassment issues in a school and there's never any kind of bad conduct in a school. I cannot imagine a school in the world where that would be true, and nor should it be. It's humans interacting with each other, and there's always going to be things attached to that. And it's the same in any sporting club. There will always be issues and there will always be conduct matters. But the way that you can minimise how bad they are in the first place is by proactively educating people with a code of conduct, a really strong code of conduct that sets the tone and a statement of your commitment to child safety, for example. So that again, you're sort of showing the behaviours that you're expecting in



your environment, and then you can also kind of work through educating that by having discussions with people and making sure that everybody is aware of what those behaviours are and what the expected tone is attached to it. I think it starts with the people themselves creating that safe space and making sure that somebody, whether it be a member of protection information officer or NPO at community club level, or whether it's a complaints officer who sits at the NSO or SSO level for the sport. Within your club and your sport, know who the person is to triage something to, you know, you might not have all the answers and be able to deal with any issue that arises, but know the person that does and speak to people and ask for help and advice.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:20:13] And that's your best route of triaging things through. And in order to do that, you've got to create a space where people are willing to speak up and know that they've got a route to do that. So whatever route it is that you choose to do that, whether it is having hotlines or online forums or whatever the sport or process has put in place, whether it's under the knife or through the sport's own processes, it's really important that people know where to find the information that allows them to make the phone call or fill in the form or speak to the person. That means that they get their point heard.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:20:50] It speaks to really back to where we started with Scouts New South Wales program know it, live it, log it. You know that permanency of a program doesn't go away and I think you can even do that in a mini fashion at a club level. And we build these at organisations, listen up, speak up frameworks and brands where you demonstrate your listening maybe to a broader aperture than just misconduct. So it might be near misses in safety, it might be other just general ideas or stamping out incivility, etc. It's everything that happens in a way on the fringes on a regular basis that demonstrates that why on a regular basis, not just when there's something really serious that happens.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:21:29] Exactly. It's the culture that you're trying to create, Right. What we're trying to do is affect culture change across the board. That's the ethos of Play by the Rules. That's the ethos of what the royal commission was trying to do. It's trying to say identify the issues that exist and then work towards shifting people's mentality, understanding education and attitude towards creating that environment that

you want to see. And I think all of the things you've just discussed are how you take steps to effect that culture change.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:22:00] It was interesting. I was at a school recently doing a talk to the executive team and they very proudly brought in their bystander coaches and so putting the name to the side, etc., if that's a good idea or not, from a branding perspective, how interesting to hear that that's their version of that. So they recognise that there's a large passive bystanders with young persons and schools, right? We're going to create a whole cohort of SRC representatives, so student level, then parent volunteer level. So there's even a bystander coach in the swap shop for uniform and then and then in a teacher level. So they've taken approach to say this is a caring and supportive environment and the leadership from every level, including your peers, are here recognising because they knew through surveys, a serious passive bystander problem. We're here to support you to get things out of the shadow. And I think that was a really beautiful, simple example, I guess, of permanency of a program and showing that you're here to listen before people speak up. I think that's really important, that ordering is critical.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:23:03] Absolutely. And the living and breathing thing comes from the humans that do every day, right? You can set policy as much as you want and put it on the shelf and it gathers dust. Or you can preach at people through newsletters and everything else. If that's not landing and that's not sitting with people and they don't take it forward, then it's not affecting that change or discussion or empowering those people in the first place. So having people who are actively involved and care and are taking steps and are supported with resources, etc., to make sure that they feel like they know what their role is. But is the only way to drive these programs forward. If we're not empowering the people who matter, then it's pointless.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:23:43] In the past episode, Anne-Marie Paterson did a wonderful quote, which was, you know, setting the tone at the top and making sure you notice the echo at the bottom. And I think that's a beautiful way to particularly with young persons, you know, it's critical to empower them to drive change themselves.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:24:00] One of the scouts manager is a guy called Rob taught me was the standard you walk by is the standard you accept. And he used to.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:24:07] That's on my window.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:24:09] I love it. I just think it's so clear. And it really sets the tone for, you know, people not just ignoring things and making sure that you're stepping up and stepping in.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:24:18] Role models are such an important part of sport as they are in business. And really anything that people do always look to the top to inspire us. But particularly in sport, it's something young persons look at on a daily, weekly basis and idolise you. Recently, the Argentina goalkeeper received the golden glove and then acted pretty poorly in what's been described as a despicable act walking off the stage. And then in the A-League there was the running of the field which caused just anarchy and injury. And it was a complete disaster. What impact does this have on young people and programs like Play by the Rules? Is it a positive in a weird way where you can contrast you then have examples of how crazy they are? They're just such larger than life behaviours of poor conduct. Or do they corrode and chip away what you've been building for years just in an instant? How do you feel about that?

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:25:20] I think, as you will know from my answers up to date, I will always say both because nothing is ever straightforward. But at the same time, what I've loved about both of those situations is that everybody has had a huge outcry, particularly in terms of the way that the goalkeeper was assaulted on the field and the criminal conduct that's followed from that.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:25:43] Yeah. Yep.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:25:44] Yeah, there's been there's been an arrest and as there should be because that is incredibly unacceptable behaviour and those adults should be taking a good hard look at themselves and thinking about what the children in their life and other people in their life will take from watching that kind of behaviour. But the outcry against that has been wonderful to see. So Craig Foster's done some brilliant interviews. If anybody wants to see what a really good attitude towards that is, you know, watch Craig Foster, listen to him and he condemns them and he says it's completely unacceptable and it should be. And the same with the crude gesture that

was shown. I think, you know, tone is such an important part of operating as a role model and, you know, in a way that reflects the sport that you obviously love so much. And you just have to think about what you want to do to inspire future generations. If you're a superstar soccer star at the World Cup, you know, think about the next generations in four years time, eight years time, who's the next kids that are going to be standing in your shoes? You know, what do you want? How do you want to inspire them? And I think the same with the Olympics all the time here. We're on the golden decade towards Brisbane in 2032. There's so much scope for us to set the tone as being a forward thinking, human rights understanding, welcoming, safe, inclusive space for sport. And the key people who represent us worldwide are those superstars on the stage. And if they're not demonstrating good conduct, then what does that say about the rest of us? I think the audience members in this situation are obviously they're not sports stars. They are, you know, audience members who very clearly breached the code of conduct that should be set by entering into that. And I hope we'll receive life bans because they should a soccer superstar should be thinking about kids that are watching and what that says.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:27:41] Absolutely. Yeah. Sometimes it's important to show that human beings make mistakes and when things occur in sport or at the upper echelons of leadership. But this type of behaviour has no place in sport.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:27:56] And sometimes it is about the way you deal with it. If he can see that and recognise it and take steps to redress, redress is an important part of who we all are as a nation and what we're going through at the moment. And I think that individual redress is a really important thing to think about, is how do you make right what you did wrong and think about how you can kind of set the tone for the future.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:28:20] Well, we've got one more question. I'd love you to finish the sentence. Great cultures rely on...

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:28:27] People feeling empowered, I think, more than anything. So just give people the impetus, the dance, the music, the songs, the artwork, the something that inspires them to make this happen. And so if you don't start with the people, boring policies on a shelf will get you nowhere.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:28:47] Amazing. Thanks, Elaine. Appreciate you joining us.

**Elaine Heaney:** [00:28:52] No problems, Nathan. Thanks very much. Take care.

**Nathan Luker:** [00:28:59] Thanks for listening to RelyOn. You can access the show notes from this episode, download resources and listen to other episodes at [relyplatform.com](https://relyplatform.com). If you enjoyed the episode, we welcome you to submit a review or send an email to [hello@relyplatform.com](mailto:hello@relyplatform.com).