



CASE STUDY

Keeping netball sidelines positive across Auckland

Across Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, netball courts are buzzing with players of all ages who show up week-in, week-out to play the game they love.

With participation numbers for netball in Auckland continuing to grow, there's no shortage of supporters who are showing up to cheer on their loved ones, too. But like all sports, netball is at its best when everyone feels safe, respected, and supported.

With smaller playing surfaces than many of the other popular winter codes, supporters are close to the action, the umpires and the players. "On the netball court, everything from

the sidelines can be heard," says Claire Beuvink, Relationship Manager at Netball Northern. "The players are close by, and the umpires are right there along the sidelines too. If there's any kind of negative sideline behaviour, it's amplified because of that small space."

Joining Forces

To help everyone involved in netball in Tāmaki Makaurau – players, supporters, umpires and volunteers – get the most out of the game, Netball Northern (the Regional Sport Organisation [RSO] for netball in Auckland and Northland) signed up as part of Love Their Game in 2025. Netball Northern supports 15 centres,



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including 9 in the Auckland region, to grow and strengthen netball. Through support in governance, leadership, coach and umpire development, it enables centres to deliver positive experiences which foster a lifelong love of the game.

Love Their Game is an initiative facilitated by Aktive in partnership with RSOs. It promotes positive sideline behaviour, emphasising the importance of positive sideline support and its role in creating quality sport experiences and environments for all involved – particularly young people.

Claire says Netball Northern and the centres it supports had already identified the need to address negative sideline experiences, and had begun work on their own campaign before Love Their Game was launched.

“We’d pulled together a working group, which came from centres in our zone identifying that there were some negative experiences out on the sideline, and that there was more that we could do in that space.”

A Good Fit

Love Their Game strengthens positive sideline behaviour messages that participating sports organisations can customise for their own codes and activate across their competitions and tournaments.

After hearing about Love Their Game, Netball Northern saw it matched what it was already trying to achieve, with Claire saying it “just made so much sense that we were part of something that would be seen Auckland-wide.”

“The messaging is similar to what we were pursuing, but the impact and the outcomes of being part of a



bigger initiative and partnering with other codes is great.”

Claire says Netball Northern is currently supporting five of its centres to share Love Their Game with clubs and schools: “We have five centres fully involved – Auckland, Waitākere, Papakura, Manurewa and Waiuku.”

“We’re supporting them to embrace Love Their Game, and be the ones that are delivering that message out to their clubs and schools. The more those centres can drive the messaging [to clubs and schools], the more impact it will have.”

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Practical support for centres

Netball Northern and Aktive have focused on making Love Their Game easy for centres to activate in their own way. Claire says: “We work with centres to develop different resources – anything that’s going to make it as easy as possible for them to jump on board.”

Practical tools include giveaways, PA messages voiced by players from the GoSweetSpot Mystics and Northern Stars ANZ Premiership teams, and resources for parents and young people.

“Love Their Game has been promoted across all GoSweetSpot Mystics home games for the past two seasons, and they wear the logo on their dress. It’s great to have the team on board to promote this across all levels of the game.”

Participating centres have also been provided with promotional packs

including banners and giveaways, but it’s the individual ideas each centre is running with – including umpire t-shirts, junior umpire vests, car ride home prompts and pre-game messaging – that help this initiative create a positive court-side environment.

Building momentum

Claire says Netball Northern has focused its approach on celebrating the people already bringing good energy to the courts – including recognising sideline champions, and using small incentives – as well as calling out poor behaviour. “We’ve found we get good results by focusing on the positive. It’s easier to have the positive conversations and say ‘thank you’ then it is to go up and say ‘excuse me, you need to watch your behaviour.’”

While feedback on the impact of Love Their Game is still anecdotal, centres are seeing signs of change, says Claire. “For the centres that’ve been

consistently putting that messaging out, they’ve come back and said that there’s better energy from people around the courts.”

Looking ahead, Claire says the goal is to bring more centres on board and keep the message visible on the sidelines: “We want other centres, and other sporting codes even, to use Love Their Game in a way that works for them.

“And that goes beyond Auckland – Netball Northern spans Auckland and Northland, and centres in Whangārei and Mangonui are doing great mahi to create positive sideline environments too. We want to make sure that work is celebrated and supported, in a way that fits their communities.”

“We need to keep going. We can’t let the momentum wither away, we need to keep working and making positive changes, and that’s what we’re aiming to do.”



Love Their Game was launched by Aktive in March 2025 with eight RSOs. It has now grown to include 19 RSOs and community groups, reaching more than 220,000 participants across Auckland.

For more information visit www.lovetheirgame.org.nz