

## Policies

Your policies are the ground rules that help club members, volunteers and other stakeholders know what to do about any club issue.

Your policies also reflect your clubs values and beliefs, and provide the blueprint for the kind of culture you want to achieve.

Having these policies and procedures in place will help members, volunteers and other stakeholders understand that:

- they share the responsibility for tackling sexist language, discrimination and harassment at the club and are expected to act
- they have club support for taking bystander action
- taking bystander action 'fits in' with your club's commitment to building a safe and inclusive environment for women and is a part of your strategy to do so.

To implement bystander action, you will need policies that let members, volunteers and other stakeholders know where they stand and what they should do in relation to:

- tackling sexist language, sex discrimination and sexual harassment
- maintaining appropriate club behaviour
- Sorting out grievances and complaints of discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

This information does not have to be contained in a stand-alone bystander action policy, but can be included in other policies aimed at building a safe and respectful club, for example:

- Equal opportunity policy (see appendix for template)
- Anti-discrimination and harassment policy
- Code of conduct (refer to page .. of the handbook)
- Anti-Sexual harassment policy (see appendix for template)
- Anti- Bullying
- Grievance and complaints resolutions (See appendix for template)

**To be effective in supporting the use of bystander action, your policies should be communicated and promoted to members, volunteers and other stakeholders.**

It is good practice to:

- include policies and code of conduct in your members handbook
- discuss policies and code of conduct at team meetings
- talk about policies and the code of conduct when new players join the club, and at the beginning of every season
- promote the code of conduct via email, the club website or social media
- regularly review the code of conduct, club policies and your members' compliance with them.

## Courageous Conversations Charter

The Courageous Conversations Charter supports organisations to provide a safe and inclusive environment and a respectful culture. And individuals with a set of core values to live by and practice. By implementing the Charter's statements of commitment, this allows individuals and organisations to address; the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, as well as challenging sexist comments, discrimination and disrespectful behaviour. Through these discussions, organisations can

- Attract a broader and more diverse group of membership and talent pool
- Increase satisfaction and morale
- Increase productivity
- Decrease absenteeism
- Reduce membership/staff turnover
- Promote themselves as a family friendly club/organisation

**courageous conversations**  
*Charter*

The Courageous Conversations Charter provides a framework organisations and individuals can adopt, to take action in the prevention of violence against women and children, by promoting gender equality and respect in their environment and their communities.

*Statement of Commitment*

**We commit to action that promotes gender equity & respectful relationships.**

- We will model respectful relationships between peers and all members of the community
- We will speak out about sexism, gender inequity and gender stereotypes
- We will provide a safe, inclusive and supportive environment
- We will provide a structural and cultural environment that promotes gender equity

**Principles**

- Living in safety is a basic human right
- All forms of violence are unacceptable
- Violence against women and children harms the entire community
- All relationships are based on respect and equality
- Power imbalances between men and women are a product of rigid gender norms and stereotypes
- Men and women have equal opportunities to participate in community life and have equal decision making powers, in both public and private domains
- Men play a significant role in taking a stand against violence against women and modelling respectful behaviours and relationships

[www.courageousconversations.org.au](http://www.courageousconversations.org.au)

This project has been funded under the Reducing Violence against Women and their Children grants program, part of the Victorian Government's Community Crime Prevention Program - local solutions for local crime prevention issues.

*...Let's talk about respect and equity*

The Courageous Conversations Charter is a further resource to help support and promote a healthy and respectful culture in your club.

The Charter can serve as a guiding policy, with the statement of commitment providing your club and the club members, actions to adhere to and promote. Displaying the Charter within the clubrooms can function as a reminder to members of accepted behaviours, and the environment the club is striving to achieve.

Breaching the statement of commitment can provide an opportunity to action on the behaviour, and be used to reinforce what behaviour will and will not be tolerated within the club

The Charter is a tool to enable your club to create a respectful and inclusive environment, and to be the best it can be

## **Scenarios**

### **Racial Vilification**

An indigenous player in the football team approaches his coach after training, notifying him of racially motivated 'jokes' some of the other player have made to him. Whilst he believes they were said in jest, he finds them offensive due to continually receiving comments on the field from other players and from his team mates

#### *Actions the club can take*

- Club president and/or coach to speak to the indigenous player who has received the comments and ask what support they need. Let them know this behaviour will be addressed
- The coach can remind all players in the team of the code of conduct and the Anti-Discrimination policy (if applicable) at a team meeting or after training, discussing the importance of respectful behaviour and supporting your team mates
- The coach to speak either individually or to the group of players who have been making the comments, again remind them of the policies and code of conduct, and that this behaviour is not tolerated or welcomed at the club
- Give those making the comments a warning, if the comments continue they will be asked to leave the club
- The coach to discuss the incident with the leadership team and the club president
- The club president to address all players and club members, again reminding them of the club policies and code of conduct, and that racial vilification is not accepted within the club
- Club president to raise the issue with league officials

### **Sexist comments and behaviour**

A woman has received negative comments and jokes after applying for the position of Club President. Some members of the club feel she is not capable of fulfilling the position, articulating it is a man's role. Other make jokes, calling her a dyke and question her sexuality.

#### *Actions the Club can take*

- Current club president to remind everyone of the Equal Opportunity policy (if applicable) and the code of conduct, discussing the values of the club and promote the type of behaviour that is acceptable e.g. this is a club that does not allow sexist behaviour and we encourage and support all our members
- President to address all those making comments (either individually or as a group). Let them know these comments are not accepted at the club, and are untrue – these comments are highly sexist and the club should be supporting her endeavours
- President to give those making the comments a warning, informing them if these comments and beliefs continue they will be asked to leave the club
- All club members to challenge these comments when they see or hear them

## **Grievance and Complaints Resolution**

Conflict is natural in any organisation and club. Disagreements can relate to substantive issues such as the allocation of resources, or can arise at an individual level in the form of disputes or complaints. The handling and recording of the issues and resolution steps is very important. Regardless of the nature or the magnitude of the conflict, it is better to address it as soon as possible before it escalates

A complaints process provides the framework for effectively resolving complaints of discrimination, harassment and other unlawful behaviours. It gives guidance to members about how they can make a complaint and spells out how you will deal with it.

Having a complaints process in place can support the use of bystander action in the club by clearly reinforcing that discrimination, harassment and other unlawful behaviours will not be tolerated, and that complaints around these behaviours will be taken seriously.

This is very important, because research shows many women who experience these behaviours remain silent or leave the club, rather than make a complaint.

A fundamental principle of a complaints process is that people can speak up against discrimination and harassment, or support someone who is making a complaint about these behaviours, without fear of victimisation. If enacted effectively in a club, it provides a 'safety net' for people to take action and ensures that unlawful or inappropriate conduct is dealt with appropriately.

A complaints process needs to be transparent and make it clear that complaints will be dealt with efficiently, with all parties treated fairly throughout and able to have their say (in line with the principles of natural justice).

A complaints procedure should detail:

- the responsibilities of managers and team leaders in responding to complaints
- informal and formal complaints resolution options
- investigation processes and possible outcomes
- external complaint resolution agencies (such as AFL Victoria, Netball Victoria)
- internal and external support options
- the importance of confidentiality and preventing gossip

A complaints process should also detail the role of your contact officer to help staff members who wish to make a complaint. It may also reference the role the contact officer could play in supporting staff wanting to take bystander action.

## **Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy**

A sexual harassment policy describes the actions an organisation and its staff will take to prevent sexual harassment.

This could include the use of bystander action as a preventive strategy, where people speak up and challenge the attitudes and behaviours that can lead to sexual harassment.

An effective sexual harassment policy:

- clearly defines what sexual harassment is and the club situations or circumstances in which it may arise
- explains that in certain circumstances, sexual harassment may constitute a criminal offence
- details the informal and formal mechanisms available to members and volunteers to address sexual harassment in their club
- spells out the responsibility of leaders and committee members to act if they are made aware of an incident of sexual harassment
- encourages all club members to take bystander action when they see or hear about such behaviours
- assures club members and volunteers that express concerns around sexual harassment will be taken seriously.

The vast majority of people who are sexually harassed are women, so having a sexual harassment policy in place is central to building a safe environment for women in your club.

Having a sexual harassment policy in place also provides a legitimate platform for club members and volunteers to engage in bystander action. In many instances, the victims of sexual harassment choose not to speak up, so it is both appropriate and important that others do so whenever they are aware of it.

For the policy to be effective, you should:

- communicate it to members when first joining the club, and at the beginning of the season
- regularly remind members about the policy during meetings, training sessions and via email or social media promotions (e.g. your intranet)
- monitor compliance with the policy and take complaints about breaches of the policy seriously.

## **Equal Opportunity Policy**

Your equal opportunity policy spells out your organisation's legal obligation to do what it reasonably can to eliminate discrimination or harassment in the Club based on personal characteristics including race, gender, marital/parental status, physical or intellectual impairment, same sex preference, age, or political associations or beliefs.

An equal opportunity policy provides clarity about the:

- standards of behaviour expected at your club
- responsibility of all members and volunteers (including leaders and coaches) to comply with these standards
- right of all members and volunteers to a safe and inclusive workplace free from discrimination and harassment (and other forms of discrimination)
- rights of volunteers and members to raise a complaint without fear of victimisation

Having an equal opportunity policy will help your organisation fulfil its obligations. An effective equal opportunity policy that supports bystander action would include:

- a clear statement about your organisation's commitment to eliminate sexist language, discrimination and harassment in your club
- explicit leadership endorsement of bystander action as a key strategy in doing this
- a clear statement that team members are expected to support bystander action as an agreed way of addressing sexist language, discrimination and harassment
- an agreed approach to taking bystander action for members and volunteers to follow when they witness or hear about sexist language, discrimination or harassment.

## Policy Checklist

Do we have any policies that describe the sort of behaviour we expect from members and volunteers while at the club?

Do any of these policies specifically mention the following as being unacceptable, inappropriate and not tolerated at the club?

- Sexist language
- Discrimination
- Harassment or sexual harassment
- Bullying
- Vilification
- Offensive language or actions
- Victimisation

Do they clearly describe what members and volunteers can do if they want to raise a concern or lodge a complaint about actions, comments decisions or behaviours that are contrary to our values, policies or code of conduct?

Do they include a list of people and organisations members and volunteers can contact if they want help to deal with issues related to actions, decisions or behaviours that are contrary to our values, policies or code of conduct?

Do they include an explanation of what bystander actions are and how they are implemented and supported here?

Is it easy for members and volunteers to find our policies and procedures if they want to find out more?

Is there regular communication and reminders for members and volunteers about these policies?

Is there a discussion about our values, policies, code of conduct and club culture at the start of each season of for new members and volunteers?



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