

AFL NSW/ACT CODE OF CONDUCT



The following is an extract from the AFL NSW/ACT Regulations and By-Laws which apply to all competitions under the jurisdiction of AFL NSW/ACT.

This Code of Conduct aims to promote and strengthen the reputation of Australian Football in NSW and the ACT by establishing a standard of performance, behaviour and professionalism for its participants and stakeholders. It also seeks to ensure the safety and enjoyment of all participants and stakeholders, and deter conduct that could impair confidence in the honest and professional conduct of Matches or in the integrity and good character of its participants.

1. PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS

1.1 Each Player and Official understands and agrees to:

- (a) Not bring the game of Australian Football, the AFL, AFL NSW/ACT or the League into disrepute;
- (b) Participate in Competition Matches in accordance with the Laws of Australian Football;
- (c) Respect the spirit of the Laws of Australian Football and fair play, and behave accordingly;
- (d) Display and foster respect for Umpires, opponents, Coaches, administrators, Officials, parents and spectators;
- (e) Never to argue with or dispute a decision of an Official. If a Participant disagrees with a decision, they should deal with their dispute in accordance with the relevant Rules, Regulations, Policies and Determinations;
- (f) Control their emotions, and not engage in verbal abuse of Officials, sledging Players and/or Coaches or behaviour that deliberately distracts or provokes an opponent;
- (g) Comply with the AFL and AFL NSW/ ACT Rules and Regulations including the National Member Protection Policy, the League By-Laws and this Code of Conduct;
- (h) Never engage in any type of violence either on or off the field;
- (i) Contribute to a safe sporting environment and respectful culture which is accepting of individual differences, and behave accordingly;
- (j) Cooperate with their Club Officials, Coaches and team-mates;
- (k) Participate for their own enjoyment and benefit and for the enjoyment and benefit of their teammates, Coaches and Club Officials;
- (l) Comply with and observe the AFL National Vilification Framework including respecting the rights, dignity and worth of all participants regardless of gender, ability, sexual orientation, cultural background or religion;
- (m) Not behave in any way so as to bring themselves, Australian Football, the AFL, AFL NSW/ ACT, the League or the Club into disrepute;

- (n) Not engage in conduct that is (in the AFL NSW/ ACT's reasonable opinion), unethical, unbecoming or likely to cause harm to the reputation of the Participant, the AFL, the AFL NSW/ ACT, the League, the Club or Australian Football;
- (o) Not take part in any form of bullying including via the use of social media;
- (p) Not make or post inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory comments in public, including via social media, about Players, Clubs, Umpires, Officials, the AFL, AFL NSW/ ACT or the League. Social media includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messaging, text messages, phone messages, digital images, website postings (including social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, websites and blogs);
- (q) Use appropriately the facilities and equipment made available for administration, coaching, training, Competition Matches and events, including facilities provided by the opposing teams;
- (r) Comply with and observe the AFL Anti-Doping Code and any relevant Illicit Drugs policies; and
- (s) Be responsible for their actions.

2. PARENTS & SUPPORTERS

2.1 Each Parent and Supporter understands and agrees to:

- (a) Support the participants and enjoy the Match;
- (b) Encourage participation, but don't force it;
- (c) Teach that enjoyment is more important than winning;
- (d) Never ridicule mistakes or losses;
- (e) Lead by example and respect all Players, Coaches, Umpires, Officials and spectators. Physical or verbal abuse will not be tolerated;
- (f) Recognise all volunteers who give up their valuable time;
- (g) Never publicly criticise Umpires and instead raise personal concerns with Club Officials in private;
- (h) Do not use remarks based on race, religion, gender or ability as many such comments are politically incorrect and it is your Coach, team-mates, Club and family that are let down with such remarks;
- (i) Respect the facilities and equipment of their own and opposing Clubs;
- (j) Do not engage in physical and/or verbal intimidation, abuse or conduct toward any Player, Official, Umpire or supporter;
- (k) Condemn the use of violence in any form, whether it is by spectators, Coaches, Officials or Players;
- (l) Refrain from using abusive language;
- (m) Not to enter the field of play in any sanctioned Competition Match unless granted permission by an Official to do so;
- (n) Not take part in any form of bullying including via the use of social media;
- (o) Not make or post inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory comments in public, including via social media, about Players, Clubs, Umpires, Officials, the AFL, AFL NSW/ ACT or the League. Social media includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messaging, text messages, phone messages, digital images, website

postings (including social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, websites and blogs);

3. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

3.1 The Scope of the Code

(a) This Code of Conduct:

- (i) forms part of the AFL NSW/ ACT Regulations and applies to the conduct and behaviour of Leagues, Clubs, Players and Officials;
- (ii) applies to all forms of Australian Football under AFL NSW/ ACT's jurisdiction;
- (iii) continues to apply to a participant even after that participant's association, registration, employment or engagement has ended, if that participant breached this Code of Conduct while a current participant; and
- (iv) does not limit or restrict the application of the AFL or AFL NSW/ ACT Rules and Regulations and, in particular, the National Match Tribunal Guidelines, National Disciplinary Tribunal Guidelines, Member Protection Policy, National Vilification Framework or Anti-Doping Policy.

(b) The Code of Conduct does not govern Reportable Offences, the Order-Off Rule or "Citations.

(c) Where an incident may constitute both a Reportable Offence or a breach of the Code of Conduct, the charge of a Reportable Offence will take precedence. An individual must not be penalised under both the Tribunal/ Prescribed Penalty System and the Code of Conduct.

(d) This Code of Conduct may be supplemented by additional codes of behaviour or ethics, provided that they are not inconsistent with the terms of this Code of Conduct.

3.2 Categories of Breach

(a) There are three categories of breach as follows:

- (i) Level 1 – Minor indiscretion;
- (ii) Level 2 – More serious offence or second Level 1 offence within previous 3 years; and
- (iii) Level 3 – Serious offence, third or subsequent Level 1 offence within previous 3 years or second or subsequent Level 2 offence within previous 3 years.

(b) Any Player, Official or supporter bringing a Club into disrepute will be entitled to one warning for a 'Level 1' breach.

(c) Level 2 or Level 3 breaches must be dealt with upon receipt of a written 'complaint' issued by:

- (i) An authorised Club Official on behalf of the Club and any of its members;
- (ii) The Administration Committee directly;
- (iii) Officiating Umpires (on Umpire Match Report Form).

- (d) All written complaints shall be referred to the Administration Committee. Complaints directly to the League will be accepted within three (3) business days of an alleged indiscretion.
- (e) Any alleged breach will be initially assessed by the Administration Committee. The Administration Committee may in its absolute discretion taking into account all the available evidence either:
- (i) impose a Level 1 breach;
 - (ii) refer the matter to the Conduct Committee for hearing and determination; or
 - (iii) dismiss the complaint including determining such complaint to be frivolous.
- (f) Should the Administration Committee or Conduct Committee determine a complaint made by a Club or Club Official to be frivolous, a fee of \$100 will be imposed upon that Club.
- (g) Individuals and Clubs will be notified via their Club President in writing of any case to answer and the time and date of a convened hearing. Those requested to attend a convened hearing into the matter are compelled to attend or have a representative attend in their place.
- (h) The following is indicative of the process and available sanctions:

Breach	Description	Sanctions	Referred
Level 1	Minor Indiscretion	Individuals name recorded; counselling, mediation or written apology if appropriate; official warning or reprimand	Usually Not
Level 2	More Serious Infraction or repetition (within 3 years)	Suspended sentence, registration ban or removal of affiliation/ membership rights; the assigning of the individual to a mentor program by the League; counselling, mediation or written apology; suspended fine for Club	Yes
Level 3	Serious Infraction or 'Third Strike' (third Level 1 or second Level 2 within 3 years)	Any of the above; AND/ OR suspension, registration ban, removal of affiliation/ membership rights of an individual; fines and/or loss of competition points to a Club/team	Yes

- (i) As such penalties may potentially be apportioned to either an individual or Club or both as determined by the Conduct Committee, Clubs are liable for the conduct and behaviour of its Players, Officials and supporters.

3.3 Promoting the Code of Conduct

- (a) A copy of this Code of Conduct must be available on each Club's website.
- (b) A copy of this Code of Conduct must be in a prominent position in the following locations: on canteen wall, in front of canteen; in the home and visitors change rooms; and at entrances to public toilets.

- (c) The League will provide Clubs with an initial supply of A4 'Code of Conduct' signs and a large corflute sign to be displayed outside a Club's canteen.
- (d) All Clubs are required to ensure that all members receive a copy of this Code of Conduct.
- (e) Clubs must ensure that its Players Officials, Coaches and parents of Under 18 Players sign off on their understanding of their obligations under this Code of Conduct.

3.4 Liability for Spectator Conduct

- (a) A Club is responsible, and liable, for the conduct and behaviour of its supporters, whether at home or away Matches.
- (b) Each patron at a Match must comply with the Spectator Code of Behaviour. It is the host Club's responsibility to ensure the Spectator Code of Behaviour is implemented and enforced against all spectators.

3.5 Ground Manager Responsibilities

- (a) In maintaining the Code of Conduct, the Ground Manager shall:
 - (i) Liaise with Club Officials as requested (from either the home or visiting Club) to help identify and find details for the alleged offender(s), those affected and any witnesses.
 - (ii) Where an incident appears to represent a minor breach, the Ground Manager may issue a warning to any person that they may be close to breaching the Code of Conduct.
 - (iii) Where a formal complaint is warranted, the Ground Manager shall advise the affected Club to submit a formal complaint to the Administration Committee and follow the procedures as described in paragraph 1.2 of these Code of Conduct Disciplinary Procedures.
 - (iv) The Ground Manager shall ensure that appropriate signage (provided by the League) is maintained and clearly visible at the venue's canteen and in each change-room.
- (b) The Ground Manager should also assist the Umpires upon request to:
 - (i) Identify and obtain the details of any supporter, member or non-member spectator that they believe to be an offender or witness to a breach.
 - (ii) Identify and obtain the details of any Club Official or member that they believe to have been involved in a reportable offence where the Umpire has not been able to ascertain the individual's identity.
- (c) Club Officials must co-operate in assisting the Ground Manager upon request to identify and obtain details for any member or supporter belonging to their Club. Where it is believed that a Club Official has not co-operated appropriately, it will be considered a Level 2 breach.

3.6 Conduct Committee

- (a) The Conduct Committee is an independent committee whose duties are to determine and adjudicate upon such matters that the Administration Committee may from time to time refer.
- (b) The Administration Committee shall appoint the Conduct Committee of not less than three members which may consist of a combination of the following: a representative from the independent Tribunal Panel, a representative from the Administration Committee or nominee(s) and/or an independent Club President.
- (c) Where reasonably practicable, the Conduct Committee will meet on the first Wednesday evening after all relevant parties can be notified of the hearing date and time and any formal investigations completed.

3.7 Scope and Powers of the Conduct Committee

- (a) The Conduct Committee is governed by the same procedures applying to the Tribunal as outlined in the League By-Laws and the National Disciplinary Tribunal Guidelines.
- (b) Decisions may be appealed to the Conduct Committee in accordance with the National Disciplinary Tribunal Guidelines.
- (c) The Tribunal representative will chair all Conduct Committee hearings and ensure Tribunal procedures are followed.
- (d) The Conduct Committee has the power to dismiss or change the grading of a breach, as well as postpone a hearing as they deem necessary in relation to the evidence produced.
- (e) The Conduct Committee may impose any of the following disciplinary sanctions:
- (f) Appointing a mentor to an individual for a period of time;
 - (i) Requiring that the individual participate in a remedial program or counselling;
 - (ii) Requiring a written apology;
 - (iii) Requiring mediation between parties including on specified conditions;
 - (iv) Revoking a Player, Umpires or Coach's registration for a period of time;
 - (v) Revoking a child's/associated Player's position to play for a period of time in the case of a parent/spectator;
 - (vi) Banning or prohibiting an individual from admission to any recognised League event and venue;
 - (vii) Banning an individual from holding any post as an Official, administrator or committee person in the League.
 - (viii) Deducting Club of the Year Award points for the season in which the indiscretion has taken place;
 - (ix) Imposing a fine on a Club (up to \$1,000 per first offence);
 - (x) Imposing the loss of 'competition points' upon a team/Club;
 - (xi) Imposing a suspended penalty of any of the above.

- (g) A third violation/breach of the Code of Conduct within a period of three (3) years in any capacity as Player, Coach, Official and/or spectator will bring about an automatic revocation or suspension of the Player's eligibility to play and/or Coach's permit to coach for a period of time as determined by the Conduct Committee in its absolute discretion.
- (h) Failure to comply with any penalty or sanction imposed by the Conduct Committee may result in further disciplinary sanctions as determined by the Conduct Committee in its absolute discretion.

3.8 Notice and Disciplinary Sanctions

- (a) AFL NSW/ ACT or a League may enforce the terms of this Code of Conduct and invoke the sanctions only if it has given the party alleged to have infringed this Code of Conduct:
 - (i) reasonable details of the alleged infringement;
 - (ii) notice of possible sanctions; and
 - (iii) the opportunity to be heard in relation to the issues of infringement and sanction.
- (b) The imposition of a sanction is immediate or as otherwise notified by the party imposing the sanction.
- (c) If a participant disputes the sanction or purported action taken under this Code of Conduct that party may appeal in accordance with the National Disciplinary Tribunal Guidelines.