

# *Member Protection* for clubs



A guide for sport and recreation clubs and associations in Western Australia.



Department of Sport and Recreation  
Government of Western Australia

## What is Member Protection?

Member protection is a term used by the Australian sports industry to describe the practices and procedures that protect an organisation's members – both individual members such as players, coaches and officials, and the member organisations such as clubs, state associations, other affiliated associations and the national body. It involves:

- protecting members from harassment, abuse, discrimination and other forms of inappropriate behaviour
- adopting appropriate measures to ensure the right people are involved in an organisation, particularly in relation to those involved with juniors
- providing education
- promoting and modeling positive behaviour.

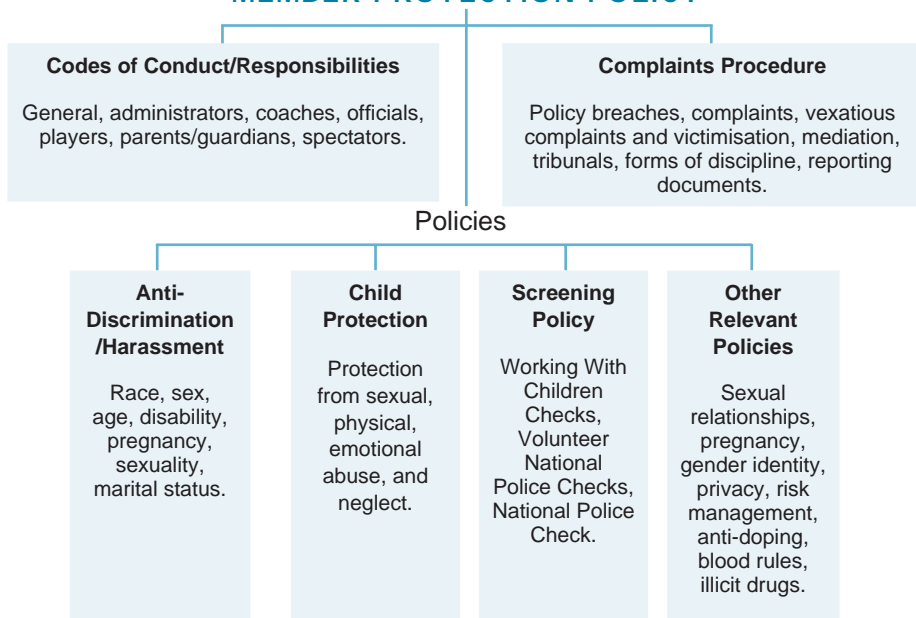
## What is a Member Protection Policy?

An organisation's statement of its commitment to provide a safe environment that is fair and respectful and free from harassment, abuse or discrimination for everyone, including children.

## Why do we need a Member Protection Policy?

- Helps to clarify responsibilities and expectations of members
- To comply with legislation
- Fulfill moral obligations
- Insurance purposes
- Raises awareness of fun, safe and fair play
- Outlines complaint handling procedures

### MEMBER PROTECTION POLICY



## What should be included in our Member Protection Policy?

It should outline the responsibilities of the organisation and its members. It should also state the procedures to be followed in the event that the policies of the organisation are not adhered to. The following areas should be addressed:

### Harassment

Harassment takes many forms, some are lawful, some are not but all harassment is undesirable and will certainly breach organisational policies and codes of conduct. Harassment is any type of behaviour that: is not wanted; is not asked for; and is not returned; that a reasonable person would recognise as being unwelcome and likely to cause the recipient to feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated. It may be a single incident or repeated, explicit or implicit, verbal or non-verbal.

### Discrimination

Discrimination means making choices about how we treat other people. Those choices can be made using real and relevant information, or they can be based on prejudice, stereotypes and bias.

Some discrimination is unlawful (for example, sexual harassment and racial discrimination) and some is not (for example, a coach who shows favouritism towards their own child over other players).

Equal opportunity laws make discrimination on various grounds unlawful such as:

- race
- sex
- age
- disability
- pregnancy
- sexuality
- marital status

All discrimination is undesirable if it leads to unfair treatment of players, members or other participants in recreation and sport.

## Child protection

Child protection is about keeping children and young people safe from abuse, discrimination and harassment, and protecting them from people who are unsuitable to work with children. This is often a legal requirement, covered by Australian child protection and anti-discrimination laws. It is also an ethical obligation and a very important consideration in meeting 'duty of care' obligations.

Child abuse can be when someone does something harmful, or does not provide for or protect, a child or young person. Child abuse can cause long-lasting emotional, physical and behavioural damage.

There are four main types of child abuse. They are:

### **Sexual abuse/sexual misconduct**

Any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child or young person, including suggestive behaviour and inappropriate touching.

For example, a coach holding a participant's arms longer than necessary to teach a golf swing or tennis serve, or voyeuristically watching an athlete shower or change clothes.

### **Physical abuse**

Non-accidental injury and/or harm to a child or young person, caused by another person such as a parent, care-giver or even an older child.

For example, physically punishing a young person for losing a game by hitting, throwing equipment, pushing or shoving.

### **Emotional abuse**

Behaviours that may psychologically harm a child or young person, including verbal abuse, threats, bullying, harassment or excessive and unreasonable demands.

For example, yelling or name-calling during a game, putting children down verbally, or encouraging violent or racist bias in the game.

### **Neglect**

Failing to provide a child or young person with basic physical and emotional necessities, harming them or putting them at risk of harm.

For example, keeping the best young player on-field to win the game despite their having concussion, or discouraging children from drinking water before a competition in case it adds to their weight.

### **Child Protection in Western Australia**

The Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act commenced in Western Australia in 2006. This legislation makes it compulsory for certain people in 'child-related' work, either as a paid employee or volunteer to obtain a Working with Children check. Those required to apply for a check can do so at any Australia Post Office.

See the Working with Children Legislation website for more information at [www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au](http://www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au) or the Department of Sport and Recreation website at [www.dsr.wa.gov.au](http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au)

**Child protection is everyone's business.**

## Member Screening

Member screening helps to identify those people who may be unsuitable to work in your organisation. The following steps can be undertaken for potential and existing (if not already done so) employees and volunteers in your organisation:

**Interviews** – good opportunity to ask questions relating to the position and observe behaviour of the applicant.

**Reference Checks** – useful to gain information from previous employers on the persons work performance and character.

**Criminal Record Screening** – Working with Children (WWC) checks are compulsory under WA State legislation. Other forms of criminal record checking such as National Police Checks for Volunteers or National Police Checks may be used for those people who are exempt under the WWC legislation or who perform duties other than working with children.

### Other Relevant Policies

Other policies can be included in an organisation's Member Protection Policies including but not limited to those relating to:

- Sexual relationships
- Pregnancy
- Gender identity
- Privacy
- Risk management
- Anti-doping
- Blood rules

Clubs should adopt and adapt the policy of their State Association. If no policy exists at this level a Member Protection Policy Framework template can be downloaded from the Australian Sports Commission website at [www.ausport.gov.au](http://www.ausport.gov.au).

## Who is responsible for Member Protection?

Everyone is responsible to ensure that all members are treated fairly and with respect.

## What are the responsibilities of agencies and individuals in the sport and recreation industry?

### National Government

- Provide a framework for member protection

### State Government

- Adopt and adapt the national framework for member protection to make it relevant to the State
- Create awareness
- Assist sport and recreation organisations with education, policy and procedures

### Peak bodies and associations

- Establish policy and procedures
- Create awareness
- Provide support and training
- Respond to incidents

### Sport and recreation clubs

- Adopt and adapt policy and procedures from the relevant peak body or association
- Action policy and procedures
- Create awareness
- Liaise with peak bodies on incidents

### Coaches, Players, Parents, Guardians and Spectators

- Be aware of member protection policies
- Abide by sport or recreation clubs policy and procedures

## What is a Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO)?

They are the first point of call in a club or sporting organisation for any enquiries, concerns or complaints about harassment, discrimination and abuse. The officer provides confidential information and moral support to the person with the concern or who is alleging harassment.

### What is their role?

The MPIO's role is to

- listen
- provide support (but not take over)
- provide information and options about what a person might do (but not advice)
- support the complainant in taking the matter further if that is what the complainant wants and the officer feels able to do it
- keep up-to-date with information on harassment, discrimination and other forms of inappropriate behaviour
- understand their sport's policies and procedures in relation to harassment and discrimination
- be accessible, approachable and able to maintain confidentiality
- operate regionally as an MPIO by being available to other sports in the region.

A MPIO does not investigate or resolve conflict.

To become a member protection officer, a person is nominated by their sport and completes an Australian Sports Commission approved two-day course where they are assessed as to their competency to undertake the role.

## Member Protection Checklist - What do we need to do?

- Incorporate a Member Protection Policy into your organisation.
- Contact your Peak Body or Association or see [www.ausport.gov.au](http://www.ausport.gov.au) to obtain a policy template to adapt to your requirements.
- Ensure everyone involved in the organisation is aware of the policy and are provided with a copy.
- Ensure the policy is easily accessible (e.g. on websites or on a notice board).
- Promote the policy and procedures widely. Resources such as posters and palm cards that support Member Protection Policies are available from the Department of Sport and Recreation.
- Conduct regular education sessions regarding the policy, its requirements and the possible consequences for breaching the policy.
- See [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au) for online tutorials regarding fun, safe and fair play.
- Appoint a person to monitor, evaluate and regularly review the policy
- Ensure that a number of people are trained to receive and handle complaints (e.g. Member Protection Information Officers - MPIO) or be aware of accessible MPIO's. A database of MPIO's is available at [www.ausport.gov.au](http://www.ausport.gov.au).
- Ensure that complaints (grievances and allegations) are handled in accordance with the procedures provided in the policy
- Ensure all persons legally required to get a Working with Children Check obtain one
- Ensure adequate and accurate records are kept

## Links

[www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)

[www.ausport.gov.au](http://www.ausport.gov.au)

[www.dsr.wa.gov.au](http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au)

## Other Resources

This resource is part of the Club Development Scheme, which provides assistance to Western Australian sport and recreation clubs and organisations to become better managed, more sustainable and to provide good quality services to members and participants.

Other resources in the series include:

- Clubhouse CD-ROM
- 1 Step by step... to starting a new club
  - 2 Planning for your club – the future is in your hands
  - 3 Taking the lead! A guide for Club Presidents
  - 4 The key to efficiency – the Club Secretary
  - 5 Show me the money – a guide for the Treasurer
  - 6 Take the 'in' out of ineffective – ten steps to running successful meetings
  - 7 Effective club meetings – a guide for the chairperson
  - 8 Lighten the load and delegate – help for the overworked committee member
  - 9 You have the answers – solving club problems
  - 10 Marketing and promoting your club
  - 11 Sponsorship – seeking and servicing a sponsor
  - 12 Establishing your club constitution and becoming incorporated
  - 13 Risky business – a club guide to risk management
  - 14 Clubs' guide to volunteer management
  - 15 Member protection for clubs
  - 16 How to be more inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds
  - 17 Passport into schools – linking sports with schools
  - 18 Youth sport – junior sport policy
  - 19 Long-term involvement – junior sport policy
  - 20 Getting young people involved – junior sport policy
  - 21 Physical growth and maturation – junior sport policy
  - 22 Sport pathways – junior sport policy
  - 23 Forming links – junior sport policy
  - 24 People making it happen – junior sport policy
  - 25 Quality coaching – junior sport policy
  - 26 Making sport safe – junior sport policy
  - 27 The law and sport – junior sport policy
  - 28 Top 20 tips for officials
  - 29 Top 20 tips for successful coaching

