

## **AFL Barwon**

### **CYBER SAFETY POLICY**

AFL Barwon has an obligation to maintain a safe physical and emotional environment for league officials, staff, registered players, umpires, coaches, club members, parents, spectators and sponsors. This responsibility is increasingly being linked to the use of the Internet and Information & Communication Technologies (ICT), and has seen the emergence of a number of related Cybersafety issues. The Internet and ICT devices/equipment bring great benefits to all users and to the effective operation of the WorkSafe VCFL, individual leagues and clubs.

AFL Barwon places a high priority on the acceptable use of ICT devices/equipment which will benefit members however; it recognises that the presence in the sporting arena of these technologies can also facilitate anti-social, inappropriate, and even illegal behaviour and activities. AFL Barwon aims, therefore, to maximise the benefits of these technologies, while at the same time to minimise the dangers and manage the risks.

#### **Underlying Principles**

The policy is written in light of the Mission Statement of AFL Victoria Country Football whereby WorkSafe AFL Victoria Country aims to: Develop, Foster, Coordinate and Sustain Australian Football at the Club and League level throughout Country Victoria

#### **Policy**

AFL Barwon and its member clubs will develop and maintain rigorous and effective Cybersafety practices which aim to maximise the benefits of the Internet and ICT and allow for the effective operation of AFL Barwon and member clubs, whilst minimising and managing any risks.

These Cybersafety practices will aim to not only maintain a cyber safe sporting environment but also to address the needs of the league officials and club members to receive education about the safe and responsible use of present and developing information and communication technologies.

Associated issues the League will address include the need for relevant education about Cybersafety for AFL Barwon and its clubs, the need for ongoing funding for Cybersafety practices through inclusion in the annual budget, implications for the design and delivery of the cybersafety program, the professional development and training, disciplinary responses to breaches of the cybersafety policy and the availability of appropriate professional support.



#### **AFL Barwon**

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AFL Barwon takes seriously its responsibility in providing robust policy, guidelines and education for its members in relation to what is deemed acceptable and appropriate online behaviours. The League and/or club name, motto, crest, logo and/or uniform must not be used in any way which would result in a negative impact for the league or club and its members. Members of AFL Barwon and its clubs have a responsibility to ensure that all online communications are in keeping with the leagues expectations in relation to appropriate and respectful interactions with officials, coaches, umpires, players, parents, spectators and sponsors. Players will not post inappropriate comments about individual AFL Barwon officials, umpires, players, club or club members; which if said in person during the playing of a game would result in disciplinary action being taken.

*“Cyber bullying is a way of delivering covert psychological bullying. It uses information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour, by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.”* (Belsey 2007)

Cyber bullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, racially vilifying or threatening another person by sending or posting inappropriate and hurtful e-mail messages, instant messages, text messages, phone messages, digital pictures or images, or Web site postings (including social network sites eg facebook or blogs) and the sending, receiving and/or possession of naked or sexually explicit images of a person. Club members must also be aware that postings from their individual accounts, whether done by themselves or another person will remain the responsibility of the account owner.

All members of AFL Barwon and individual clubs must be aware that in certain circumstances where a crime has been committed, they may also be subjected to a criminal investigation by Police over which the league and/or club will have no control. This particularly applies to ‘sexting’ where the image is of a person under the age of 18 years whereby Police will be informed immediately a club becomes aware of the situation. This policy applies to AFL Barwon Senior & Junior competitions.

## **PROCEDURE**

AFL Barwon and/or club officials or members who feel that they have been the victims of such misuses of technology should save and store the offending material on their computer, mobile phone or other device. They should then print a copy of the material and immediately report the incident to the relevant club/league representative.

All reports of cyber bullying and other technology misuses will be reported to AFL Barwon Operations Manager.



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AFL Barwon will investigate the matter, and where it believes a breach of the Cyber Safety Policy may have occurred AFL Barwon may, after considering the evidence, offer a sanction to the offender/s. Should this sanction be accepted by the offender/s the sanction will be applied immediately and the sanction entered into the players Tribunal history. Where it considers it to be required, AFL Barwon may notify the Police of the incident. Should the sanction not be accepted, AFL Barwon will investigate the matter in accordance with AFL Victoria Country Rule 5.0 and may result in a notification to Police where AFL Barwon or club is legally obliged to do so, and the allegations will be forwarded to AFL Barwon Investigation Officer. If there is evidence, charges will be laid and the complaint will proceed to the league's Independent Tribunal, exactly the same as if the investigation relates to physical violence or other reportable offences.

## **PENALTIES**

Any proven charges will automatically lead to a minimum of a two (2) match suspension for a registered player. In deciding the final penalty, consideration will be given to the seriousness of the act, the impact on the victim, the impact on the club/league/WorkSafe VCFL and the prior good history or otherwise of the player.

Players charged with these types of offences for a second or subsequent time and where a suspension has been previously imposed will face deregistration.

Any player presented before the tribunal for the first or subsequent time on a cyber bullying offence must be aware that the penalties available to the tribunal members will cover the complete range including deregistration. In the case of a non playing club member being proved to have engaged in harassment or bullying, the club employing, engaging or otherwise associated with the person at the time of the conduct shall be deemed to be vicariously liable for the conduct of the person and shall pay to the League a penalty to be determined by the league.



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