



# SAFE CULTURE & SAFE PEOPLE

## CREATING A CULTURE OF SAFETY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### PRINCIPLES

- Clubs, leagues and associations should play a lead role in actively promoting a culture of safety for children and young people.
- Clubs, leagues and associations should ensure that every adult involved is aware of their obligations to protect children and young people and every child and young person is aware of their right to be safe and feel safe.
- Clubs, leagues and associations should prioritise child safety in all decision making, consistently assess risk and consider strategies to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

**This means, simply:**

## DEFINITIONS

**A Child:** someone involved in footy who is 12 years or younger - usually a player but may also be a sibling of a player or child of an adult at the club.

**A Young Person:** someone involved in footy who is between the ages of 13 and 18 years old - usually a player but could also be an umpire or in another role at the club, or a sibling or child of a player.

**Adult:** someone involved in footy who is over the age of 18 - this could be a coach, manager, umpire, club official, AFL/club/league/association staff member, player, volunteer, and/or a parent.



**Put children and young people first** because without them, there is no club. If your club doesn't prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, your membership may suffer.



**Talk about child safety and wellbeing.** Your committee should address it at every meeting, not just through the implementation process, but beyond. Treat it like risk management, OH&S and other mandatory requirements.



**Involve children and young people.** Engage them in important decision-making processes wherever you can, especially those that impact them directly like uniforms, facilities, social events and significant changes to the way the club operates.

## WHY DO WE NEED TO DO THIS?

### THE ROYAL COMMISSION

The Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse identified the prevalence of abuse in sport and highlighted ways to prevent this in the future. Four recommendations focus on sport and many other recommendations indirectly impact sport. Key themes from the report included the importance of the voice of the child, understanding risk at club level and embedding a safe and welcoming culture. Click on this **infographic** to read more about the seven key themes.

### PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

The Royal Commission recommended the introduction of National Principles for all organisations involved with children and young people.

It is recommended that every club, league and association comply with the **National Principles of Child Safe Organisations** regardless of the state or territory they are in.

Additionally, depending on your state or territory, you may have Child Safe Standards, principles and legislation that your club, league or association and its people must comply with.

## HOW CAN WE DO THIS?

- Make sure your committee is diverse, seek membership from people outside of the football community to vary the skillset (promote opportunities to teachers, police officers and community services workers who don't necessarily have contact with football but bring valuable experience).
- Make 'Safeguarding Children and Young People' a standing agenda item for the committee.
- Actively promote the AFL Safe Footy Guidelines to your club/league/association members and broader community. These guidelines can be found on the Safeguarding page on **Toyota AFL Club Help**.
- Consider delegating the Safeguarding portfolio to someone within your club/league/association.
- Engage with local community service providers - who can you call on if there is an issue? Know the contacts for child protection, police and other support services for children and young people.
- Be aware of risks, what they are, how to mitigate them and how and why they may change over time.

## RECRUITING SAFE PEOPLE INTO OUR CLUBS/LEAGUES/ASSOCIATIONS

Your club, league and/or association is responsible for recruiting to key roles including coach, manager, physio, junior coordinators and in some cases wellbeing officers.

In doing so, you are expected to prioritise the safety of children and young people and conduct all recruitment processes in line with the 5 strategies listed below.

In short, you should:

- look for the right type of person
- do the background checks
- ask them the right questions
- ensure they know what is expected of them
- be picky and not afraid to say no.

## SAFE RECRUITMENT CHECKLIST

### 1 LOOK FOR THE RIGHT PERSON

Roles you could be recruiting for may include:

- junior coordinator
- coach
- manager.

Think about the attributes or personality type best suited to the role. Think about the experience they should have, not just as a coach but as someone who is responsible for the safety of children and young people.

### 2 DO THE BACKGROUND CHECKS

Working with Children Checks (WWCC), or State/Territory equivalent, and National Police Check.

Any adult in a paid or volunteer role in your club, league or association should have a WWCC and have it linked to your club, league, association. It is an important part of creating a culture of safety.

This includes:

- committee members
- coaches and managers (including seniors)
- club medical support (physios, trainers etc)
- position holders (junior coordinators, officials, volunteers)
- any supervising adult on overnight trips.

Clubs, leagues and associations should sight the Working with Children Check card, or state/territory equivalent, and keep a record of who has them.

There are some situations where adults may be exempt from holding a WWCC under state/territory legislation e.g. Police Officer or Teacher. You should still ask them to get one, if they can. This is a different role and we shouldn't make assumptions of people based on their profession.

Regularly run the identification details through the appropriate state/territory checking system. Quarterly is a good idea, but annually as a minimum.

It is best practice for clubs to conduct police checks on those in their club that have regular contact with children and young people ie. Coaches, assistant coaches, and team managers.

## REFERENCE CHECKS

Reference checks can be done formally or informally.

Clubs, leagues and associations should ask potential applicants for a referee and the recruiting officer should ask the referee "do you have any reason to be concerned about the applicant having contact with a child or young person?"



**Remember - If a child or young person is harmed, you want to know you did what you could to make sure that person was safe. You can't control people's actions, but you can control your processes.**

### 3 ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Interviews are likely to be informal, and that is ok, it is still important to ask key safety related questions and to gauge the responses to determine if the applicant can demonstrate appropriate behaviour and motivation for working with children and young people.

What if I don't like what I am seeing or hearing? Trust your gut - seek a second opinion if you need to.

### 4 ENSURE THEY UNDERSTAND WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM

The Safe Footy Guidelines provide clear guidance around what is expected of adults in football when interacting with children and young people. This includes coaches and volunteers in direct roles, as well as any adult who may be supervising children and young people on overnight trips.

### 5 BE PICKY, AND NOT AFRAID TO SAY NO

If something doesn't feel right, things aren't lining up or you don't have the required checks for someone, say no. Go with your gut or seek advice or support from your state or national body. It is acknowledged that recruiting and retaining volunteers is difficult, particularly in small regional communities, however, it is your responsibility to choose safe and appropriate people. If you skip processes, turn a blind eye to red flags or intentionally ignore your gut for convenience, you can be held responsible for any harm or abuse that may occur to a child by that person.

Just follow the steps, do the checks and seek support if you need it.