



Anti-Bullying Policy

PURPOSE

Castlemaine Football Netball Club (CFNC) is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the CFNC
- make clear that no form of bullying at CFNC will be tolerated
- ask that everyone in our club be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to your coach, team manager or a committee member
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to players who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including targets, bystanders and players engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at CFNC.

When responding to bullying behaviour, CFNC aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the players involved.

CFNC acknowledges that we owe a duty of care to players to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

SCOPE

This policy addresses how CFNC aims to address and respond to bullying behaviour amongst players. CFNC recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate player behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our club. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with the Bendigo Junior Football League (BJFL) Code of Behaviour and other Bendigo Football Netball League, Central Victoria Football League, AFL, and club policies. The BJFL Code of Behaviour will be used to address unacceptable behaviour of parents/carers, officials and coaches in relation to our junior teams (U18 Girls and U16 Boys footballers and below).



POLICY

Definition - Bullying

The Australian Sports Commission defines bullying as follows:

Bullying is deliberately hurting a specific person either physically, verbally, psychologically or socially. It involves a power imbalance where one person has power or strength (e.g. physical, mental, social or financial) over another.

It can be carried out by one person or several people who are either actively or passively involved. Bullying can be a 'one-off' incident, but usually involves repeated actions or incidences.

It can occur everywhere: at home, school, work, playgrounds, while participating in sport, when using public transport or walking to or from home. An individual may bully their victim face to face or use technology such as a mobile phone or computer.

<https://www.aascf.com.au/files/Australian-Sports-Commission-Factsheet-Bullying.pdf>

Bullying has three main features:

- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repeated, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

Bullying can be:

1. *direct* physical bullying - e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. *direct* verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. *indirect* bullying – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyberbullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

Definitions - Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours

Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Players who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to their coach, team manager or a member of the committee.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Single-episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at CFNC and may have serious consequences for players engaging in this behaviour.



Harassment is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment.

Incident Response

Reporting alleged bullying behaviour

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

Players who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to their coach, team manager or member of the committee as soon as possible.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by players and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

When a coach, team manager or committee member is notified of alleged bullying behaviour, they are required to:

1. record the details of the allegations and
2. inform the President or relevant club divisional head e.g. President Junior Football.

Procedure for investigating allegations of bullying behaviour

All communications with the President or club divisional head in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the players involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform the club about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

The following steps will be taken to investigate allegations of bullying:

1. Reconciliation by getting the parties together. It may be that a genuine apology solves the problem.
2. If this fails/not appropriate a small panel (President or divisional head, a member of the committee and the team coach) will meet with the parent and child alleging bullying to get details of the allegation. Minutes will be taken for clarity, which should be agreed by all as a true account.
3. The same three persons will meet with the alleged bully and parent/s and put the incident raised to them to answer and give their view of the allegation. Minutes will be taken again and agreed.
4. If bullying has in the panel's view taken place, the panel will consider an appropriate response.



Responses to bullying behaviours

When the President or divisional head has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the players involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected players in consultation with the team manager and coach.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, CFNC will consider:

- the age and maturity of the players involved
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the target player
- whether the player/s engaging in bullying behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the players engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

All or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours may be implemented:

- Offer counselling support to the target player or players.
- Offer counselling support to the players engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Offer counselling support to affected players, including witnesses and/or friends of the target player.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the players involved to help to encourage players to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all players are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Prepare a Safety Plan restricting contact between target and players engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Monitor the behaviour of the players involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the players engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include suspension for a specified number of games, being prohibited from attending training or, as a last resort, be asked to leave the club.

CFNC understand the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of players who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Where appropriate, the club will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

The President or relevant divisional head is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.



COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our club members in the following ways:

- Available publicly on the CFNC website
- Through posts on Team App
- Included in staff committee induction processes
- Included in our Policy Handbook (under development)
- Discussed at committee meetings as required
- Discussed at parent information sessions as required

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the BJFL Code of Behaviour and the CFNC Policy Handbook (under development).

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every 2/3 years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research relating to bullying, to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with players and parents/carers
- end of season feedback surveys

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with the committee.

Policy Created: **February 2022**

Next Scheduled Policy Review: **February 2024**