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**Macarthur RAMS FC**

**Football Club**

**Member Protection Policy**

**2023**

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**MEMBER PROTECTION POLICY**

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**1. Introduction**

The Macarthur Rams Football Club promotes respectful and positive behaviour and

values and is committed to providing a safe environment for its players, coaches, parents,

spectators and volunteers. The vision of the club is for a community where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, can contribute fully and have equal opportunity to benefit from, excel at and fulfil their potential through football.

**2. Purpose of Our Policy**

The main objective of the Macarthur Rams Football Club Member Protection Policy is to

maintain responsible behaviour and the making of informed decisions by members and other

participants in this club. It outlines our commitment to a person’s right to be treated with respect

and dignity, and to be safe and protected from discrimination, harassment, and abuse. Our policy

informs everyone involved in our club of his or her legal and ethical rights and responsibilities and

the standards of behaviour that are expected of them. It also covers the care and protection of

minors participating in our club’s activities.

**3. Who Our Policy Applies To**

This policy applies to everyone involved in the activities of our club whether they are in a paid or

unpaid/voluntary capacity and including:

• club committee members, administrators, and other club officials.

• coaches and assistant coaches and other personnel participating in events and activities,

including games and training sessions.

• support personnel, including team managers, physiotherapists, sport trainers and others.

• referees, umpires, and other officials.

• athletes.

• members, including any life members.

• parents.

• spectators; and

• volunteers

**4. Extent of Our Policy**

Our policy covers all matters directly and indirectly related to The Macarthur RAMS Football Club and its activities. In particular, the policy governs unfair selection decisions and actions, breaches of our code of behaviour and behaviour that occurs at games, training sessions, in the change rooms, at social events organised or sanctioned by the club (or by Football NSW), and on away and overnight trips. It also covers private behaviour where that behaviour brings our club or sport into disrepute or there is suspicion of harm towards a child or young person.

**5. Club Responsibilities**

We will:

* adopt, implement, and comply with this policy.
* ensure that this policy is enforceable.
* publish, distribute, and promote this policy and the consequences of any breaches of this

policy.

* Always promote and model appropriate standards of behaviour.
* deal with any complaints made under this policy in an appropriate manner.
* deal with any breaches of this policy in an appropriate manner.
* recognise and enforce any penalty imposed under this policy.
* ensure that a copy of this policy is available or accessible to all people and organisations to

whom this policy applies.

* review this policy every 12-18 months; and
* seek advice from and refer serious issues to Football NSW or the relevant authorities.

Serious issues include unlawful behaviour that involves or could lead to significant harm and

includes criminal behaviour (e.g., physical assault, sexual assault, child abuse) and any other.

issues that our state or national bodies request to be referred to them.

**6. Individual Responsibilities**

Everyone associated with our club must:

• make themselves aware of the contents of this policy.

• comply with all relevant provisions of this policy, including the standards of behaviour outlined

in this policy.

• consent to the screening requirements set out in this policy and Working with Children

Checks if the person holds or acts in a role that involves regular unsupervised contact with a

child or young person under the age of 18, or where otherwise required by law.

• treat other people with respect.

• always place the safety and welfare of children above other considerations.

• be responsible and accountable for their behaviour; and

• follow the guidelines outlined in this policy if they wish to make a complaint or report a

concern about possible child abuse, discrimination, harassment, bullying or other

inappropriate behaviour; and

• comply with any decisions and/or disciplinary measures imposed under this policy.

**7. Protection of Children**

**7.1 Child Protection**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children

and young people who participate in our clubs’ activities or use our services. We support the

rights of the child and will always act to ensure that a child safe environment is maintained.

We also support the rights and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and encourage their active

participation in building and maintaining a secure and safe environment for all participants.

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club acknowledges the valuable contribution made by our staff, members and volunteers and we encourage their active participating in providing a safe, fair, and inclusive environment for all participants.

**7.1.1: Identifying and Analysing Risks of Harm**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club will develop and implement a risk management

strategy, which includes a review of our existing child protection practices, to determine how

child-safe our organisation is and to identify any additional steps we can take to minimise and

prevent the risk of harm to children because of the action of an employee, volunteer or another

person.

**7.1.2: Codes of Conduct for Players and Parents**

We will develop and promote a code of conduct that specifies standards of conduct and care

we expect of adults when they interact with our players and visiting team players. We will also

implement a code of conduct to promote appropriate behaviour between children.

The codes will clearly describe ethical behaviour and unacceptable behaviour and are found in

the RAMS Player and Parent Code of Conduct which is located on our website and must be

signed by players and parents.

**7.1.3: Choosing Suitable Employees and Volunteers**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club will ensure that the organisation takes all

reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work

with children. This may be achieved using a range of screening measures. Such measures will aim

to minimise the likelihood of engaging (or retaining) people who are unsuitable to work with

children.

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club will ensure that Working with Children Checks are

conducted for employees and volunteers working with children. If a criminal history report is

obtained as part of the screening process, the Macarthur RAMS Football Club will

ensure that the criminal history information is dealt with confidentially and in accordance with

relevant legal requirements.

**7.1.4: Support, Train, Supervise and Enhance Performance**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club will ensure that all our employees and volunteers

who work with children have ongoing supervision, support, and training. Our goal is to develop

their skills and capacity and to enhance their performance so we can maintain a child-safe

environment in our club.

**7.1.5: Report and Respond Appropriately to Suspected Abuse and Neglect**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club will ensure that employees and volunteers are

able to identify and respond appropriately to children at risk of harm and that they are aware of

their responsibilities under state laws to make a report if they suspect on reasonable ground

that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected.

In addition to any legal obligations, if any person believes that another person or organisation

bound by this policy is acting inappropriately towards a child or is in breach of this policy, they

may make an internal complaint.

***Please refer to our grievance procedure in section 10 of this policy.***

Any person who believes a child is in immediate danger or in a life-threatening situation,

should contact the police immediately.

**7.2 Supervision**

Children under the age of 18 must be always supervised by a responsible adult. We

endeavour to always provide an appropriate level of supervision and will ensure that there is

a female supervisor in the change room on game days. If a member finds a child under the age

of 18 is unsupervised, they should assume responsibility for the child’s safety until the child’s

parent/guardian or supervisor is located.

For reasons of courtesy and safety, parents must collect their children on time. If it appears a

member or coach will be left alone with just one child at the end of any club activity, they will ask

another member to stay until the child is collected.

**7.3 Transportation**

Parents and or guardians are responsible for organising the transportation of their children to and

from club activities (e.g., training and games). Where we make arrangements for the

transportation of children (e.g., for away matches or overnight trips), we will conduct a risk

assessment that includes ensuring vehicles are adequately insured, the driver has a current and

appropriate licence for the vehicle being used and the appropriate safety measures are in place

(e.g. fitted working seatbelts).

No minors to make unsupervised or unsanctioned trips with coaches.

**7.4 Taking Images of Children**

Images of children can be used inappropriately or illegally. We require that members, wherever

possible, obtain permission from a child’s parent or guardian before taking an image of a child

that is not their own.

To respect people’s privacy, we do not allow smart phones, videos, and cameras to be used inside

changing areas, showers, and toilets which we control or are used in connection with our club.

When using a photo of a child, we will not name or identify the child or publish personal

information, such as school, residential address, email address or telephone number, without the

consent of the child’s parent or guardian.

Any third-party photographers will be verified by the club.

**7.5 Change Room Guidelines**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club work diligently to protect players from all forms of bullying, harassment and/or abuse and will provide supervision for all minor change rooms before and after all games.

In addition:

• Parents and staff of opposite gender (e.g., physio, coach) must not be present in the change rooms whilst players are getting dressed or showering.

• If a player is uncomfortable changing or showering in public no pressure should be placed on them to do so and they can do this at home.

• No photos or filming is allowed in the change room particularly when players are getting dressed. This includes smart phones, cameras, video cameras, etc.

• All staff and volunteers should not be alone with a player in the change room.

• Mobile phone use should be limited to emergencies.

**7.6 Concussion and Return to Play Following Injury/Illness Guidelines**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club has adopted the Football Australia Concussion Guidelines regarding the management of concussions for our players. The Guidelines are of a general nature only. Individual treatment will depend on the facts and circumstances specific to each individual case. The latest version of these Guidelines can be found on our website or the Football Australia

website.

Any athlete with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from play, and should not be returned to activity until they are assessed by a qualified medical practitioner. Only qualified medical practitioners should diagnose whether a concussion has occurred or provide medical advice (clearance) as to whether the player can return to play.

Football is a contact sport where injuries can occur. In the circumstance when a player sustains an injury in a training session or a game the club physiotherapist will make an assessment on the capacity of the player to continue their participation in the training session or game.

The physiotherapist will communicate their assessment to coaching staff (and parent if practicable) to ensure the player’s welfare. An injury report form will be completed by the club physiotherapist to document all injuries for all players that have been assessed. All concussions and injuries regardless of when the injury occurred should be reported to The Macarthur RAMS Football club physiotherapist.

A medical clearance from a doctor or physiotherapist is required for any illness or injury in which a player has missed school, training or games for longer than 7 days and should be submitted to the team manager who will communicate to the coach and physiotherapist.

**7.7 Social Media**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club acknowledges the enormous value of social networking websites, such as Facebook and Instagram, to promote our sport and celebrate our achievements.

As a member of our club social media postings, blogs, status updates and tweets:

• Must not be offensive, misleading, false or injure the reputation of a teammate, coach, or person associated with the Macarthur RAMS Football Club

• Should respect and maintain the privacy of other members

• Should promote sport in a positive way

• Should not post pictures of players that without their permission.

**7.8 Playing Above Age Group**

In general, all players at Macarthur RAMS Football Club are required to play in their

mandated age group.

The following reasons are provided for this policy decision:

• Football Australia provides age level rules to ensure that all aspects of a child's

development and enjoyment of football are taken into consideration. This includes ability,

physical capability and emotional development.

• The Macarthur RAMS philosophy is that children should develop in their mandated age levels and enjoy the progress they make through our football program.

• By enabling a player to play in an older age level team, a position in this age level is filled which therefore prevents a player of the right age from participating in this team.

Players may request in writing to the Macarthur RAMS Football Club Committee to play up in an older age group. All players requesting must go through the club’s grading process and be approved in writing by both the Committee and the club’s Head Of Football. The grading process is based on the players technical ability, soccer IQ, physical capabilities, and emotional maturity. Selection will also depend on whether or not the older age group requires players who play specific positions (e.g., goalkeeper, striker). Every case is decided on an individual basis.

Players may also be asked by the club to play up an age group. The reasons for the club to

offer positions in another age group:

• A player may have exceptional ability for their age group and be requested to play a specific position.

• The club may have too many players in the age group of the player but have vacancies within the age group above.

Football is a contact sport and there is an equal if not greater risk of injury when a player plays

in an age group which is greater than the player’s current age group including but not limited to

participation against adults in the Senior competition. A Consent Form must be completed by a

Parent or Guardian of any player playing in a Football NSW competition above their own true

age group whether on a casual or permanent basis.

**8. Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying**

Our club is committed to providing an environment in which all people are treated fairly and equitably and that is, as far as practicable, free from all forms of discrimination, harassment and bullying.

We recognise that people may not be able to enjoy themselves or perform at their best if they are

treated unfairly, discriminated against, harassed, or bullied.

**8.1 Discrimination**

Unlawful discrimination involves the less favourable treatment of a person on the basis of one or

more of the personal characteristics protected by State or Federal anti-discrimination laws.

Discrimination includes both direct and indirect discrimination:

• Direct discrimination occurs if a person treats, or proposes to treat, a person with a

protected personal characteristic unfavourably because of that personal characteristic.

• Indirect discrimination occurs if a person imposes, or proposes to impose, a requirement,

condition or practice that will disadvantage a person with a protected personal characteristic and that requirement, condition or practice is not reasonable.

For the purpose of determining discrimination, the offender’s awareness, and motive are irrelevant.

**8.2 Bullying and Harassment**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club is committed to providing an environment that is free from bullying and harassment. We understand that bullying has the potential to result in significant

negative consequences for an individual’s health and wellbeing, and we regard bullying in all forms as unacceptable at our club.

Bullying is characterised by repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed at a person, or group of

persons, that creates a risk to health and safety. Bullying behaviour is one that victimises,

humiliates, undermines, threatens, degrades, offends, or intimidates a person. Bullying behaviour

can include actions of individuals or a group.

Bullying includes cyber-bulling which occurs through the use of technology. We will not tolerate

abusive, discriminatory, intimidating, or offensive statements being made online about any of our

players, coaches, or volunteers.

Harassment is any unwelcome conduct, verbal or physical, that intimidates, offends or humiliates

another person. If any person believes they are being, or have been, bullied or harassed by

another person or organisation bound by this policy, he or she may make a complaint.

***(Refer to Item 10 of this policy.)***

**9. Inclusive practices**

Our club is welcoming, and we will seek to include members from all areas of our community.

The following are examples of some of our inclusive practices.

**9.1 People with a disability**

The Macarthur Rams Football Club will not discriminate against any person because they have a disability. Where it is reasonable, we will make necessary adjustments to enable participation.

**9.2 People from diverse cultures**

We will treat equally, support, respect, and encourage people from diverse cultures and religions to participate in our club and where possible we will try to accommodate requests for flexibility (e.g. modifications to uniforms)

**9.3 Sexual & Gender Identity**

All people, regardless of their sexuality or gender identity, are welcome at our club. We strive to

provide a safe environment and will not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment because of a person’s sexuality or gender identity.

**9.4 Race Equality**

No one is to be oppressed or discriminated against because of physical traits such as skin colour, hair texture, facial features, and eye formation.

**9.5 Pregnancy**

The Macarthur RAMS Football Club respects and supports the rights of pregnant players who, in consultation with medical professionals, elect to continue playing football provided that at all times, the health and wellbeing of the player and their unborn child is paramount.

Football is a contact sport and carries an inherent risk of accident and injury, both to the participant and the unborn child. Accordingly, participation in football during pregnancy is at the risk of the participant.

All players as soon as possible after becoming aware that they are pregnant, and on an ongoing

basis throughout their pregnancy, will obtain and disclose to the club’s Physiotherapist regular

medical advice regarding the risks associated with participating in, training, and playing football

while pregnant and whether their training and conditioning program should be reviewed or modified.

No information, other than whether the player is fit to play and train, will be disclosed to the club

by the club’s Physiotherapist, during the player’s first trimester without the player’s express

consent. After the first trimester, the club’s Physiotherapist may provide all relevant information to

the coach and Member Protection Information Officer, on a ‘need to know’ basis as required. This

information will otherwise be kept confidential unless the express consent of the player is provided.

Whilst the decision as to whether or not to participate rests solely with the relevant participant:

1. The participant's own health and the health of the unborn child are of paramount importance.

2. The Macarthur RAMS Football Club strongly recommends that the player:

**a.** consults with their own appropriately qualified medical practitioner to inform them, on

a voluntary basis, of their pregnancy and to obtain individual and specific professional medical advice before participating in football (both during and following pregnancy), in particular regarding the risks of such participation.

**b.** acts in accordance with the medical advice received; and

**c.** attends regular check-ups with their medical practitioner throughout and following

their pregnancy regarding their participation in football adjusting participation accordingly.

3. The participant will be responsible for ensuring she has appropriate insurance cover for participating in football during and following pregnancy; and

4. By participating when pregnant, the participant will be deemed to have consented to any risks

 (including any risk of injury to the participant and/or the unborn child) that may arise from such

 participation. Aside from liability for death or personal injury resulting from negligence, the

 participant will also be deemed to have waived all claims, causes and rights of action against the Macarthur RAMS Football Club.

**10. Responding to Complaints and Grievances**

**10.1 Complaints/Grievances**

Our club takes all complaints about on and off-field behaviour seriously. Our club will handle

complaints based on the principles of procedural fairness, and ensure:

• all complaints will be taken seriously.

• the person with allegations made against them will be given full details of what is being alleged

against them and have the opportunity to respond to those allegations.

• irrelevant matters will not be taken into account.

• decisions will be unbiased; and

• any penalties imposed will be reasonable.

All complaints will be investigated thoroughly. Once the investigation is complete, we will then

communicate the outcome or resolution to all involved. More serious complaints may be

escalated to Football NSW.

If the complaint relates to suspected child abuse, sexual assault, or other criminal activity, then our

club may need to report the behaviour to the police and/or relevant government authority.

**10.2 Complaint Handling Process**

When a complaint is received by our club, the person receiving the complaint (e.g., President or

Member Protection Information Officer) will:

• listen carefully and ask questions to understand the nature and extent of the concern.

• ask the complainant how they would like their concern to be resolved and if they need any support.

• explain the different options available to help resolve the complainant’s concern.

• inform the relevant government authorities and/or police, if required by law to do so; and

• where possible and appropriate, maintain confidentiality but not necessarily anonymity.

Once the complainant decides on their preferred option for resolution, the club will assist, where

appropriate and necessary, with the resolution process. This may involve:

• supporting the person complaining to talk to the person being complained about.

• bringing all the people involved in the complaint together to talk objectively through the

problem (this could include external mediation)

• gathering more information (e.g., from other people that may have seen the behaviour)

• seeking advice from our district, regional, state and/or national body or from an external

agency (e.g., State Department of Sport or anti-discrimination agency)

• referring the complaint to Football NSW and/or

• referring the complainant to an external agency such as a community mediation centre, police

or anti-discrimination agency.

In situations where a complaint is referred to Football NSW and/or an investigation is conducted,

the club will:

• co-operate fully with the investigation.

• where applicable, ensure the complainant is not placed in an unsupervised situation with the

respondent(s); and

• act on Football NSW’s recommendations.

At any stage of the process, a person can seek advice from an anti-discrimination commission or

other external agency and, if the matter is within their jurisdiction, may lodge a complaint with the

anti-discrimination commission or another external agency.

If these measures do not result in a suitable resolution or there is dissatisfaction with the handling

of the complaint, the matter can be referred to another nominated independent person at the club.

**10.3 Disciplinary Sanctions**

Our club may take disciplinary action against anyone found to have breached our policy or made

false and malicious allegations. Any disciplinary measure imposed under our policy must:

• be applied consistent with any contractual and employment rules and requirements.

• be fair and reasonable.

• be based on the evidence and information presented and the seriousness of the breach; and

• be determined by our constituent documents, by Laws and the rules of the game.

 Possible sanctions that may be taken include:

• a direction that the individual make verbal and/or written apology.

• counselling of the individual to address behaviour.

• suspension or termination of membership, participation or engagement in a role or activity.

• de-registration of accreditation for a period of time or permanently.

• a fine; or

• any other form of discipline that our club considers reasonable and appropriate.

**10.4 Appeals**

The complainant or respondent may be entitled to lodge an appeal against a decision made in

relation to a complaint to Football NSW depending on the nature of the complaint.

Please refer to Football Australia Member Protection Policy on the Football Australia website.