NATIONAL COMMUNITY FOOTBALL POLICY HANDBOOK

NOVEMBER 2024

TOYOTA AFL CLUBHELP

PURPOSE

The National Community Football Policy Handbook aims to:

A. make it easier for leagues, clubs, volunteers and other stakeholders to administer Australian Football at the State and community level;

B. provide a framework for key organisational requirements in relation to Australian Football at the State and community level;

C. address appropriate standards of behaviour and the prevention of discrimination and harassment in Australian Football at the State and community level; and

D. encourage that the game of Australian Football is played in a fair and good-spirited manner.

Table of Contents

PART A – GENERAL **7**

1. Definitions and Interpretation **7**

1.1 Definitions 7
1.2 Interpretation 13
1.3 Amendment 13
1.4 General 14

2. Application **14**

2.1 Laws of the Game 14
2.2 Governing body 14
2.3 Responsibility of Controlling Body 14
2.4 AFL national policies, regulations and guidelines superseded 14

PART B – ELIGIBILITY & REGISTRATION **16**

3. Player registration, transfers and permits **16**

3.1 Player eligibility 16
3.2 Player Registration 18
3.3 Transfer Request 18
3.4 Transfer approval 19
3.5 Transfer refusal 20
3.6 Transfer fee 22
3.7 Player Permits 22
3.8 Underage Players 23
3.9 Permit Committee 24
3.10 False or misleading information 24
3.11 General provisions 25

4. Age dispensation **26**

4.1 Application process 26
4.2 Relevant factors in assessing application 27
4.3 Effect of approved application 27
4.4 Appeal 27

5. Player declaration **28**

6. Coach and Umpire eligibility and accreditation **29**

6.1 General 29
6.2 Eligibility and Accreditation requirements 29
6.3 Accreditation determination 32
6.4 Review of determination regarding Accreditation 32
6.5 Accreditation status 33
6.6 Coach and Umpire disclosure requirements 34

7. Deregistration **34**

7.1 Disciplinary History 34
7.2 Criteria for Deregistration – Reportable Offences 35
7.3 Criteria for Deregistration – serious or cumulative sanctions 35
7.4 Criteria for Deregistration – Serious Criminal Offence by Coach or Umpire 36

7.5 Deregistration – general provisions 36
7.6 Notice of Deregistration 37
7.7 Application for re-registration 38

8. Gender diversity (participation of transgender and non-binary people) 40

PART C – MEMBER PROTECTION & INTEGRITY 41

9. Member protection 41

9.1 Responsibility of a Person 41
9.2 General code of conduct 42
9.3 Coach code of conduct 42
9.4 Additional responsibilities of a Club 43

10. Vilification and discrimination (Peek Rule) 43

10.1 Prohibited conduct 43
10.2 AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel 43
10.3 Preliminary conciliation process 44
10.4 Agreed outcomes at conciliation 45
10.5 Confidentiality and public statement 46
10.6 No conciliation outcome 46

11. Safeguarding Children and Young People 47

11.1 AFL commitment to safeguarding Children and Young People 47
11.2 Controlling Body commitment to safeguarding Children and Young People 47
11.3 Behavioural standards 48
11.4 Prohibited conduct 49
11.5 Reporting procedures 50

12. Social Media 50

12.1 AFL commitment to online safety 50
12.2 AFL statement on Social Media 50
12.3 Behavioural standards on Social Media 51
12.4 Prohibited conduct on Social Media 51
12.5 Official Social Media engagement 51

13. Gambling and match fixing 52

13.1 Corrupt conduct 52
13.2 No gambling 52
13.3 Insider information 52
13.4 Performance on merits 53
13.5 Notification 53

14. Anti-doping 53

PART D – HEALTH & SAFETY 54

15. Injury management 54

15.1 AFL statement on injury management 54
15.2 Minimum requirements for matches and training 54
15.3 Appropriate Minimum Qualifications 55
15.4 Registration of Sports Trainers or First Aid Providers 56

16. Protective equipment 56

16.1 Laws of the Game 56

16.2 Categories of Protective Equipment 56
16.3 Using Protective Equipment 56
16.4 Prohibited protective equipment 57
16.5 Mouthguards 57
16.6 Spectacles 57

17. Extreme weather 58

17.1 AFL statement on extreme weather 58
17.2 Extreme heat 58
17.3 Lightning 59

18. Sun / UV protection 62

18.1 AFL statement on sun / UV protection 62
18.2 Club and Person responsibility 62

19. Concussion 63

20. Pregnant players 63

20.1 AFL statement on pregnant players 63
20.2 Club and Player responsibility 63

21. Active bleeding 64

PART E – DISCIPLINARY 65

22. Reportable Offences 65

22.1 Making a report 65
22.2 Investigating an incident 66
22.3 Notice of Charge 67
22.4 Early Guilty Plea – Reportable Offence 68
22.5 Recording of Reportable Offences 69

23. Policy Breaches 69

23.1 Making a complaint 69
23.2 Assessing and investigating a complaint 70
23.3 Decision following investigation 73
23.4 Issuing or withdrawing Notice of Breach 74
23.5 Early Guilty Plea – Policy Breach 75
23.6 Recording of Policy Breaches 76

24. Disciplinary Officer 76

25. Tribunal 76

25.1 Function 76
25.2 Establishment 77
25.3 Procedure and evidence 77
25.4 Outcomes 84
25.5 Suspension of Person 85
25.6 Criticism of decision 87

26. Appeal Board 87

26.1 General 87
26.2 Establishment 89
26.3 Procedure and Evidence 90
26.4 Outcomes 94

APPENDIX 1 – Reportable Offences **97**
1. Application 97
2. Classifiable Offences 97
3. Determining the grading of Classifiable Offences 99
4. Direct Tribunal Offences 103
5. Low-level Offences 104
6. Auditory Offences 106
7. Other factors regarding sanctions 108
8. Other factors regarding certain Reportable Offences 109

APPENDIX 2 – Example Reportable Offences **117**

APPENDIX 3 – Serious Criminal Offences **120**

APPENDIX 4 – Non-exhaustive list of examples of disabilities **121**

APPENDIX 5 – Categories of Protective Equipment **122**

APPENDIX 6 – AFL forms and templates **125**

APPENDIX 7 – Revision History **127**

PART A – GENERAL

1. Definitions and Interpretation

1.1 Definitions

In this Policy Handbook:

Accreditation (or **Accredited**) means:

(a) in respect of a Coach, registration and accreditation (including re-accreditation) of a Person via the Coach Learning Platform and otherwise in accordance with Section 6; and

(b) in respect of an Umpire, registration and/or accreditation (including re-accreditation) of a Person via the Umpire Learning Platform and otherwise in accordance with Section 6.

Australian Football has the meaning given to that term in the Laws of the Game.

AFL means Australian Football League (ACN 004 155 211).

AFL Affiliate means any league, association or body responsible for the organisation and conduct of Matches which is affiliated to the AFL, including a State Football Body.

AFL Club means a Club competing in an AFL/AFLW Competition.

AFL National Dispensation Application Form means an AFL National Dispensation Application Form in the form set out in Appendix 6 or such other form prescribed by the Controlling Body from time to time.

AFL NSW/ACT means AFL (NSW/ACT) Commission Ltd (ACN 086 839 385).

AFL NT means AFL Northern Territory Limited (ACN 097 620 525).

AFL Queensland means AFL Queensland Limited (ACN 090 629 342).

AFL Tasmania means Football Tasmania Limited (ACN 085 213 350).

AFL Victoria means Australian Football League (Victoria) Limited (ACN 147 664 579).

AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel means the panel established by the AFL in accordance with Section 10.2 from time to time.

AFL/AFLW Competition means the AFL's elite level national men's and women's Competitions (as the context dictates).

AFL/AFLW Listed Player means a Player listed with an AFL Club on their primary or rookie list.

Anti-Doping Code means the AFL Anti-Doping Code adopted by the AFL which regulates the use and administration of drugs by Players competing in the Competitions conducted by a Controlling Body or such other code or policy adopted by a Controlling Body which has been approved by the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority.

Appeal Board means an appeal board established by a Controlling Body in accordance with Section 26.2.

Appendix means an appendix to this Policy Handbook.

Appellant means an appellant under Section 26.1(b) and, where applicable, includes an Appellant's representative.

Auditory Offence means a Reportable Offence specified in Table 7 of Appendix 1 which may be graded by a Controlling Body to determine an appropriate base sanction for that Reportable Offence.

Certificate means a written statement from a physician or other medically qualified health care provider which attests to the result of a medical examination of a patient and can serve as evidence of a health condition including a Disability.

Child Abuse includes all forms of physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, grooming, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) exploitation, harassing behaviour, such as bullying or other exploitation of a Child or Young Person and includes any actions that results in actual or potential Harm to a Child or Young Person. Child abuse can be a single incident, but usually takes place over time.

Children and Young People means a person under the age of eighteen years. Child or Young Person shall mean a single person falling within the definition of Children and Young People.

Classifiable Offence means a Reportable Offence specified in Table 1 of Appendix 1, which may be graded by a Controlling Body to determine an appropriate base sanction for that Reportable Offence.

Club means a club fielding a team in a Competition, including a Destination Club or Source Club.

Club Officer means a president, chairperson, vice president, vice chairperson, general manager, chief executive officer, football manager, Coach, board or committee member of a Club or any other servant or agent, whether formally appointed or not, who makes or participates in the decision making that affects the whole, or a substantial part, of the business or operations of a Club.

Coach means a senior coach, reserves coach, assistant coach, volunteer coach or any other Person holding, or seeking to hold, coaching responsibilities at a Club or Controlling Body who is Accredited (or required to be Accredited) in accordance with Section 4.

Coach Learning Platform means the AFL's online coaching platform which incorporates the Accreditation portal for Coaches and a library of online training and other resources available to all Coaches.

Competition means any Australian Football competition conducted by a Controlling Body, including AFL/AFLW Competitions and any Tier 1 Competition or Tier 2 Competition.

Competition Management Platform means PlayHQ.

Conduct means a Person's conduct in relation to a Reportable Offence, which will be assessed in accordance with Appendix 1 and may be graded as "Intentional" or "Careless"

for a Classifiable Offence or “Threatening”, “High-level Abusive, Obscene or Insulting” or “Low-level Abusive, Obscene or Insulting” for an Auditory Offence.

Contact means the level of contact in relation to a Reportable Offence, which will be assessed in accordance with Appendix 1 and may be graded as “High/Groin/Chest” or “Body”.

Contingency means any contingency related to or in any way connected with a Match.

Contravening Person has the meaning given to that term in Section 10.3(a)(i).

Controlling Body means:

(a) the AFL;

(b) an AFL Affiliate;

(c) any league, association or body responsible for the organisation and conduct of Matches of Australian Football which is affiliated to an AFL Affiliate;

(d) any league, association or body responsible for the organisation and conduct of Matches of Australian Football, which has determined to adopt and enforce this Policy Handbook or any part of this Policy Handbook.

Declared Player means a Player who has entered into a current, valid Standard Player Declaration with a Club.

Deregistration means removal of the registration or Accreditation of a Player or Football Official (**Deregistered** has the same meaning).

Deregistration Warning means the deregistration warning template set out in Appendix 6.

Destination Club means the Club to which a Player is Transferring.

Destination Controlling Body means the Controlling Body to which a Player is Transferring (or Football Official is transferring).

Direct Tribunal Offence means a Reportable Offence specified in Section 4 of Appendix 1, which is referred directly to the Tribunal for determination without grading.

Disability means a disability as defined in the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* (Cth) or in any similar state-based legislation applicable to a particular Controlling Body including those disabilities listed in Appendix 4.

Disciplinary Officer means a person appointed by a Controlling Body in accordance with Section 24.

Disciplinary History means the recorded history of any charges laid and sanctions imposed for Reportable Offence and Policy Breaches under Part E (Disciplinary) of this Policy Handbook in respect of a Person.

Early Guilty Plea means an early guilty plea submitted by a Person in relation to:

(a) a Reportable Offence in accordance with Section 22.4; or

(b) a Policy Breach in accordance with Section 23.5.

Executive Officer means a chief executive officer or head of a Controlling Body.

Football Official means a Club Officer, Disciplinary Officer, Umpire, Umpire escort or coach, Coach, trainer, team manager, interchange steward, water carrier, timekeeper, scoreboard attendant, runner, employee of a Club or any other Match official.

Game Permit means a permit as defined under Section 3.7(b)(i) (otherwise known as a 'Type 1 permit' and previously known as a 'Match-Day Permit').

Harm means any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a Child's or Young Person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing.

Impact means the impact of Conduct in relation to a Reportable Offence, which will be assessed in accordance with Appendix 1 and may be graded as "Low", "Medium", "High" or "Severe".

Incident Referral Form means an incident referral form in relation to an alleged Reportable Offence in the form set out in Appendix 6 or such other form prescribed by the relevant Controlling Body from time to time.

Interchange Agreement means an agreement entered into between two or more Controlling Bodies allowing Players to participate in Matches between those Controlling Bodies under a Permit.

Junior Football means any Match for an under 18 age group or below.

Laws of the Game means the Laws of Australian Football as administered and controlled by the AFL and set out at https://play.afl/learning-resource/laws-game.

Low-level Offence means a low-level Reportable Offence specified in Clause 5 of Appendix 1, which does not require grading.

Match means any Australian Football match played in a Competition.

Match Review Officer means a Match Review Panel comprising one Person.

Match Review Panel means a match review panel appointed pursuant to Section 22.2(b)(i).

Medical Specialist means a doctor who has completed advanced education and clinical training in a specified area of medicine and includes a Paediatrician, Sports Physician or Controlling Body approved general medical practitioner.

Notice of Appeal means a notice of appeal in relation to an appeal under Section 26.1 in the form set out in Appendix 6 or such other form prescribed by the relevant Controlling Body from time to time.

Notice of Breach means a notice of breach in relation to an alleged Policy Breach in the form set out in Appendix 6 or such other form prescribed by the relevant Controlling Body from time to time.

Notice of Charge means a notice of charge in relation to an alleged Reportable Offence in the form set out in Appendix 6 or such other form prescribed by the relevant Controlling Body from time to time.

Notice of Complaint means a notice of complaint in the form set out in Appendix 6 or such other form prescribed by the Controlling Body from time to time.

Paediatrician means a medical practitioner who specialises in medical care and treatment for children and babies.

Permit means a Season Permit or Game Permit.

Permit Committee means a committee appointed under Section 3.9.

Person means a Club (where applicable), Football Official, Player, Club member, parent or guardian of a Player, spectator of a Match or any other person reasonably connected to Australian Football and within the purview of this Policy Handbook.

Physical Size Considerations means, in respect of a Player:

(a) a body mass index (i.e. weight (in kilograms) divided by height (in metres squared)) below the 5th percentile for that Player's age; or

(b) a height below the 5th percentile for that Player's age,

as measured by an appropriately qualified General Practitioner or Medical Specialist.

Player includes a player registered to play Australian Football for a Club and/or participate in a Competition, including a Declared Player or Underage Player.

PlayHQ means the AFL's online competition management system currently operated by PlayHQ designed to assist Controlling Bodies with the management of their competitions and membership data.

Policy Breach means a breach of any Section of this Policy Handbook (other than a breach constituting a Reportable Offence).

Protective Equipment has the meaning described in Law 9.1 in the Laws of the Game and will be categorised as Class 1 Protective Equipment, Class 2 Protective Equipment or Class 3 Protective Equipment as specified in Appendix 5.

Receiver means the person to whom an Auditory Offence was directed which will be assessed in accordance with Appendix 1 and may be graded as "Umpire" or "Another Person".

Reportable Offence means any reportable offence identified in the Laws of Australian Football, including the reportable offences specified in Appendix 1.

SANFL means South Australian National Football League Inc (ABN 59 518 757 737).

Season Permit means a permit as defined under Section 3.7(b)(ii) (otherwise known as a 'Type 2 permit' and previously known as a 'Local Interchange Permit').

Serious Criminal Offence means criminal offence falling within the scope of the list of offences set out in Appendix 3.

Social Media means digital technology that allows interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks including, but not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, instant messaging (e.g. SMS), LinkedIn, Snapchat, TikTok, WhatsApp, X (formerly known as Twitter) and YouTube.

Source Club means the Club from which a Player is Transferring, being the Club with which the Player is registered.

Source Controlling Body means the Controlling Body from which a Player is Transferring (or Football Official is transferring).

Sports Physician means a medical practitioner who specialises in the treatment of injuries resulting from athletic activities.

Standard Player Declaration means a standard player declaration as set out in Section 5 and:

(a) in the form attached at Appendix 6; or

(b) in such other form as approved for use by a State Football Body or the AFL,

which sets out the details of a Player's arrangement to play for a Club.

State Football Body means each of the following AFL Affiliates:

(a) AFL NSW/ACT;

(b) AFL NT;

(c) AFL Queensland;

(d) AFL Tasmania;

(e) AFL Victoria;

(f) SANFL; and

(g) WAFC.

Tier 1 Club means a Club competing in a Tier 1 Competition.

Tier 1 Competition means each of the following Competitions (male and female, as applicable):

(a) Victorian Football League senior Competitions conducted by AFL Victoria;

(b) Coates League under 18s Competitions conducted by AFL;

(c) SANFL senior, reserves and under 18s Competitions conducted by SANFL; and

(d) West Australian Football League senior, reserves and under 18s Competitions conducted by WAFC.

Tier 2 Club means a Club competing in a Tier 2 Competition.

Tier 2 Competition means any Competition other than a Tier 1 Competition or an AFL/AFLW Competition.

Transfer means the movement of a Player from one Club to another Club in accordance with Section 3 (**Transferring** and **Transferred** have the same meaning).

Transfer Request means a request to Transfer a Player which has been initiated in accordance with Section 3.3(a)(i).

Tribunal means a tribunal established by a Controlling Body in accordance with Section 25.2.

Umpire includes a registered field, boundary, goal or emergency umpire.

Umpire Learning Platform means the AFL's online umpire management platform which incorporates the Accreditation portal for Umpires and a library of online training and other resources available to Umpires.

Underage Player means a Player under eighteen (18) years of age as of 31 December in the year prior to that Player's applicable playing year.

Volume means the loudness and exposure of Conduct in relation to an Auditory Offence, which will be assessed in accordance with Appendix 1 and may be graded as "Low", "Medium" or "Loud".

WAFC means West Australian Football Commission Inc (ABN 51 167 923 136).

1.2 Interpretation

In the interpretation of this Policy Handbook, unless there is something in the subject or context inconsistent therewith:

(a) words importing the singular will be deemed to include the plural and vice versa;

(b) words importing persons will be deemed to include all bodies and associations, incorporated or unincorporated and vice versa;

(c) headings are included for convenience only and will not affect the interpretation of this Policy Handbook;

(d) "including" and similar words are not words of limitation;

(e) a reference to a business day means any day, other than a Saturday or Sunday, that is not a designated public holiday in the relevant location, and if not otherwise specified in the Policy Handbook, a business day ends at 5.00pm in the relevant location;

(f) words, terms and phrases not otherwise defined in this Policy Handbook will be given their ordinary meaning;

(g) *[**Guidance notes**]* throughout the Policy Handbook are for guidance only and not operative terms of the Policy Handbook; and

(h) this Policy Handbook includes this Policy Handbook as amended, varied, supplemented or replaced from time to time and any Appendix, schedule, attachment, annexure or exhibit to this Policy Handbook or that document.

1.3 Amendment

The AFL may from time to time amend this Policy Handbook as it, in its absolute discretion, deems fit.

1.4 General

Any matter of any kind whatsoever not dealt with or provided for in this Handbook may be dealt in such a manner as the AFL determines.

2. Application

2.1 Laws of the Game

The Laws of the Game are adopted as part of this Policy Handbook and its terms are deemed terms of this Policy Handbook.

2.2 Governing body

The AFL is recognised by Sport Australia as the governing body responsible for the management and development of Australian Football in Australia. The AFL recognises the legislative and regulatory mandate of Sport Australia to develop sport and sporting excellence in Australia and to increase participation, including through the provision of funding, in accordance with the *Australian Sports Commission Act 1989* (Cth). Wherever reasonably practicable, the AFL adopts the guidelines, governance, accountability and transparency mechanisms promulgated by Sport Australia.

As part of the AFL's recognition as the governing body responsible for the management and development of Australian Football, the AFL is committed to being accountable at the national level for providing all Persons with technically and ethically sound sport programs, policies and services. This Policy Handbook has been prepared having regard to that commitment and is formally endorsed by the AFL.

2.3 Responsibility of Controlling Body

A Controlling Body must:

(a) adopt, implement and comply with this Policy Handbook;

(b) make such amendments to its constitution, rules, regulations and by-laws as may be necessary to ensure the enforceability of this Policy Handbook;

(c) use best endeavours to make this Policy Handbook available to each Person involved with or related to the Controlling Body and educate such Persons about this Policy Handbook and the consequences for breaches of this Policy Handbook;

(d) promote and model appropriate standards of conduct at all times and in accordance with this Policy Handbook;

(e) if required under this Policy Handbook, promptly deal with any breaches of this Policy Handbook or complaints made under this Policy Handbook;

(f) monitor and adopt updates to this Policy Handbook as notified by the AFL from time to time.

2.4 AFL national policies, regulations and guidelines superseded

(a) This Policy Handbook supersedes the following AFL national policies, regulations and guidelines:

(i) Complaint and Investigation Guidelines dated June 2013;

(ii) Member Protection Policy dated June 2013;

(iii) National Age Dispensation Policy dated October 2018;

(iv) National Child Protection Policy dated March 2015;

(v) National Extreme Weather Policy dated June 2013;

(vi) National Gambling Policy dated June 2013;

(vii) National Coaching Accreditation Policy dated November 2018;

(viii) National Player and Official Deregistration Policy dated July 2021;

(ix) National Player Registration and Transfer Regulations dated March 2022;

(x) National Vilification & Discrimination Policy dated February 2013;

(xi) National Sexuality & Pregnancy Guidelines dated February 2013;

(xii) National Social Media Engagement Policy dated June 2013;

(xiii) National Injury Management Policy dated April 2019;

(xiv) State and Territory Disciplinary Committee Guidelines dated 2021; and

(xv) State and Territory Tribunal Guidelines dated 2021,

(**Superseded Policies, Regulations and Guidelines**).

(b) The Superseded Policies, Regulations and Guidelines have no further force or effect.

(c) All AFL issued policies, regulations and guidelines other than the Superseded Policies, Regulations and Guidelines in effect at the date of this Policy Handbook, some of which are incorporated by reference in this Policy handbook, remain in full force and effect unless determined otherwise by the AFL.

PART B – ELIGIBILITY & REGISTRATION

What is the purpose of Part B?

- This Part sets out how someone can get involved in Australian Football as a Player, Coach or Umpire.

- Section 3 governs the registration and transfer of Players within Australian Football and aims to ensure the movement of Players is fair, transparent and consistent.

- Section 4 provides for the dispensation of a Player to participate in a Competition below their applicable age group where a disability and/or physical size considerations exist. A Player who wishes to apply for dispensation may make an application in accordance with Section 4.

- The national framework for the accreditation of Coaches and Umpires of Australian Football is set out in Section 6. The framework is focused on improving Coach and Umpire education and Player safety at all levels of Australian Football and forms part of the AFL's commitment to creating a fun and safe environment for every Person to participate in Australian Football.

- The AFL is committed to providing a physiologically and psychologically safe environment for all participants and Section 7, which deals with the deregistration of Players and Football Officials, provides a risk management framework and policy basis for the AFL and community football stakeholders to support that objective.

The points above are for background only and are not operative terms of this Policy Handbook.

3. Player registration, transfers and permits

3.1 Player eligibility

(a) **Ineligibility**

A Player who is:

(i) unregistered; or

(ii) registered based on false or misleading information,

will be ineligible to play for a Club and/or participate in a Competition.

(b) **Age group eligibility**

(i) To participate in a Competition, a Player must be seven years of age by the following dates in the applicable playing year in each respective State and Territory:

(A) 1 January – Tasmania;

(B) 30 April – South Australia, Victoria;

(C) 30 June – Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia; and

(D) 31 July – Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales.

(ii) Subject to Section 3.1(b)(iii), a Player's age eligibility to participate in a Competition age group is as per the following table:

Age Group	Minimum age to participate in age group (age as at 31 December in the year prior to the applicable playing year)	Age turning in the applicable playing year
Under 8	7 - subject to Section 3.1(b)(i)	7 or 8 - subject to Section 3.1(b)(i)
Under 9	7	7, 8 or 9 - subject to Section 3.1(b)(i)
Under 10	7	8, 9 or 10
Under 11	8	9, 10 or 11
Under 12	9	10, 11 or 12
Under 13	10	11, 12 or 13
Under 14	11	12, 13 or 14
Under 15	12	13, 14 or 15
Under 16	13	14, 15 or 16
Under 17	14	15, 16 or 17
Under 18	15	16, 17 or 18
Under 19	16	17, 18 or 19
Seniors	16	17 or older

(iii) A Controlling Body may permit a Player to participate in a higher age group than that specified in the table above where it determines that there are exceptional and compelling circumstances that warrant such permission being granted. *[**Guidance note**: In assessing whether there are exceptional and compelling circumstances, a Controlling Body must have regard to the Player's football development interests including their physical capacity, experience, skill level and social maturity.]*

(iv) A Player who is 14 years of age or older as at 31 December in the year prior to their applicable playing year must play in a Competition age group that accords to their gender except where:

(A) approved under the AFL Gender Diversity Policy Community Football (refer to Section 8 (Gender Diversity)); or

(B) a State Football Body determines, in its absolute discretion, that there are exceptional and compelling circumstances that warrant otherwise, provided that the AFL Gender Diversity Policy Community Football does not apply.

(v) For the avoidance of doubt, mixed Competition age groups are only permitted up to and including Under 14.

(vi) Upon request by a Controlling Body from time to time, a Player must provide evidence or confirmation of a Player's age.

*[**Guidance note**: For example, if a Player is 11 years of age as at 31 December 2024 then that Player's Competition age group for the 2025 calendar year will be Under 12s (assuming single age groups).]*

(c) Playing in multiple Competitions

Unless otherwise specified in this Policy Handbook, a Player who is 14 years of age or older as at 31 December in the year prior to their applicable playing year must not participate in both a boys Competition and a girls Competition at the same time or interchangeably.

*[**Guidance note**: This Section prevents a Player who has reached 14 years of age from participating in a boys Competition and a girls Competition at the same time or switching back and forth.]*

3.2 Player Registration

(a) A Player must be registered via the Competition Management Platform to play Australian Football for a Club and/or participate in a Competition.

(b) A Player may only register under one name and must not submit multiple concurrent registrations. Clubs must monitor compliance with this Section 3.2(b) and where a Club becomes aware of an issue under this Section 3.2(b) they must immediately notify the relevant Controlling Body.

(c) Each Player registration must be submitted electronically via the Competition Management Platform by the Player or, where the Player is an Underage Player, by that Player's parent or legal guardian.

(d) For a Player registration to be active, the Club must accept the Player registration via the Competition Management Platform.

(e) Unless otherwise specified in this Policy Handbook, the Player registration period in respect of each season commences on 1 October.

3.3 Transfer Request

(a) **Initiating a Transfer Request**

(i) Subject to Section 3.3(a)(ii), a Transfer may be initiated by:

(A) a Player; or

(B) where a Player is an Underage Player, that Player's parent or legal guardian; or

(C) a Destination Club with the Player's consent,

submitting a Transfer Request electronically via the Competition Management Platform.

(ii) A Transfer must not be initiated in respect of a Player who is subject to a Permit.

(iii) Once a Transfer Request is submitted under Section 3.3(a)(i), notification of the Transfer Request will be automatically sent via the Competition Management Platform to the Source Club.

(b) **Transfer Request Window**

(i) Subject to Sections 3.3(b)(ii) and 3.3(b)(iii), a Transfer Request must be submitted between:

(A) 12:01am (AEDT) on 1 November and 11:59pm (AEDT) on 30 November during the calendar year preceding the relevant season; or

(B) 12:01am (AEDT) on 1 February and 11:59pm (AEST) on 30 June during the calendar year of the relevant season,

(the **Transfer Periods**).

(ii) A State Football Body may permit an intrastate Transfer Request, or the relevant State Football Bodies may jointly permit an interstate Transfer Request, outside of the Transfer Periods where:

(A) exceptional and compelling circumstances apply to the Transfer Request; or

(B) the '24-month rule' set out in Section 3.5(c) applies to the Transfer Request.

(iii) The Transfer Periods are not applicable to the following Competitions conducted by AFL NT (and any other Competitions notified by AFLNT from time to time):

(A) Northern Territory Football League;

(B) Tiwi Islands Football League;

(C) Lajamanu Football League;

(D) Maningrida Football League.

(c) **Source Club to approve or refuse Transfer Request**

(i) A Source Club may, within six (6) calendar days from notification of a Transfer Request under Section 3.3(a)(iii), either

(A) approve the Transfer Request; or

(B) refuse the Transfer Request under one or more of the grounds specified in Section 3.5(b).

(d) **Transfer Request withdrawal**

(i) A Player wishing to withdraw their Transfer Request must do so in writing to the Source Controlling Body within six (6) calendar days from notification of the Transfer Request under Section 3.3(a)(iii).

(ii) For the avoidance of doubt, if a Transfer Request is approved by the Source Club before the Player lodges a transfer withdrawal under Section 3.3(d)(i), the Player is not eligible for a transfer withdrawal.

(e) **Suspended Players**

(i) A suspended Player may Transfer to a Destination Club (**First Transfer**) but must not play a Match with that Destination Club until the Player has served their suspension and may not subsequently Transfer (i.e. a second consecutive transfer) to a further Destination Club until at least twenty eight (28) days after completion of the First Transfer.

(ii) A suspended Player seeking a Transfer from a winter Competition to a summer Competition and vice versa will be subject to Law 22.4.4 of the Laws of the Game.

3.4 Transfer approval

(a) **How Transfer is approved**

(i) If a Source Club fails to either approve or refuse a Transfer Request in accordance with Section 3.3(c), the Transfer will be approved automatically in the Competition

Management Platform following the expiry of the prescribed period of six (6) calendar days.

(ii) Subject to Section 3.3(d), if a Transfer Request is approved under Section 3.3(c) or 3.4(a)(i):

(A) notification of such approval will be automatically sent via the Competition Management Platform to the Source Controlling Body; and

(B) if applicable, notification of such approval together with the playing history of the Player (including their Disciplinary History) will be automatically sent via the Competition Management Platform to the Destination Controlling Body; and

(C) notification of such approval will be automatically sent via the Competition Management Platform to the Destination Club and the Destination Club must either approve or refuse the Transfer Request.

(iii) If a Transfer Request is approved under Section 3.4(a)(ii)(C), the Player will be "pending" in the Competition Management Platform and ineligible to be entered on a team sheet and play for the Destination Club until the Player or, where the Player is an Underage Player, that Player's parent or legal guardian completes the Player's registration to the Destination Club via the Competition Management Platform after which the Player will be "active" in the Competition Management Platform and eligible to be entered on a team sheet and play for the Destination Club.

(b) **Transfer Request completed incorrectly**

If a Transfer Request is submitted and/or approved incorrectly, the relevant Controlling Body may deal with the Transfer Request in any manner it reasonably determines.

3.5 Transfer refusal

(a) **How Transfer is refused**

If a Source Club refuses a Transfer Request under Section 3.3(c):

(i) the Transfer will be refused in the Competition Management Platform; and

(ii) a Person or Destination Club may not submit a further Transfer Request unless the dispute has been resolved in accordance with Section 3.5.

(b) **Grounds for refusal**

(i) Subject to Sections 3.5(b)(ii) and 3.5(c), a Source Club may refuse a Transfer Request where it can substantiate that the Player:

(A) is a Declared Player whose current player arrangement requires the Player to continue to play for the Source Club (as substantiated in accordance with Section 3.5(b)(iii)); or

(B) is financially indebted to the Source Club as evidenced by proper financial records; or

(C) is in possession of Source Club property (for example, Source Club jumper or Source Club equipment) that must be returned; or

(D) wishes to withdraw their Transfer Request in accordance with Section 3.3(d).

For the avoidance of doubt a Source Club may only refuse a Transfer Request on grounds set out in Section 3.5(b)(i).

(ii) Where a Source Club refuses a Transfer Request on grounds specified in Section 3.5(b)(i)(B) or 3.5(b)(i)(C) in respect of a Player, those grounds will not be valid grounds for that Source Club to refuse a Transfer Request for that Player once 24 months has elapsed since the date of the initial refusal of Transfer Request. *[**Guidance note**: This Section is distinct from the '24-month rule' set out in Section 3.5(c).]*

(iii) Upon request by its affiliate Controlling Body, a Source Club refusing to Transfer a Player must provide evidence (for example, written documentation acknowledged by both parties) in order to substantiate the refusal within four (4) calendar days of such request. Failure to provide such evidence may result in the Controlling Body approving the Transfer Request upon resubmission of the Transfer Request by the Player or, where the Player is an Underage Player, that Player's parent or guardian.

(iv) A Destination Club may refuse a Transfer Request initiated under Section 3.3(a)(i)(A) or 3.3(a)(i)(B).

(c) **24-month rule**

(i) Subject to Section 3.5(c)(ii), a Player who has not played a Match for a period of 24 months or greater may submit a Transfer Request in accordance with Section 3.3(a) at any time and that Player's Source Club may not refuse the Transfer Request under any circumstances.

*[**Guidance note**: A Player in these circumstances cannot register at a new Club without following the Transfer process. The Player is still required to submit a Transfer Request, even though it cannot be declined.]*

(ii) A Transfer Request for a Player who has not played a Match for a period of 24 months or greater may be refused by that Player's Source Club on one or more of the grounds under Section 3.5(b) if that Player has:

(A) had an approved Transfer Request within the previous 24 months; or

(B) registered with the Source Club within the previous 24 months.

(d) **Appealing a Transfer refusal**

(i) Where a Player disputes a Transfer refusal, that Player and/or their Destination Club and the Source Club must use best endeavours to resolve the dispute.

(ii) Where a dispute cannot be resolved under Section 3.5(d)(i), a Player and their Destination Club may appeal the Transfer refusal by the Source Club provided that:

(A) an appeal involving Clubs affiliated with the same Controlling Body will be heard by that Controlling Body's Appeal Board in accordance with Section 26;

(B) an appeal involving Clubs from two different Controlling Bodies located within the same State will be heard by the relevant State Football Body's Appeal Board in accordance with Section 26; and

(C) an appeal involving Clubs from two different Controlling Bodies not located within the same State will be referred to the Permit Committee for resolution in accordance with Section 3.9.

3.6 Transfer fee

Without limiting any applicable player payment or transfer rules enacted by a Controlling Body in respect of a Competition, no Club or Controlling Body may directly or indirectly receive or pay any transfer fee or any other consideration in respect of a Transfer.

3.7 Player Permits

(a) **Interchange Agreement**

(i) A Controlling Body may enter into an Interchange Agreement with another Controlling Body in respect of the movement of Players between:

(A) Tier 2 Competitions with the approval of the relevant State Football Body;

(B) a Tier 1 Competition and Tier 2 Competition;

(C) Tier 1 Competitions;

(D) a Tier 1 Competition and AFL/AFLW Competition,

provided that any Interchange Agreement must be in place by 30 June in the applicable playing year.

(ii) A copy of an Interchange Agreement entered into under Section 3.7(a)(i)(A) must be lodged with the relevant State Football Body within ten (10) calendar days of its execution for approval by the relevant State Football Body.

(iii) An Interchange Agreement will be for an indefinite term unless otherwise specified in the Interchange Agreement and may be terminated:

(A) by a party to the Interchange Agreement giving notice to the other party to the Interchange Agreement at any time; or

(B) in respect of an Interchange Agreement entered into under Section 3.7(a)(i)(A), by the relevant State Football Body giving notice to each party to the Interchange Agreement at any time.

(b) **Permits**

(i) A Game Permit is a Permit which:

(A) allows a Player to play a single Match for a Club (other than their Source Club); and

(B) does not require Source Club approval via the Competition Management Platform.

(ii) A Season Permit is a Permit which:

(A) allows a Player to play more than a single Match for a Club (other than their Source Club); and

(B) requires Source Club approval via the Competition Management Platform.

(iii) If a Source Club fails to either approve or refuse a Season Permit in accordance with Section 3.7(b)(ii)(B), the Season Permit will be approved automatically in the Competition Management Platform following the expiry of the prescribed period of six (6) calendar days.

(iv) Permits are to be applied and managed in accordance with the respective State Football Body rules, regulations or by-laws and it is the responsibility of the relevant Controlling Body to monitor the application and management of Permits.

(v) Other than pursuant to Section 3.7(c), a Permit may not be granted unless there is an Interchange Agreement in place between the relevant Controlling Bodies.

(vi) Any Player granted a Season Permit will remain registered with their Source Club for the term of the Season Permit.

(c) **Season Permits (and Northern Territory Football League)**

(i) A Player may Transfer to or from the Northern Territory Football League under a Season Permit using the Competition Management Platform.

(ii) Season Permits are valid for one (1) season only. Players wishing to continue on a Season Permit basis will be required to complete a new Competition Management Platform application for each subsequent season.

(iii) Where a Tier 1 Club recruits a Player on a Season Permit, the Tier 1 Competition shall be responsible for ensuring that the Player participates with the Club for one (1) season only.

(iv) Where a Player has played under a Season Permit and has not played or made themselves available for selection for their Source Club for more than five (5) home and away Matches for a period of twenty-four (24) months, the Player must lodge a Transfer Request through the Competition Management Platform for any subsequent Transfer.

(v) Where a Player is drafted as an AFL/AFLW Listed Player during the period of the Season Permit, they shall be regarded as having been recruited from the Source Club of the Controlling Body granting the Season Permit.

3.8 Underage Players

(a) An Underage Player who resides and is registered in one State may not be registered with a Club in a Tier 1 Competition in another State without the prior approval of the Permit Committee.

(b) In granting any approval under Section 3.8(a), the Permit Committee may consider the following factors (without limitation):

(i) whether the Underage Player has transferred interstate with their family;

(ii) whether the Underage Player has undergone a bona fide transfer of employment to another State;

(iii) whether the Underage Player has enrolled in a tertiary education course in another State;

(iv) whether the AFL's Head of Talent Pathways and National Diversity Talent Manager (or equivalent) support the move in the interests of developing the Underage Player's football career.

3.9 Permit Committee

(a) The AFL may, from time to time, appoint a Permit Committee comprising at least three (3) members who in the opinion of the AFL possess sufficient knowledge of Australian Football and are sufficiently qualified to competently perform the role of Permit Committee member.

(b) The Permit Committee may, upon receipt of a bond amount of $550.00 (including GST) (or such other amount determined by the Permit Committee) from each Club, consider and determine an appeal involving Clubs from two different States referred to the Permit Committee in accordance with Section 3.5(d)(ii)(C) and the following provisions will apply:

(i) the parties will be required to provide brief written submissions to the Permit Committee in respect of matter; and

(ii) 50% of the bond amount will be refunded to each Club (or such other amount determined by the Permit Committee) unless the Permit Committee considers that the appellant Club's appeal or the defendant Club's defence (as applicable) is vexatious or frivolous in which case the whole bond amount paid by the Club whose appeal or defence is considered vexatious or frivolous may be forfeited.

(c) The Permit Committee may:

(i) mediate disputes that arise between State Football Bodies in respect of the application and interpretation of this Section 3 and provide final judgment as appropriate;

(ii) consider and determine interstate Transfer Requests in relation to Underage Players under Section 3.8;

(iii) consider and determine matters raised under Sections 5 and 3.8; or

(iv) deal with any other matters as determined by the AFL.

(d) To refer a matter to the Permit Committee under Sections 3.9(b) and 3.9(c), the relevant party must provide written notice to the AFL (via the AFL Community Football Operations Manager).

(e) The Permit Committee may:

(i) exercise its powers under Section 3.9(c) in any manner it reasonably determines; and

(ii) levy a fee for the administration of matters under Section 3.9(b) (with the fee amount to be determined by the Permit Committee).

3.10 False or misleading information

(a) If a Player submits false or misleading information or intentionally fails to disclose information during the registration process under Section 3.2 or in relation to any Transfer Request under Section 3.3 or to a Permit Committee under Section 3.9(b)(i), that Player:

(i) will be deemed to have also breached Section 9.2(a) of this Policy Handbook; and

(ii) notwithstanding any other provision of this Policy Handbook, may be dealt with in such manner as the Controlling Body determines including a retrospective determination that the Player was ineligible for Matches in which they participated.

(b) In addition to any sanction imposed or determination made by the Controlling Body in respect of a Player under Section 3.10(a), the Controlling Body may impose a sanction on that Player's Club, except where the Club satisfies the Controlling Body that the Player engaged in the relevant conduct without the knowledge of the Club.

3.11 General provisions

(a) **Power of AFL and State Football Body**

The AFL or a State Football Body may override any rule or other mechanism of a Club or other Controlling Body relating to the registration, transfer or permit of Players where the AFL or State Football Body (as applicable) determines (acting reasonably) that the relevant rule or other mechanism is inconsistent with this Policy Handbook.

(b) **State Football Body responsible**

Where a Tier 1 Competition is separately constituted, the Controlling Body to which the Tier 1 Competition is affiliated will be responsible for ensuring that the Tier 1 Competition observes and complies with this Section 3.

(c) **Team in another Tier 1 Competition**

Where a Club or team located in one State (**State A**) competes in a Tier 1 Competition based and administered in another State, the Players of the Club or team located in State A will be considered Players from State A.

(d) **State affiliation – Tier 2 Competitions**

A Controlling Body administering a Tier 2 Competition with two thirds or more of its Clubs domiciled in a State shall be required to affiliate with the State Football Body recognised by the AFL as responsible for the State concerned.

(e) **Transfer of Player to an AFL Competition**

(i) A Player will be automatically registered to an AFL Club upon becoming an AFL/AFLW Listed Player.

(ii) Should a Player be listed as an AFL/AFLW Listed Player by an AFL Club located in a State different to that Player's Tier 1 Club, the Player may play with a Tier 1 Club in that State (i.e. the new State).

(iii) A Player delisted by an AFL Club who returns to play for a Club in the Tier 1 Competition from which the Player was drafted will be bound by any applicable transfer and registration rules of that Tier 1 Competition.

(iv) Where a Player is delisted as an AFL/AFLW Listed Player and becomes an AFL/AFLW Listed Player of another AFL Club for the following AFL/AFLW Competition season that Player shall be regarded as having continuous AFL/AFLW Competition registration.

(f) **Non-use of Competition Management Platform**

Where a Controlling Body does not use the Competition Management Platform, this Section 3 will not apply.

4. Age dispensation

4.1 Application process

(a) A Player may apply for dispensation to play in a Competition age group below their applicable age group on the basis of a Disability or for Physical Size Considerations by submitting an application in accordance with Section 4.1(b).

*[**Guidance Note:** for the purpose of this Age Dispensation section, a Disability is not intended to include a temporary injury from which the Person is recovering]*

(b) An application for dispensation under Section 4.1(a) must be:

(i) in the form of the AFL National Dispensation Application Form or such other form prescribed by the relevant Controlling Body;

(ii) submitted via the Player's Club to the Controlling Body;

(iii) supported by written consent from the Player's parent or guardian where the Player is an Underage Player; and

(iv) supported by a certificate from a Medical Specialist (**Certificate**) appropriately qualified in an area of practice directly related to the dispensation being sought. Such Certificate, to be completed within three (3) months prior to submission of the application, must state the clinical rationale for the dispensation being sought and have regard to all relevant matters pertaining to the Player including:

(A) the Player's Disability; and/or

(B) the Player's Physical Size Considerations; and

(C) the qualifications of the Medical Specialist providing the Certificate.

*[**Guidance note**: The NSW Government Healthy Weight Calculator for children and teenagers may assist a General Practitioner or Medical Specialist in determining a Player's body mass index for their age. The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne Growth Charts may assist a General Practitioner or Medical Specialist in determining a Player's height for their age.]*

(c) In relation to an application for dispensation on the basis of a Disability, a Medical Specialist may, in their supporting Certificate, recommend that dispensation be approved for two seasons.

(d) Following its assessment of an application for dispensation, the Controlling Body may:

(i) approve the application;

(ii) refuse the application; or

(iii) request additional information from the Player or Club and, following its assessment of such additional information, either approve or refuse the application.

4.2 Relevant factors in assessing application

In assessing an application for dispensation, a Controlling Body will have regard to the following factors:

(a) the effect of the Player's Disability or Physical Size Considerations on their capacity to effectively participate in Australian Football, in particular, their capacity to participate against the oldest Players in their age group as prescribed under Section 3.1(b)(ii);

(b) the supporting Certificate provided under Section 4.1(b) and any recommendation under Section 4.1(c);

(c) what reasonable adjustments have been considered, attempted or undertaken to facilitate the Player remaining in their eligible age group, and any reasons why those adjustments have been unsuccessful or not implemented;

(d) how it is proposed that the grant of age dispensation will support the Player to overcome any barriers to their effective participation in Australian Football arising from their Disability or Physical Size Considerations;

(e) the availability of other assistance to the Player to enable them to effectively participate in Australian Football;

(f) the safety and welfare of the Player and those Players they will be participating with and against; and

(g) any other relevant factors in relation to the Player's Disability and/or the Player's Physical Size Considerations which may impact the Player's capacity to effectively participate in Australian Football as determined by the Controlling Body.

4.3 Effect of approved application

(a) A Player who has received dispensation approval (**Permitted Player**) will be allocated to a Competition age group below their applicable age group. Unless medical advice recommends otherwise or exceptional and compelling circumstances apply, a Permitted Player will be allocated to the next lowest Competition age group.

(b) If, following receipt of dispensation approval, a Permitted Player plays in a Competition age group other than the Competition age group originally approved, the dispensation approval will be automatically withdrawn.

(c) A dispensation approval applies for the season in which the dispensation approval is granted unless the Controlling Body endorses a recommendation under Section 4.1(c) in which case the dispensation approval will apply for the season in which the dispensation approval is granted and the following season (i.e. two seasons).

(d) A Controlling Body may, acting reasonably, revoke a dispensation approval at any time provided that the reasons for such revocation are provided to the Permitted Player.

4.4 Appeal

A decision by a Controlling Body under Section 4.1(d) may be appealed in accordance with Section 26.

5. Player declaration

(a) Where a Club and Player wish to, or are required to, enter into an arrangement in relation to the Player's participation at the Club, the parties must use a Standard Player Declaration.

(b) A Club must provide a copy of each Player's current Standard Player Declaration upon request by a State Football Body.

(c) Each Club and Player must ensure all player payments required to be made pursuant to any Standard Playing Declaration are made in accordance with:

(i) any applicable player payment rules; and

(ii) all applicable State and Commonwealth laws.

(d) In respect of a Standard Player Declaration, the following provisions apply:

(i) a Player must be at least 18 years old to sign a Standard Player Declaration (where a Player is an Underage Player, the Standard Player Declaration must be signed by a parent or guardian);

(ii) for a Standard Player Declaration to be valid both the Club and Player (or where the Player is an Underage Player, that Player's parent or guardian) must sign the Standard Player Declaration;

(iii) subject to Section 5(d)(iv), a Standard Player Declaration will expire on 31 October each year;

(iv) a Standard Player Declaration that is:

(A) expressed to be valid for more than one year will expire on 31 October in the final year of the Standard Player Declaration; and

(B) executed between a Club in the Northern Territory Football League Competition and Player will expire on 31 March in the final year of the Standard Player Declaration; and

(v) a Standard Player Declaration will remain effective until the expiration or earlier termination of the Standard Player Declaration. For the avoidance of doubt, a Club and Player may agree to an early release of the Player from a Standard Player Declaration.

(e) A Tier 1 Club or AFL/AFLW Competition Standard Player Declaration will take precedence over a Tier 2 Club Standard Player Declaration should the relevant Player wish to participate in a Tier 1 Competition or AFL/AFLW Competition, provided that where a Tier 1 Club or AFL/AFLW Competition Standard Player Declaration expires or is validly terminated within the term of the Tier 2 Club Standard Player Declaration the relevant Player will be bound by the Tier 2 Club Standard Player Declaration until expiration or earlier termination.

(f) If there is any dispute concerning this Section 5, including between a Player and Tier 1 Club or Tier 1 Competition as to whether that Player is a Declared Player, that dispute may be referred to the Permit Committee for determination.

(g) A Tier 1 Club Declared Player must not play with a Tier 2 Club in a Match unless:

(i) that Player's Standard Player Declaration is validly terminated; or

(ii) that Player does so pursuant to the rules of the relevant Tier 1 Competition; or

(iii) that Player does so under a Permit or Interchange Agreement.

If a Player breaches Section 5(g), that Player and the relevant Tier 2 Club may be dealt with in such manner as the relevant Controlling Body determines.

6. Coach and Umpire eligibility and accreditation

6.1 General

(a) A Person must be eligible and Accredited to:

(i) coach Australian Football at a Club or Controlling Body; or

(ii) umpire a Match, unless otherwise permitted by a Controlling Body in accordance with that Controlling Body's rules and regulations.

(b) A Club or Controlling Body may only appoint a Person as a:

(i) Coach if that Person is eligible and Accredited; or

(ii) Umpire if that Person is eligible and Accredited unless otherwise permitted by the Controlling Body in accordance with the Controlling Body's rules and regulations.

(c) For the avoidance of doubt, the AFL does not represent that a Person who has obtained Accreditation is a fit and proper person to be appointed as a Coach or Umpire (as applicable). Without limiting the foregoing:

(i) it is a matter for the Club or Controlling Body appointing a Coach or Umpire (as applicable) to satisfy itself that a Person is a fit and proper person to be appointed as a Coach or Umpire (as applicable);

(ii) the function of the Accreditation process is primarily to ensure that all Coaches and Umpires meet basic registration requirements and satisfactorily complete the required educational modules for their Accreditation level;

(iii) as part of the Accreditation process a Person may be required to submit to the AFL, a National Police Check, a working with children certificate (or equivalent) or other relevant information.

6.2 Eligibility and Accreditation requirements

(a) **Coach Eligibility**

(i) A Person will be ineligible to be a Coach if they:

(A) are not Accredited as required under Section 6.2(b);

(B) are Accredited based on false or misleading information; or

(C) do not meet the age eligibility requirements as per Sections 6.2(a)(ii) to 6.2(a)(iv).

(ii) A head Coach must be fifteen (15) years of age or older in the year prior to the applicable playing year and must meet the minimum age to coach a Competition age group as per the following table:

Age Group	Age in the year prior to the applicable playing year	Minimum age turning in the applicable playing year
Under 8	15	16
Under 9	15	16
Under 10	15	16
Under 11	15	16
Under 12	15	16
Under 13	15	16
Under 14	15	16
Under 15	16	17
Under 16	17	18
Under 17	18	19
Under 18	18	19
Under 19	18	19
Seniors	18	19

(iii) A head Coach who is under eighteen (18) years of age must have an adult assistant Coach (who is over 18 years of age).

(iv) An assistant Coach must be twelve (12) years of age or older in the year prior to the applicable playing year.

(v) Clubs should have regard to the Coach's experience, social maturity and any child safeguarding considerations when making coaching appointments.

(b) **Coach Accreditation**

To apply for Accreditation as a Coach, a Person (**Applicant**) must:

(i) register on the Coach Learning Platform;

(ii) accurately and honestly complete the relevant Accreditation application form(s) via the Coach Learning Platform;

(iii) complete:

(A) the relevant training for Registered Accreditation, Bronze Accreditation, Silver Accreditation or Gold Accreditation (as applicable); and/or

(B) the relevant update or refresher training (as applicable); and

(iv) hold a current working with children check (or equivalent) or otherwise meet the working with children requirements in their State or Territory.

(c) **Umpire eligibility**

(i) A Person will be ineligible to be an Umpire if they:

(A) are not Accredited as required under Section 6.2(d) (unless Section 6.1(a)(ii) applies);

(B) are Accredited based on false or misleading information; or

(C) do not meet the age eligibility requirements as per Sections 6.2(c)(ii) and 6.2(c)(iv) (unless Section 6.2(c)(iii) applies).

(ii) A field Umpire must be twelve (12) years of age or older in the year prior to the applicable playing year and their eligibility to umpire a Competition age group is as per the following table:

Age Group	Age in the year prior to the applicable playing year	Minimum age turning in the applicable playing year
Under 8	12	13
Under 9	12	13
Under 10	12	13
Under 11	12	13
Under 12	13	14
Under 13	14	15
Under 14	15	16
Under 15	16	17
Under 16	16	17
Under 17	16	17
Under 18	16	17
Under 19	16	17
Seniors	16	17

(iii) A Controlling Body or umpiring group may appoint a field Umpire to a higher age group than that specified in the table above where it determines that there are exceptional and compelling circumstances that warrant such permission being granted.

*[**Guidance note**: in assessing whether there are exceptional and compelling circumstances, a Controlling Body and Umpiring Group must have regard to the Umpire's physical capacity, experience, skill level and social maturity along with any child safeguarding considerations]*

(iv) Boundary Umpires and goal Umpires must be nine (9) years of age or older in the year prior to the applicable playing year. A Controlling Body or umpiring group must have regard to the Umpire's physical capacity, experience, skill level and social maturity along with any child safeguarding considerations when appointing boundary and goal Umpires.

(v) Where a Club is appointing an Umpire in accordance with the Controlling Body's rules and regulations, the principles of Sections 6.2(c)(ii), 6.2(c)(iii) and 6.2(c)(iv) should be applied.

(d) **Umpire Accreditation**

To apply for Accreditation as an Umpire, a Person (**Applicant**) must:

(i) register on the Umpire Learning Platform;

(ii) accurately and honestly complete the relevant Accreditation application form(s) via the Umpire Learning Platform;

(iii) if applicable, complete the relevant training applicable for Accreditation, including any relevant update or refresher training; and

(iv) hold a current working with children check (or equivalent) or otherwise meet the working with children requirements in their State or Territory.

6.3 Accreditation determination

(a) Following completion by an Applicant of the Coach or Umpire Accreditation requirements set out in Section 6.2(b) or 6.2(d) (as applicable), the AFL may:

(i) grant Accreditation to the Applicant with no further requirements; or

(ii) grant provisional Accreditation to the Applicant and request additional information from the Applicant including a current National Police Check; or

(iii) revoke an Applicant's Accreditation; or

(iv) deal with the matter in such other manner as the AFL sees fit.

(b) **Additional information requested by AFL**

(i) Upon receipt of a request for additional information by the AFL under Section 6.3(a)(ii), the Applicant must provide such requested information to the AFL within the timeframe specified by the AFL.

(ii) Following its assessment of the information provided, the AFL may revoke or confirm the Applicant's Accreditation at its absolute discretion.

(iii) If the information (including any National Police Check) provided discloses that the Applicant has been convicted of, or is charged with, a Serious Criminal Offence, that Applicant's Accreditation may be revoked.

(iv) If an Applicant fails to provide the requested information within the timeframe specified by the AFL, that Applicant's Accreditation may be revoked.

(v) A decision by the AFL under this Section 6.3(b) will be notified to the Applicant confidentially and as soon as reasonably practicable.

6.4 Review of determination regarding Accreditation

(a) Where a Person is not granted Accreditation or has their Accreditation revoked under Section 6.3, that Person may by written application have that determination reviewed by a panel comprising at least two (2) members appointed by the AFL General Manager Game Development (or their nominee) (**Accreditation Panel**) provided that no person involved in the decision under review may be appointed to the Accreditation Panel.

(b) A written application under Section 6.4(a):

(i) must be submitted by email to coachregistrar@afl.com.au or umpireregistrar@afl.com.au (as applicable);

(ii) must set out why the Person considers the relevant determination to be incorrect; and

(iii) may include any further information the Person considers relevant.

(c) In reviewing a written application submitted in accordance with 6.4(b), the Accreditation Panel may have regard to any matter they consider relevant including but not limited to:

(i) the nature of any information provided under Sections 6.2 or 6.3(b);

(ii) the time elapsed since the date of any charge(s) or conviction(s) disclosed in any information provided under Section 6.3(b);

(iii) any evidence of a Person's:

(A) good standing in the community, especially since the date of any charge(s) or conviction(s) disclosed in information provided under Section 6.3(b); and

(B) positive behavioural remediation, especially since the date of any charge(s) or conviction(s) in information provided under Section 6.3(b);

(iv) the Disciplinary History of the Coach or Umpire, including in respect of Reportable Offences and any Policy Breaches committed by the Coach or Umpire; and

(v) the health and safety of other Persons.

(d) Following its review of the written application, the Accreditation Panel may confirm, reverse or modify the original determination.

(e) A determination of the Accreditation Panel is final and subject only to any rights of appeal provided by law.

(f) Where a decision to not grant or to revoke an Applicant's Accreditation is confirmed by the Accreditation Panel, the Applicant may re-apply to have their Accreditation status reviewed provided that any such application is made:

(i) no less than 12 months from the date of the Accreditation Panel's decision; and

(ii) in the manner set out in Section 6.4(b).

(g) Where a decision to not grant or to revoke an Applicant's Accreditation is reversed by the Accreditation Panel, the Applicant is still required to meet all eligibility and Accreditation requirements under Section 6.2.

6.5 Accreditation status

(a) The AFL will endeavour to note each Person's Accreditation status on their Coach Learning Platform or Umpire Learning Platform account (as applicable), including any relevant details about that Person's Accreditation history (including any review history).

(b) For the avoidance of doubt:

(i) a decision under Section 6.3 to not grant or to revoke an Applicant's Accreditation has ongoing effect until such time as that decision is reversed or modified in accordance with Section 6.4;

(ii) the AFL may, at any time after Accreditation is granted:

(A) reassess a Person's Accreditation; and

(B) in its absolute discretion, revoke a Person's Accreditation; and

(iii) if, at any time, including after receiving Accreditation, a Person is found to not comply with the requirements of Sections 6.2(b) or 6.2(d) (as applicable), the AFL may, in its absolute discretion, revoke that Person's Accreditation.

6.6 Coach and Umpire disclosure requirements

(a) If after applying for or being granted Accreditation, a Coach or Umpire:

(i) is charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence; or

(ii) has a working with children check (or equivalent) which has expired, been suspended or revoked,

the Coach or Umpire must notify the AFL of this matter within seven (7) days by email to coachregistrar@afl.com.au or umpireregistrar@afl.com.au (as applicable).

(b) Where further information is received by the AFL under Section 6.6(a) or where the AFL becomes aware that a Coach or Umpire may have been charged with or committed a Serious Criminal Offence, or may have had a working with children check (or equivalent) which has expired, been suspended or revoked, the AFL may deal with the matter in accordance with Section 6.3.

7. Deregistration

7.1 Disciplinary History

(a) The Disciplinary History of a Player or Football Official will apply in respect of all Competitions. For the avoidance of doubt, all Players and Football Officials moving from one Club and/or Controlling Body to another do so on the basis that their Disciplinary History will continue to apply and will not be erased or amended.

(b) During the Transfer process under Section 3.4(a)(ii)(B), the Disciplinary History of a Player will be automatically sent to the Destination Controlling Body via the Competition Management Platform.

(c) Where a Football Official transfers to or registers with a Controlling Body, the following will apply:

(i) the Source Controlling Body (if applicable) will use reasonable endeavours to disclose that Football Official's Disciplinary History to the Destination Controlling Body; and

(ii) upon request by a Destination Controlling Body, the Source Controlling Body (if applicable) will provide that Person's Disciplinary History to the Destination Controlling Body.

(d) Club imposed penalties will not be included on the Disciplinary History of a Person.

7.2 Criteria for Deregistration – Reportable Offences

(a) **Suspension threshold**

(i) Subject to Section 7.5(b), a Player or Football Official shall be automatically Deregistered and not allowed further registration with any Club or Controlling Body if the Player or Football Official has been suspended for a total of sixteen (16) matches (or greater) as a Player and/or Football Official (including during an AFL/AFLW Competition career, subject to Section 7.2(c)) as a result of Reportable Offences (**Reportable Offences Suspension Threshold**).

(ii) For the avoidance of doubt:

(A) a Player or Football Official may apply for re-registration in accordance with Section 7.7;

(B) the Reportable Offences Suspension Threshold relates to suspensions imposed as a result of Reportable Offences; and

(C) any suspension or sanction imposed on a Player or Football Official in relation to a Policy Breach will not count in relation to the Reportable Offences Suspension Threshold.

(b) **Suspensions attained once 16 years or older apply**

Only suspensions relating to Reportable Offences committed by a Player or Football Official after attaining the age of 16 years will count for the purposes of Section 7.2(a).

(c) **AFL/AFLW Competition Career**

Any suspension served by a Player or Football Official during their AFL/AFLW Competition career shall carry over and apply to Tier 1 and Tier 2 Competitions except that the total suspension period shall be reduced by 25% for the purposes of this Section 7 (to the decimal point).

*[**Guidance note**: For example, if a Player is suspended for six (6) matches whilst playing in the AFL/AFLW Competition, only four and one half (4.5) matches shall carry over for the purposes of this Section 7. For the avoidance of doubt, the 25% discount will not apply to any suspension imposed on an AFL/AFLW Listed Player for a Reportable Offence committed while playing outside of the AFL/AFLW Competition.]*

7.3 Criteria for Deregistration – serious or cumulative sanctions

(a) In addition to any sanction imposed on a Player or Football Official under Part E (Disciplinary) of this Policy Handbook, the AFL or relevant State Football Body may determine to Deregister that Player or Football Official if the AFL or relevant State Football Body (in consultation with the AFL) is satisfied that the Policy Breach or Reportable Offence and sanction imposed, when assessed together with the factors in Section 7.3(c), warrants Deregistration.

(b) If the AFL or relevant State Football Body establishes that a Player or Football Official has contravened the rules of a sport other than Australian Football (**Contravention**) and is reasonably satisfied that such Contravention warrants deregistration when assessed together with the factors in Section 7.3(c), then the

AFL, or relevant State Football Body with the prior approval of the AFL, may determine to Deregister that Player or Football Official.

(c) In making a determination under Section 7.3(a) and 7.3(b), the AFL or relevant State Football Body (as applicable) will have regard to the following factors:

(i) the nature and seriousness of the Policy Breach, Reportable Offence or Contravention;

(ii) the Disciplinary History of the Player or Football Official;

(iii) the health and safety of other Persons; and

(iv) any other matter considered relevant by the AFL or relevant State Football Body.

7.4 Criteria for Deregistration – Serious Criminal Offence by Coach or Umpire

(a) If the AFL becomes aware of information regarding a Coach or Umpire which the AFL reasonably considers gives rise to an inference that the Coach or Umpire may have committed a Serious Criminal Offence, then the AFL may request additional information (including a current National Police Check) or clarification from the Coach or Umpire.

(b) If:

(i) a Coach or Umpire does not within a reasonable period comply with a request by the AFL under Section 7.4(a); or

(ii) following its assessment of the information or clarification provided under Section 7.4(a) or the provision of verified information from the police, the AFL is satisfied that a Coach or Umpire has committed a Serious Criminal Offence,

then the AFL may Deregister that Coach or Umpire.

(c) In making a determination under Section 7.4(b), the AFL will have regard to the following factors:

(i) the nature of the Serious Criminal Offence;

(ii) the Disciplinary History of the Coach or Umpire, including in respect of Reportable Offences and any Policy Breaches committed by the Coach or Umpire;

(iii) the health and safety of other Persons; and

(iv) any other matter considered relevant by the AFL or relevant State Football Body.

7.5 Deregistration – general provisions

(a) **Effect of Deregistration**

(i) If a Player or Football Official is Deregistered that Player or Football Official cannot:

(A) register to play Australian Football for a Club or participate in a Competition; or

(B) officiate or act as a Football Official for a Club or Competition; or

(C) be entered on a team sheet.

(ii) For the avoidance of doubt:

(A) if a Player is Deregistered, that Player will also be prohibited from being a Football Official in any Competition; and

(B) if a Football Official is Deregistered, that Football Official will also be prohibited from being a Player in any Competition.

(b) **First Offence**

Should a Player or Football Official receive a sixteen (16) match (or greater) suspension as a "first offence" it shall be at the discretion of the AFL or relevant State Football Body (in consultation with any other relevant Controlling Body) as to whether or not that Player or Football Official will be Deregistered following suspension.

7.6 Notice of Deregistration

(a) **Deregistration Warning – Reportable Offences only**

Where a Player or Football Official has served a total of ten (10) matches of suspensions as a Player or Football Official in respect of Reportable Offences, the relevant Controlling Body will use reasonable endeavours to notify the Player or Football Official and their Club in writing that the Player or Football Official faces the risk of Deregistration should the Player or Football Official incur further suspensions resulting in that Player or Football Official meeting the Reportable Offences Suspension Threshold (**Deregistration Warning**). A Deregistration Warning should be in the form of the Deregistration Warning template or such other form approved by the Controlling Body.

(b) **Controlling Body obligations**

(i) The relevant Controlling Body will provide written notification of a Deregistration under Section 7.2 to the Player or Football Official and their Club and the relevant State Football Body (if applicable). *[**Guidance note**: Where Deregistration occurs due to Reportable Offences, the local league will usually be the "relevant Controlling Body" for the purposes of this Section. In which case, the local league must notify the relevant State Football Body of the Deregistration.]*

(ii) The AFL or relevant State Football Body (as applicable) will provide written notification of a Deregistration under Section 7.3 or 7.4 to the Player or Football Official and their Club and any other relevant Controlling Body.

(iii) A central database of all Deregistered Players and Football Officials will be maintained by the AFL and State Football Bodies via the Competition Management Platform.

(c) **Club obligations**

(i) Each Club will at all times strive to ensure its Players and Football Officials do not risk Deregistration and implement measures (such as anger management training) to achieve this objective.

(ii) Upon receipt of a Deregistration Warning or written notification of a Deregistration under Section 7.6(b), a Club must use its best endeavours to confirm that its Player or Football Official has received such notice and promptly acknowledge to the relevant Controlling Body the steps taken by the Club to obtain this confirmation.

(d) **Commencement of Deregistration**

(i) A Deregistration under Section 7.2 will commence on the date on which the most recent suspension of the Player or Football Official ends (being the suspension which resulted in that Player or Football Official being Deregistered).

(ii) A Deregistration under Section 7.3 or 7.4 will commence on the date of notification of Deregistration by the AFL or State Football Body in accordance with Section 7.6(b)(ii).

(iii) A Player or Football Official will be categorised as deregistered in the Competition Management Platform (as distinct from Deregistration as defined in this Policy) at the time that the Player or Football Official receives a sanction which results in Deregistration.

(e) The failure of a Controlling Body to issue a notice to a Player or Football Official and their Club in accordance with Section 7.6(a) or 7.6(b)(i), or the failure of a Club to provide notice to a Player or Football Official in accordance with Section 7.6(c)(ii), does not invalidate the deregistration of that Player or Football Official.

7.7 Application for re-registration

(a) Subject to Sections 7.7(e) and 7.7(f), a Deregistered Player or Football Official may, by written application to the relevant State Football Body in the form prescribed by that State Football Body, apply for re-registration no less than 12 calendar months after the date on which their Deregistration commenced (**Re-Registration Application**). The relevant State Football Body may levy a fee for the administration of a Re-Registration Application.

(b) Following receipt of a Re-Registration Application, the relevant State Football Body will convene a panel of at least three members (**Re-Registration Panel**) and arrange a hearing of the Re-Registration Panel to consider the Re-Registration Application (**Re-Registration Hearing**).

(c) The Re-Registration Panel must comprise of persons who in the opinion of the State Football Body possess sufficient knowledge of Australian Football and are sufficiently qualified to competently perform the role of Re-Registration Panel member.

(d) In respect of a Re-Registration Hearing, the following provisions apply:

(i) a Re-Registration Hearing will be heard at the date, time and place/forum notified by the State Football Body;

(ii) prior to the Re-Registration Hearing, the relevant Controlling Body will provide the Re-Registration Panel with a list of the suspension(s) of the Deregistered Player or Football Official, the grounds for those suspension(s) (i.e. the relevant Reportable Offence or Policy Breach) and any other relevant details regarding the deregistration of the Player or Football Official;

(iii) the Deregistered Player or Football Official, their Club and the relevant Controlling Body may make brief submissions to the Re-Registration Panel regarding the Re-Registration Application;

(iv) the Re-Registration Panel may either approve or reject a Re-Registration Application provided that the Re-Registration Panel must not approve a Player's or Football Official's Re-Registration Application unless the panel is reasonably satisfied that:

(A) the Player or Football Official is genuinely rehabilitated and committed to ongoing rehabilitation; and

(B) the Player or Football Official is unlikely to re-offend; and

(C) the Player or Football Official does not pose an unacceptable risk to other Persons;

(v) the Re-Registration Panel must not approve a conditional re-registration in respect of a Player or Football Official (for example, allow re-registration as a particular kind of Football Official);

(vi) the Re-Registration Panel:

(A) may regulate any Re-Registration Hearing in such manner as the Re-Registration Panel determines; and

(B) is not bound by the rules of evidence or by practices and procedures applicable to a court of law and may inform itself as to any matter in such manner as it determines; and

(vii) the decision of the Re-Registration Panel shall be final and binding.

(e) A Player or Football Official may only submit one (1) Re-Registration Application per 12-month period.

(f) If a State Football Body considers that exceptional and compelling circumstances exist which may reasonably justify a Re-Registration Panel considering a Re-Registration Application prior to the end of the 12-month period specified in Section 7.7(a), then the State Football Body may, with the prior approval of the AFL General Manager Game Development (or their nominee), waive a portion of that 12-month period and arrange an early Re-Registration Hearing.

(g) If a Player or Football Official is re-registered and subsequently receives a suspension as a result of a Reportable Offence or Policy Breach:

(i) where that Player or Football Official was previously Deregistered under Section 7.2 or 7.3, the Player or Football Official will be permanently

Deregistered from participating in any Competition as a Player or Football Official with no further right of appeal or right to apply for re-registration; or

(ii) where that Player or Football Official was previously deregistered under Section 7.4, the State Football Body (in consultation with the AFL) may determine to permanently Deregister the Player or Football Official or grant continued conditional registration.

*[**Guidance note**: Under Section 7.7(g)(ii), permanent Deregistration will not occur automatically and it will be at the discretion of the State Controlling Body, in consultation with the AFL, whether the Player or Football Official is permanently Deregistered.]*

(h) For the avoidance of doubt:

(i) a Re-Registration Hearing is an application for re-registration only and is not a review or appeal of any previous sanctions;

(ii) there is no review or appeal process in relation to a Deregistration.

8. Gender diversity (participation of transgender and non-binary people)

The AFL Gender Diversity Policy Community Football (as amended from time to time) is adopted as part of this Policy Handbook and its terms are deemed terms of this Policy Handbook.

PART C – MEMBER PROTECTION & INTEGRITY

Member protection statement

The AFL regards violence, discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and abuse in any form, including online, as unacceptable. The AFL believes that all people have the right to work, play and socialise in an environment which is safe and inclusive. In other words, our members (i.e. participants in Australian Football) have the right to be protected from unacceptable conduct whilst participating in our sport.

Any complaints of inappropriate behaviour will be treated seriously and sensitively and, if required under this Policy Handbook, investigated thoroughly. Best endeavours will be used to ensure that persons affected by a complaint are not victimised in any way.

What is the purpose of Part C?

- Part C aims to promote ethical and informed decision-making and responsible behaviours within Australian Football and records the AFL's commitment to upholding the rights of its participants to be treated with respect and dignity and to be safe and protected from all forms of discrimination and abuse within Australian Football.

- Part C sets out standards of behaviour that the AFL requires of all individuals associated with Australian Football.

- The general responsibilities and expectations of each Person, Club and Controlling Body are clearly defined in Section 9 while vilification and discrimination, safeguarding children and young people, social media, gambling, respect and responsibility and anti-doping matters are also dealt with under Part C.

The points above are for background only and are not operative terms of this Policy Handbook.

9. Member protection

9.1 Responsibility of a Person

A Person must:

(a) not consume alcohol, smoke or vape at Junior Football;

(b) make themself aware of this Policy Handbook and its contents;

(c) comply with this Policy Handbook and any rules, regulations, by-laws, emergency protocols and policies formally approved and/or adopted by the AFL from time to time, including without limitation, the Laws of the Game;

(d) respect the spirit of fair play;

(e) be ethical, fair, honest and respectful in all their dealings with other people;

(f) contribute to a safe sporting environment and respectful culture which is accepting of individual differences;

(g) prioritise the safety and welfare of children;

(h) recognise the essential role that Umpires and other Football Officials play in Australian Football;

(i) display and foster respect for Umpires and other Football Officials;

(j) comply with all relevant laws including anti-discrimination and child protection laws;

(k) comply with any direction given or investigative or disciplinary measure or procedure imposed in accordance with this Policy Handbook;

(l) where applicable, consent to any screening requirements set out in this Policy Handbook including in relation to national police checks or working with children checks; and

(m) comply with a sanction imposed after a finding that the Person has committed a Reportable Offence or breached this Policy Handbook.

9.2 General code of conduct

A Person or, where applicable, a Controlling Body must not:

(a) engage in conduct which brings, or is likely to bring, the interests of Australian Football or the Controlling Body into disrepute;

(b) act in a manner which is, or is likely to be, prejudicial to the interests of Australian Football or the Controlling Body;

(c) commit a Serious Criminal Offence;

(d) directly or indirectly harass or bully (including cyber bully) any person;

(e) make or post inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory comments in public (including via Social Media) about another person or Controlling Body;

(f) victimise another person for making a complaint under this Policy Handbook;

(g) engage in a sexually inappropriate relationship with a person that the Person coaches, supervises, or has influence, authority or power over;

(h) verbally or physically abuse, threaten, assault or engage in violence with another person, intimidate another person or create a hostile environment;

(i) disclose to a person or organisation any information related to Australian Football that is of a private, confidential or privileged nature without the required consent; and

(j) make a complaint under this Policy Handbook that the Person or Controlling Body knows to be untrue, vexatious, malicious or improper.

9.3 Coach code of conduct

In addition to the obligations under Sections 9.1 and 9.2, a Coach must:

(a) be Accredited;

(b) be reasonable in the demands made on the time commitments of Players, having regard to their health and well-being;

(c) be considerate of the varying maturity and levels of ability of Players when designing practice schedules and practice activities;

(d) if coaching Junior Football, use best endeavours to ensure that every Player plays a minimum of 50% playing time;

(e) always monitor and ensure the health and safety of Players;

(f) seek and follow the advice of appropriately qualified health specialists in relation to the participation of injured or ill Players provided that, where such advice is that a Player is fit to play but that advice is inconsistent with any restrictions in this Policy Handbook on the participation of injured or ill Players, the restrictions in this Policy Handbook must be complied with;

(g) keep up to date with the principles of coaching including skill development and requirements of Accreditation;

(h) display and foster appropriate sporting behaviour, including using best endeavours to procure that Players comply with their obligations under this Policy Handbook;

(i) display and foster respect for Football Officials, opponents, parents and spectators; and

(j) ensure that Players are involved in a positive environment where skill learning and development are priorities.

9.4 Additional responsibilities of a Club

In addition to its obligations under Sections 9.1 and 9.2, a Club (including Club Football Officials) must:

(a) provide a culturally safe and inclusive Club environment for all Persons; and

(b) use its best endeavours to procure compliance by its Football Officials, Players, members and supporters with any sanctions imposed under Part E of this Policy Handbook.

10. Vilification and discrimination (Peek Rule)

10.1 Prohibited conduct

No Person shall act towards or speak to any other person in a manner, or engage in any other conduct which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults another person or group of persons on any basis, including but not limited to, a person's race, religion, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

10.2 AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel

(a) **Appointment by AFL**

The AFL may, from time to time, appoint persons to the AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel.

(b) **Qualifications of panel members**

The AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel will consist of a panel of persons who:

(i) meet the Tribunal qualification requirements specified in Section 25.2(c); and

(ii) in the opinion of the AFL:

(A) have demonstrated knowledge and skills in the resolution of vilification and discrimination matters;

(B) possess sufficient knowledge of Australian Football; and

(C) are sufficiently qualified to competently perform the role of AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel member.

(c) **Function**

The function of the AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel is to provide expert assistance to the AFL and other Controlling Bodies in respect of the conciliation process under Section 10.

(d) **Levy of fee**

A Controlling Body may levy a fee for the administration of a conciliation under Section 10 including the involvement of the AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel (with the fee amount to be determined by the Controlling Body).

10.3 Preliminary conciliation process

(a) Where Section 23.2(a)(ii) or 23.2(c)(ii) applies in relation to an alleged breach of Section 10.1, the AFL or Controlling Body (as applicable) must as soon as practicable:

(i) inform the person alleged to have breached Section 10.1 (**Contravening Person**) of the alleged breach and provide that person with an opportunity to respond to the complaint;

(ii) use reasonable measures to establish the facts of the alleged Policy Breach.

*[**Guidance note**: Sections 23.2(h) (Cooperation with an investigation) and 23.2(i) (Investigations involving minors) apply to any investigation undertaken by the AFL or Controlling Body in establishing the facts of the alleged Policy Breach.]*

(b) If, following completion of the steps in Section 10.3(a), the AFL or Controlling Body (as applicable) is reasonably satisfied that a breach of Section 10.1 may have occurred, it will arrange for the complaint to be conciliated unless the AFL determines that it is appropriate in all the circumstances that the matter will proceed to Section 10.6.

(c) The AFL or Controlling Body will determine the arrangements for the conciliation, including appointment of a conciliator and the date, time and place/forum (e.g. in person or virtually).

(d) Where a Controlling Body (other than the AFL) arranges to hold a conciliation, it must inform the AFL prior to the conciliation and, in consultation with the AFL, appoint a conciliator. The relevant Controlling Body may, by written notice, request the assistance of an AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel member to conduct the conciliation and the AFL may, subject to the availability of the AFL Vilification and Discrimination Panel, arrange for that requested assistance.

(e) Persons entitled to attend a conciliation are as follows:

(i) person(s) vilified;

(ii) the Contravening Person;

(iii) other person(s) directly involved in the complaint whom in the reasonable opinion of the AFL or Controlling Body ought to attend the conciliation;

(iv) where the alleged breach of Section 10.1 was not about or did not directly impact a specific person or persons (e.g. the prohibited conduct vilified a group of persons generally without specifying any individual), a representative of that group may attend the conciliation at the invitation of the AFL or Controlling Body for the purpose of providing a victim impact statement and more generally to provide the perspectives of that group of vilified persons in the conduct of the conciliation;

(v) an employee of the AFL and/or the Controlling Body directly involved in the conduct of the conciliation;

(vi) conciliator; and

(vii) where a Person involved in a conciliation is under the age of eighteen (18) years:

(A) a Club Officer (who must not be a parent or guardian of the Person) must attend to assist and support the Person; and

(B) a parent or guardian of the Person may attend a conciliation in support of the Person.

(f) All conciliation participants are permitted and encouraged to have a support person present at the conciliation. Support persons will not be advocates or actively participate in the conciliation.

(g) All conciliation participants are discouraged from having a legal practitioner as their support person or in any other capacity in conciliation.

10.4 Agreed outcomes at conciliation

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Policy Handbook, the conciliation participants will be at liberty to consider and agree to any outcome or sanction including but not limited to any of the following (or a combination of them):

(i) suspension of a Contravening Person from playing and/or officiating in Matches at any level;

(ii) if reasonably practicable, attendance at or participation in a community service program by the Contravening Person;

(iii) completion of relevant education by a Contravening Person;

(iv) the provision of a public apology or apologies by a Contravening Person.

(b) For the avoidance of doubt:

(i) the person(s) vilified, the Contravening Person and the AFL or Controlling Body must all agree to any outcome or sanction;

(ii) the conciliation participants may not agree to any outcome that binds or sanctions any Person that is not a conciliation participant;

(iii) the effect of any suspension agreed under Section 10.4(a)(i) will be subject to the requirements outlined under Section 25.5.

(c) In their consideration of agreed outcomes and sanctions, the conciliation participants should have regard to the following:

(i) the nature of the Policy Breach and all the circumstances in which it was undertaken including the setting (e.g. during the course of a Match, during the course of an official or unofficial Club activity, in a public place, in a private setting);

(ii) the extent to which the Policy Breach caused offence or hurt to the vilified person or others (e.g. was it undertaken in an aggressive or threatening way, did it offend or hurt a large number of people);

(iii) whether there have been previous instances of Policy Breaches by the Contravening Person;

(iv) whether the Contravening Person has received any relevant training and education.

10.5 Confidentiality and public statement

(a) Subject to Section 10.5(b):

(i) the particulars of a complaint and the conciliation shall at all times remain confidential; and

(ii) a person shall not publicly comment on or disseminate to any person information concerning a complaint or conciliation at any time prior to, during or after the conciliation.

(b) Where a complaint is resolved by conciliation, any public statement (including any apology) made concerning the complaint and its resolution shall be agreed upon by the parties.

10.6 No conciliation outcome

Where the matter has not proceeded to conciliation pursuant to Section 10.3(b), or the AFL or Controlling Body (as applicable) is of the opinion that the matter has not been resolved by conciliation, the AFL or Controlling Body must:

(a) complete a Notice of Breach and issue it to the Contravening Person and the Contravening Person's Club;

(b) provide the person(s) vilified and that person's Club (if applicable) with a copy of the Notice of Breach; and

(c) proceed to deal with the matter under Section 23.5 (Early Guilty Plea – Policy Breach),

unless the AFL or Controlling Body (with the approval of the AFL) determines that exceptional and compelling circumstances apply such that:

(d) the matter should be referred directly to the Tribunal, in which case the matter will proceed directly to the Tribunal to be determined under Section 25 and the Contravening Person may not enter an Early Guilty Plea; or

(e) the matter should not proceed to a Notice of Breach or be referred directly to the Tribunal, in which case the matter will be closed or dealt with in such other manner as determined by the AFL.

***[Guidance note**: Where a matter is being managed by a Controlling Body, the Controlling Body must seek the approval of the AFL if it considers that exceptional and compelling circumstances apply].*

11. Safeguarding Children and Young People

11.1 AFL commitment to safeguarding Children and Young People

All Children and Young People, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from Child Abuse. The AFL is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of all Children and Young People.

11.2 Controlling Body commitment to safeguarding Children and Young People

(a) To support the AFL's commitment under Section 11.1, each Controlling Body will commit to the following:

(i) the Controlling Body will have zero tolerance for Child Abuse;

(ii) the Controlling Body will seek to provide an environment in which all Children and Young People feel supported and respected;

(iii) the Controlling Body will recognise the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, LGBTIQA+ Children and Young People, Children and Young People from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and Children and Young People with a disability and will implement culturally appropriate practices and procedures to address those needs;

(iv) the Controlling Body will consider the opinions of Children and Young People and use their opinions to inform the development of policies and procedures in relation to the protection of Children and Young People;

(v) the Controlling Body will engage with Children and Young People and their parents/guardians about safeguarding practices and help empower them to speak up when they see or hear something that makes them feel unsafe and ensure that relevant information and resources are accessible to them; and

(vi) in the event a concern or allegation is raised in relation to Child Abuse or any other inappropriate behaviour towards a Child or Young Person that has occurred while a Child or Young Person is under the Controlling Body's care, the Controlling Body will ensure it is treated seriously, in a culturally sensitive manner and fully investigated in accordance with this Policy Handbook and any other related policies or procedures and relevant legislation.

(b) Each Controlling Body and Club must ensure that it complies with all statutory requirements in respect of safeguarding Children and Young People, including ensuring all relevant Persons who work with Children and Young People have complied with their working with children obligations applicable to their State or Territory.

*[**Guidance note**: Further information and resources for Controlling Bodies and Clubs in relation to safeguarding requirements can be found at https://play.afl/safeguarding.]*

11.3 Behavioural standards

(a) A Person must:

(i) treat all Children and Young People with respect;

(ii) wherever possible ensure that another adult is present when working near or with Children and Young People;

(iii) use disciplinary strategies that are fair, respectful and appropriate to the developmental stage of the Children or Young People involved;

(iv) wherever possible ensure that all email, text messages and other forms of communication sent to a Child or Young Person are copied to their parent/guardian;

(v) ensure that approval has been obtained from a Child or Young Person and their parent/guardian prior to any photograph or film being taken of a Child or Young Person;

(vi) ensure that any photograph or film taken of a Child or Young Person is taken in circumstances that are directly relevant to the Child's or Young Person's participation in a Controlling Body program and the Child or Young Person is appropriately dressed and posed;

(vii) immediately report any concern for the safety or wellbeing of a Child or Young Person, or a suspected breach of this Section 11, in accordance with this Policy Handbook.

(b) A Person must in the course of their employment or engagement by a Controlling Body:

(i) ensure that all Children and Young People are appropriately supervised while participating in a Controlling Body program while respecting the privacy of Children and Young People;

(ii) limit all interactions with Children and Young People to the confines of official duties;

(iii) use best endeavours to complete a risk assessment for any Controlling Body program that involves Children or Young People prior to carrying out that Controlling Body program;

(iv) immediately disclose any charges or convictions affecting their suitability to engage with Children and Young People to Controlling Body senior management.

11.4 Prohibited conduct

(a) A Person must not:

(i) engage in any form of sexual behaviour with or in the presence of Children or Young People;

(ii) engage in any other form of behaviour that may reasonably be considered to be Child Abuse;

(iii) initiate unnecessary physical contact with a Child or Young Person;

(iv) do things of a personal nature for a Child or Young Person that the Child or Young Person can do themselves;

(v) take disciplinary action involving physical punishment or any other form of treatment that could reasonably be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening or humiliating;

(vi) use language or behaviour towards Children or Young People that is inappropriate, harassment, abusive, sexually provocative, intended to humiliate or culturally inappropriate;

(vii) consume alcohol, drugs or tobacco when working with any Children or Young People; or

(viii) use a computer, mobile phone, video camera, camera or Social Media to exploit or harass Children or Young People, or access child exploitation material.

(b) A Person must not in the course of their employment or engagement by a Controlling Body:

(i) give a gift to a Child or Young Person engaged in a Controlling Body program, activity or service without the permission of Controlling Body senior management and the Child's or Young Person's parent/guardian;

(ii) transport any Children or Young People without the permission of Controlling Body senior management and the Child's or Young Person's parent/guardian;

(iii) arrange contact, including online contact, with Children or Young People outside of the Controlling Body's programs, activities or services.

11.5 Reporting procedures

(a) If a Person believes that a Child or Young Person is in imminent risk of Harm or immediate danger, that Person must report the situation directly to the police - CALL '000'.

(b) If a person (including a Person (as defined) or member of the public) believes that a Person has committed a breach of Section 11, that person must:

(i) contact the relevant Controlling Body immediately; and

(ii) as soon as practicable, submit a written complaint to the AFL under Section 23.1(a).

(c) When a Controlling Body is notified by a reporting person of an alleged breach of Section 11, the Controlling Body must use best endeavours to ensure the reporting person submits a written complaint to the AFL under Section 23.1(a) and support the reporting person to do so.

(d) For the avoidance of doubt, once a written complaint is received by the AFL under Section 23.1(a) it will then be processed under the applicable provisions of Part E (Disciplinary), including an assessment of the written complaint under Section 23.2(a).

12. Social Media

12.1 AFL commitment to online safety

The AFL has signed the Online Safety Statement of Commitment alongside 23 other major sporting organisations from around Australia to actively support the work of the Commonwealth Government eSafety Commissioner to help keep all Australians, from grassroots to professional athletes, team members and officials, safe online.

12.2 AFL statement on Social Media

(a) It is important to understand that content posted on Social Media can have serious ramifications for the Person involved, the AFL and other Controlling Bodies, their people, commercial partners or other related organisations and individuals. Comments may be mistakenly attributed to the AFL or other Controlling Body in some circumstances. It is therefore important that a Person always think twice before posting.

(b) Before using Social Media, the AFL encourages all Persons to ask themselves the following questions:

(i) Am I revealing any sensitive or confidential information?

(ii) Would I want my Club, Coach, team, family or friends to see this?

(iii) Will I regret my actions?

(iv) Could this negatively impact the reputation of the AFL, other Controlling Body or a Club?

(v) Could this be seen as inappropriate, discriminatory, defamatory or in breach of any laws?

12.3 Behavioural standards on Social Media

When using Social Media, a Person must:

(a) respect the privacy of others;

(b) ensure that content published is factually accurate;

(c) be polite and respectful with others; and

(d) adhere to the terms of use of the relevant Social Media, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and other applicable laws.

12.4 Prohibited conduct on Social Media

When using Social Media, a Person must not:

(a) post or engage with (e.g. like, comment on, share, forward) material that is offensive, obscene, disparaging, defamatory, threatening, harassment, bullying, discriminatory, homophobic, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful;

(b) talk negatively about a Controlling Body, its employees, its competitors, corporate partners, broadcast partners, sponsors, or customers/fans or any other related organisation;

(c) represent a personal view as that of a Controlling Body;

(d) bring a Controlling Body's brand and reputation into disrepute;

(e) post or release any Controlling Body information or material (including images or video) prior to its official launch or announcement by the Controlling Body in the public domain;

(f) plagiarise or breach copyright of another person;

(g) access, download or transmit any kind of sexually explicit material (including child pornography), violent and/or graphic images (without medical purpose);

(h) access, download or transmit information on the use and construction of weapons, explosives and/or other tools of violence or terrorism;

(i) breach the reasonable expectation of privacy of a person; or

(j) access to the computing resources of a Controlling Body without the prior consent of the Controlling Body.

12.5 Official Social Media engagement

Before engaging in Social Media as a representative of a Controlling Body, a Person must be formally authorised to do so by the relevant Controlling Body.

13. Gambling and match fixing

13.1 Corrupt conduct

A Person must not contrive or attempt to contrive the result of a Match or Contingency or any aspect of a Match or Contingency in exchange for a bribe, benefit or reward.

13.2 No gambling

(a) Subject to Section 13.2(b), a Player or Football Official must:

(i) not bet or wager on a Contingency;

(ii) ensure that no other person has access to their betting accounts which would enable such person to bet on any Contingency;

(iii) not have an interest in any bet or wager on a Contingency or have someone else place a bet or wager on their behalf;

(iv) not facilitate or assist the making of a bet or wager on a Contingency; or

(v) not without the prior permission of the relevant Controlling Body, encourage, induce, advertise or promote betting on a Contingency.

(b) Section 13.2(a) does not apply where a Player or Football Official has no direct or indirect connection with the relevant Contingency.

*[**Guidance note**: For example, a Player or Football Official who is 18 years or older may bet on an AFL or AFLW Match where that Player or Football Official participates in a Tier 2 Competition and otherwise has no indirect or direct connection with the AFL or AFLW Match.]*

(c) For the avoidance of doubt, Section 13.2(b) does not permit a Person associated with a Club to engage in conduct under Section 13.2(a) in respect of a Contingency relating to the relevant Controlling Body which does not involve their Club.

13.3 Insider information

A Player or Football Official must not disclose or provide any information, advice or opinion to any person about the teams playing in any Match (including but not limited to, the actual or likely composition of the team, player injuries, the form of players and tactics), unless the Person can establish to the satisfaction of the Controlling Body that:

(a) such information, advice or opinion was already in the public domain or given in a bona fide media interview; or

(b) the information, advice or opinion was not provided in any of the following circumstances:

(i) for the purpose of betting or wagering by any person on a Contingency;

(ii) negligently without regard to whether it would be used for betting or wagering by any person on a Contingency;

(iii) for consideration or reward.

13.4 Performance on merits

A Player or Football Official must at all times perform on their merits and must not induce or encourage any other Player or Football Official not to perform on their merits, in any Match or in relation to any aspect of a Match for any reason whatsoever.

13.5 Notification

Any Person who is contacted by another person, corporation or entity requesting to engage in conduct which may be prohibited by Section 13 must, within 24 hours of such contact, advise the relevant Controlling Body.

14. Anti-doping

The Australian Football Anti-Doping Code (as amended from time to time) is adopted as part of this Policy Handbook and its terms are deemed terms of this Policy Handbook.

PART D – HEALTH & SAFETY

What is the purpose of Part D?

- Part D aims to promote a healthy and safe environment within Australian Football. It sets out requirements around injury management, the use of protective equipment and key considerations for Player health and safety including concussion management, managing extreme weather, the importance of ensuring protection from the sun and ultraviolet (UV) light, playing whilst pregnant or post-partum and managing active bleeding.

15. Injury management

15.1 AFL statement on injury management

(a) The AFL expects that Matches at all levels are played in a safe environment. To ensure the prevention of, and prompt attention to, injuries in Australian Football, it is important that adequate and timely first aid is delivered. Sports trainers and first aid providers play a key role in player preparation and safety at all levels.

(b) It is important that sports trainers and first aid providers are trained in the first aid needs relevant to Australian Football at the level at which they are involved.

(c) A sports trainer or first aid provider involved with a Club should have a clear understanding of the role and importance of emergency and injury management in Australian Football and injury prevention.

(d) A sports trainer or first aid provider must read and understand The Management of Sport-Related Concussion in Australian Football.

15.2 Minimum requirements for matches and training

(a) Unless otherwise notified by the AFL, each Controlling Body and Club must ensure that at each Match or training session:

(i) at least one Sports Trainer or First Aid Provider with Appropriate Minimum Qualifications (see Section 15.3) for the relevant level of Australian Football is in attendance;

(ii) a first aid kit and adequate sport-specific rescue/transport equipment (e.g. stretcher) are available; and

(iii) there is marked venue access for emergency vehicles.

(b) Where the minimum requirements specified in Section 15.2(a) are not met, the Match or training session may be postponed, rescheduled or cancelled and must not commence until such time as the minimum requirements are met.

(c) In addition to the minimum requirements, the AFL strongly recommends that at each Match and training session:

(i) each Club has access to an automated external defibrillator (AED); and

(ii) each Sports Trainer or First Aid Provider in attendance is easily identifiable (e.g. by wearing a vest or armband).

15.3 Appropriate Minimum Qualifications

(a) Unless otherwise notified by the AFL, for the purposes of this Policy Handbook, **Appropriate Minimum Qualifications** means the minimum qualifications set out in the following Table:

Level	***Tier 1 Competition (e.g. State League)***	***All Other Competitions***
Recommended	AFL Level 2 Sports Trainer or Qualified Medical Professional	AFL Level 1 or Level 2 Sports Trainer or Qualified Medical Professional
Minimum	AFL Level 1 Sports Trainer or Qualified Medical Professional	AFL First Aider or Qualified Medical Professional

(b) The terms specified in Table 1 have the following meanings:

(i) **AFL First Aider** means a person who has:

(A) obtained a nationally accredited first aid and CPR qualification which is current and up-to-date and includes assessed competencies HLTAID011 (Provide First Aid) and HLTAID009 (Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation); and

(B) has completed the AFL First Aid and Concussion Management online module within the previous 24 months.

*[**Guidance note**: HLTAID011 (Provide First Aid) remains valid for 3 years after completion. HLTAID009 Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation remains valid for 1 year (and must be renewed annually).]*

(ii) **Level 2 Sports Trainer** means a person who has:

(A) completed a Controlling Body-approved Level 2 Sports Trainer Course which is current and up to date; and

(B) has completed the AFL First Aid and Concussion Management online module within the previous 24 months.

*[**Guidance note**: HLTAID011 (Provide First Aid) and HLTAID009 Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation are both prerequisites for a Level 2 Sports Trainer Course. HLTAID011 (Provide First Aid) remains valid for 3 years after completion. HLTAID009 Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation remains valid for 1 year (and must be renewed annually).]*

(iii) **Level 1 Sports Trainer** means a person who has:

(A) completed a Controlling Body-approved Level 1 Sports Trainer Course which is current and up to date; and

(B) has completed the AFL First Aid and Concussion Management online module within the previous 24 months.

*[**Guidance note**: HLTAID011 (Provide First Aid) and HLTAID009 Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation are both prerequisites for a Level 1 Sports Trainer Course. HLTAID011 (Provide First Aid) remains valid for 3 years after completion. HLTAID009 Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation remains valid for 1 year (and must be renewed annually).];*

(iv) **Qualified Medical Professional (QMP)** means a person who:

(A) is a qualified and AHPRA registered medical practitioner, paramedic, physiotherapist, or nurse with appropriate first aid competencies (including or equivalent to HLTAID011 (Provide First Aid) and HLTAID009 (Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)); and

(B) has completed the AFL First Aid and Concussion Management online module within the previous 24 months.

(c) A Sports Trainer or First Aid Provider must hold a current working with children check (or equivalent) or otherwise meet the working with children requirements in their State or Territory.

15.4 Registration of Sports Trainers or First Aid Providers

(a) To register as a Sports Trainer or First Aid Provider, a person must complete registration on PlayHQ by accurately and honestly completing the relevant registration form.

(b) Following completion of the registration process set out in 15.4(a), the AFL may, based on the information provided, request additional information from the applicant including a current National Police Check.

(c) If information (including any National Police Check) provided to the AFL discloses that a Sports Trainer or First Aid Provider has been convicted of, or is charged with, a Serious Criminal Offence the AFL may revoke that Person's registration and notify that person's Club.

16. Protective equipment

16.1 Laws of the Game

(a) Law 9 of the Laws of the Game regulates the management and use of Protective Equipment in Australian Football.

(b) Section 16 is supplementary to Law 9 of the Laws of the Game and aims to assist Controlling Bodies to apply Law 9 of the Laws of the Game and regulate the use of Protective Equipment.

16.2 Categories of Protective Equipment

(a) Protective Equipment will be categorised as follows:

(i) Category 1 Protective Equipment;

(ii) Category 2 Protective Equipment; and

(iii) Category 3 Protective Equipment.

(b) The three categories of Protective Equipment are defined in Appendix 5.

16.3 Using Protective Equipment

(a) During a Match, a Player may use:

(i) Category 1 Protective Equipment: no prior notification, inspection or approval is required;

(ii) Category 2 Protective Equipment: inspection of Class 2 Protective Equipment by relevant Controlling Body required prior to the relevant Match;

(iii) Category 3 Protective Equipment: prior approval of the relevant Controlling Body required in accordance with Section 16.3(b).

(b) A Controlling Body may only grant approval under Section 16.3(a)(iii) following a physical inspection of the Class 3 Protective Equipment. To assist a Controlling Body with its assessment, Players are encouraged to provide medical certification from a Qualified Medical Practitioner which outlines the clinical need for the Class 3 Protective Equipment and confirms that it does not pose any unreasonable safety risk to the Player or others.

(c) Any approval granted in respect of Category 3 Protective Equipment may be withdrawn by the relevant Controlling Body at any time.

16.4 Prohibited protective equipment

Equipment with any of the following characteristics will not be classified as Protective Equipment and must not be approved by a Controlling Body:

(a) equipment made with metal;

(b) equipment with an exposed hinge;

(c) equipment with an exposed point, strap or edge;

(d) equipment with sharp edges;

(e) equipment made with hard plastic (other than Thermoplastic where there is sufficient exterior padding).

16.5 Mouthguards

(a) Mouthguards have a definite role in preventing injuries to the teeth and face and for this reason they are strongly recommended at all levels of football. Mouthguards should be worn for all Matches and contact training sessions.

(b) Custom made mouthguards offer the best protection and comfort for the Player and should be used by all Players.

*[**Guidance note:** a 'boil and bite' mouthguard will provide better protection than no mouthguard and should be used if a custom made mouthguard cannot be sourced.]*

16.6 Spectacles

Players who wish to wear spectacles during Matches and training sessions should wear spectacles with plastic frames and plastic lenses. A band must also hold the spectacles on securely.

17. Extreme weather

17.1 AFL statement on extreme weather

Environmental factors may affect the playing of Australian Football. On some occasions, extreme weather conditions (for example, heat, humidity, lightning) may lead to postponement or cancellation of matches, or the implementation of other measures to ensure the safety of Players and Football Officials. This Section sets out the approach that each Controlling Body must adopt when assessing extreme weather conditions.

17.2 Extreme heat

(a) **Effects of extreme heat**

Heat stress can impair the wellbeing of Players and Football Officials (for example, dizziness, headaches and collapse). In extreme cases, heat stroke can develop, which may be life threatening. Preventing and managing heat stress and injury will ensure safe performance and may improve Player recovery. To prevent and manage heat stress, careful planning and preparation is required in accordance with this Section.

(b) **Controlling Body responsibility**

(i) A Controlling Body must:

(A) assess the heat stress risk by regularly reviewing weather information provided by the Bureau of Meteorology; and

(B) use reasonable endeavours to monitor the implementation of heat stress management strategies by Clubs and Players.

(ii) Where there is a risk of heat stress, a Controlling Body must use reasonable endeavours to schedule Matches:

(A) to avoid extremes of heat;

(B) allow for increased rest and recovery breaks; and

(C) at venues equipped with cooling facilities (for example, cool room (where possible), misting fans, shade and air conditioning).

(iii) In addition, a Controlling Body may undertake the following measures to mitigate heat stress:

(A) increase the number of water carriers to run drinks at Matches;

(B) increase the length of intervals to enable teams to leave the field for the shade of the rooms at each break;

(C) reduce length of quarters;

(D) postpone or reschedule Matches.

(c) **Club responsibility**

(i) A Club must monitor environmental factors such as extreme heat in respect of Matches and any training sessions administered by the Club. The Club should assess the heat stress risk by regularly reviewing information provided by the Bureau of Meteorology. Heat stress management strategies should also be implemented at all Matches and training sessions.

(ii) A Club must use reasonable endeavours to:

(A) coordinate training times to avoid extreme heat conditions;

(B) use cooling aids during Matches and training sessions such as ice vests, water spray bottles, cold or iced towels, misting fans (in changerooms and on interchange bench) and shade including portable shade structures;

(C) provide heat permeable apparel to Players;

(D) report incidents of heat stress illness to the relevant Controlling Body;

(E) ensure a Club Football Official is available to monitor and manage Players for heat stress issues as they arise during a Match;

(F) provide adequate fluids (water and/or sport drinks) in appropriate bottles; and

(G) ensure trainers are fit enough to access as many players as possible during the game.

(d) **Player responsibility**

A Player must ensure that the impact of environmental factors such as extreme heat is not exacerbated by their own conduct and take measures to:

(i) use cooling strategies before, during and after Matches (for example, cool shower, ice towels or vest on neck and torso)

(ii) ensure adequate fluid intake prior to and during Matches (500-700mls per quarter);

(iii) monitor hydration, if practical, by pre-and post weighing and replace lost fluids (weight)

(iv) notify Club Football Officials when affected by heat or when performance is noticeably affected;

(v) not play in the heat with an existing illness; and

(vi) apply sun protection sunscreen at least 30 minutes before exposure to the sun.

*[**Guidance Note:** Sunscreen with a UPF rating above 15 is suitable however the AFL recommends a 50+ UPF rating]*

17.3 Lightning

(a) **AS1768-2007**

(i) A Controlling Body must use best endeavours to comply with AS1768-2007, entitled The Lightning Protection Standard, published on 10 January 2007 (**Lightning Standard**).

(ii) While the Lightning Standard will not necessarily prevent damage or personal injury due to lightning, it will reduce the probability of such damage or injury occurring.

(b) 30/30 Safety Guideline

(i) In the absence of specific information from a weather radar, lightning location system or specialised warning device then the relevant Controlling Body and Club(s) must refer to the 30/30 Safety Guideline.

(ii) The 30/30 Safety Guideline specifies that where lightning is considered to be a possible or actual threat to a Match or training session the following procedures and considerations apply:

(A) The observation of approaching storm clouds, the first flash of lightning or clap of thunder, no matter how far away should heighten lightning awareness. The level of risk depends on one's location (direction and distance) relative to the storm cell and the direction in which the storm system is traveling.

(B) A simple method of determining the distance to the storm cell is to measure the time elapsed from when the lightning flash is observed and when the associated clap of thunder is heard.

(C) Light travels faster than sound. Assuming that the light from the flash reaches the observer instantaneously, and knowing that sound takes approximately three (3) seconds to travel one (1) kilometre, the distance can be determined by using the following rule:

distance (in km) = time from observing the flash to hearing thunder (in 3 seconds).

(D) It is important to remember that lightning may be obscured by clouds so it must be assumed that when thunder is heard, lightning is in the vicinity. In such cases, careful judgment must be used to determine whether a threat exists.

(E) The accepted "safe" distance from lightning is greater than 10km. This means that as the time interval between observing the flash and hearing the thunder approaches 30 seconds, all those in exposed areas should be seeking or already inside safe shelters. A storm cell with lightning activity within 10km constitutes a threat.

(F) It is recommended that people wait a minimum of 30 minutes after the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder. This figure is based on the observation that the typical storm moves at about 40km/h. Thus, waiting 30 minutes allows the thunderstorm to be about 20km away, minimising the likelihood of a nearby lightning strike.

(G) It is important to emphasise that blue skies and lack of rainfall are not adequate reasons to breach the 30 minute minimum return-to-activity rule.

(c) **General lightning safety guideline**

(i) Prior to Match Day

A Controlling Body must assess the thunderstorm activity and lightning risk to Matches and training sessions by regularly reviewing weather information provided by the Bureau of Meteorology.

(ii) Match Day

(A) If lightning is predicted within 10km of a Match venue at the scheduled starting time, that Match may be delayed or suspended by the relevant Controlling Body or Umpire(s).

(B) A decision to resume play in respect of a Match which has been delayed or suspended due to lightning will be made by the Controlling Body or Umpire(s) based on information obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology and in consultation with the relevant Clubs. As per 17.3(b)(ii)(F), it is recommended that at least 30 minutes have elapsed since the last sighting of lightning or sound of thunder.

(d) **Club responsibility**

(i) A Club must monitor environmental factors such as lightning in respect of Matches and any training sessions administered by the Club. The Club should assess the lightning risk by reviewing information provided by the Bureau of Meteorology.

(ii) Where there is a risk of lightning, a Club must adhere to the following general guidelines:

(A) If a lightning threat emerges, a nominated Club Football Official must contact all relevant coaching, rehabilitation and training staff and provide updates on a regular basis.

(B) A decision to delay, suspend or resume training should be made in consultation with relevant coaching and administration staff.

(C) If Players are training when the lightning threat becomes real, then they should leave the training venue immediately and take shelter inside a building or car. They should not shelter under or near trees.

(D) Once the storm's path has been reassessed, there must be a minimum of 30 minutes elapsed before returning to training.

(E) Where there is no access to Bureau of Meteorology information, the 30/30 Safety Guideline serves as a guide for the suspension and subsequent resumption of activities.

18. Sun / UV protection

18.1 AFL statement on sun / UV protection

(a) A Person may be exposed to ultraviolet (UV) light when participating in Australian Football. Prolonged exposure to UV light can result in sunburn, chronic sun damage to both skin and eyes and increase the risk of precancerous and cancerous skin lesions. Sport-specific factors such as increased sweating can increase skin photosensitivity and result in an increased risk of sunburn. A Person should undertake sun protection measures for all outdoor activities, particularly when the UV levels are 3 or greater. The World Health Organisation (WHO) outlines the UV radiation exposure categories or UV Index (UVI) with levels from 0 low to 11+ extreme.

Exposure Category	**UVI Range**
Low	< 2
Moderate	3 to 5
High	6 to 7
Very High	8 to 10
Extreme	11+

(b) Australian Football is only one contributor to a Person's overall sun exposure and a Person should apply these guidelines to non-football related leisure and work activities.

18.2 Club and Person responsibility

(a) Clubs are encouraged to develop specific sun protection guidelines that are relevant to their geographic location and training requirements. A sport-specific sun protection guideline template can be found on the SunSmart website.

(b) Club Officers should download the SunSmart Mobile Application to assist with monitoring of daily UV levels.

(c) Where possible, Clubs should reduce sun exposure for Players and Football Officials by scheduling outdoor training sessions outside of times of peak UV levels (i.e. early morning or late afternoon noting that UV levels are higher in the middle of the day).

(d) Training sessions undertaken when UV levels are high should be reduced in duration where possible.

(e) Clubs should provide shade for Football Officials participating at training sessions and Matches. Additional shade structures on the benches for Matches should also be considered when matches are played when high UV levels are 3 or greater.

(f) At times when Players and Football Officials have an increased risk of sun exposure, the following additional measures should be employed:

(i) SPF 50+ water-resistant sunscreen should be available at all outdoor training sessions and Matches when the UV levels are (or are expected to be) greater than 3. Expired sunscreen should not be used.

(ii) Players and Football Officials should be educated by Clubs to apply a generous amount of sunscreen to all exposed skin at least 30 minutes before sun exposure and sweating occurs and reapplied every 2 hours.

(iii) Zinc based sunscreens can be used as an alternative and applied to high exposure areas such as the face.

(iv) Where possible, long-sleeved clothing, with Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) should be worn. A UPF rating above 15 is suitable however the AFL recommends a 50+ UPF rating.

(v) Players and Football Officials should wear a hat and sunglasses for outdoor training sessions where practical.

(g) Players and Football Officials should perform regular self-examination of their skin and consult a doctor if they become aware of any changes. These might include new freckles or moles or a change in size, colour or shape.

19. Concussion

The Management of Sport-Related Concussion in Australian Football (as amended from time to time) is adopted as part of this Policy Handbook and its terms are deemed terms of this Policy Handbook.

20. Pregnant players

20.1 AFL statement on pregnant players

(a) The AFL respects the rights of women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or the carer of a child to participate in Australian Football and is committed to providing support to assist them to do so. The AFL prohibits any actions that may amount to discrimination against a player because of the Player's pregnancy, breastfeeding or status as the carer of a child.

(b) While many sporting activities are safe for pregnant women, there may be risks that apply to some women during pregnancy. Those risks will depend on the nature of the sporting activity and the pregnant woman’s circumstances. The AFL respects and supports the rights of pregnant players who, in consultation with medical professionals, elect to continue to participate in Australian Football competitions, provided that at all times the health and wellbeing of the Player and their unborn child is paramount.

20.2 Club and Player responsibility

(a) All Players should agree to, as soon as possible after becoming aware that they are pregnant, and on an ongoing basis throughout their pregnancy, obtain and disclose to their Club Coach regular medical advice which sets out the Player's doctor's opinion regarding:

(i) the risks associated with participating in the Australian Football competition and associated training and events while pregnant;

(ii) taking into account their individual circumstances, whether it is safe for the player to continue participating in the Australian Football competition and associated training and events; and

(iii) any other information that the doctor considers relevant.

(b) The Club may seek additional information about a Player's pregnancy as reasonably required.

(c) All information provided by a Player about her pregnancy must be kept strictly confidential unless the express consent of the Player is provided. Announcements regarding the Player's pregnancy should only be made in consultation with the Player.

(d) It is recommended that:

(i) after a Player becomes aware that they are pregnant, the Player should receive medical clearance and sign an insurance declaration form (prescribed by the AFL from time to time) prior to participation; and

(ii) Clubs ensure that all pregnant Players are advised that the Australian Football National Risk Protection Program may not cover them while pregnant.

21. Active bleeding

Law 24 of the Laws of the Game regulates the management of active bleeding in Australian Football.

PART E – DISCIPLINARY

What is the purpose of Part E?

- This Part E (Disciplinary) sets out how alleged Reportable Offences and Policy Breaches are dealt with.

- Alleged Reportable Offences are processed in accordance with Section 22, which covers Umpire reports, the referral and investigation of alleged Reportable Offences, Notices of Charge and Early Guilty Pleas.

- Alleged Policy Breaches are processed in accordance with Section 23, which covers the submission and investigation of written complaints, Notices of Breach and decisions available to the AFL and Controlling Bodies following an investigation of a Policy Breach.

- Following the processes under Section 22 or Section 23, a matter may be referred to the Tribunal. Section 25 deals with the operation and powers of the Tribunal. Section 26 deals with appeals from the Tribunal to the Appeal Board.

- The points above are for background only and are not operative terms of this Policy Handbook.

22. Reportable Offences

22.1 Making a report

(a) **Notice of Report– Umpire report**

(i) Subject to Section 22.1(a)(ii), if an Umpire considers that a Person has committed a Reportable Offence, the Umpire will use their best endeavours to inform the Person that they have been reported either:

(A) immediately following the relevant incident;

(B) before the commencement of the quarter following the relevant incident; or

(C) if the relevant incident occurs in the final quarter, as soon as reasonably practicable after the completion of the Match.

(ii) An Umpire may inform the captain, acting captain or Club Officer of a report where it is impractical to inform the Person.

(iii) As soon as practicable after completion of the Match, the Umpire must:

(A) complete a Notice of Report;

(B) lodge the Notice of Report together with the Match paperwork to the Controlling Body; and

(C) retain a copy of the Notice of Report,

provided that the Notice of Report must be lodged no later than twenty four (24) hours after completion of the relevant Match or at such other time as the Controlling Body determines.

(b) **Incident Referral Form – Umpire or Club incident referral after Match**

(i) If an Umpire considers that a Person may have committed a Reportable Offence but did not report that Person under Section 22.1(a), then as soon as practicable after completion of the Match, the Umpire must:

(A) complete an Incident Referral Form; and

(B) lodge the Incident Referral Form with the Controlling Body in the manner prescribed by the Controlling Body from time to time (together with the Match paperwork if possible),

provided that the Incident Referral Form must be lodged no later than 5:00pm on the next business day after the relevant Match or at such other time as the Controlling Body determines.

*[**Guidance note**: If an Incident Referral Form is lodged, refer to Section 22.2.]*

(ii) If a Club considers that a Person has committed a Reportable Offence, the Club may:

(A) complete an Incident Referral Form, or such other form as prescribed by the Controlling Body; and

(B) lodge the Incident Referral Form with the Controlling Body in the manner specified by the Controlling Body from time to time,

provided that the Incident Referral Form must be lodged no later than 5:00pm on the next business day after the relevant Match or at such other time as the Controlling Body determines.

*[**Guidance note**: If an Incident Referral Form is lodged, refer to Section 22.2.]*

(iii) The Controlling Body may levy a fee for the administration of an Incident Referral Form lodged in accordance with Section 22.1(b)(ii), which may be refunded if the Controlling Body determines that the Person who is the subject of the Incident Referral Form has committed a Reportable Offence.

(iv) An Incident Referral Form lodged in accordance with Section 22.1(b)(ii) may not be withdrawn by the Club after it has been lodged with the Controlling Body.

(c) **Incident Referral Form – Power of Executive Officer**

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Policy Handbook, if an Executive Officer (or their nominee) considers that a Person has committed a Reportable Offence during a Match, the Executive Officer (or their nominee) may report that Person by completing an Incident Referral Form for assessment by the Controlling Body under 22.2(a).

22.2 Investigating an incident

(a) **Assessment**

As soon as practicable after a Controlling Body receives:

(i) a Notice of Report under Section 22.1(a)(iii);

(ii) an Incident Referral Form under Section 22.1(b)(i), 22.1(b)(ii) or 22.1(c); or

(iii) a referral under Section 23.2(a)(i)(D) or 23.2(c)(i)(F),

the Controlling Body must undertake an assessment of the alleged Reportable Offence set out in the Notice of Report or Incident Referral Form or referral and following its assessment, the Controlling Body may complete a Notice of Charge.

*[**Guidance note**: If a Notice of Charge is completed, refer to Section 22.3. Where any offence involves conduct that is considered to constitute vilification or discrimination, the offence is to be dealt with under Section 10 of this Policy Handbook]*

(b) **Match Review Panel**

(i) A Controlling Body may appoint any number of Persons to assist with the assessment of alleged Reportable Offences, including the review of Match footage (**Match Review Panel**). For the avoidance of doubt, the Match Review Panel may comprise one Person.

(ii) If instructed by a Controlling Body, the Match Review Panel may:

(A) assist an Executive Officer in relation to a determination under Section 22.1(c); or

(B) assist the Controlling Body in relation to an assessment under Section 22.2(a); or

(C) review Match footage and/or investigate any incident which occurred during a Match using reasonable measures (including by interviewing any relevant Person and taking witness statements) to assess whether a Reportable Offence has been committed during a Match.

(iii) If, after an assessment under Section 22.2(b)(ii)(C), the Match Review Panel considers that a Person has committed a Reportable Offence, the Match Review Panel or the Controlling Body must complete a Notice of Charge.

*[**Guidance note**: If a Notice of Charge is completed by the Match Review Panel, refer to Section 22.3.]*

22.3 Notice of Charge

(a) **Issuing Notice of Charge**

If:

(i) a Controlling Body completes a Notice of Charge under Section 22.2(a); or

(ii) a Match Review Panel completes a Notice of Charge under Section 22.2(b)(iii),

then the Controlling Body must, as soon as practicable after the relevant Match, issue the Notice of Charge to the charged Person and that Person's Club.

*[**Guidance note**: Once a Notice of Charge is issued, refer to Section 22.4.]*

(b) **Withdrawal of Notice of Charge**

(i) Subject to Section 22.3(a)(ii), a Match Review Panel or Controlling Body may withdraw a Notice of Charge completed under Section 22.2(a) or 22.2(b)(iii) (as applicable) at any time prior to a Tribunal hearing with notice of the withdrawal to be given to the charged Person and that Person's Club.

(ii) Where a Notice of Charge has been issued with an Early Guilty Plea offer and that Early Guilty Plea offer has been accepted by the charged Person, the Notice of Charge cannot then be withdrawn or amended or a new Notice of Charge issued for the same offence.

(c) **Notice of Charge**

A Notice of Charge must categorise and grade (if applicable) the alleged Reportable Offence based on the categories and gradings of Reportable Offences specified in Appendix 1.

22.4 Early Guilty Plea – Reportable Offence

(a) **Person may enter Early Guilty Plea**

Subject to Section 22.4(c), where a Person has been issued a Notice of Charge, that Person may enter an Early Guilty Plea in relation to the Reportable Offence set out in the Notice of Charge and accept the Early Guilty Plea penalty prescribed by the Controlling Body in accordance with Appendix 1 or elect to contest the Notice of Charge, by no later than 5:00pm on the next business day after receipt of the Notice of Charge, or such other time as the Controlling Body determines.

*[**Guidance note**: Sometimes an Early Guilty Plea will not be available because a Controlling Body may refer the Notice of Charge directly to the Tribunal under Section 22.4(c).]*

(b) **Proceed to Tribunal hearing**

(i) If a Person elects to contest a Notice of Charge issued under Section 22.4(a) then the Controlling Body must refer the matter to the Tribunal and, subject to Sections 25.4(a)(iv) and 25.4(a)(vi), that Person will not be entitled to any reduction to the sanction applicable to the Reportable Offence as per Appendix 1.

(ii) If a Person fails to respond to a Notice of Charge issued under Section 22.4(a) then the Controlling Body may:

(A) refer the matter to the Tribunal to be dealt with in accordance with Section 25 and, subject to Sections 25.4(a)(iv) and 25.4(a)(vi), that Person will not be entitled to any reduction to the sanction applicable to the Reportable Offence as per Appendix 1; or

(B) apply the Early Guilty Plea penalty without referring the matter to the Tribunal.

(c) **Early plea not available**

(i) On issuing a Notice of Charge under Section 22.3(a), a Controlling Body may refer the Notice of Charge directly to the Tribunal to be determined under Section 25.

*[**Guidance note**: Refer to the Direct Tribunal Offences provisions set out in Clause 4 of Appendix 1 which must be referred directly to the Tribunal.]*

(ii) If a Notice of Charge is referred directly to the Tribunal, the charged Person may not enter an Early Guilty Plea.

*[**Guidance note**: Where a Classifiable Offence is referred directly to the Tribunal under Appendix 1 Clause 2(b)(iv), and the charged Person pleads guilty to the charge at the Tribunal, the Tribunal in its discretion may still apply a sanction under Appendix 1, Table 2 as if an Early Guilty Plea has been entered.]*

22.5 Recording of Reportable Offences

(a) On issuing a Notice of Charge under Section 22.3(a), a Controlling Body must record the details of the Reportable Offence against the relevant Person's profile in the Competition Management Platform (where that Person has a profile).

(b) When the outcome of the Notice of Charge is determined, the Controlling Body must record that outcome against the relevant Person's profile in the Competition Management Platform (where that Person has a profile).

23. Policy Breaches

23.1 Making a complaint

(a) **Written complaint by person**

Subject to Section 23.1(b), if a Person considers that another Person has committed a Policy Breach, the first Person may submit a written complaint to:

(i) the relevant Controlling Body (other than the AFL) by submitting a Notice of Complaint to that Controlling Body; or *[**Guidance note**: If complaint submitted to Controlling Body, refer to Section 23.2(c).]*

(ii) the AFL via the AFL's electronic complaint submission platform (accessible here); or *[**Guidance note**: If complaint submitted to AFL, refer to Section 23.2(a).]*

(iii) otherwise in the manner specified by the AFL from time to time.

(b) **Time limitation**

(i) Subject to Section 23.1(b)(ii), a written complaint under Section 23.1(a) must be submitted as soon as practicable but no later than 30 days after the alleged incident except that a written complaint which relates to an alleged breach of Section 11 (Safeguarding Children and Young People) may be submitted at any time after the alleged incident.

(ii) If a Club (including a Club Officer) considers that a Person has committed a Policy Breach in connection with a Match, that Club must, by no later than 5:00pm on the next business day after the relevant Match or such other time as the relevant Controlling Body determines, submit a written complaint in accordance with Section 23.1(a).

*[**Guidance note**: Clubs are held to a higher standard. Clubs **must** submit a complaint in relation to a suspected Policy Breach during a Match, whereas an ordinary person may choose to do so but within the time parameters stated.]*

(c) **Levy of fee**

A Controlling Body may levy a fee for the administration of a written complaint (with the fee amount to be determined by the Controlling Body), which may be refunded if the Controlling Body determines that the Person who is the subject of the written complaint may have committed a Policy Breach.

(d) **Withdrawal of complaint**

A complaint submitted in accordance with Section 23.1(a) cannot be withdrawn by the submitting party after it has been submitted, unless otherwise approved by the Controlling Body.

(e) **Referral – Power of Executive Officer**

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Policy Handbook, if an Executive Officer (or their nominee) considers that a Person may have committed a Policy Breach, the Executive Officer (or their nominee) may refer a matter for assessment by the Controlling Body under Section 23.2(c).

23.2 Assessing and investigating a complaint

(a) **AFL assessment following receipt of complaint**

(i) Subject to Section 23.2(a)(ii), as soon as practicable after the AFL receives a written complaint under Section 23.1(a)(ii) or from a Controlling Body under Section 23.2(c)(i)(A), the AFL must undertake an assessment of the alleged Policy Breach set out in the written complaint and following its assessment, the AFL may:

(A) investigate the matter in accordance with Section 23.2(b); or

(B) delegate the matter to the relevant Controlling Body to be dealt with in accordance with Section 23.2(d); or

(C) refer the matter to a government authority (including the police); or

(D) refer the matter to the relevant Controlling Body to be assessed as an alleged Reportable Offence in accordance with Section 22.2(a).

(ii) As soon as practicable after the AFL receives a written complaint under Section 23.1(a)(ii) which relates to an alleged breach of Section 10.1 (Vilification and discrimination – Prohibited conduct), the AFL must undertake an assessment of the alleged breach of Section 10.1 and following its assessment, the AFL must either:

(A) undertake the preliminary resolution process set out in Section 10.3; or

(B) delegate the matter to the relevant Controlling Body to be dealt with in accordance with Section 23.2(d).

(b) **AFL investigation**

(i) Except where prohibited by law, the AFL may investigate and deal with any matter in connection with this Policy Handbook including to:

(A) use reasonable measures to establish the facts of the alleged Policy Breach (including by interviewing any relevant Person and taking witness statements);

(B) determine all questions arising or objections made in relation to an alleged Policy Breach;

(C) refer any matter concerning an alleged Policy Breach for hearing and determination, in whole or in part, by a body or person appointed by the AFL;

(D) stand down any Person subject to any action specified under Sections 23.2(a) to 23.2(e) (including any investigation or associated Tribunal or Appeal Board hearing) from participating in or in connection with a Competition;

(E) consider external expert advice regarding cultural or religious matter or other relevant lived experience;

(F) exercise any other powers conferred by this Policy Handbook; and

(G) delegate any of its powers under this Policy Handbook.

(ii) If the AFL elects to investigate a matter under this Policy Handbook, the AFL must give written notice to the Person(s) the subject of the investigation.

(iii) On completion of an investigation under this Section 23.2(b), the AFL must proceed with the matter in accordance with Section 23.3(a).

(c) **Controlling Body assessment following receipt of complaint**

(i) Subject to Section 23.2(c)(ii), as soon as practicable after a Controlling Body receives a written complaint under Section 23.1(a)(i) or is referred a matter under Section 23.1(e), the Controlling Body must undertake an assessment of the alleged Policy Breach and following its assessment, the Controlling Body may:

(A) escalate the matter to the AFL on behalf of the relevant Person in accordance with Section 23.1(a)(ii) and notify the relevant Person(s) of that escalation; or

(B) procure the relevant Person to submit their written complaint to the AFL in accordance with Section 23.1(a)(ii); or

(C) investigate the matter in accordance with Section 23.2(e); or

(D) complete a Notice of Breach; or

(E) refer the matter to a government authority (including the police); or

(F) refer the matter for assessment as an alleged Reportable Offence in accordance with Section 22.2(a).

(ii) As soon as practicable after a Controlling Body receives a written complaint under Section 23.1(a)(i) which relates to an alleged breach of Section 10.1 (Vilification and discrimination – Prohibited conduct), the Controlling Body

must undertake an assessment of the alleged breach of Section 10.1 and following its assessment, the Controlling Body must either:

(A) undertake the preliminary resolution process set out in Section 10.3; or

(B) escalate the written complaint to the AFL on behalf of the relevant Person in accordance with Section 23.1(a)(ii) and notify the relevant Person(s) of that escalation.

*[**Guidance note**: A Controlling Body has numerous options once a complaint is received and assessed. The Controlling Body must be clear about which Section(s) of the Policy Handbook the alleged Policy Breach(es) relates to before choosing a course of action.]*

(d) **Controlling Body assessment following delegation by AFL**

As soon as practicable after the AFL delegates a matter to a Controlling Body under Section 23.2(a)(i)(B), the Controlling Body must undertake an assessment of the alleged Policy Breach set out in the written complaint and following its assessment, the Controlling Body may, having regard to the AFL's findings including any recommendations (if any):

(i) where the written complaint relates to an alleged breach of Section 10.1 (Vilification and discrimination – Prohibited conduct), undertake the preliminary resolution process set out in Section 10.3; or

(ii) investigate the matter in accordance with Section 23.2(e); or

(iii) complete a Notice of Breach.

*[**Guidance note**: This Section only applies where the AFL delegates a matter to another Controlling Body once the AFL has assessed the matter itself. With any delegation the AFL may provide recommendations as to the appropriate course of action.]*

(e) **Controlling Body investigation**

(i) If a Controlling Body elects to investigate a matter under Section 23.2(c)(i)(C) or 23.2(d)(ii), the Controlling Body must:

(A) notify the Person(s) the subject of the investigation as soon as practicable; and

(B) use reasonable measures to establish the facts of the alleged Policy Breach (including by interviewing any relevant Person and taking witness statements).

(ii) A Controlling Body may engage a third party, appropriately qualified investigator to assist with an investigation.

(iii) On completion of its investigation, a Controlling Body must proceed with the matter in accordance with Section 23.3(b).

(f) **State Football Body stand down rule**

A State Football Body may, with the prior written consent of the AFL, stand down any Person subject to any action specified under Sections 23.2(a) to 23.2(e)

(including any investigation or resulting Tribunal or Appeal Board hearing) from participating in or in connection with a Competition.

*[**Guidance note**: Generally, a Person will only be stood down in the most serious of circumstances and the AFL must consent to any proposed stand down.]*

(g) **Vexatious complaints**

A Person (including a Disciplinary Officer or Club) must not knowingly submit a complaint that is untrue, vexatious or malicious.

(h) **Cooperation with investigation**

A Person the subject of an investigation under this Section 23.2 and other Persons relevant to an investigation (including, for the avoidance of doubt, Clubs) must:

(i) cooperate with the investigation;

(ii) answer questions and provide statements truthfully during the investigation;

(iii) not make any false or misleading statement or act in a manner calculated to or which is likely to mislead.

(i) **Investigations involving minors**

Where a Person involved in an investigation under this Section 23.2 is under the age of eighteen (18) years then during the investigation that Person must always be supported by:

(i) a parent or guardian of the Person; and

(ii) where possible, a Club Officer.

*[**Guidance note**: It is critical that all minors are always supported by an adult if they are the subject to or involved in any investigation.]*

(j) **Confidentiality**

(i) Subject to Section 23.2(j)(ii), a Controlling Body must use reasonable endeavours to keep confidential any information obtained under Section 23.2.

(ii) Information obtained under Section 23.2 may be used or disclosed by a Controlling Body in connection with investigations under this Policy Handbook and in reporting any reasonable suspicion of criminal conduct to relevant authorities. Without limiting the foregoing, a Controlling Body may disclose such information to the public where it is reasonable to do so in the interests of the open administration of AFL and State Football Body disciplinary processes provided that no information that identifies a person will be disclosed other than a person's name and information about their participation in a Competition.

23.3 Decision following investigation

(a) **AFL decision following investigation**

(i) On completion of an investigation under Section 23.2(b), the AFL may:

(A) deliver its findings (including any recommendations) to the relevant Controlling Body and direct that Controlling Body to make a determination in accordance with Section 23.3(b); or

(B) impose a sanction on any Person who has committed a Policy Breach on any terms and conditions, including to reprimand, suspend or deregister a Person; or

(C) deal with the matter in such other manner as the AFL sees fit which may include the AFL attempting to conciliate or mediate the matter or issuing a warning letter or dismissing the matter altogether.

(ii) All decisions of the AFL, including in connection with an alleged Policy Breach, are final and subject only to any rights of appeal provided by law.

(b) **Controlling Body decision following investigation**

(i) On completion of an investigation under Section 23.2(e) or as soon as practicable after a direction from the AFL under Section 23.3(a)(i)(A), the relevant Controlling Body may, having regard to the AFL's findings including any recommendations (if any):

(A) complete a Notice of Breach; or

(B) deal with the matter in such other manner as the Controlling Body determines which may include the Controlling Body attempting to conciliate or mediate the matter or issuing a warning letter or dismissing the matter altogether.

(ii) On completing a Notice of Breach under Section 23.3(b)(i)(A), a Controlling Body may elect to refer the Notice of Breach directly to the Tribunal (to be determined under Section 24) without prescribing a sanction.

*[**Guidance note**: Refer to the definition of "Notice of Breach" and Section 23.5 when completing a Notice of Breach.]*

(c) **Appealing Controlling Body decision**

A decision by a Controlling Body under Section 23.3(b)(i)(B) may be appealed in accordance with Section 26.

23.4 Issuing or withdrawing Notice of Breach

(a) **Issuing Notice of Breach**

If a Controlling Body completes a Notice of Breach under Section 23.2(c)(i)(D), 23.2(d)(iii) or 23.3(b)(i)(A) then the Controlling Body:

(i) must issue that Notice of Breach to the charged Person and that Person's Club (if applicable); and

(ii) may, where deemed appropriate, provide the other Person and that Person's Club (if applicable) with a copy of the Notice of Breach.

(b) **Completing a Notice of Breach**

A Notice of Breach must:

(i) provide details of the conduct that gives rise to the Policy Breach and of the section(s) of the Policy Handbook breached;

(ii) set out the sanction prescribed by the Controlling Body (for example, a fine, reprimand or suspension) unless the matter is referred directly to the Tribunal in which case no prescribed sanction is required; and

(iii) include the details set out in the form of the Notice of Breach set out in Appendix 6.

*[**Guidance note**: In categorising the alleged Policy Breach under Section 23.4(b)(i), a Controlling Body may categorise that there have been multiple sections of the Policy Handbook that have been breached]*

*[**Guidance note**: In setting out a sanction under Section 23.4(b)(ii), a Controlling Body may, at its discretion, offer a discount to the prescribed sanction for the acceptance of an Early Guilty Plea]*

(c) **Withdrawal of Notice of Breach**

A Controlling Body may withdraw a Notice of Breach completed under Section 23.2(c)(i)(D) or 23.3(b)(i)(A) at any time prior to a Tribunal hearing.

23.5 Early Guilty Plea – Policy Breach

(a) **Person may enter Early Guilty Plea**

Subject to Section 23.5(c), where a Person has been issued a Notice of Breach, that Person may enter an Early Guilty Plea in relation to the Policy Breach and accept the Early Guilty Plea penalty prescribed by the Controlling Body in the Notice of Breach or elect to contest the Notice of Breach, by no later than 48 hours after receipt of the Notice of Breach, or such other time as the Controlling Body determines.

(b) **Proceed to Tribunal hearing**

(i) If a Person elects to contest a Notice of Breach issued under Section 23.5(a) then the Controlling Body must refer the matter to the Tribunal and that Person will not be entitled to any reduction to the sanction available with the Early Guilty Plea penalty.

(ii) If a Person fails to respond to a Notice of Breach issued under Section 23.5(a) then the Controlling Body may:

(A) refer the matter to the Tribunal to be dealt with in accordance with Section 25 and that Person will not be entitled to any reduction to the sanction available with the Early Guilty Plea penalty; or

(B) apply the Early Guilty Plea penalty without referring the matter to the Tribunal.

(c) **Early plea not available**

If a Notice of Breach is referred directly to the Tribunal in accordance with Section 23.3(b)(ii), the relevant Person may not enter an Early Guilty Plea.

23.6 Recording of Policy Breaches

(a) On issuing a Notice of Breach under Section 23.4, a Controlling Body must record the details and outcome of the Policy Breach against the relevant Person's profile in the Competition Management Platform (where that Person has a profile).

(b) When the outcome of the Notice of Breach is known, the Controlling Body must record that outcome against the relevant Person's profile in the Competition Management Platform (where that Person has a profile).

24. Disciplinary Officer

(a) The Controlling Body may, from time to time, appoint one or more Disciplinary Officers who may:

(i) assist with the assessment and/or investigation of an alleged Policy Breach under Section 23.2(c), 23.2(d) or 23.2(e);

(ii) advise the Tribunal of the particulars of a Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach;

(iii) advise the Appeal Board of the particulars of a Notice of Appeal;

(iv) make submissions in relation to a Notice of Charge, Notice of Breach or Notice of Appeal;

(v) respond to any matters put in defence in relation to a Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach;

(vi) ask questions of any Person appearing before the Tribunal or Appeal Board;

(vii) where necessary or desirable in the interests of general justice and fairness, call any Person to give evidence before the Tribunal; and

(viii) address the Tribunal or Appeal Board prior to the final submissions of any Person.

(b) A Disciplinary Officer may, with leave of the Tribunal, amend any Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach to be determined by the Tribunal prior to or at any time during a Tribunal hearing.

*[**Guidance note**: An umpire advocate may be appointed as a Disciplinary Officer from time to time.]*

25. Tribunal

25.1 Function

(a) The function of the Tribunal is to deal with any Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach referred to it under this Policy Handbook.

(b) A Notice of Charge or a Notice of Breach is, for the purposes of this Section 25, a Notice.

(c) For the avoidance of doubt, this Section 25 only applies to a Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach referred to the Tribunal under this Policy Handbook.

25.2 Establishment

(a) **Appointment of Tribunal**

A Controlling Body may, from time to time, appoint persons to the Tribunal.

(b) **Tribunal members**

The Tribunal must consist of:

(i) a person who in the opinion of the Controlling Body possesses sufficient knowledge of Australian Football and sufficiently qualified to competently perform the role of chairperson (**Chairperson**); and

(ii) a panel of persons who in the opinion of the Controlling Body possess sufficient knowledge of Australian Football and are sufficiently qualified to competently perform the role of Tribunal panel member (**Tribunal Panel**).

(c) **Qualifications of Tribunal members**

Except where the Controlling Body determines otherwise, a person must not be appointed to the Tribunal if:

(i) in the twelve (12) months preceding the relevant appointment date, that person:

(A) has been a member of a board of directors of a Club affiliated with the Controlling Body that has appointed the Tribunal;

(B) has been a coach or assistant or specialty coach of a Club affiliated with the Controlling Body that has appointed the Tribunal;

(C) has been a Player; or

(D) has been an employee of a Club affiliated with the Controlling Body that has appointed the Tribunal; or

(ii) that person has failed to meet any Tribunal-specific training or education requirements specified by the AFL from time to time.

(d) **Resignation and removal of Tribunal members**

(i) A member of the Tribunal may resign by providing written notice to the Controlling Body.

(ii) The Controlling Body may remove a member of the Tribunal at any time.

25.3 Procedure and evidence

(a) **Composition of Tribunal for hearing**

(i) Except where the Controlling Body determines otherwise, at any Tribunal hearing, the Tribunal must comprise:

(A) the Chairperson or, in the Chairperson's absence, a member of the Tribunal Panel who will act as Chairperson; and

(B) a minimum of two (2) and maximum of four (4) Tribunal Panel members.

(ii) Persons appointed as Chairperson and to the Tribunal Panel may be rotated from time to time as determined by the Controlling Body.

(b) **Representation**

(i) Subject to Section 25.3(b)(iii), at any Tribunal hearing a Person issued with a Notice (in this Section 25, the **charged Person**) must:

(A) appear in person; and

(B) subject to Section 25.3(b)(ii), be represented by:

(1) a Club Officer;

(2) a barrister or solicitor unless such representation is expressly prohibited under applicable Competition rules, or

(3) a person who is approved by the Controlling Body.

*[**Guidance note**: Refer to Section 25.3(c) for information about how and when a Person may attend a Tribunal hearing. The wording "appear in person" does not necessarily mean the charged Person must be physically present at the Tribunal hearing.]*

(ii) If a charged Person appears in person and elects not to be represented in accordance with Section 25.3(b)(i)(B) then the charged Person may act as their own advocate.

(iii) Where a Person issued with Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach is under the age of eighteen (18) years at the time of the Tribunal hearing:

(A) the Person must be represented under Section 25.3(b)(i)(B) (and such representative must not be a parent or guardian of the Person); and

(B) a parent or guardian of the Person may attend any Tribunal hearing in support of the Person.

(iv) Where the Chairperson is of the opinion that a Person or representative of a Person appearing before the Tribunal has failed to observe directions of the Tribunal or otherwise acted in a contemptuous, irresponsible or discourteous manner, the Chairperson may dismiss the Person or Person's representative and, if appropriate, adjourn the proceedings to enable the Person to obtain fresh representation.

*[**Guidance note**: in nominating a representative, the charged Person must have regard to the availability of that representative to attend the Tribunal hearing at the time and date notified by the Controlling Body. The Tribunal may exercise its right to apply Section 25.3(c)(ii)(D) where a nominated representative is unavailable to attend the hearing at the scheduled time and date.]*

(c) **Attendance at Tribunal hearing**

(i) Subject to Section 25.3(c)(ii), the following persons must attend a Tribunal hearing at the date, time and place/forum (including by video or telephone conferencing) notified by the Controlling Body:

(A) the charged Person and their representative;

(B) any Football Official, Player, parent or guardian of a Player if requested to do so by the Controlling Body or Tribunal;

(C) any person nominated and permitted to give evidence under Section 25.3(e);

(D) a Disciplinary Officer nominated by a Controlling Body under Section 24(a).

(ii) In respect of a Tribunal hearing:

(A) the Chairperson may excuse a Person from appearing at a Tribunal hearing if the Chairperson is satisfied that the Person is suffering from an injury or medical condition that will reasonably prevent that Person's attendance;

(B) any person required to attend a tribunal hearing under Section 25.3(c) who wishes to attend a Tribunal hearing via video or telephone must first seek the prior approval of the Controlling Body (except where video or telephone conferencing is the forum fixed by the Controlling Body);

(C) the Controlling Body or Tribunal may, at any time prior to the Tribunal hearing, vary the date, time and place/forum of the Tribunal hearing and upon doing so, must advise all directly interested parties of such variation; and

(D) if any person who is required to attend a Tribunal under Section 25.3(c), fails to appear at a Tribunal hearing at the notified date, time and place/forum, the Tribunal may proceed to hear and determine the matter and impose any sanction in the absence of that person or postpone the Tribunal hearing provided that Section 25.5 will apply to a charged Person for the period of any postponement (as if the charged Person was suspended).

(d) **General conduct of Tribunal hearing**

(i) A Tribunal hearing:

(A) must be held in the State or Territory of the charged Person's registered Club, unless otherwise notified or approved by the Controlling Body; and

(B) will be conducted by the Tribunal with as little formality and technicality and as much expedition as a proper consideration of the matter permits.

(ii) The Tribunal is not bound by the rules of evidence or by practices and procedures applicable to a court of law and may inform itself as to any matter in any such manner as it determines.

(iii) A Controlling Body may establish and apply guidelines for the practice and procedure of a Tribunal hearing provided that such guidelines are not inconsistent with this Policy Handbook. Any such guidelines must be directory in nature and no decision of the Tribunal will be invalidated by reason of a guideline not being followed.

(iv) The Tribunal must:

(A) subject to Section 25.3(d)(v), provide any Person whose interest will be directly and adversely affected by its decision, a reasonable opportunity to be heard;

(B) hear and determine the matter before it in an unbiased manner; and

(C) make a decision that a reasonable Tribunal could honestly arrive at.

(v) The Tribunal will use reasonable endeavours to hear and determine any Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach referred to it before the Club of the relevant Person(s) is next scheduled to compete but to the extent that natural justice principles require that:

(A) a Person be given adequate notice of or sufficient time to prepare for a hearing; or

(B) a Tribunal hearing be scheduled at a time which does not affect the preparation of the Person(s) or the Club of the Person(s) for the next scheduled Match,

those requirements are expressly excluded from this Policy Handbook.

(e) **Evidence**

(i) A charged Person may, subject to the following provisions of 25.3(e)(i), request to adduce witness evidence at the Tribunal hearing:

(A) any such request must be submitted to the Controlling Body in writing by no later than 10.00am on the day after the Notice of Breach or Notice of Charge is issued (or such other time determined by the Controlling Body);

(B) the request must contain:

(1) the name, email address and phone number of the witness, and, in the case of any expert witness, evidence proposed to be adduced, their qualifications and experience;

(2) a summary of the substance of the evidence the charged Person proposes to adduce from the witness;

(ii) In this Section 25, the word witness includes the charged Person, where the charged Person intends to, or does give evidence at the Tribunal hearing.

(iii) Unless permission is granted by the Chairperson, a Person shall not adduce the evidence of a witness unless that Person complies with Section 25.3(e)(i).

(iv) After receiving a request submitted in accordance with Section 25.3(e)(i), the Chairperson may permit a Person to adduce the evidence of a witness.

(v) Where expert evidence from a witness is adduced, or on any other occasion, the Tribunal, at the direction of the Chairperson, may hear any other expert evidence in relation to the matters requiring its determination.

(vi) In relation to a Notice of Charge only, and only in exceptional and compelling circumstances, as determined by the Controlling Body in its absolute discretion, will the Tribunal receive evidence from a person who is not an Umpire or recorded on the team sheet for a relevant Match.

(vii) Any video or medical evidence which is not already in the possession of the Controlling Body must be submitted by a Club to the Controlling Body if requested by the relevant Controlling Body.

(viii) A charged Person may, subject to the following provisions of 25.3(e)(viii), request to adduce video or photographic evidence at the Tribunal hearing of the incident in respect of which the Person is charged:

(A) any such request must be submitted to the Controlling Body in writing by no later than 10.00am on the day after the Notice of Breach or Notice of Charge is issued (or such other time determined by the Controlling Body);

(B) the request must:

(1) attach the video or photographic evidence or a link to the video or photographic evidence;

(2) contain the name and address of the person who took the video or photographic evidence;

(3) contain with a summary of the substance of the evidence the charged Person proposes to adduce in relation to the video or photographic evidence.

(ix) Unless permission is granted by the Chairperson, a Person shall not adduce video or photographic evidence unless that Person complies with Section 25.3(e)(viii).

(x) After receiving a request submitted in accordance with Section 25.3(e)(viii), the Chairperson may permit a Person to adduce the video or photographic evidence.

(xi) At a Tribunal hearing, a Person may rely on any incident contained in the prescribed video examples set out in Appendix 2 as evidence of an incident comparable to the incident in respect of which the Person is charged, subject to the following provisions:

(A) it will not be necessary to obtain the leave of the Chairperson to adduce such evidence;

(B) the Chairperson may give some directions to the Tribunal as to the use of such evidence;

(C) subject to the Chairperson's directions, it will be a matter for the Tribunal to determine the assistance such evidence provides and the weight given to it;

(D) adequate notice must be given by the Person to the Controlling Body of any prescribed video example sought to be relied upon; and

(E) the Tribunal will not consider evidence (including video evidence) of any other incidents.

(f) **Matters referred under Anti-Doping Code**

Where a Notice of Breach referred to the Tribunal relates to an alleged breach of the Anti-Doping Code, this Section 25 must be read in conjunction with the provisions of the Anti-Doping Code, provided that to the extent of any inconsistency, the provisions of the Anti-Doping Code will prevail.

(g) **Challenges**

If a Person intends to:

(i) challenge the jurisdiction of the Tribunal to deal with a matter;

(ii) challenge the constitution of the Tribunal;

(iii) challenge the formalities relating to a Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach; or

(iv) raise any other matter requiring a legal or technical interpretation,

that Person must provide full written particulars of all relevant matters and forward a copy of those particulars to the Controlling Body and any other Person who has a direct interest in the proceedings (including, if applicable, the Disciplinary Officer) by midday on the day after the issue of the Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach.

(h) **Standard of proof**

(i) In relation to a Notice of Charge, the Tribunal will decide whether a Reportable Offence against a Person has been committed on the balance of probabilities.

(ii) In relation to a Notice of Breach, the Tribunal will decide whether a Policy Breach has been committed to its comfortable satisfaction.

(i) **Onus of proof**

No Person appearing before the Tribunal shall bear an onus of establishing that an alleged Reportable Offence or Policy Breach has been committed.

(j) **Cooperation with Tribunal**

If in the opinion of the Tribunal, a Person who appears before the Tribunal:

(i) fails to fully cooperate with the Tribunal;

(ii) fails to truthfully answer any questions asked by a Disciplinary Officer or Tribunal;

(iii) fails to provide any document in that Person's possession or control relevant to the Tribunal hearing following a request by a Disciplinary Officer or Tribunal;

(iv) makes any false or misleading statement or makes a statement or acts in a manner which may mislead a Disciplinary Officer or Tribunal; or

(v) fails to produce video evidence to the Controlling Body where requested to do so under Section 25.3(e)(vii),

that Person may be dealt with in such manner as the Tribunal determines, including, where relevant, factoring in that Person's conduct in imposing a sanction under Section 25.4(a).

(k) **Prohibited conduct**

(i) A charged Person, that Person's representative or any Person acting in concert with a charged Person, must not contact, or procure another Person to contact, a Person who may be required to give evidence before the Tribunal, where that contact is intended to or may otherwise mislead the Tribunal or unfairly affect the conduct of the Tribunal hearing.

(ii) A Person must not comment publicly on:

(A) the contents of a Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach prior to the conclusion of any Tribunal hearing and/or completion of a matter; or

(B) any matter relating to an investigation under this Policy Handbook, until completion of such investigation and/or relevant determination by the Tribunal,

unless the Person establishes, to the reasonable satisfaction of the Controlling Body, that such public comment was not intended to influence or affect the conduct of a Tribunal hearing or the process of an investigation.

(iii) If a Controlling Body determines that a Person has breached this Section 25.3(k), that Person:

(A) will be deemed to have also breached Section 9.2(a) of this Policy Handbook; and

(B) notwithstanding any other provision of this Policy Handbook, may be dealt with in such manner as the Controlling Body determines including referral of such breach to the Tribunal.

(l) **Sanction on Person's Club**

In addition to any sanction imposed or determination made under Section 25.3(k)(iii), the Controlling Body may impose a sanction on that Person's Club:

(A) where the Person was a Football Official of the Club; and

(B) where the Person was not a Football Official of the Club, unless the Club satisfies the Controlling Body that the Person engaged in the relevant conduct without the knowledge of the Club.

(m) **Costs**

Each party to a Tribunal hearing will bear their own costs in relation to the Tribunal process regardless of the outcome.

(n) **Recording a Tribunal hearing**

(i) A Tribunal hearing may be recorded by a person authorised to do so by the Tribunal Chairperson.

(ii) No other person shall record a Tribunal hearing without the prior consent of the Tribunal Chairperson.

25.4 Outcomes

(a) **Tribunal decision**

(i) A decision of the Tribunal must be determined according to the opinion of a majority of the sitting Tribunal.

(ii) Subject to Section 25.4(a)(iv), if:

(A) in relation to a Notice of Charge, the Tribunal determines that a Reportable Offence has been committed by a Person, the Tribunal must impose the sanction applicable to the Reportable Offence in accordance with Appendix 1; or

(B) in relation to a Notice of Breach, the Tribunal determines that a Policy Breach has been committed by a Person, the Tribunal may impose a sanction on that Person, on any terms and conditions, including to reprimand or suspend that Person provided that the Tribunal may not deregister that Person.

(iii) In determining a sanction under Section 25.4(a)(ii)(B), the Tribunal may be guided, to the extent applicable and relevant, by the sanctions applicable to Reportable Offences in accordance with Appendix 1. A 'suspended' match suspension is not a sanction available to the Tribunal.

(iv) The Tribunal may determine that a reduced sanction is applicable in exceptional and compelling circumstances, including where:

(A) a Person has a verifiable exemplary Disciplinary History;

[Guidance note: refer to Appendix 1, Clause 7(b)]

(B) a Reportable Offence or Policy Breach was committed in response to provocation;

(C) a Reportable Offence or Policy Breach was committed in self-defence; or

(D) there are multiple Reportable Offences and/or Policy Breaches arising from the same incident or course of conduct,

and it is appropriate in such exceptional and compelling circumstances to reduce the sanction.

(v) In determining any sanction, the Tribunal will have no regard to the effect of the sanction on deregistration.

(vi) Should a Person plead guilty to a Reportable Offence subject to an alternative classification, and successfully contest the Notice of Charge at the Tribunal (such that the Tribunal determines to downgrade the charge), the Person will be entitled to receive a reduction in the sanction equivalent to the reduction obtained had the Player submitted an Early Guilty Plea for that lesser offence.

(vii) The Tribunal is not obliged to give reasons for any decision it makes under this Policy Handbook.

(viii) If the Tribunal makes a decision under this Section 25.4(a) in relation to a Person who was under the age of eighteen (18) years at the time the Reportable Offence or Policy Breach occurred, the Controlling Body must not publish the decision of the Tribunal insofar that it is viewable by the general public without the express permission of the relevant Person and their parent/guardian except that, to ensure effective administration of Competitions, access to such decisions and related sanctions will be available to the Controlling Body and any Club Officer who has access to Competition records.

(b) **Validity of charge and hearings**

(i) Where there is any procedural irregularity in relation to a Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach or any other relevant matter, the Tribunal must still hear and determine the relevant matter unless the Tribunal is satisfied that the irregularity has caused or may cause injustice.

(ii) The Chairperson may direct that a Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach be amended to ensure that the Notice of Charge or Notice of Breach is heard and determined according to its merits. For the avoidance of doubt, the power to amend includes the power to substitute a charge.

(iii) A decision of the Tribunal is not invalid because of a defect or irregularity in, or in connection with, the appointment of a Tribunal member.

(iv) Subject to Sections 25.3(d)(v), 25.3(h) and 25.3(i), any procedure or requirement regulating the function of the Tribunal is directory in nature and a decision of the Tribunal will not be invalid by reason of that procedure or requirement not being fulfilled.

25.5 Suspension of Person

(a) Where a sanction imposed under Section 22.3, 23.4(b)(ii) or 25.4 is a suspension that suspension:

(i) must be expressed as a number of Matches; and

(ii) must not contain a suspended Match suspension.

(b) A Person suspended:

(i) must, where the offence or breach was committed by a Person playing or participating in a Match, serve such suspension in the grade in which the Person committed the offence or breach;

(ii) must, where the breach was committed by a Person not playing or participating in a Match, serve the suspension as determined by the Controlling Body;

(iii) may not serve the suspension in any pre-season or off-season Matches but may participate in such Matches unless otherwise determined by the relevant Controlling Body;

(iv) may not serve the suspension in any practice or trial matches;

(v) may participate in practice or trial matches unless otherwise determined by the relevant Controlling Body;

(vi) may not serve the suspension in any Competition bye round or where the relevant Person's team has a bye;

(vii) may not serve the suspension in any cancelled or forfeited Matches unless otherwise determined by a Controlling Body;

(viii) in a junior Competition and graduating to a senior Competition must serve the suspension in the senior Competition;

(ix) who is transferring from one Competition to another Competition will carry over any suspensions to the new Competition;

(x) during a split round may not serve the suspension in that same round in another grade (including representative football);

(xi) who is seeking to appeal the suspension is subject to Section 26.4(b);

(xii) who receives more than one suspension for offences under Part E of the Policy Handbook, whether arising from the same match or not, must serve those suspensions consecutively.

(xiii) (other than a Player suspended for a Reportable Offence) may not communicate with any Football Official on Match day for the duration of their suspension;

(xiv) (other than a Player suspended for a Reportable Offence), may not enter the playing area or Club change rooms at any Match on Match day for the duration of their suspension;

(xv) may not perform any Football Official duties on Match day for the duration of their suspension, including any role that would require that Person to be entered on a team sheet. *[**Guidance note**: For example, a suspended Player cannot play or perform the role of runner or assistant coach during their suspension period.]*

(c) Unless otherwise specified by the relevant Controlling Body in exceptional and compelling circumstances, a suspended Person will not be eligible to play, coach or otherwise be involved in representative football if the representative fixture occurs while the Person is serving the suspension. The representative fixture will not count as part of the suspension.

(d) Where a Person is suspended, and a scenario arises with respect to the application of that suspension that is not specifically dealt with in Sections 25.5(b) and 25.5(c), then the relevant Controlling Body or Controlling Bodies may apply the suspension at their discretion (acting reasonably and having regard to the principles set out in Section 25.5(b) and 25.5(c)). If two Controlling Bodies are involved, both Controlling Bodies must agree on the application of the suspension under this Section 25.5(d).

(e) Where a matter cannot be resolved under Section 25.5(d), an involved Controlling Body may refer the matter to the AFL for resolution.

(f) Law 22.4 of the Laws of the Game will apply in conjunction with this Section 25.5 in relation to all Persons suspended under Part E of this Policy Handbook.

(g) Law 22.4.4 will be deemed to apply to a suspension arising from a Policy Breach in the same way as a suspension arising from a Reportable Offence.

25.6 Criticism of decision

(a) A Person must not make any unfair, unreasonable or excessive public criticism of a Tribunal decision or of any Tribunal member or any other matter touching or concerning the Tribunal or a determination made by it.

(b) If a Person breaches Section 25.6(a) that Person and that Person's Club may be dealt with in such manner as the Controlling Body sees fit including referral of such breach to the Tribunal.

26. Appeal Board

26.1 General

(a) **Function**

The function of the Appeal Board is to deal with any appeal commenced by a Controlling Body or Person in respect of:

(i) a decision made by a Controlling Body under Section 23.3(c); or

(ii) a decision made by the Tribunal under Section 25; or

(iii) a decision made by a Controlling Body under Section 4.1(d)(ii); or

(iv) a dispute referred in accordance with Section 3.5(d)(ii)(A) or 3.5(d)(ii)(B) in relation a Transfer refusal by a Source Club which cannot be resolved.

(b) **Grounds for appeal**

(i) Except where the Controlling Body determines otherwise, a Person the subject of a decision or a Controlling Body affected by a decision made by a Controlling Body under Section 4.1(d) or 23.3(c) or the Tribunal under

Section 25 (**Appellant**) may appeal to the Appeal Board in respect of such decision on one or more of the following grounds:

(A) the decision involved an error of law that had a material impact on the Tribunal's decision;

(B) the decision was so unreasonable that no Controlling Body or Tribunal acting reasonably could have come to that decision having regard to the evidence before it;

(C) the classification of the Reportable Offence or Policy Breach or other conduct (as applicable) was manifestly excessive or inadequate; or

(D) that the sanction imposed was manifestly excessive or inadequate,

(each, an **Appeal Ground**).

(ii) For the avoidance of doubt, only the Appeals Grounds in Sections 26.1(b)(i)(A) and 26.1(b)(i)(B) apply in respect of an appeal brought under Section 4.1(d).

(iii) A Person (**Appellant**) may appeal to the Appeal Board under Section 3.5(d)(ii)(A) or 3.5(d)(ii)(B) in respect of a Transfer refusal by a Source Club where the relevant Transfer dispute cannot be resolved by the parties under Section 3.5(d)(i) (also **Appeal Ground**).

(iv) For the avoidance of doubt, an Appellant may not appeal any decision of the AFL to the Appeal Board.

(c) **Notice of appeal**

(i) An appeal must be submitted by the Appellant lodging with the Controlling Body, by no later than 5:00pm on the day following the relevant decision of the Tribunal or Controlling Body or such other time as the Controlling Body determines, the following:

(A) a duly completed Notice of Appeal which must specify the Appeal Ground(s) relied upon by the Appellant and supporting submissions in respect of the Appeal Ground(s); and

(B) payment of a fixed fee determined by the Controlling Body (which will be dealt with in accordance with Sections 26.4(d) and 26.4(e)).

(ii) The Controlling Body must fix a date, time and place/forum (including by video or telephone conferencing) for the Appeal Board hearing as soon as practicable after the lodgement of a Notice of Appeal and payment in accordance with Section 26.1(c)(i)(B) and must advise all interested parties of those particulars.

*[**Guidance note**: Refer to the definition of "Notice of Appeal" when completing a Notice of Appeal. Appendix 6 of the Policy Handbook provides a link to relevant templates, including the Notice of Appeal.]*

(d) **Lodgement of appeal**

An Appellant may appeal to the relevant Controlling Body's Appeal Board (e.g. local league appeals board) where constituted or, where no such body is constituted, to the relevant State Football Body's Appeal Board.

(e) **Appeal Board may dismiss appeal**

(i) The Appeal Board may dismiss an appeal to the Appeal Board without conducting any hearing if the Appeal Board determines that:

(A) the subject matter of the appeal is trivial or unrelated to the functions of the Appeal Board;

(B) the appeal is frivolous or vexatious;

(C) the appeal lacks substance or credibility; or

(D) the appellant does not have a sufficient interest in the decision that is the subject of the appeal.

(ii) Where the Appeal Board dismisses an appeal under Section 26.1(e)(i) the Chairperson will notify the Appellant and Controlling Body in writing as soon as practicable after the appeal has been dismissed.

26.2 Establishment

(a) **Appointment**

A Controlling Body may, from time to time, appoint persons to the Appeal Board.

(b) **Appeal Board Members**

The Appeal Board must consist of:

(i) a person who in the opinion of the Controlling Body possesses sufficient knowledge of Australian Football and the law to competently perform the role of chairperson of the Appeal Board (**Chairperson of the Appeal Board**); and

(ii) a panel of persons who in the opinion of the Controlling Body possess sufficient knowledge of Australian Football and the law to competently perform the role of Appeal Board panel member (**Appeal Board Panel**).

(c) **Qualifications of Appeal Board members**

Except where the Controlling Body determines otherwise, a person must not be appointed to the Appeal Board if:

(i) in the twelve (12) months preceding the relevant appointment date, that person:

(A) has been a member of a board of directors of a Club affiliated with the Controlling Body that has appointed the Appeal Board;

(B) has been a coach or assistant or specialty coach of a Club affiliated with the Controlling Body that has appointed the Appeal Board;

(C) has been a Player; or

(D) has been an employee of a Club affiliated with the Controlling Body that has appointed the Appeal Board; or

(ii) that person has failed to meet the appeal board training or education requirements set out by the AFL from time to time.

(d) **Resignation and removal of Appeal Board members**

(i) A member of the Appeal Board may resign by providing written notice to the Controlling Body.

(ii) A Controlling Body may remove a member of the Appeal Board at any time.

26.3 Procedure and Evidence

(a) **Composition of Appeal Board**

(i) Except where the Controlling Body determines otherwise, at any Appeal Board hearing, the Appeal Board must comprise:

(A) the Chairperson of the Appeal Board or, in their absence, a member of the Appeal Board Panel who will act as Chairperson of the Appeal Board; and

(B) a minimum of one (1) and maximum of two (2) Appeal Board Panel members.

(ii) Any Chairperson of the Appeal Board or Appeal Board Panel member who:

(A) has also been appointed as Chairperson or Tribunal Panel member; and

(B) sat on the Tribunal for the matter that is the subject of any Appeal Board hearing,

must not sit on the Appeal Board for the Appeal Board hearing.

(iii) Persons appointed as Chairperson of the Appeal Board and to the Appeal Board Panel may be rotated from time to time as determined by the Controlling Body.

(b) **Representation**

(i) Subject to Section 26.3(b)(ii), at any Appeal Board hearing an Appellant must:

(A) appear in person; and

(B) be represented by:

(1) a Club Officer; or

(2) a barrister or solicitor on such terms as the Chairperson of the Appeal Board directs unless such representation is expressly prohibited under applicable Competition rules.

*[**Guidance note**: Refer to Section 26.3(c) for information about how and when a Person may attend an Appeal Board hearing. The wording "appear in person" does not necessarily mean the relevant person must be physically present at the Appeal Board hearing.]*

(ii) If an Appellant appears in person and elects not to be represented in accordance with Section 26.3(b)(i)(B) then the Appellant may act as their own advocate.

(iii) Where an Appellant is under the age of eighteen (18) years at the time of the Appeal Board hearing:

(A) the Appellant must be represented under Section 26.3(b)(i)(B) (and such representative must not be a parent or guardian of the Appellant); and

(B) a parent or guardian of the Appellant may attend any Appeal Board hearing in support of the Appellant.

(iv) At any hearing before the Appeal Board, a Disciplinary Officer appointed by the Controlling Body shall be entitled to appear.

(v) Where the Chairperson of the Appeal Board is of the opinion that an Appellant, a representative of an Appellant or a Disciplinary Officer appearing before the Appeal Board has failed to observe directions of the Appeal Board or otherwise acted in a contemptuous, irresponsible or discourteous manner, the Chairperson of the Appeal Board may dismiss the Appellant, representative or Disciplinary Officer and if appropriate, adjourn the proceedings to enable the Appellant or Controlling Body to obtain fresh representation.

(c) **Attendance at Appeal Board hearing**

(i) Subject to Section 26.3(b), an Appellant, a representative of the Appellant and a Disciplinary Officer, must attend an Appeal Board hearing at the date, time and place/forum (including by video or telephone conferencing) fixed by the Controlling Body.

(ii) Any Football Official, Player, parent or guardian of a Player must appear before the Appeal Board if requested to do so by the Controlling Body or Appeal Board.

(iii) In respect of an Appeal Board hearing:

(A) the Chairperson of the Appeal Board may excuse an Appellant from appearing at an Appeal Board hearing if the Chairperson of the Appeal Board is satisfied that the Appellant is suffering from an injury or medical condition that will reasonably prevent that Appellant's attendance;

(B) any Appellant, including the Appellant's representative, or Disciplinary Officer, who wishes to attend an Appeal Board hearing via video or telephone must first seek the prior approval of the

Controlling Body (except where video or telephone conferencing is the forum fixed by the Controlling Body);

(C) the Controlling Body or Appeal Board may, at any time prior to the Appeal Board hearing, vary the date, time or place/forum of the Appeal Board hearing and upon doing so, must advise all interested parties of such variation; and

(D) if an Appellant, or that Appellant's representative, or a Disciplinary Officer fails to appear at an Appeal Board hearing at the notified date, time and place/forum, the Appeal Board may proceed to hear and determine the matter and impose any sanction in the absence of that person.

(d) **General Conduct of Appeal Board hearing**

(i) An Appeal Board hearing must be held in the State or Territory of the Appellant's registered Club, unless otherwise notified or approved by the Controlling Body.

(ii) The Appeal Board:

(A) may regulate any proceedings brought before it in such manner as the Chairperson of the Appeal Board determines; and

(B) is not bound by the rules of evidence or by practices and procedures applicable to a court of law and may inform itself as to any matter in such manner as it determines.

(iii) The Appeal Board must:

(A) subject to Section 26.3(d)(iv), provide any Person whose interest will be directly and adversely affected by its decision, a reasonable opportunity to be heard;

(B) hear and determine the matter before it in an unbiased manner; and

(C) make a decision that a reasonable Appeal Board could honestly arrive at.

(iv) The Appeal Board will use reasonable endeavours to hear and determine any appeal before the Club of the Appellant is next scheduled to compete but to the extent that natural justice principles require that:

(A) the Appellant be given adequate notice of or sufficient time to prepare for a hearing; or

(B) an Appeal Board hearing be scheduled at a time which does not affect the preparation of the Appellant or the Club of the Appellant for the next scheduled Match,

those requirements are expressly excluded from this Policy Handbook.

(e) **Review of evidence by Appeal Board**

(i) The Appeal Board must hear an appeal by way of a review of the evidence presented before the Tribunal or Controlling Body (as applicable) and will determine whether the Appeal Ground(s) nominated by the Appellant has been established.

(ii) An Appellant may not produce fresh evidence at an Appeal Board hearing without leave of the Appeal Board.

(iii) If an Appellant seeks leave to produce fresh evidence, the Appeal Board will not grant such leave unless the Appeal Board is satisfied that:

(A) the evidence could not by reasonable diligence have been obtained by the Person prior to the conclusion of the Tribunal hearing or Controlling Body investigation (as applicable); and

(B) the evidence is of sufficient probative value such that, considered with other evidence which was before the Tribunal or Controlling Body (as applicable), the Tribunal or Controlling Body would have reached a different decision.

(f) **Onus and standard of proof on appeal**

At an Appeal Board hearing, the Appellant will bear the onus of establishing, on the balance of probabilities, one or more Appeal Grounds.

(g) **Prohibited conduct**

(i) A Person must not comment publicly on the contents of a Notice of Appeal prior to a determination by the Appeal Board or conclusion of the matter unless the Person establishes, to the reasonable satisfaction of the Controlling Body, that such public comment was not intended to influence or affect the conduct of an Appeal Board hearing.

(ii) If a Person breaches Section 26.3(g)(i), that Person:

(A) will be deemed to have also breached Section 9.2(a) of this Policy Handbook; and

(B) notwithstanding any other provision of this Policy Handbook, may be dealt with in such manner as the Tribunal or Controlling Body determines.

(h) **Sanction on Person's Club**

In addition to any sanction imposed or determination made under Section 26.3(g), the Controlling Body may impose a sanction on that Person's Club:

(A) where the Person was a Football Official of the Club; and

(B) where the Person was not a Football Official of the Club, unless the Club satisfies the Controlling Body that the Person engaged in the relevant conduct without the knowledge of the Club.

(i) **Costs**

Notwithstanding Section 26.1(c)(i)(B), each party to an appeal will bear their own costs in relation to the appeal process regardless of the outcome.

26.4 Outcomes

(a) **Decision of Appeal Board**

(i) A decision of the Appeal Board must be determined according to the opinion of a majority of the sitting Appeal Board. Where no majority is reached, the decision of the Appeal Board must be determined according to the opinion of the Chairperson.

(ii) Where the Appeal Board determines that one or more Appeal Grounds has been established, the Appeal Board may confirm, reverse or modify the decision of the Tribunal or Controlling Body (as applicable) and make such orders and give such directions in such manner as it determines provided that any suspension imposed must be expressed in Matches.

(iii) The Appeal Board is not obliged to give reasons for any decision it makes under this Policy Handbook.

(iv) If the Appeal Board makes a decision under this Section 26.4(a) in relation to a Person who was under the age of eighteen (18) years at the time the Reportable Offence or Policy Breach occurred, the Controlling Body must not publish the decision of the Appeal Board such that it is viewable by the general public without the express permission of the relevant Person and their parent/guardian except that, to ensure effective administration of Competitions, access to such decisions and related sanctions may be available to the Controlling Body and any Club Official who has access to Competition records.

(b) **Person to serve sanction**

Subject to Section 26.4(c), where the Tribunal or Controlling Body imposes a sanction on a Person that prevents the Person from participating in a Match, Section 25.5 will apply and the Person must serve that sanction pending the determination of any appeal.

(c) **Power to adjourn**

(i) Subject to Section 26.4(c)(ii), the Appeal Board may, of its own motion or upon application of any party to the appeal, order:

(A) that an appeal be adjourned; and/or

(B) a stay of the execution of the sanction imposed by the Tribunal or Controlling Body pending the determination of the appeal,

if the Appeal Board is satisfied that exceptional and compelling circumstances apply such that it would be harsh and unreasonable if such an order was not made.

(ii) In making an order under Section 26.4(c)(i), the Appeal Board must have regard to:

(A) the merits of the appeal and the Appellant's prospects of success;

(B) the interests of other Clubs and Persons;

(C) the effect on the results of the relevant Competition; and

(D) the need to permit the due and proper administration of Australian Football.

(d) **Success of appeal and refund of fixed fee**

(i) For the purposes of this Section 26.4(d), an appeal is:

(A) successful if the Appeal Board determines that one or more Appeal Grounds has been established; and

(B) unsuccessful if the Appeal Board determines that no Appeal Ground has been established.

(ii) Where an appeal is successful, 50% (or such other proportion determined by the Controlling Body) of the fixed fee paid by the Appellant under Section 26.1(c)(i)(B) must be refunded to the Appellant on receipt by the Controlling Body of a refund request or appropriate tax invoice. For the avoidance of doubt, the remaining balance of the fixed fee paid by the Appellant under Section 26.1(c)(i)(B) will not be refunded.

(iii) Where an appeal is unsuccessful, the fixed fee paid by the Appellant under Section 26.1(c)(i)(B) will not be refunded and will be retained by the Controlling Body, unless the matter involves a monetary sanction and/or the Appeal Board determines that it would be manifestly unjust and unfair not to refund part of the fixed fee in which case, part of the fixed fee may be refunded.

(e) **Abandon appeal and refund of fixed fee**

(i) An Appellant may abandon an appeal prior to any Appeal Board hearing by giving written notice to the Controlling Body in which case 50% (or such other proportion determined by the Controlling Body) of the fixed fee paid by the Appellant under Section 26.1(c)(i)(B) must be refunded to the Appellant on receipt by the Controlling Body of a written refund request or appropriate tax invoice. For the avoidance of doubt, the remaining balance of the fixed fee paid by the Appellant under Section 26.1(c)(i)(B) will not be refunded.

(ii) If an Appellant abandons an appeal during the conduct of the Appeal Board hearing, the fixed fee paid by the Appellant under Section 26.1(c)(i)(B) will not be refunded and will be retained by the Controlling Body.

(f) **Validity of appeal and hearing**

(i) Where there is any procedural irregularity in relation to an Appeal Board hearing, the Appeal Board must still hear and determine the appeal unless the Appeal Board is of the opinion that the irregularity has caused or will cause injustice.

(ii) A decision of the Appeal Board is not invalid because of a defect or irregularity in, or in connection with, the appointment of an Appeal Board member.

(iii) Subject to Sections 26.3(d)(iii) and 26.3(d)(iv), any procedure or requirement regulating the function of the Appeal Board is directory in nature and a decision of the Appeal Board is not invalid by reason of that procedure or requirement not being fulfilled.

(g) **Criticism of Appeal Board decision**

(i) A Person must not make any unfair, unreasonable or excessive public criticism of an Appeal Board decision or of any Appeal Board member or any other matter relevant to the Appeal Board or a determination made by it.

(ii) If a Person breaches Section 26.4(g)(i), that Person and that Person's Club may be dealt with in such manner as the Appeal Board or Controlling Body sees fit including referral of such breach to the Tribunal.

(h) **Exhaust appeal rights**

A Person must exercise their right of appeal under this Policy Handbook and have any appeal heard and determined by the Appeal Board before commencing any relevant proceedings or becoming a party to any relevant proceedings in a court of law.

APPENDIX 1 – Reportable Offences

1. Application

(a) This Appendix 1 sets out the different categories of Reportable Offences and appropriate sanctions and courses of action in respect of Reportable Offences.

(b) The categories of Reportable Offences are as follows:

(i) Classifiable Offences (Clauses 2 and 3 of this Appendix 1);

(ii) Direct Tribunal Offences (Clause 4 of this Appendix 1);

(iii) Low-level Offences (Clause 5 of this Appendix 1); and

(iv) Auditory Offences (Clause 6 of this Appendix 1).

(c) This Appendix 1 is to be used by a Controlling Body (including any Match Review Panel, Match Review Officer or other person(s) responsible for assessing a Reportable Offence) to determine the appropriate category of offence, sanction or course of action prior to any Tribunal involvement under Section 25.

*[**Guidance note**: Examples of Reportable Offences committed in the AFL/AFLW Competition are listed in Appendix 2. The AFL will make vision of these examples available to Controlling Bodies from time to time.]*

2. Classifiable Offences

(a) **Which Reportable Offences are Classifiable Offences?**

A Classifiable Offence is a Reportable Offence specified in Table 1 below which may be graded by a Controlling Body in order to determine an appropriate base sanction for that Reportable Offence.

Table 1 – Classifiable Offences
Charging
Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact to the Eye Region
Forceful Front-On Contact
Headbutt or Contact Using Head
Kicking
Kneeing
Rough Conduct
Striking
Tripping
Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact to the Face

(b) **Grading Classifiable Offences**

(i) Unless otherwise specified in this Policy Handbook, a Controlling Body must grade a Classifiable Offence in accordance with Table 2 below:

Table 2 – Classification Table

Conduct	Impact	Contact	Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea
Intentional	Severe	High/Groin/Chest	5 or more Matches (Tribunal)*	N/A
		Body	4 or more Matches (Tribunal)*	N/A
	High	High/Groin/Chest	4 Matches	3 Matches
		Body	3 Matches	2 Matches
	Medium	High/Groin/Chest	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Body	2 Matches	1 Match
	Low	High/Groin/Chest	2 Matches	1 Match
		Body	1 Match	Fine and/or Reprimand
Careless	Severe	High/Groin/Chest	4 or more Matches (Tribunal)*	N/A
		Body	3 or more Matches (Tribunal)*	N/A
	High	High/Groin/Chest	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Body	2 Matches	1 Match
	Medium	High/Groin/Chest	2 Matches	1 Match
		Body	1 Match	Fine and/or Reprimand
	Low	High/Groin/Chest	1 Match	Fine and/or Reprimand
		Body	1 Match	Fine and/or Reprimand

**Refer to Clause 2(b)(vi) of Appendix 1.*

(ii) If applicable, a Controlling Body may grade a Classifiable Offence in accordance with the specific classification table adopted by the relevant Controlling Body provided such table has been approved by the AFL.

(iii) For a Controlling Body to arrive at a grading set out in Table 2, the Controlling Body must use the interpretation provisions set out in Clause 3 of this Appendix 1 to assess whether:

(A) the Conduct is Intentional or Careless;

(B) the Impact is Severe, High, Medium or Low; and

(C) the Contact with the other Person is High/Groin/Chest or to the Body.

(iv) A Controlling Body may refer a Classifiable Offence directly to the Tribunal on the basis that:

(A) it is a Classifiable Offence which the Controlling Body has graded as Severe Impact (together with any Contact or Conduct grading); or

(B) it is a Classifiable Offence which attracts a base sanction that the Controlling Body finds inappropriate.

*[**Guidance note**: Refer to Section 22.4(c). See also Clause 4 (Direct Tribunal Offences) of this Appendix 1.]*

(v) References to 'Chest' in this Appendix 1 apply to Persons participating in female Competitions only.

(vi) In respect of a charge for a Classifiable Offence where the Impact is graded by the Controlling Body as Severe, if only the minimum prescribed sanction (set out in Table 2 above) is sought, the Controlling Body will, in its discretion, specify that minimum prescribed sanction and the Player may enter an Early Guilty Plea and accept the sanction without the matter being referred directly to the Tribunal. If the Controlling Body does not specify that the minimum prescribed sanction is sought, the charge will be referred to the Tribunal and the charged Player will not have the option to enter an Early Guilty Plea.

3. Determining the grading of Classifiable Offences

(a) Grading Conduct

(i) The Conduct will be graded as Intentional or Careless.

(ii) Intentional Conduct

(A) A Person intentionally commits a Classifiable Offence if the Person engages in the conduct constituting the Reportable Offence with the intention of committing that Reportable Offence.

(B) An intention is a state of mind and may be formed on the spur of the moment.

(C) Whether or not a Person intentionally commits a Reportable Offence depends upon the state of mind of the Person when the Person

engages in the conduct with which they are charged. What the Person did is often the best evidence of their intention. In some cases, the evidence that the conduct itself provides may be so strong as to compel an inference of what the Person's intent was, no matter what they may say about it afterwards. If the immediate consequence of conduct is obvious and inevitable, the deliberate engaging of the conduct carries with it evidence of an intention to produce the consequence.

(D) As an example, a strike will be regarded as Intentional where a Person delivers a blow to another Person with the intention of striking them.

(E) The state of a Person's mind is an objective fact and has to be proved in the same way as other objective facts. The whole of the relevant evidence has to be considered. It is necessary to weigh the evidence of the Person as to what their intentions were along with whatever inference as to their intentions can be drawn from their conduct and/or other relevant facts. The Person may or may not be believed. Notwithstanding what the Person says, it may be able to be concluded from all the material that the Person intentionally engaged in the conduct constituting the Reportable Offence.

(iii) Careless Conduct

(A) A Person's conduct will be regarded as Careless where it constitutes a breach of the duty of care owed by the Person. Each Person owes a duty of care to other Persons not to engage in conduct which will constitute a Reportable Offence being committed against those Persons.

(B) To constitute a breach of that duty of care, the conduct must be such that a reasonable Player would not regard it as prudent in all the circumstances.

(C) Further, a Person will be careless if they breach their duty to take reasonable care to avoid conduct which can be reasonably foreseen to result in a Reportable Offence.

(b) **Grading Impact**

(i) The Impact will be graded as Low, Medium, High or Severe. In an assessment as to the level of Impact, the following factors will be considered:

(A) the extent of force and, in particular, any injury sustained by the Person who was offended against (as set out in any relevant medical report).

(B) the absence of injury does not preclude the classification of Impact as Low, Medium, High or Severe;

(C) the potential to cause injury must also be factored into the determination of Impact, particularly in the following cases:

(1) intentional strikes, such as those with a swinging clenched fist, raised forearm or elbow;

(2) high bumps, particularly with significant head contact and/or momentum;

(3) any head-high contact with a Player who has their head over the ball, particularly when contact is made from an opponent approaching from a front-on position;

(4) forceful round-arm swings that make head-high contact to a Player in a marking contest, ruck contest or when tackling;

(5) any contact that occurs when the other Person should not reasonably be expecting or is not reasonably prepared for contact (i.e. contact off the ball);

(6) any dangerous tackle.

(D) Low Impact is the minimum impact required for a Classifiable Offence which requires more than just negligible impact. However, the potential to cause injury may result in an upgrade to the level of Impact, including from negligible to a higher level of Impact;

(E) strong consideration will be given to the distance the incident occurs from the ball and the expectation of contact of the other Person (especially in the case of intentional strikes);

(F) consideration will also be given not only to the impact between the offending Person and the other Person, but also any other impact to the other Person as a result of that impact; *[**Guidance note**: For example, where the other Person as a result of the impact from an offending Person is pushed into the path of a fast-moving third Person, the impact to the other Person may be classified as High or Severe Impact, even though the level of impact between the other Person and offending Person was only Low or Medium Impact.]*

(G) the body language of the offending Person in terms of flexing, turning, raising or positioning the body to either increase or reduce the force of impact; and

(H) the following Table 3 sets out Impact guidelines and provides a summary of indicative Impact guidelines for Low, Medium, High and Severe Impact incidents:

Table 3 – Impact guidelines	
Low	Player: Minimal or no impact on the Match - the Player continued to play the majority of the Match and suffered no or minimal ongoing issues. Person (other than Player): Person continued in their relevant capacity in relation to the Match for the majority of the Match and suffered no or minimal ongoing issues. The Impact grading may be raised under the potential to cause injury provisions in this Appendix 1.

Medium	Player: Clearly some impact on the Player, and/or the Player left the field for a lengthy period of time, and/or some possible lower level ongoing treatment(s) required, and/or may miss one Match. Person (other than Player): Clearly some impact on the Person, and/or the Person was prevented from continuing in their official capacity in relation to the Match for a lengthy period of time, and/or some possible lower level ongoing treatment(s) required. The Impact grading may be raised under the potential to cause injury provisions in this Appendix 1.
High	Player: Major impact on the Player, and/or the Player was unable to participate in the remainder of the Match, and/or major ongoing issues that require medical intervention and/or may miss some Matches. Person (other than Player): Major impact on the Person, and/or the Person was unable to continue in their official capacity in relation to the Match for the remainder of the Match, and/or major ongoing issues that require medical intervention and/or may miss some Matches. The Impact grading may be raised under the potential to cause injury provisions in this Appendix 1.
Severe	Person (including Player): Major impact and serious injury to the Person, and/or likely to miss a significant number of Matches. The sanction determination may be raised under the potential to cause injury provisions in this Appendix 1.

For the avoidance of doubt, Table 3 is included for guidance purposes and must be considered together with factors set out in Clause 3(b) of this Appendix 1.

(c) **Grading Contact (High/Groin/Chest, Body)**

(i) High Contact is not limited to contact to the head and includes contact to the top of the shoulders.

(ii) A classification of High Contact may apply to a Careless or Intentional Dangerous Tackle (refer to Clause 8(f)(iii) of this Appendix 1) which has the potential for injury to be caused through dangerous high contact with the ground and where high contact does not actually occur.

(iii) Contact to the Groin includes contact to the crease or hollow at the junction of the inner part of each thigh with the trunk together with the adjacent region, including the testicles and vulva.

(iv) Contact to the Chest means contact to the breast(s) of the other Person (females only).

(v) Where contact is both High and to the Body, it will usually be classified as High Contact.

(vi) Where contact is both to the Chest and to the Body, it will be classified as Contact to the Chest (females only).

(vii) Contact will be classified as High, to the Groin or, in the case of females only, to the Chest, where a Person's head, groin or chest makes contact with another Person or object such as the fence or the ground as a result of the actions of the offending Person. By way of example, should a Person tackle another Person around the waist and as a result of the tackle, the tackled Person's head makes forceful contact with the fence or the ground the Contact in these circumstances would be classified as High, even though the tackle was to the body.

(viii) The Controlling Body has the discretion to grade contact as Body contact rather than High contact where the Body impact would result in a more significant sanction.

(d) **Impact of a bad record on Classifiable Offence**

(i) The sanction for Classifiable Offences may be increased where a Person has a bad Disciplinary History.

(ii) Where a Person has been found or pleaded guilty to two low-level Classifiable Offences within a 12 month period (those Classifiable Offences with a base sanction of 1 match as per Table 2), any third or subsequent low-level Classifiable Offence (with a base sanction of 1 match as per Table 2) within the same 12 month period (as at the date of the offence) will result in a base sanction of 2 matches, with the Person able to accept 1 match with an Early Guilty Plea. For the avoidance of doubt, the Low-level Offences referred to in Clause 5 of this Appendix 1 will not be affected by this bad record provision.

(iii) A Controlling Body has the power pursuant to Section 22.4(c) to directly refer a Person to the Tribunal as a result of the Person's bad Disciplinary History. In this instance the Tribunal will not be bound by Table 2. Evidence in relation to the record of a Person may be tendered to the Tribunal without the leave of the Chairperson.

(e) **Injury**

The Controlling Body and the Tribunal can inquire and receive information as to the nature and extent of any injury suffered by a Person in relation to a Reportable Offence. The nature and extent of injury may be a relevant factor in determining the level of Impact, Contact and in some instances, the nature of the Conduct. A Club must provide a medical report upon request by the Controlling Body or Tribunal.

4. Direct Tribunal Offences

(a) **Which Reportable Offences are Direct Tribunal Offences?**

Direct Tribunal Offences are those Reportable Offences which are referred by the Controlling Body directly to the Tribunal for determination without grading (i.e. without an assessment of the Reportable Offence using Table 2), including the following Reportable Offences:

Table 4 – Direct Tribunal Offences
Attempting to Strike an Umpire

Behaving in an Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Manner Towards or in Relation to an Umpire
Eye Gouging
Intentional Contact with an Umpire
Spitting on Another Person
Spitting on or at an Umpire
Stomping
Striking an Umpire
Serious Misconduct

(b) **Determination of Direct Tribunal Offences**

The Tribunal will determine a Direct Tribunal Offence in accordance with Section 25. The Tribunal will determine the appropriate sanction for a Direct Tribunal Offence in its absolute discretion.

5. Low-level Offences

(a) **Which Reportable Offences are Low-level Offences?**

Low-level Offences are the following low-level Reportable Offences which, having regard to the provisions of this Clause 5 and Clause 8 of this Appendix 1, do not require classification (i.e. do not require an assessment of the Reportable Offence using Table 2):

Table 5 – Low-level Offences
Attempt to Strike / Kick / Trip
Careless Contact with an Umpire
Disputing Decision
Instigator of a Melee / Wrestle
Interfering with a Player Kicking for Goal
Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Injured Player
Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Umpire
Not Leaving the Playing Surface
Obscene Gesture

Pinching
Prohibited Boots, Jewellery or Equipment
Scratching
Shaking, Climbing or Interfering with Goal or Behind Post
Spitting at Another Player
Staging
Striking
Kicking
Time Wasting
Tripping
Engaging in a Melee / Wrestle
Any Other Act of Low-Level Misconduct which is not a Classifiable Offence or Direct Tribunal Offence

(b) **Sanctions for Low-level Offences**

(i) Unless otherwise specified in this Policy Handbook, for Low-level Offences a Controlling Body must impose the base sanctions (with a reduced sanction for an early Guilty Plea) set out in Table 6 below:

Table 6 – Low-level Offence Base Sanctions			
1st & 2nd Low-level Offence		**3rd & Subsequent Low-Level Offence**	
Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea	Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea
1 Match	Reprimand	2 Matches	1 Match

(ii) If applicable, a Controlling Body may impose base sanctions for Low-level Offences in accordance with the specific Low-level Offence sanctions table adopted by the relevant Controlling Body provided such table has been approved by the AFL.

(iii) A reference to second, third and subsequent Low-level Offences is a reference to a second, third or subsequent Low-level Offence occurring at any time in the previous 12 months (as at the date of the current offence). The second, third or subsequent Low-level Offence need not be the same offence as the first or any other Low-level Offence. For the avoidance of

doubt, a prior offence other than a Low-level Offence will not count as a first offence for the purposes of the above Table 5.

(iv) A Controlling Body may refer a Low-level Offence directly to the Tribunal on the basis that it is a Low-level Offence which attracts a base sanction that the Controlling Body finds inappropriate.

6. Auditory Offences

(a) Which Reportable Offences are Auditory Offences

An Auditory Offence is a Reportable Offence specified in Table 7 below which may be graded by a Controlling Body in order to determine an appropriate base sanction for that Reportable Offence.

Table 7 – Auditory Offences
Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language towards or in relation to an Umpire
Using Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Language

(b) Grading Auditory Offences

(i) Unless otherwise specified in this Policy Handbook, a Controlling Body must grade an Auditory Offence in accordance with Table 8 below.

Table 8 – Auditory Classification Table

Conduct	Receiver	Volume	Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea
Threatening	Umpire*	Any	4 or more Matches (Tribunal)*	N/A
	Another Person	Loud	4 or more Matches (Tribunal)*	N/A
		Medium or Low	3 Matches	2 Matches
High-level Abusive / Obscene / Insulting	Umpire	Loud	4 Matches	3 Matches
		Medium or Low	3 Matches	2 Matches
	Another Person	Loud	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Medium or Low	2 Matches	1 Match

Low-level Abusive / Obscene / Insulting	Umpire	Loud	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Medium or Low	2 Matches	1 Match
	Another Person	Loud	2 Matches	1 Match
		Medium or Low	1 Match	Fine and/or Reprimand

**Refer to Clauses 6(b)(iv) and 6(b)(v) of this Appendix 1 for treatment of offences graded as Threatening language directed at an Umpire and Threatening language directed at Another Person of Loud Volume.*

(ii) If applicable, a Controlling Body may grade an Auditory Offence in accordance with the specific classification table adopted by the relevant Controlling Body provided such table has been approved by the AFL.

(iii) For a Controlling Body to arrive at a grading set out in Table 8, the Controlling Body must use the interpretation provisions set out in Clause 6(c) of this Appendix 1 to assess whether:

(A) the Conduct is Threatening, High-level Abusive, Obscene or Insulting or Low-level Abusive, Obscene or Insulting;

(B) the Receiver of the Conduct is an Umpire or Another Person; and

(C) the Volume of the Conduct is Loud, Medium or Low.

(iv) Subject to Clause 6(b)(v) of this Appendix 1:

(A) in respect of a charge graded by the Controlling Body as Threatening language directed at an Umpire, that charge will be classified as Behaving in an Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Manner Towards or in Relation to an Umpire, a Direct Tribunal Offence; and

(B) in respect of a charge graded by the Controlling Body as Threatening language directed at Another Person of Loud Volume, the Controlling Body may refer that charge directly to the Tribunal.

(v) In respect of a charge under Clause 6(b)(iv) of this Appendix 1, if only the minimum prescribed sanction (set out in Table 8 above) is sought, the Controlling Body will, at its discretion, specify that minimum prescribed sanction and the Player may enter an Early Guilty Plea and accept the sanction without the matter being referred directly to the Tribunal. If the Controlling Body does not specify that the minimum prescribed sanction is sought, the charge will be referred to the Tribunal and the charged Player will not have the option to enter an Early Guilty Plea.

(c) **Interpretative provisions of Auditory Offences**

(i) Grading Conduct

(A) The Conduct of an Auditory Offence will be graded as:

(1) Threatening;

(2) High-level Abusive, Obscene or Insulting; or

(3) Low-level Abusive, Obscene or Insulting.

(B) Threatening language means language that conveys an intention to cause bodily harm or cause someone to feel vulnerable or at risk.

(C) High-level and Low-level Abusive, Obscene or Insulting language includes rude, shocking or offensive language which may abuse, insult or offend any person or group. In grading whether Abusive, Obscene or Insulting language is High-level or Low-level, the following factors will be considered:

(1) the nature of language;

(2) the tone of the language;

(3) the extent of aggression in the language;

(4) the actual or potential hurt caused by the language;

(5) the body language of the offending Person.

*[**Guidance note**: Where any auditory offence involves the use of words or sounds that are considered to constitute vilification or discrimination, the offence is to be dealt with under Section 10.]*

(ii) Grading Receiver

(A) The Receiver will be graded as Umpire or Another Person.

(B) Umpire means a field, boundary, goal or emergency umpire who has been appointed to officiate in the relevant Match.

(C) Another Person means any person who is not an Umpire, regardless of whether that person is able to be identified or not.

(iii) Grading Volume

(A) The Volume of an Auditory Offence will be graded as Loud, Medium or Low.

(B) Loud means the language could be heard from more than 50 metres away or heard by spectators.

(C) Medium means the language could be heard from more than 10 metres away, but less than 50 metres away, and/or heard by other Players and/or heard by Football Officials.

(D) Low means the language could be heard from no more than 10 metres away, and/or conversational language.

7. Other factors regarding sanctions

(a) Reduction in base sanction for an Early Guilty Plea

The base sanction for a Classifiable Offence or Auditory Offence will be decreased where a Person submits an Early Guilty Plea (if available). As per Table 2 or Table 8 (as applicable):

(i) an Early Guilty Plea in respect of a Classifiable Offence or Auditory Offence with a fixed base sanction of a two, three or four Match suspension will result in a one Match reduction in that suspension; and

(ii) an Early Guilty Plea in respect of a Classifiable Offence or Auditory Offence with a base sanction of a one Match suspension will result in a reprimand and/or fine (at the discretion of the Controlling Body).

(b) **No automatic reduction for exemplary record**

(i) A Person will not receive an automatic reduced base sanction for their exemplary Disciplinary History.

(ii) If a Classifiable Offence or Auditory Offence is contested or referred to the Tribunal, a Person with a verifiable exemplary Disciplinary History may argue that their Disciplinary History constitutes exceptional and compelling circumstances under Section 25.4(a)(iv)(A). This may make it inappropriate to apply the sanctions in Table 2 or Table 8 (as applicable) to the determined classification. In such circumstances, the Tribunal may determine the appropriate sanction in its absolute discretion.

(c) **Reportable Offences in a Grand Final**

The Controlling Body or Tribunal (as applicable) may apply (at its absolute discretion) a loading of up to 100% in relation to the base sanction for any Reportable Offence committed during a Grand Final.

*[**Guidance note**: For example, if the usual base sanction for an offence was 2 matches and the Controlling Body applied the full 100% loading, the base sanction would become 4 matches. An early guilty plea discount would then apply to the 4 match base sanction, i.e. 4 matches reduced to 3 matches if the plea is accepted]*

(d) **Multiple Reportable Offences in a single Match**

Where a Person is found guilty of multiple Reportable Offences from a single match, the individual sanctions must be added together to form the final sanction applicable to the Person.

8. Other factors regarding certain Reportable Offences

(a) **General**

(i) The Laws of the Game sets out a non-exhaustive list of specific Reportable Offences in Law 22.2.2 as well as providing for various categories of permitted contact which will not constitute a Reportable Offence (for example, legally using a hip, shoulder, chest, arms or open arms, providing the football is no more than five metres away, and contact which is incidental to a marking contest where a Player is legitimately marking or spoiling or attempting to mark or spoil the football).

(ii) The Laws of the Game define certain Reportable Offences, but provide that in interpreting/classifying Reportable Offences, words, terms or phrases

which are not defined in the Laws of the Game will be given their ordinary meaning.

(iii) This Clause 8 provides guidance in relation to the characteristics of particular Reportable Offences and other relevant factors.

(b) **Striking, Kicking**

(i) Striking and kicking are interpreted in accordance with their ordinary meaning. A strike would usually be by hand, arm or elbow and would generally not apply to other contact using the body. A strike can also occur with an open hand. A kick is generally applied to contact by foot or leg.

(ii) A strike or kick requires more than negligible impact to be a Classifiable Offence.

(iii) Where a strike or kick does not have more than negligible impact, it is open to a Controlling Body to charge a Person with Striking or Kicking under Table 5 where it is satisfied that notwithstanding the result, the intention of the Person was to commit a Reportable Offence. Where no contact is made, a Controlling Body may charge a Person with an Attempt to Strike or Kick, which are both Low-level Offences.

(c) **Classification of certain strikes**

The following factors will be considered when determining the classification of the Reportable Offence of Striking:

(i) Intent: Notwithstanding any other part of this Policy Handbook, the fact that an act of striking occurred behind the play or off the ball or during a break in play or with a raised forearm or elbow is usually consistent with the strike being intentional. Further, where a Player intends to forcefully push or fend an opposition Player off the ball (including to gain separation for the purpose of contesting the ball) and the effect is that the Player commits the Reportable Offence of Striking, the strike will usually be graded as Intentional.

(ii) Impact: Notwithstanding any other part of this Policy Handbook, any Careless or Intentional strike which is of an inherently dangerous kind and/or where there is a potential to cause an injury (such as a strike with a raised elbow or forearm) will usually not be classified as Low Impact even though the extent of the actual physical impact may be low. Such strikes will usually be classified at a higher level commensurate with the nature and extent of the risk of injury involved. Strong consideration will also be given to the distance the incident occurs from the ball and the expectation of contact of the other Player.

(d) **Misconduct**

(i) Misconduct has a wide meaning and generally is any conduct which would be reasonably regarded as unacceptable or unsportsmanlike or where it has the effect or potential to prejudice the reputation of any Person, Club or Controlling Body or to bring the game of Australian Football into disrepute.

(ii) Acts of Serious Misconduct will be referred directly to the Tribunal.

*[**Guidance note**: Generally, for conduct to constitute Serious Misconduct, the Controlling Body will consider that a sanction of at least 4 Matches is appropriate as a sanction for that conduct.]*

(iii) Any other act of Misconduct will be a Low-level Offence unless the Controlling Body determines that:

(A) the Low-level Offence sanction is inappropriate; and

(B) the act of Misconduct is not Serious Misconduct,

in which case the Controlling Body may impose a sanction of either a 2 Match or 3 Match suspension, with the relevant Person entitled to receive a 1 Match reduction in the sanction with an Early Guilty Plea (i.e. a 2 Match suspension reduced to a 1 Match suspension with an Early Guilty Plea).

(e) **Forceful Front-On Contact**

(i) Bumping or making contact that is at least Low Impact to an opponent from front-on when that opponent has their head over the ball is a Reportable Offence. Unless Intentional, such conduct will be deemed Careless except where:

(A) the Player was contesting the ball and it was reasonable for the Player to contest the ball in that way; or

(B) the contact was caused by circumstances outside the control of the Player which could not reasonably be foreseen,

in which case such conduct will not constitute a Reportable Offence.

(ii) Any Careless or Intentional Forceful Front-On Contact where High Contact has been made and that has the potential to cause injury will usually be graded at a minimum as Medium Impact, even though the extent of the actual physical impact may be low.

(iii) A Player may bump another Player's body from side-on but any contact forward of side-on will be deemed to be front-on. A Player with their head down in anticipation of winning possession of the ball or after contesting the ball will be deemed to have their head over the ball for the purposes of this Clause 8(e) of this Appendix 1.

(f) **Rough Conduct**

Rough Conduct is interpreted widely and may be any contact which is unreasonable in the circumstances.

It is a Reportable Offence for a Person to intentionally or carelessly engage in Rough Conduct against another Person which is unreasonable in the circumstances. Without limiting the wide interpretation of Rough Conduct, regard will be had to the following recognised forms of Rough Conduct:

(i) Rough Conduct (High Bumps)

A Person will be guilty of Rough Conduct where in the bumping of another Person (whether reasonably or unreasonably) the Person causes contact

that is at least Low Impact to be made with any part of their body to that Person's head or neck. Unless Intentional, such conduct will be deemed to be Careless, except where:

(1) the Person was contesting the ball and it was reasonable for the Person to contest the ball in that way; or

(2) the contact to the other Person's head or neck was caused by circumstances outside the control of the Person which could not be reasonably foreseen,

in which case such conduct will not constitute a Reportable Offence.

Any high bump which constitutes Rough Conduct that has the potential to cause injury will usually be graded at a minimum as Medium Impact, even though the extent of the actual physical impact may be low.

The purpose of Clause 8(f)(i) of this Appendix 1 is to, as far as practicable, minimise the risk of head injuries to Persons and this purpose must be front of mind for all Persons and will guide the application of the Clause.

For the purposes of this Policy Handbook, head clashes that occur when a Person has elected to bump are circumstances that can reasonably be foreseen. Players will ordinarily be liable if they elect to bump if not contesting the ball.

(ii) Rough Conduct (Bumps to the Body)

If Clause 8(f)(i) does not apply (for example, in the case of a bump to the body), a Person may still be guilty of Rough Conduct if the Person's conduct was unreasonable in the circumstances. In determining whether a bump was unreasonable in the circumstances the following factors will be considered (without limitation):

(A) whether the degree of force applied by the Person bumping was excessive for the circumstances;

(B) whether the Person being bumped was in a vulnerable position; and

(C) whether the Person could reasonably expect the contact having regard to the Person's involvement in play or ability to influence the contest.

(iii) Rough Conduct (Dangerous Tackles)

The application of a tackle may be considered Rough Conduct where the tackle is unreasonable in the circumstances. In determining whether the application of a tackle constitutes a Reportable Offence and whether the tackle is Careless or Intentional, the following factors will be considered (without limitation):

(A) whether the tackle consists of more than one action, regardless of whether the Person being tackled is in possession of the ball;

(B) whether the tackle is of an inherently dangerous kind, such as a spear tackle or a tackle where a Player is lifted off the ground;

(C) whether the Person being tackled is in a vulnerable position (for example, arm(s) pinned) with little opportunity to protect themself;

(D) whether the Person being tackled is slung, driven or rotated into the ground with excessive force (for example, a run down tackle where the tackled player is driven into the ground with excessive force or where the tackle consists of a player dropping their knees and using their full body weight to bring the tackled player to the ground with excessive force).

(iv) Rough Conduct (Contact Below the Knees)

Under the Laws of the Game, making contact with an opponent below the knees is prohibited. A Person who keeps their feet is vulnerable to serious injury from other Persons who lunge, dive or slide toward them and make contact below the knees. This Clause 8(f)(iv) aims to protect such Persons from the risk of foreseeable injury. A Person may be guilty of Rough Conduct if the Person makes contact below the knees of another Person and does so in a manner which is unreasonable in the circumstances. It is not a defence that the Person who made contact below the knees was contesting the ball or was first to the ball. The primary responsibility of Persons with respect to contact below the knees is to avoid the risk of foreseeable injury. In determining whether contact below the knees is unreasonable in the circumstances, the following factors will be considered:

(A) the degree of momentum and/or force involved in the contact;

(B) whether the Person causes contact below the knees by sliding with their foot, feet, knee or knees in front of them;

(C) whether the other Person was in a position that was vulnerable to contact below the knees (for example, standing over the ball or approaching from the opposite direction); and

(D) whether the Person making contact had any realistic alternative ways of approaching the contest or situation.

Where contact is not made below the knees of the other Person but to another part of that Person's body, a Person may still be guilty under the general definition of Rough Conduct for making unreasonable contact by sliding or dropping into another Person with their knees or feet first.

(v) Rough Conduct (Smothers)

Where a Player elects to leave the ground in an attempt to smother the football, any reasonably foreseeable high contact with an opponent that is at least Low Impact will be deemed to be Careless at a minimum, unless the Player has taken all reasonable steps to avoid that high contact and/or minimise the force of that high contact (for example, by adopting a body position that minimises the force of the high contact).

(g) **Contact with an Umpire**

(i) Intentional Contact with an Umpire

(A) Contact with an Umpire that is aggressive, forceful, demonstrative or disrespectful will be deemed intentional and the Person will be referred directly to the Tribunal. In determining the sanction for Intentional Contact with an Umpire, the Tribunal must have regard to the number of elements of the offence (aggressive, forceful, demonstrative and/or disrespectful) which are established.

(B) A Player may also be charged with the offence of Intentional Contact with an Umpire by pushing or holding an opponent into an Umpire or their direct path.

(C) Where contact with an umpire is forceful but only incidental (i.e. it is not otherwise aggressive, demonstrative or disrespectful), the Controlling Body has the discretion to not charge the Player with Intentional Contact with an Umpire (resulting in a direct referral to the Tribunal) and instead charge the Player with Careless Contact with an Umpire (but provided such Contact is not otherwise disrespectful, demonstrative or aggressive).

(ii) Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Umpire

Where contact with an Umpire is not aggressive, forceful, demonstrative or disrespectful but could otherwise be regarded as intentional, it will be classified as Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Umpire which is a Low-level Offence.

(iii) Careless Contact with an Umpire

A charge of Careless Contact with an Umpire is a Low-level Offence. In determining whether the contact was careless, the following factors will be considered:

(A) whether contact occurs at a centre bounce or ball up;

(B) whether the Person has set up behind the Umpire;

(C) whether the Person has taken a path that intersects the Umpire's exit line from a stoppage;

(D) the force of the contact;

(E) whether the Umpire's decision making is impeded;

(F) whether the Umpire goes to ground as a result of the contact;

(G) any mitigating factors (for example, effort to avoid contact, offline bounce or throw, pushed by opponent into Umpire's path).

A Player may also be charged with the offence of Careless Contact with an Umpire by pushing or holding another Person into an Umpire or their direct path.

(h) **Umpire abuse**

(i) Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language Towards or in relation to an Umpire will be an Auditory Offence unless the Controlling Body determines

that the conduct constitutes the Direct Tribunal Offence of Behaving in an Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Manner Towards or in Relation to an Umpire.

(ii) Where a Person is reported for an Auditory Offence that is directed at, or in relation to, an Umpire, and responds with further abuse that is directed at, or in relation to, an Umpire, the Controlling Body or Tribunal, may increase the penalty for the Auditory Offence by one (1) additional match.

(i) **Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language**

Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language will be an Auditory Offence unless the Controlling Body determines that the conduct constitutes the Direct Tribunal Offence of Serious Misconduct.

(j) **Melee**

(i) Engaging in a Melee/Wrestle

A Melee/Wrestle is defined as an incident involving Persons who are grappling or otherwise struggling with one another, and which is likely to bring the game of Australian Football into disrepute or prejudice the interests or reputation of the Controlling Body. In determining if a Person's conduct constitutes Engaging in a Melee/Wrestle, the following factors will be considered:

(A) the duration the Person is involved in the Melee/Wrestle;

(B) the vigour applied by the Person;

(C) whether the Melee/Wrestle occurs at a break in play, particularly at quarter breaks and half time;

(D) whether the Person contributed to an escalation of the Melee/Wrestle; and

(E) the role of the Person (for example, Player or Football Official).

(ii) Instigator of a Melee/Wrestle

Where a Person's conduct results in retaliatory action which leads to a Melee/Wrestle, that Person's conduct may constitute a Reportable Offence of Instigator of a Melee/Wrestle. The Reportable Offence of Instigator of Melee/Wrestle is separate to the Reportable Offence of Engaging in a Melee/Wrestle and a Person may be found guilty of both Reportable Offences.

(k) **Staging**

Staging includes excessive exaggeration of contact in an unsportsmanlike manner. In determining whether a Person's conduct constitutes the Reportable Offence of Staging, the following factors will be considered:

(i) whether the conduct affected, or was likely to affect, the Umpire decision-making;

(ii) whether the conduct incited a melee; and/or

(iii) whether the conduct was in the spirit of the game.

(l) **Tripping**

(i) Tripping is interpreted in accordance with its ordinary meaning. In determining whether a Person's conduct constitutes the Reportable Offence of Tripping, to the following factors will be considered:

(A) how fast the opponent was moving;

(B) whether the trip was by hand or by foot/leg; and

(C) whether contact was made with a swinging motion.

(ii) To constitute a Classifiable Offence, Tripping requires more than negligible impact. Where a trip does not have more than negligible impact, it is still open to the Controlling Body or Tribunal to charge a Person with Tripping under Table 5 where it is satisfied that notwithstanding the result, a Reportable Offence was committed. Where no contact or minor contact is made, the Panel can charge a Person with an Attempt to Trip, which is a Low-level Offence.

APPENDIX 2 – Example Reportable Offences

The following incidents are examples of Reportable Offences which were processed in accordance with these Guidelines. Vision of these incidents is available on request to the AFL.

CLASSIFIABLE OFFENCES	
Striking	**Example 1** - Lewis Young on Mason Wood (Round 6, 2023) Careless Conduct, Low Impact, Body Contact **Example 2** - Nicholas Blakey on Joshua Treacy (Round 9, 2023) Careless Conduct, Low Impact, High Contact **Example 3** - Beau McCreery on James Sicily (Round 21, 2023) Careless Conduct, Medium Impact, Body Contact **Example 4** - Samuel Wicks on Ryan Lester (Round 14, 2023) Careless Conduct, High Impact, High Contact **Example 5** - Eloise Jones on Mia King (Finals Week 3, 2023) Intentional Conduct, Low Impact, Body Contact **Example 6** - Lincoln McCarthy on Kamdyn McIntosh (Round 16, 2023) Intentional Conduct, Low Impact, High Contact **Example 7** - Joshua Rachele on Jack Buckley (Round 18, 2023) Intentional Conduct, Medium Impact, High Contact
Kneeing	**Example 8** - Lloyd Meek on Max Gawn (Round 9, 2023) Careless Conduct, Low Impact, Body Contact
Rough Conduct	**Example 9** - Marlion Pickett on Jeremy McGovern (Round 18, 2023) Careless Conduct, Low Impact, Body Contact **Example 10** - Hannah Ewings on Sofia Hurley (Round 6, 2023) Intentional Conduct, Low Impact, Body Contact
Rough Conduct (High Bumps)	**Example 11** - Jack Viney on Lachlan Fogarty (Finals Week 2, 2023) Careless Conduct, Low Impact, High Contact **Example 12** - Taylor Duryea on Jamie Cripps (Round 23, 2023) Careless Conduct, Medium Impact, High Contact **Example 13** - Rhyan Mansell on James Aish (Round 13, 2023) Careless Conduct, Severe Impact, High Contact **EXCEPTION: CONTESTING THE BALL** **Example 14** - Ollie Wines on Christian Petracca (Round 10, 2023) **EXCEPTION: CIRCUMSTANCES OUTSIDE CONTROL** **Example 15** - Marcus Bontempelli on Jed Bews (Round 24, 2023)

Rough Conduct (Dangerous Tackles)	**Example 16** - Katie Lynch on Jacqueline Parry (Round 1, 2023) Careless Conduct, Low Impact, High Contact **Example 17** - Jaeger O'Meara on Charlie Spargo (Round 11, 2023) Careless Conduct, Medium Impact, High Contact **Example 18** - Will Day on Bradley Close (Round 4, 2023) Careless Conduct, High Impact, High Contact **Example 19** - Dee Heslop on Rhiannon Watt (Round 10, 2023) Careless Conduct, Severe Impact, High Contact
Forceful Front-On Contact	**Example 20** - Lachlan Hunter on Connor Rozee (Round 10, 2023) Careless Conduct, Medium Impact, High Contact **EXCEPTION: CONTESTING THE BALL** **Example 21** - Bailey Humphrey on Keidean Coleman (Round 20, 2023)
Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact to the Eye Region	**Example 22** - Dayne Zorko on Luke Pedlar (Round 11, 2023) Intentional Conduct, Low Impact, High Contact
Tripping	**Example 23** - Joshua Rachele on Andrew McGrath (Round 17, 2023) Intentional Conduct, Low Impact, Body Contact
Kicking	**Example 24** - Tom Atkins on Jamie Webster (Round 23, 2023) Careless Conduct, Medium Impact, Body Contact

DIRECT TRIBUNAL OFFENCES	
Any Other Act of Serious Misconduct which the MRO Considers Appropriate to Refer to the Tribunal	**Example 25** - Sam Swikowski on Jack Ginnivan (Round 10, 2022) – two match suspension

LOW-LEVEL OFFENCES	
Careless Contact with an Umpire	**Example 26** - Tom Atkins (Round 9, 2023) **Example 27** - James Jordon and Liam Stoker (Round 17, 2023)
Engaging in a Melee or Wrestle	**Example 28** - Darcy Fogarty and James Sicily (Round 6, 2023)
Staging	**Example 29** - Zachary Merrett (Round 18, 2023)

Other Misconduct	**Example 30** - Cody Weightman on Brennan Cox (Round 16, 2023) **Example 31** - Jy Simpkin (Round 8, 2023)
Tripping	**Example 32** - Willie Rioli on Connor Idun (Round 22, 2023)
Attempting to Trip	**Example 33** - Aishling Moloney on Casey Sherriff (Round 5, 2023)

APPENDIX 3 – Serious Criminal Offences

The following offences are considered Serious Criminal Offences for the purposes of this Policy Handbook:

(a) offences relating to assault and/or violence in relation to a child, whether physical, sexual and/or emotional;

(b) offences relating to violence or of a violent nature;

(c) offences relating to culpable and/or dangerous driving that can attract a detention or custodial sentence;

(d) offences relating to drug trafficking, abuse or supply;

(e) offences relating to the exploitation of children;

(f) offences relating to theft, felony and/or related offence of property or person;

(g) offences relating to fraud and/or any activity related to fraudulent behaviour; and

(h) offences relating to embezzlement or any impropriety relating to monies or property.

APPENDIX 4 – Non-exhaustive list of examples of disabilities

To provide practical guidance to administrators, this Appendix is a non-exhaustive list of disabilities which may give rise to grounds for granting age dispensation to a Player.

1) **Physical disabilities:** This may include physical issues that may be present since birth (e.g. cystic fibrosis, shortened or absent limbs), developmental conditions (e.g. cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy) or those acquired through injury or trauma. (e.g. acquired brain injury, wheelchair reliance).

2) **Intellectual or neurodevelopmental disabilities:** The Player's intellectual or neurodevelopmental disability impairs learning and memory, language, behavioural, social, cognitive and emotional functioning to the extent that they face significant impairment in their ability to train for, and play, football.

3) **Sensory disabilities:** such as deafness, blindness or vision impairment in which the Player's visual or auditory impairment results in impaired ability to train for, and play, football.

4) **Psychosocial disability:** where the presence of a psychiatric disability or mental disorder, as diagnosed by a mental health professional (classified under the ICD-11 or DSM-5-TR), impairs the Player's cognition, social, emotional, or behavioural functioning to the extent that they face significant impairment in their ability to train for, and play, football

APPENDIX 5 – Categories of Protective Equipment

1. Category 1 Protective Equipment

Category 1 Protective Equipment includes:

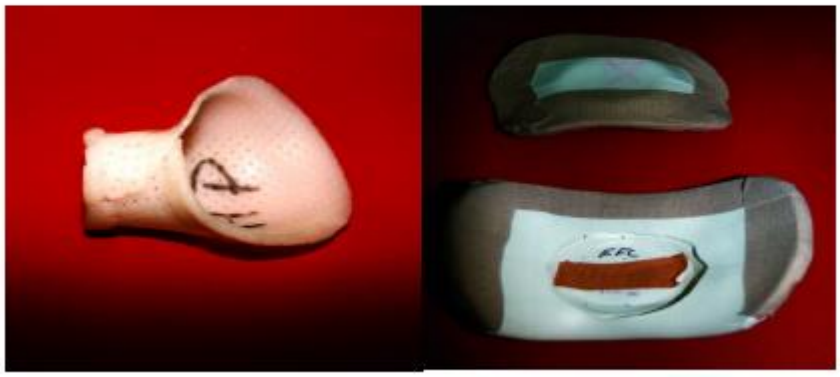
Protective Equipment	Guidance notes
Mouthguard	
Thigh padded shorts	Example – rhino shorts
Shin guard	A shin guard is defined as a guard that protects the shin, is below the standard sock and not designed for any other function
Ankle brace	
Simple Neoprene only devices	No straps or exposed plastic or metal
Breast protection	Example – Boob Armour, Zena Z1
Helmets	Soft padded or foam helmets only
Spectacles	Must meet requirements as outlined in Section 16.6

2. Category 2 Protective Equipment

Category 2 Protective Equipment includes:

Protective Equipment	Guidance notes
Shoulder guards	• Thermoplastic AC joint • No edges exposed
Arm guards	• Thermoplastic material with exterior padding > 3mm • Surgical foam or Neoprene • No edges or straps exposed • Minimum thickness as clinically indicated • All appliances to be neoprene covered

Hand and finger guards	• Thermoplastic material
	• Not beyond end of the finger but acceptable if contoured around distal end of finger and this is clinically indicated
	• Covered by tape
	• No exposed edges and material thickness as indicated below:
	  ○ Finger = 1.6mm thickness
	  ○ Thumb = 3mm thickness
	  ○ Metacarpal = 3mm thickness
	• Refer to images below:

	 ORFIT FINGER SPLINT ORFIT FINGER SPLINT ORFIT THUMBGUARD ORFIT THUMBGUARD  ORFIT THUMBGUARD RIB GUARDS
Trunk guards	• Thermoplastic material • Covered by foam rubber or Neoprene • No edges • 3.2mm maximum thickness
Hip, pelvis and thigh guards	• Neoprene • Soft padding (foam rubber)

3. Category 3 Protective Equipment

Category 3 Protective Equipment includes any protective equipment other than Category 1 Protective Equipment and Category 2 Protective Equipment. Category 3 Protective Equipment may include:

(a) knee braces (other than simple Neoprene only devices);

(b) helmets (except soft padded or foam helmets);

(c) gloves;

(d) shoulder pads;

(e) back supports;

(f) arm guards;

(g) prosthetics; and

(h) face masks.

4. Materials approved for use

The following materials are approved materials for Protective Equipment:

Material	**Guidance notes**
Neoprene	

Thermoplastic	• Preference low temperature thermoplastic:
	  ○ Aquaplast
	  ○ ORFIT
	  ○ Braceform
	  ○ Polyflex II
	  ○ Orthoplast
	• Maximum thickness is 3.2mm
	• Together with padding as specified in this Appendix
	
	***Note**: The AFL's preference is products made from thermoplastic.*

Foam / rubber padding	• Leukofoam • Neoprene

*[**Guidance note:** Brand references included in this Appendix 5 are for guidance only and should not to be construed as AFL endorsement of such brands.]*

APPENDIX 6 – AFL forms and templates

The following is a list of AFL forms and templates which are referred to in the Policy Handbook or otherwise support the function of the Policy Handbook are set out below and can be found here on the Play AFL website: https://play.afl/clubhelp/handbook-templates

Doc no.	Form / Template	Section	For use by
B0300	Application to Play in Higher Age Group	3.1(b)(iii)	Player / Club
B0301	Late Transfer Request	3.3(b)(ii)	Player / Club
B0302	Request to Club for Transfer Refusal Evidence	3.5(b)(iii)	Controlling Body
B0401	Age Dispensation Application to Play Down	4.1(b)	Player / Club
B0501	Standard Player Declaration	5	Player / Club
B0601	Application to Umpire a Higher Grade	6.2(c)(iii)	Umpire
B0701	Deregistration Warning Notice	7.6(a)	Controlling Body
B0702	Deregistration Notice – Section 7.2(a)	7.2(a) 7.6(b)(i)	Controlling Body
B0703	Deregistration Notice – Section 7.3(a)	7.2(a) 7.6(b)(i)	AFL / State Football Body
B0704	Deregistration Notice – Section 7.3(b)	7.2(a) 7.6(b)(i)	AFL / State Football Body
B0706	Deregistration Notice – Section 7.4	7.4 7.6(b)(i)	AFL
B0707	Reregistration Application Form	7.7(a)	Player / Football Official
E2201	Notice of Report	22.1(a)(iii)	Umpire
E2202	Incident Referral Form	22.1(b)(i) 22.1(b)(ii) 22.1(c)	Umpire Club Executive Officer
E2203	Notice of Charge – Low Level Offence	22.2(a) 22.2(b)(iii) 22.3(c)	Controlling Body
E2204	Notice of Charge – Classifiable Offence	22.2(a) 22.2(b)(iii) 22.3(c)	Controlling Body / MRP
E2205	Notice of Charge – Classifiable Auditory Offence	22.2(a) 22.2(b)(iii) 22.3(c)	Controlling Body / MRP
E2206	Notice of Charge – Direct Tribunal Referral	22.2(a) 22.2(b)(iii) 22.3(c) ~~22.4(c)~~	Controlling Body / MRP
E2301	Notice of Complaint	23.1(a)(i)	Person / Club
E2302	Notice of Complaint - Vilification	10 23.1(a)(i)	Person / Club
E2303	Notice of Investigation – Person	23.2(e)(i)(A)	Controlling Body
E2304	Notice of Investigation – Person (under 18)	23.2(e)(i)(A)	Controlling Body
E2305	Notice of Investigation – Club	23.2(e)(i)(A)	Controlling Body
E2306	Witness Statement Template	N/A	Person

E2307	Notice of Breach – Early Guilty Plea Offer	23.2(c)(i)(D) 23.2(d)(iii) 23.3(b)(i)(A) 23.4(b)	Controlling Body
E2308	Notice of Breach – Early Guilty Plea Offer (under 18)	23.2(c)(i)(D) 23.2(d)(iii) 23.3(b)(i)(A) 23.4(b)	Controlling Body
E2309	Notice of Breach – Direct Tribunal Referral	23.2(c)(i)(D) 23.2(d)(iii) 23.3(b)(i)(A) 23.3(b)(ii) 23.4(b)	Controlling Body
E2501	Tribunal Advocate & Witness Information Form (attached to Notice of Charge / Notice of Breach)	25.3(b) 25.3(e)(i)	Person / Club
E2502	Notice of Tribunal Outcome	25.4(a)	Controlling Body / Tribunal
E2601	Notice of Appeal	26.1(c)	Person / Club / Controlling Body
E2602	Notice of Appeal - Transfer Refusal	3.5(d)(ii) 26.1(c)	Player / Club

APPENDIX 7 – Revision History

REVISION HISTORY	
01.04.2022	Version 1.0 of the Policy Handbook published.
03.03.2023	Version 2.0 of the Policy Handbook published.
08.03.2024	Version 3.0 of the Policy Handbook published.
29.04.2024	Version 3.1 of the Policy Handbook published
23.08.2024	Version 3.2 of the Policy Handbook published
15.11.2024	Version 4.0 of the Policy Handbook published

TOYOTA
AFL
CLUBHELP

MEMORANDUM

To:	**Community Football stakeholders**		
From:	**AFL Game Development, AFL Legal & Regulatory**	Date:	**15 November 2024**
Re:	**Summary of 2025 amendments to National Community Football Policy Handbook**		

Dear all,

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a summary of the substantive amendments to the National Community Football Policy Handbook (**Policy Handbook**) for 2025.

The Policy Handbook was introduced in April 2022 and is used across most of Australia. After an extensive review and feedback process in relation to the 2024 version of the Policy Handbook, the following substantive amendments will be implemented in 2025:

1. **Section 6 – Coach and Umpire eligibility and accreditation**

    a. **Previously Section 5 (Coach accreditation) and section 6 (Umpire accreditation)** – These sections have been combined due to duplicated processes for Accreditation determination (Section 6.3), Review of determination regarding Accreditation (Section 6.4), Accreditation status (Section 6.5) and Coach and Umpire disclosure requirements (Section 6.6).

    b. **Section 6.2(a) (Coach Eligibility)** – A new section has been added to outline age eligibility to be a head Coach and an assistant Coach. This includes the following new provisions:

        i. A head Coach must be fifteen (15) years of age or older in the year prior to the applicable playing year and must meet the minimum age requirements applicable for coaching a Competition age group (e.g. must be eighteen (18) years of age in the year prior to the applicable playing year to be a Head Coach of a Seniors team).

        ii. A head Coach who is under eighteen (18) years of age must have an adult assistant Coach (who is over 18 years of age).

        iii. An assistant Coach must be twelve (12) years of age or older in the year prior to the applicable playing year.

    Previously, coach age eligibility requirements were included in the Terms of Participation and required that all coaches must be sixteen (16) years of age.

    c. **Section 6.2(c) (Umpire Eligibility)** – A new section has been added to outline age eligibility to be a field Umpire, boundary Umpire and goal Umpire. This includes the following new provisions:

        i. A field Umpire must be 12 years of age or older in the year prior to the applicable playing year and must meet the minimum age requirements applicable for umpiring a Competition age group (e.g. must be sixteen (16) years of age in the year prior to the applicable playing year to field Umpire a Seniors game) noting that a Controlling Body

or umpiring group may appoint a field Umpire to a higher age group than that specified where it determines that there are exceptional and compelling circumstances that warrant such permission being granted (e.g. with regard to the Umpire's physical capacity, experience, skill level and social maturity along with any child safeguarding considerations).

ii. Boundary Umpires and goal Umpires must be nine (9) years of age or older in the year prior to the applicable playing year noting that a Controlling Body or umpiring group must have regard to the Umpire's physical capacity, experience, skill level and social maturity along with any child safeguarding considerations when appointing boundary and goal Umpires.

iii. Where a Club is appointing an Umpire in accordance with a Controlling Body's rules and regulations (i.e. non accredited Club Umpires), the Policy Handbook outlines that the principles of the umpire age eligibility requirements should be applied.

Previously, umpire age eligibility requirements were included in the Umpire Terms and Conditions. However, these were removed for 2024 following a review of the requirements by AFL Game Development in consultation with AFL State Football Bodies.

d. **Section 6.4 (Review of determination regarding Accreditation)** – Amendments to this section have been made to the following effect:

i. The structure for reviewing Accreditation has been changed from a three-tiered structure to a two-tiered structure. Previously, the structure consisted of an initial review decision, and where a person's Accreditation was revoked, the person seeking review could have the determination 'reviewed' at first instance and then, if unsuccessful, also 'appeal' that decision. This has been amended to a more streamlined structure where if a person's Accreditation is revoked, they may apply to have that decision reviewed by an Accreditation Panel who will make a final determination on the matter.

ii. A person can now only apply for review of their Accreditation once every 12 months, whereas this was previously unlimited. This amendment creates consistency with Section 6.4(f)(i), which deals with re-registration applications following Deregistration).

e. **Section 6.5 (Accreditation Status)** – A new section has been added to outline that a decision to not grant or revoke a person's Accreditation will apply until such time as that decision is reversed or modified. Previously, a person who had their Accreditation revoked could apply for Accreditation annually.

2. **Section 7.2(b) (Deregistration – Reportable Offences – Suspensions attained once 16 years or older apply)** – This section has been amended to allow for a person under 16 years of age to be Deregistered for serious or cumulative sanctions (under 7.3). Previously, 7.2(b) outlined that a person under 16 years of age could not be deregistered in any circumstance.

3. **Section 7.4 (Deregistration – Coach citations)** – We have removed Deregistration for Coach citations (and reference to Coach citations throughout the Policy Handbook). Coach citations were rarely used, administered inconsistently and created unnecessary administration. The AFL or State Football Body (in consultation with the AFL) can instead rely on Section 7.3 (Deregistration - serious or cumulative sanctions) to Deregister a Coach.

4. **Section 9.1 (Member Protection)** – A new section has been added to outline that a Person must not consume alcohol, smoke or vape at Junior Football (defined as u18 football and below). The Australian Football Match Policy included a similar provision but is no longer in force.

5. **Section 9.3 (Member Protection – Coach code of conduct)** – Amended section to outline that a Coach who is coaching Junior Football (i.e. u18) must use best endeavours to ensure that every Player plays a minimum of 50% playing time. Previously, this section required coaches to use best endeavours to ensure Players gain equal playing time which was impractical. This amendment aligns with the AFL Junior Rules which outline that a Coach must provide each Player with 50-75% playing time for u18 and below.

6. **Section 10.3(b) (Preliminary conciliation process)** – Amended section to allow flexibility for the AFL, where it determines it is appropriate in all the circumstances, to bypass the otherwise mandatory conciliation process and proceed to deal with the matter in accordance with section 10.6 (e.g. Notice of Breach or direct Tribunal referral). The aim of this change is to address circumstances where conciliation may not be appropriate, such as when a vilified person does not wish to go to conciliation, or the matter involves young children (e.g. Players under 12 years of age).

7. **Section 10.6(e) (No conciliation outcome)** – Amended section to add flexibility for the AFL where there has been no conciliation outcome, and the AFL determines that exceptional and compelling circumstances apply which justify dealing with a matter in an alternative manner. This is to allow for alternative resolution mechanisms when dealing with young children (e.g. Players under 12 years of age) rather than putting them through a typical Tribunal hearing. For example, issuing a warning and gaining commitment from the Club to undertake broader education.

8. **Section 25.3(b) (Tribunal – Procedure and evidence – Representation)** – Amended to allow a person who is approved by the Controlling Body to represent the charged Person in a Tribunal hearing. This is intended to address circumstances where the charged Person is not represented by a Club Officer or a barrister or solicitor. For example, a Club may wish to use someone as the representative of their charged player who does not meet the definition of a Club Officer – i.e. someone with little connection to the Club but who has relevant advocacy skills.

9. **Section 25.3(n) (Tribunal – Procedure and evidence – Recording a Tribunal hearing)** – Added a new section to outline that a Tribunal hearing may be recorded by a person authorised to do so by the Tribunal Chairperson and that no other person shall record a Tribunal hearing without the prior consent of the Tribunal Chairperson.

10. **Section 25.5(a) (Suspension of Person) –** Added a section to outline that any sanction imposed via a Notice of Charge, Notice of Breach or as a Tribunal outcome must not contain a suspended Match suspension. Previously, this may have been interpreted as only applying to Tribunal outcomes for a Policy Breach.

11. **Section 25.5(b) (Suspension of Person)** – This section has been amended to clarify the terms of suspension of a person, including the following:

    a. where the offence or breach was committed while playing or participating in a Match, the suspended Person must serve the suspension in the grade in which the offence occurred.

    b. where the breach was committed while not playing or participating in a Match, serve the suspension as determined by the Controlling Body.

Previously, this section was ambiguous and created queries around the application of a suspension where the suspension was delayed (e.g. following investigation into policy breach) and the Person had subsequently played or participated in a different grade to that where the offence or breach occurred.

12. **Section 25.5(g) (Suspension of Person)** – Added a section to outline that for the purpose of any suspension arising under Part E of the Policy Handbook, including a suspension for a Policy Breach, the terms of Law 24.4.4 (Effect of Suspension) of the Laws of the Game will be deemed to apply to that suspension. Law 22.4.4 of the Laws of the Game only apply to Reportable Offences and this added section ensures that Law also applies to Policy Breaches.

13. **Appendix 1, Section 8(f) (Reportable Offences – Other factors regarding certain Reportable Offences)** – A further example has been added in relation to Rough Conduct (Dangerous Tackles) to account for the scenario where the tackler drops their knees and uses their full body weight to bring the tackled player to the ground with excessive force.

14. **Appendix 1, Section 8(h) (Reportable Offences – Other factors regarding certain Reportable Offences)** – Added a new clause in relation to Umpire abuse that outlines that where a Person is reported for an Auditory Offence that is directed at, or in relation to, an Umpire, and responds with further abuse that is directed at, or in relation to, an Umpire, the Controlling Body or Tribunal, may increase the penalty for the Auditory Offence by one (1) additional match. This gives a Controlling Body or Tribunal the ability to further deter this behaviour.

Please note that there are expected to be further amendments and a subsequent release of the Policy Handbook in early 2025 including with respect to the following sections:

1. Section 20 (Pregnancy) – This section is currently being reviewed and may result in amendments.

2. Appendix 1 (Reportable Offences) – Amendments to the AFL Tribunal Guidelines (for elite) will result in further amendments to this Appendix to ensure consistency between the documents (where practical).

3. Appendix 2 (Example Reportable Offences) – Updates to the vision examples will result in amendments to this section.

-END-