



How clubs can protect and support coaches and officials

1. **Develop a risk management plan for coaches and officials** - what are the major risks that they face in going about their task? The club needs to identify these risks through discussions with the coaches and officials in the club and then developing ways of addressing them. An example of a risk management plan is below:

Risk Identification	Strategies to minimise risk	Timeline	Responsibility
Inadequate equipment for coaches to utilise at training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek grants to purchase new equipment• Coordinate fundraising activities	Next 3 months	Fund raising committee
Spectators abusing the official	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distribute code of behaviour to spectators• Promote acceptable behaviour standards in club newsletter• Ask a club official to observe at matches and provide support to the official	First 3 weeks of the season	Club president

2. **Provide opportunities for accreditation and registration** - whilst the club can provide a supportive environment for its coaches and officials through its own operations, involvement in accreditation and registration courses is a crucial opportunity the club needs to offer its coaches and officials. By attending such programs, participants are upskilled in all the important, relevant and most recent information, methods, practices, skills and techniques. Generally information is provided on the new policies and procedures (e.g. legal and insurance, child protection etc) that impact upon all areas of coaching and officiating and how these relate to the players and associated groups involved in sport.

3. **Don't expect coaches and officials to undertake too many roles** - clubs need to be mindful of not overloading their personnel. Clubs need to ensure their coaches take on only those responsibilities identified in their job role - for example, is it really a coach's role to arrange the after match catering, to organise a new team uniform, or to run the annual club raffle? Coaches are responsible for looking after the welfare of their players but clubs must not forget to have someone look after the welfare of the coaches.

4. **Build a positive club culture** - a major deterrent to coaches and officials is the abuse and criticism they have to put up with. Clubs can play an important role in addressing this issue, and trying to change the culture to be positive and supportive of coaches and officials. Clubs can develop guidelines based on the codes of behaviour for how their coaches and officials should be treated. Clubs can also provide mentoring and support for coaches and officials who are subjected to abuse and criticism. Clubs can assist in raising the profile and image of the important role of coaches and officials, and promote respect towards people in these roles.

This can be done by the club being supportive of any promotional campaigns such as Thanks Coach/Thanks Official, and Harassment-free sport that are developed.

5. **Develop Rights and Responsibilities** - every person who takes on a role as a coach or an official does so in the knowledge that they have some responsibilities to the club and in return the club has some expectations they want met and some expectations they need to meet. At



the initial recruitment meeting these need to be discussed and agreed upon. Here are some examples to get you started.

Responsibilities of the coach or official to the club	Expectations of the coach or official	Responsibilities of the club to the coach or official
Be prepared to commit the time required	Meet the commitments to the team and club	Recognition, reward and acknowledgement
Be willing to learn and improve	Show loyalty to the players	Support and training
Be reliable and dependable	Treat players fairly and with respect	Appreciation and respect
Be loyal and supportive of the club	Be aware of the duty of care to the players	Openness and honesty

6. Keep up to date with current trends and policies - one of the hardest things clubs face is keeping up with the off field issues and policies and regulations that are confronting sport. Almost every day it seems something new is being promoted or required of clubs to ensure a safe and supportive environment for the players and members of the clubs. Generally these will impact upon coaches and officials in a significant manner and so the club needs to be aware of the implications. Here are some of the policies and regulations that clubs must take note of:

- State Child Protection Legislation
- Mandated Reporting of child abuse
- Sun Safe protection
- Blood policy
- Junior Sport Framework
- Harassment free sport and member protection
- Anti-doping policies

For further advice on these policies and others that the club needs to find out about and training opportunities for your coaches and officials contact the relevant state sporting association or State Department of Sport and Recreation.

Case study

A local rugby league club had just finished a recruitment drive from which six new potential volunteers had offered to do some refereeing for the club. After collating all the data provided by these volunteers the club's referees director convened two "orientation to refereeing" for all the new referees. The first was held on a Sunday afternoon and the second on a Wednesday evening allowing the new referees to attend the most suitable session.

At these sessions details were provided about what the club would be providing to support these new volunteers who had made a commitment to assist the club and to play a part towards the development of the juniors in the club. The club would be providing:

- A whistle and rule book
- Opportunities to attend officiating accreditation course
- 25% discount on club subscriptions
- Voucher to cover any entry costs to matches they were refereeing