FOOTBALL
QUEENSLAND

Supporting and Protecting Referees

Football Queensland Guidelines for Supporting and Protecting Referees

For Competition Managers – Affiliated Competitions

Referees are vital to the safe, fair, and professional delivery of football and futsal competitions across Queensland. As Competition Managers, you are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that referees are respected, supported, and protected at all times. This obligation is not discretionary — it is a requirement under Football Australia's *Member Protection Policy* and a condition of affiliation with Football Queensland.

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Zero Tolerance for Abuse

Football Queensland maintains a strict zero-tolerance stance on abuse or intimidation directed at match officials.

- Unacceptable behaviour includes verbal abuse, physical intimidation, threats, harassment, or any form of disrespect — whether from players, coaches, team officials, parents, or spectators.
- Competition Managers must actively intervene when such behaviour occurs, ensuring that referees are not left to manage these situations alone.
- Referees' decisions must be publicly supported, even if contested, to reinforce their authority and maintain match control.
- Disciplinary action must be enforced consistently and without bias. Sanctions should reflect the seriousness of the offence and prioritise referee safety and the integrity of the competition.
- Commercial or reputational concerns must never override the need to protect referees or uphold disciplinary standards.

Complaint Management – Fair, Transparent, and Just

Complaints involving referees must be handled with professionalism, impartiality, and procedural fairness.

- All complaints must be formally documented, including the nature of the concern, the parties involved, and any supporting evidence.
- Referees must be given a reasonable opportunity to respond, either in writing or through a formal interview, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- Decisions must be made transparently, with clear reasoning and reference to relevant policies or codes of conduct.
- Where appropriate, Competition Managers should seek guidance from Football Queensland to ensure consistency and fairness in decision-making.
- Referees who believe they have been treated unfairly have the right to request a formal review or appeal through Football Queensland. This process must be communicated clearly and made accessible.

Ensuring a Safe Matchday Environment

Creating a safe and supportive matchday environment is essential to referee wellbeing and match integrity.

- Conduct regular venue risk assessments, including checks for crowd control, access to change rooms, emergency exits, and lighting.
- Ensure emergency procedures are in place and communicated to all staff — including protocols for medical emergencies, severe weather, and critical incidents.
- Appoint designated personnel (e.g. Stadium Services Officers, Ground Officials) to monitor crowd behaviour and respond to incidents involving referees.
- Referees must be able to enter, officiate, and exit the venue safely, without fear of confrontation or harassment.
- Consider implementing post-match escort procedures for referees at high-risk fixtures or venues with known behavioural issues.

Supporting Referee Development

Referee development is a shared responsibility and a key component of competition quality.

- Provide referees with access to qualified assessors and mentors, particularly for junior or less experienced officials.
- Encourage referees to engage in ongoing education, including Football Queensland training modules, accreditation upgrades, and peer learning opportunities.
- Create a culture where referees are valued and respected as part of the competition team — not just service providers.
- Offer constructive feedback through formal channels, avoiding public criticism or undermining of referee decisions.
- Celebrate referee milestones and achievements (e.g. first senior match, Level 3 accreditation) to reinforce their importance within the football community.

Integrity Above All

The authority and protection of referees must be upheld without compromise.

- Competition Managers must never side with participants or stakeholders against referees purely to protect revenue, reputation, or customer satisfaction.
- Referees must be empowered to make decisions without fear of backlash or undermining from competition staff.
- Upholding referee integrity is essential to maintaining fair play, participant safety, and public trust in Football Queensland competitions.
- Where conflicts arise, Competition Managers must act in accordance with Football Queensland's values and policies — not personal relationships or external pressures.

Summary of Competition Manager Responsibilities

- Enforce zero tolerance for abuse and misconduct.
- Publicly and consistently support referee decisions.
- Apply disciplinary measures fairly, transparently, and without bias.
- Ensure referees are physically and psychologically safe at all times.
- Promote referee development through access to mentors, training, and feedback.
- Manage complaints professionally, allowing referees the right to respond and appeal.

By following these guidelines, Competition Managers help ensure that referees are respected, competitions are safe, and Football Queensland delivers a high-quality and trusted product for all participants.

Appeals Process:
Referees who believe they have been treated unfairly by a Competition Manager may submit an appeal directly to Football Queensland for independent review.

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