



GUIDANCE ON DEALING WITH DISCRIMINATION

FOR MATCH OFFICIALS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION & FRAMEWORK	3
1. WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION	5
2. YOUR ROLE & RESPONSIBILITY AS A REFEREE	5
3. YOUR REPORT IS VITAL	6
4. YOUR OWN LANGUAGE & ACTIONS	7
5. WHAT ACTION WILL FOOTBALL VICTORIA TAKE?	8
THE REPORTING PROCESS	9
1. AT THE MATCH	10
2. IF A MATCH OFFICIAL IS ADVISED OF AN ALLEGATION AFTER THE MATCH	11
3. AWAY FROM THE MATCH	12
EXAMPLE SCENARIOS	13
WELLBEING SUPPORT	19

INTRODUCTION & FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION & FRAMEWORK

We all want football to be as welcoming as possible. Everyone at every level of the game should have an enjoyable experience participating in football.

Referees play a vital role in this work, partly by sanctioning any discriminatory words and/or actions. Just as we protect player safety where we see violent conduct or serious foul play, we must also act when we witness or are made aware of discrimination.

Everyone is to be afforded the same access and opportunity regardless of their background, gender or sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, religion, or socio-economic status whilst being protected from discrimination, harassment, abuse, racism, and vilification.

But what exactly is discrimination, what actions should you take and where does your responsibility begin and end?

This guide aims to answer these questions – and more. It also provides advice on how to manage situations if or when discrimination sadly occurs.



INTRODUCTION & FRAMEWORK

1. WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION

Here's the definition given by the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 which protects Victorians from unfair treatment:

"A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if, because of a protected characteristic, A treats B less favourably than A treats or would treat others."

The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society. It protects people from direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation, regardless of whether the victim has multiple characteristics, is perceived to have them – or is associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

More information is available at humanrights.vic.gov.au

There are nine protected characteristics, i.e. grounds on which you cannot discriminate by law:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnerships
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

2. YOUR ROLE & RESPONSIBILITY AS A REFEREE

Your role is to ensure the Laws of the Game are adhered to. Your responsibility is to challenge any discriminatory words and/or actions you see or hear.

The Laws of the Game clearly state in Law 12 - Fouls and misconduct:

"A player, substitute or substituted player who commits any of the following offences is sent off: using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or action(s)."

"A player or team official who commits a cautionable or sending-off offence, either on or off the field of play is disciplined according to the offence."

Of course, such language or actions might be reported to you when you have not personally seen or heard them. In this case, you should still follow the discriminatory reporting protocol. This is covered on page 7 and 8.

For clarity, your role is not to judge whether the allegation is discriminatory. But as the next section says, you must report it.

INTRODUCTION & FRAMEWORK

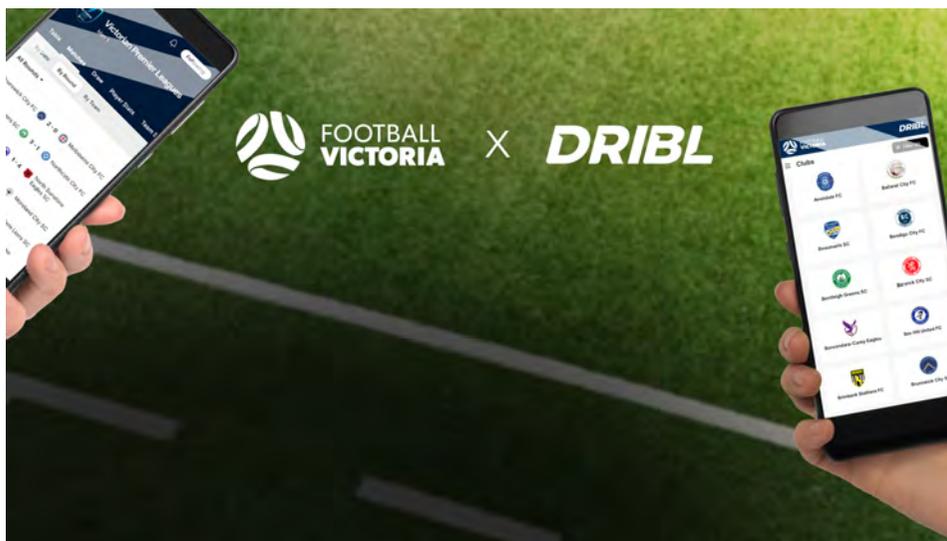
3. YOUR REPORT IS VITAL

The match referee must report any discriminatory behaviour they have seen or witnessed or any alleged discrimination as part of their misconduct report following the game.

Any offence which has been heard, seen or alleged to have occurred (irrespective of its origins) must be reported as an 'Incident' in your post-match report.

Referees should report using the reports section within **DRIBL** or via the [Post Match Submission Form](#)

If unsure, please report to allow FV to determine the most appropriate course of action.



INTRODUCTION & FRAMEWORK

4. YOUR OWN LANGUAGE & ACTIONS

Any match official found to have used discriminatory word and/actions is subject to the same disciplinary procedures as any other football participant. With this in mind, it's important to self-check your own language and/or actions.

Of course, language changes. What was acceptable five years ago, might not be today. Similarly, what's acceptable today may not be tomorrow. We all need to keep up to date with what's acceptable and what's not. Above all, if you're not sure, don't be afraid to ask. Don't just press on regardless.

Language is not only important in relation to protected characteristics (e.g. race, sexual orientation etc.), and when dealing with players. It also applies when dealing with refereeing colleagues and in our everyday lives. Even in jest or 'banter', the wrong choice of language can offend and cause unnecessary hurt and harm. People may laugh along, join in, or not actively object to the words used –but this doesn't mean they're happy with what's being said.

Here are some tips to guide your words and actions:

- Before you make a decision, comment or joke ask yourself: is this appropriate?
- Think about how you'd feel if you were on the receiving end of a comment/action you're about to make. Impact always outweighs intention.
- When referring to a player, use their name, shirt number and kit colour only.
- Don't use the 'defence' that 'we've always said it that way'. Find out the right way.
- Overall, the aim is to ensure the way we behave as match officials fosters positive relationships with every part of the football family, whether in person or online.

INTRODUCTION & FRAMEWORK

5. WHAT ACTION WILL FOOTBALL VICTORIA TAKE?

When a report is received, FV investigates all allegations of discrimination. If there is sufficient evidence, a participant is likely to face disciplinary action via a misconduct charge under FV's GDT of MP5D or R6_4 Use of discriminatory, homophobic, racist, religious, ethnic or sexist language and/or gestures.

To find out about FV's Inclusion Charter, [click here](#).



THE REPORTING PROCESS

THE REPORTING PROCESS

1. AT THE MATCH

If you, as the referee, hear or witnesses a discriminatory incident on the field of play or in technical area, you should:

1. Stop play and send off the offending player or technical area occupant from the field in accordance with Law 12.
2. Make a full and comprehensive report of what has happened before you restart play (player name, offence, minute, what was said/done, where you were, any other necessary information).
3. Separately (and before restarting play) advise both teams, necessary players and management, that you have made a comprehensive report and will be reporting this post-match.

If an incident is reported to you with no match officials witness to it, you should:

1. Stop play at the next break in play.
2. Make a full and comprehensive report of what has happened before you restart play (the alleged offending player name, offence, minute, what was said/done, where you were, any other necessary information).
3. Separately (and before restarting play) advise both teams, necessary players and management, that you have made a comprehensive report and will be reporting this post-match.

If you - or one of the match officials - hears or witnesses an incident from a spectator, you should:

1. Stop play at the next break in play.
2. Advise the host club about what's been witnessed and ask them to deal with the offender, if they can be identified.
3. Make a full and comprehensive report about what's happened before you restart play (offence, minute, what was said/done, where you were, any other necessary information).
4. Separately (and before restarting play) advise both teams, necessary players and management, that you have made a comprehensive report and will be reporting this post-match.

THE REPORTING PROCESS

2. IF A MATCH OFFICIAL IS ADVISED OF AN ALLEGATION AFTER THE MATCH

If a match official is advised of a discriminatory allegation after a match, they should ensure full notes of the allegation are made before leaving the changing room.

- The notes should include timings and as be as accurate as possible, including reported speech.
- The notes should document all participants in attendance at the meeting or meetings.
- The notes should be retained by the match officials.
- As well as submitting a report, match officials are strongly advised not to make any comments regarding any aspect of an allegation of this nature.



THE REPORTING PROCESS

3. AWAY FROM THE MATCH

At the earliest possible opportunity after a match, you should:

- Report all your information through the Post Match Submission Form. If you sent the player off, you should still report an incident with all your information.
- Write every detail possible in this report, including where you were at the time, i.e. your position on the pitch or in your changing room etc. Be as specific as you can with elements such as:
 - The time the incident was reported to you.
 - Who reported what to you.
 - The full statements from all necessary participants.
- Dealing with discriminatory incidents can be tough. We often need some reassurance and a listening ear, so feel free to pick up the phone or email.
- You may then be required to give a further witness statement and/or attend a Tribunal hearing. Remember, you are only ever a witness at such hearings. You are there to give your view to help the disciplinary procedure reach a fair outcome.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

As the referee, do not defer responsibility for taking notes regarding the incident until the end of the game; it must be recorded there and then.

Always submit an Incident report following the game, irrespective of whether the discriminatory language/behaviour was heard by/reported to the referee.

When a match official has been made aware of an allegation of discriminatory behaviour that they have not heard themselves, they should also observe and include in their report the behaviours of all involved.

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

To achieve genuine inclusivity, it's important to call out discrimination in society – and the same applies to match officials.

We have a duty to report discriminatory words and/or actions on or around the field of play.

Here are eight example scenarios and how you might listen, action and report.

1. You hear a discriminatory comment made by a player on the field of play

LISTEN	ACTION	REPORT
Stop the game immediately and take accurate notes detailing the comments.	Send off the player for using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or action(s). Explain to a suitable representative of the club the reason for the sending off.	Complete your post-match misconduct report, including the sending-off of the player. As the sending-off was due to a discriminatory comment, you must also report the specific incident in and Extraordinary Incident report.

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

2. Your assistant referee received discriminatory abuse from a spectator.

<i>LISTEN</i>	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>REPORT</i>
<p>The assistant referee should alert the referee immediately. Speak to the assistant referee and take accurate notes.</p>	<p>Alert the relevant representatives from the two teams of the situation and ask for appropriate actions to be taken with the spectator (see scenario 2 above). If the issues persists, consider your options, i.e. to suspend or abandon the fixture.</p>	<p>Post-match, take a statement from the assistant referee and include the incident as an Incident report. Ensure the assistant referee submits their own report as an Incident.</p>

3. A player is subject to discriminatory abuse at a game by a spectator, but you do not directly hear the comment; the player is visibly distressed and advises you during a break in play.

<i>LISTEN</i>	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>REPORT</i>
<p>At the break in play listen to the player and take accurate notes detailing the alleged comments</p>	<p>As the game has stopped, notify a suitable representative from the home club (manger, security marshall) to advise them of the allegation. As it is a spectator, ask for a club representative to speak to the individual(s) concerned and deal with the incident as necessary (including alerting the police).</p>	<p>Post-match, speak to the player concerned to verify the action/comments made. Explain to the clubs the nature of the allegation and advise that this will be included in your match report as an Extraordinary Incident. Complete the separate Extraordinary Incident report.</p>

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

4. A team refuses to continue with the game and walks off/refuses to return to the field of play due to a discriminatory allegation you did not see or hear.

<i>LISTEN</i>	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>REPORT</i>
<p>Listen to the participant making the allegation and advise representatives from both teams of what has been alleged</p>	<p>Explain and action the protocols in place for occasions when allegations of discriminatory abuse have been made. These include speaking with representatives from both teams and stepped approach regarding the match (pause/suspend/abandon). If a team advises they are unwilling to continue, advise that the game will have to be abandoned and reported to the Competition Department.</p>	<p>Following the game, notify the appointing authority of the incident and the circumstances leading to the abandonment of the fixture. Complete an Incident report outlining the facts surrounding the incident which led to the abandonment.</p>

5. A player in your game alleges they have received abuse of a discriminatory nature and tells you what has been said as you did not hear it yourself.

<i>LISTEN</i>	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>REPORT</i>
<p>Stop the game. Speak to the player and take accurate notes of the allegation.</p>	<p>Speak to representatives of both teams detailing the allegation and explain that a statement will be taken from the alleged victim following the game.</p>	<p>Post-match, take a statement from the alleged victim. Repeat the statement back to them to ensure it is an accurate reflection of the allegation. Include full details of the incident, including the player's statement, in an Incident report following the game.</p>

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

6. You (the referee) are accused of using discriminatory language.

LISTEN	ACTION	REPORT
<p>Stop the game. Open dialogue with the alleged victim and team manager.</p>	<p>Alert the opposition manager of the reason for interruption. Advise all parties that you will report the incident following the game</p>	<p>Post-match, report the incident as an Incident report. Ask the representatives of the two clubs to submit reports regarding the incident.</p>

7. You hear a player or coach use language you deem to be offensive, insulting and abusive towards an opposing player. You do not believe it is discriminatory, but the opposition team believes it is.

LISTEN	ACTION	REPORT
<p>Stop the game.</p>	<p>Send off the manager for using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or action(s). Advise the opposition that you will include the nature of action in your post-match Incident report.</p>	<p>Complete the sending-off report, detailing the nature of the offence. Include within the report the opposition's view that the comments were discriminatory.</p>

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

8. You hear and see a discriminatory comment and/or action made by a match official on your game.

<i>LISTEN</i>	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>REPORT</i>
Inform the match official their words and/or actions are discriminatory and ask them not to use them again.	Advise the match official they are being removed from their role in the game.	Report the discriminatory words and/or actions to FV in an Incident report.

WELLBEING SUPPORT

WELLBEING SUPPORT

Dealing with discriminatory incidents can be tough and sometimes distressing for match officials. That's particularly true when the environment in which these incidents occur is hostile. Such a situation can be really challenging for you, mentally and physically.

Ultimately, your wellbeing is a priority, so if you face one of these challenging situations, please get in touch with FV Referees Department. They are there to support you, so don't hesitate to pick up the phone or send an email.

In addition, Referee Wellbeing Officers are available to support you. They understand the additional pressures refereeing can bring.

Request a call back or book an online meeting by contacting Referees@FootballVictoria.com.au

Further support for victims and witnesses of discrimination
FV facilitates access to mental health and emotional wellbeing services including EAP service. Contact the service on **1800 808 374**



For more information or for assistance in dealing with discrimination, please contact FV Referees department (Referees@FootballVictoria.com.au)



**FOOTBALL
VICTORIA**