**Online Safety and Social Media Policy**

**Purpose**

This policy outlines the Ballarat Football Netball League’s (BFNL) commitment to safe, respectful, and responsible use of digital technologies and social media platforms. It provides clear guidelines for staff, players, volunteers, clubs, and community members when engaging in online activity, particularly in relation to child safety and wellbeing.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all individuals involved with BFNL, including:

* Players (juniors and seniors)
* Coaches, officials, and umpires
* BFNL staff and volunteers
* Club committees and members
* Parents, carers, and spectators

It covers all digital communication and social media use related to BFNL, including but not limited to:

* Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube
* Messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Messenger, Teams)
* Email, websites, livestreams, and online meetings

**BFNL’s Commitment to Online Safety**

BFNL is committed to:

* Creating a safe digital environment that protects children and young people from harm, including bullying, grooming, exploitation, and inappropriate content.
* Promoting respectful and inclusive online behaviour.
* Providing education and support to players, staff, and clubs on responsible digital conduct.
* Responding promptly and effectively to online incidents and breaches.

**Appropriate Online Conduct**

All online communication and social media use must:

* Be respectful, inclusive, and positive.
* Protect the privacy, dignity, and safety of others.
* Avoid posting, sharing, or liking content that is offensive, discriminatory, violent, sexually explicit, or inappropriate.
* Refrain from negative commentary about BFNL, clubs, players, umpires, or other stakeholders.

**In particular, individuals must not:**

* Cyberbully, harass, or threaten others.
* Share personal details or images of children without consent.
* Engage in direct private messaging with a child or young person unless part of a parent/guardian-approved team communication process.
* Create or share fake, misleading, or defamatory content.

**Social Media Use by Clubs and Officials**

All clubs and representatives must:

* Appoint a responsible social media administrator.
* Moderate public comments on posts to prevent bullying, trolling, or hate speech.
* Gain consent before sharing images or names of children and young people.
* Avoid tagging or identifying children unless express written permission is obtained.
* Use official accounts for communication with players/parents — not personal profiles.

**Online Communication with Children and Young People**

When communicating with children or young people:

* Communication should only occur for BFNL-approved purposes (e.g., team updates, scheduling).
* Include parents/guardians or use group chats that are monitored.
* Avoid one-on-one private messaging with minors.
* Use official channels (club apps, email, or monitored platforms).

**Protecting Children and Young People Online**

BFNL will:

* Educate players, families, and clubs about online safety, cyberbullying prevention, and digital citizenship.
* Follow the **eSafety Commission guidelines** for protecting children online.
* Require digital consent forms for posting or sharing images/videos of minors.
* Respond swiftly to any online behaviour that risks a child’s safety or breaches the Code of Conduct.

**Responding to Online Safety Incidents**

If you become aware of or experience an incident involving online harm, abuse, bullying, grooming, or misconduct:

**Report immediately to:**  
 **BFNL Child Safety Officer:**  
Gemma Murphy  
gemma@bfnl.com.au  
0401 152 906

We will:

* Investigate reports seriously, promptly, and confidentially.
* Take disciplinary action, which may include warnings, suspensions, bans, or police reporting.
* Support affected individuals with access to reporting pathways and counselling/referral.

**Breaches of Policy**

Breaches of this policy may result in:

* Removal of offensive or harmful content.
* Disciplinary action, including suspension or termination of involvement with BFNL or clubs.
* Mandatory reporting to relevant authorities (e.g., eSafety Commissioner, Victoria Police).

**Education and Awareness**

BFNL will provide:

* Training for clubs, officials, and volunteers on online safety and social media expectations.
* Clear information for families about protecting children online.
* Access to tools and support from the **eSafety Commission** and **Play by the Rules**.

**11. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner in response to:

* Technological developments or emerging risks
* Serious online incidents
* Legislative or regulatory changes

**Related Policies**

* BFNL Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
* BFNL Code of Conduct
* BFNL Mandatory Reporting Procedures
* Victorian Child Safe Standards (2022)
* eSafety Commissioner – National Online Safety Guidelines

**Helpful Resources**

* [eSafety Commissioner](https://www.esafety.gov.au/)
* [Play by the Rules](https://www.playbytherules.net.au/)
* [ThinkUKnow](https://www.thinkuknow.org.au/)
* [Bullying. No Way!](https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/)

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