

# **BALLARAT FOOTBALL NETBALL LEAGUE INC.**

## **HARASSMENT / BULLYING / CYBERBULLYING POLICY**

### **Background**

Sometimes incidents occur which require a means of protecting the rights of members within the wider Ballarat Football Netball League community. This includes players, officials, umpires, club members, parents, spectators and sponsors.

A number of incidents have been brought to the attention of the Ballarat FNL Board in the past which have raised concerns about (for the sake of a better term) cyber bullying, whether it be through the use of mobile telephones / SMS technology, email, chat room+forums (e.g Bigfooty), etc.

There is a complaints procedure within the AFL Victoria / VCFL Member Protection Policy however the VCFL has not yet ratified this policy through the Rules Committee. The Ballarat FNL executive has decided that an immediate policy needs to be considered and implemented from October 1<sup>st</sup> 2009.

### **The Policy**

Harassment or bullying is when someone or a group of people deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance.

Harassment or bullying can be carried out through face to face contact but can also occur through an internet service, such as email, chat room, discussion group or instant messaging. It can also include the use of mobile phone technologies such as text or video messaging.

Examples of cyber bullying include teasing, spreading rumors, unwanted messages, defamation or threats - any action which humiliates and distresses someone.

### **The Procedure**

If the Ballarat FNL executive receives a complaint the allegations of harassment or bullying will be forwarded to the League Investigation Officer.

If there is evidence, charges will be laid and the issue will proceed to the Ballarat FNL Independent Tribunal, exactly the same as if the investigation relates to physical violence or other reportable offences.

### **The Penalties**

The Ballarat FNL executive has come up with a range of penalties for harassment or bullying.

Any proven charges will automatically lead to at least a two (2) match suspension for a registered player.

The tribunal, as always will have full discretion in these matters, but because of the unusual and new type of offences the League Board will make a recommendation in relation to a penalty in consultation with Victoria Police.

These penalties will cover a complete range, including deregistration.

If evidence of complaints becomes available that information will be forwarded to Victoria Police.

In the case of a non playing club member being proved to have engaged in harassment or bullying the club employing , engaging or otherwise associated with the person at the time of the conduct shall be deemed to be vicariously liable for the conduct of the person and shall pay to the League a penalty to be determined by the League.