

24 August 2018

Action Plan to tackle match official abuse

Capital Football CEO Phil Brown, Chair of the Referees Standing Advisory Committee Alex McConachie and representatives from the ACT referee community have recently met and agreed an action plan to address increasing safety concerns regarding the verbal and physical abuse of referees in the ACT.

The parties agree that abuse of match officials in our game should not be tolerated and they will work together and with the clubs to ensure measures are put in place to hold individuals that behave in an antisocial fashion accountable. Capital Football will also work to ensure the safety and security of the environment in which our referees are asked to go about their work.

It has been acknowledged that abuse of match officials by players, officials and spectators is a leading factor in referees choosing to discontinue their involvement in officiating. The parties have agreed that although most abuse problems come from a small minority involved in the game, it is a joint responsibility to engage with these individuals seeking change in their behaviour or alternatively, if necessary, ban them from being involved in the game in any capacity or at any level.

Three key areas of reform

The joint plan involves both short term initiatives to ensure the 2018 finals series, across all Capital Football competitions, is successfully delivered, and medium to longer term proposals to be investigated to ensure agreed actions are implemented prior to the 2019 NPL season.

This main focus of this plan involves actions in three key areas:

- **Better Referee Development and Support.** Includes investment in the development and implementation of improved training and coaching for referees, particularly in the areas of conflict management and report writing. It also includes ensuring referees have access to professional support when they experience a hostile or abusive environment.
- **Improved Incident Management.** A range of initiatives are proposed to identify options and implement actions to improve Capital Football's systems and processes to address referee abuse and other incidents. This includes a review of Capital Football's internal systems and resourcing in this area and stronger support and leadership in revising and enforcing the 2019 Dispute and Discipline Regulations and the 2019 Competition Regulations. This is aimed at ensuring appropriate sanctions are applied and improvements made in the way Capital Football and its Tribunals deliver appropriate outcomes that are timely and consistent with its regulations.



- **Better engagement between Clubs, Capital Football and the Referees:** The active involvement of Clubs is critical to the successful delivery of initiatives to eliminate abuse of match officials. Clubs will be required to participate and be more accountable for actions that improve player, coach and spectator behaviour with match officials. This includes the implementation of the following proposed initiatives:
 - Capital Football to run courses for Club Vested Officials (CVO) in early 2019, especially for clubs in NPL competitions
 - Improved systems put in place to address non-compliance with competition regulations, particularly those related to CVOs
 - Working with clubs to ensure their coaches have the required accreditation, especially those involved in junior NPL and NPLW competitions, and
 - Developing and implementing useful education resources on the Laws of the Game for use by coaches and Club officials at all levels, including how sanctions are imposed.

2018 finals series initiatives

Several short term initiatives have been agreed between the parties to assist in delivering successful outcomes in the 2018 Capital Football finals series. These look to provide a safer environment for match officials and include, but are not limited to:

- Clubs involved in the final series ensuring the correct number of CVOs are in place at each match (in accordance with the 2018 Competition Regulations), supported by Capital Football appointed venue managers and, where appropriate, security personnel
- Capital Football appointing strongly supported referee teams including, where appropriate, fourth officials and referee coaches to provide more effective match day support to referee teams involved, and
- Capital Football ensuring all technical areas are correctly marked and appropriate spectator control initiatives are in place at agreed Finals venues.

2018 Referee review to guide future work

Capital Football plans to complete and announce the outcomes of its current Referee Review by the end of 2018 which will, where necessary, guide the development and delivery of work in these critical areas to ensure reforms to lead the elimination of abuse of match officials are agreed and introduced prior to the start of the 2019 Capital Football season.

