



VICTORIAN
UNDERWATER HOCKEY
COMMISSION INC

Victorian Underwater Hockey Commission
MEMBER PROTECTION POLICY

VERSION 1

Created by the VUHC Committee – 14 February 2016



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MEMBER PROTECTION POLICY

1. Introduction

The Victorian Underwater Hockey Commission Inc. (VUHC) acts as the peak body for underwater hockey in Victoria in accordance with the Rules of the VUHC (**VUHC Rules**).

The core aim and purpose of the VUHC is to promote fairness, inclusiveness and safety, and foster the development of the sport of underwater hockey in Victoria.

2. Purpose of Our Policy

The main objective of our Member Protection Policy (policy) is to maintain responsible behaviour and the making of informed decisions by participants of the VUHC. It outlines our commitment to a person's right to be treated with respect and dignity, and to be safe and protected from abuse.

Our policy informs everyone involved in the VUHC of his or her legal and ethical rights and responsibilities and the standards of behaviour that are required. It also covers the care and protection of children participating in VUHC activities.

3. Who Our Policy Applies To

Our policy applies to everyone involved in the VUHC including committee members, administrators, coaches, officials (umpires/referees/judges), players, parents and spectators.

4. Extent of Our Policy

Our policy sets out expectations around appropriate conduct, safety and protection of players and members.

This policy also outlines the processes that the VUHC will adopt to regulate the sport and address unfair decisions (e.g. team selection) and inappropriate actions (e.g. breaches of our code of behaviour).

It also covers private behaviour where that behaviour brings the VUHC or sport into disrepute or there is suspicion of harm towards a child or young person.

This policy sits under the VUHC Rules, By-laws and Code of Behaviour, it also complements and works alongside other VUHC policies, including:

- Chaperone Policy;
- Communications Policy;
- Alcohol Policy;
- Including People with Disability Policy;
- Spectator Behaviour Policy; and
- Team Selection Policies (for both junior and open grades).

5. VUHC Responsibilities

We will:

- implement and comply with our policy;
 - promote our policy to everyone involved in underwater hockey in Victoria;
 - promote and model appropriate standards of behaviour at all times;
 - respond to breaches or complaints made under our policy promptly, fairly, and confidentially;
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- review this policy every 12-18 months; and
- seek advice from and refer serious issues to Underwater Hockey Australia (as a Commission of the Australian Underwater Federation).

Serious issues include unlawful behaviour that involves or could lead to significant harm and includes criminal behaviour (e.g. physical assault, sexual assault, child abuse) and any other issues that our national body requests to be referred to them.

6. Individual Responsibilities

Everyone associated with the VUHC must:

- comply with the standards of behaviour outlined in our policy;
- treat others with respect;
- always place the safety and welfare of children above other considerations;
- be responsible and accountable for their behaviour;
- follow the guidelines outlined in this policy if they wish to make a complaint or report a concern about inappropriate behaviour.

7. Protection of Children

7.1 Child Protection

The VUHC is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people accessing our sport. We support the rights of the child and will act without hesitation to ensure a child safe environment is maintained at all times. We also support the rights and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all participants.

The VUHC acknowledges that our staff, members and volunteers provide a valuable contribution to the positive experiences of children involved in our sport. The VUHC aims to continue this and to take measures to protect the safety and welfare of children participating in our sport by:

7.1.1: Identify and Analyse Risk of Harm

The VUHC will develop and implement a risk management strategy, which includes a review of existing child protection practices, to determine how child-safe and child-friendly the organisation is and to determine what additional strategies are required to minimise and prevent risk of harm to children because of the action of an employee, volunteer or another person.

7.1.2: Develop Codes of Behaviour

The VUHC has adopted a Chaperone policy, which specifies standards of conduct and care when dealing and interacting with children in the organisation's care.

The VUHC has a Code of Behaviour that applies to all officials, players, members and supporters which sets out standards of conduct and care, including appropriate behaviour between children.

The VUHC also has adopted the *Play By the Rules* Guidelines for Working with Children, which are available at www.vuhc.org.au

7.1.3: Choose Suitable Employees and Volunteers

The VUHC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children (in prescribed positions).



The VUHC will ensure that all junior team chaperones and coaches hold valid working with children checks, unless they hold a valid exemption in accordance with law (e.g. where a parent is coaching or chaperoning a team in which their child is playing).

In addition, VUHC volunteers overseeing junior development activities, such as running of schools' clinics, will be required to hold valid working with children checks, unless they hold a valid exemption in accordance with the law (e.g. student volunteers aged 18 or 19, where the volunteer work is at the student volunteer's educational institution).

Further guidance details are provided in the Working With Children Check Factsheet available at www.vuhc.org.au

7.1.4: Support, Train, Supervise and Enhance Performance

The VUHC will ensure that volunteers and employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training such that their performance is developed and enhanced to promote the establishment and maintenance of a child-safe environment.

7.1.5: Empower and Promote the Participation of Children In Decision-Making And Service Development

The VUHC will promote the involvement and participation of children and young people in developing and maintaining child-safe environments.

7.1.6: Report and Respond Appropriately To Suspected Abuse and Neglect

The VUHC will ensure that volunteers and employees are able to identify and respond to children at risk of harm.

The VUHC will make all volunteers and employees aware of their responsibilities under respective state laws if they have suspicion on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is being abused or neglected.

In addition to any legal obligation, if any person feels another person or organisation bound by this policy is acting inappropriately towards a child or is breaching the code'(s) of practice set out they may make an internal complaint.

7.2 Taking Images of Children

Images of children can be used inappropriately or illegally. The VUHC requires that members, wherever possible, obtain permission from a child's parent/guardian before taking an image of a child that is not their own and ensure that the parent knows the way the image will be used. We also require the privacy of others to be respected and disallow the use of camera phones, videos and cameras inside changing areas, showers and toilets.

If the VUHC uses an image of a child it will avoid naming or identifying the child or it will, wherever possible, avoid using both the first name and surname. We will not display personal information such as residential address, email address or telephone numbers without gaining consent from the parent/guardian. We will not display information about hobbies, likes/dislikes, school, etc as this information can be used as grooming tools by pedophiles or other persons. We will only use appropriate images of a child, relevant to our sport and ensure that the child is suitably clothed in a manner that promotes the sport, displays its successes, etc.

8. Anti-harassment, Discrimination and Bullying

The VUHC opposes all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying. This includes treating or proposing to treat someone less favourably because of a particular characteristic; imposing or intending to impose an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice which has an unequal or disproportionate effect on people with a particular characteristic; or any behaviour that is

offensive, abusive, belittling, intimidating or threatening – whether this is face-to-face, indirectly or via communication technologies such as mobile phone and computers.

Some forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying are against the law and are based on particular characteristics such as age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, political or religious beliefs, race, and marital status.

The VUHC takes all claims of harassment, discrimination, bullying and cyber bullying seriously. We encourage anyone who believes they have been harassed, discriminated against or bullied to raise the issue with the VUHC.

9. Inclusive practices

The VUHC is welcoming and we will seek to include members from all areas of our community.

9.1 People with a disability

Where possible we will include people with a disability in our teams and clubs. We will make reasonable adaptations (e.g. modifications to equipment and rules) to enable participation.

9.2 People from diverse cultures

We will support and respect people from diverse cultures and religions to participate in our club and where possible will accommodate requests for flexibility (e.g. modifications to uniforms).

9.3 Sexual & Gender Identity

All people, regardless of their sexuality, are welcome at our club. We strive to provide a safe environment for participation and will take action over any homophobic behaviour.

9.4 Pregnancy

Pregnant women should be aware that their own health and wellbeing, and that of their unborn children, should be of utmost importance in their decision making about the way they participate in our sport. We recommend pregnant women to consult with their medical advisers, make themselves aware of the facts about pregnancy in sport, and ensure that they make informed decisions about participation.

10. Responding to Complaints

10.1 Complaints

The VUHC takes all complaints about behaviour in and out of the water seriously.

The VUHC will handle complaints based on the principles of procedural fairness (natural justice), that is:

- all complaints will be taken seriously;
- both the person making the complaint (complainant) and the person the complaint is against (respondent) will be given full details of what is being said against them and have the opportunity to respond (give their side of the story);
- irrelevant matters will not be taken into account;
- decisions will be unbiased and fair; and
- any penalties imposed will be fair and reasonable.

More serious complaints may be escalated to Underwater Hockey Australia.

If the complaint relates to suspected child abuse, sexual assault or other criminal activity, then our club will need to report the behaviour to the police and/or relevant government authority.

10.2 Complaint Handling Process



When a complaint is received by the VUHC, the person receiving the complaint (e.g. President, Junior Development Officer, Secretary) will:

- inform all VUHC Committee members of the nature of the complaint;
- listen carefully and ask questions to understand the nature and extent of the problem;
- seek further clarification and/or information from the complainant;
- ask what the complainant would like to happen;
- explain the different options available to help resolve the problem;
- take notes; and
- maintain confidentiality but not necessarily anonymity.

The VUHC will assist, where appropriate and necessary, with the resolution process. This may involve:

- supporting the person complaining to talk to the person being complained about;
- bringing all the people involved in the complaint together to talk objectively through the problem (this could include external mediation);
- gathering more information (e.g. from other people that may have seen the behaviour);
- seeking advice from Underwater Hockey Australia or from an external agency (e.g. State Department of Sport or anti-discrimination agency);
- referring the complaint to Underwater Hockey Australia; and/or
- referring the complainant to an external agency such as a community mediation centre, police or anti-discrimination agency.

If a complaint, or an issues of concern, is raised with the VUHC Committee and then retracted but there is sufficient information to warrant further investigation or consideration, the VUHC Committee may on its own motion examine the issues, and take whatever action is deemed necessary, such as:

- gathering more information (e.g. from witnesses or observers);
- seek further information from the complainant and ask what they would like to happen;
- take notes;
- examine the information presented and provide feedback to the complainant, the respondent and other people involved in the issue/s;
- refer the matter to Australian Underwater Hockey or other relevant authorities, as required;
- maintain confidentiality but not necessarily anonymity; and
- agree that no further action is required.

In situations where a complaint is referred to Underwater Hockey Australia or the Australian Underwater Federation and an investigation is conducted at that level, the VUHC will:

- co-operate fully;
- ensure the complainant and respondent are not victimised;
- where applicable, ensure the complainant is not placed in an unsupervised situation with the respondent(s); and
- act on any recommendations.

At any stage of the process, a person can seek advice from or lodge a complaint with an anti-discrimination commission or other external agency.

10.3 Disciplinary Measures

The VUHC will take disciplinary action against anyone found to have breached the Code of Behaviour or made false and malicious allegations.

Any disciplinary measure imposed under our policy must:

- Be applied consistent with any contractual and employment rules and requirements;
 - Be fair and reasonable;
 - Be based on the evidence and information presented and the seriousness of the breach;
 - Be determined by the VUHC Rules, By-Laws and the rules of the game.
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Possible measures that may be taken include:

- verbal and/or written apology;
- counselling to address behaviour;
- withdrawal of any awards, placings, records, achievements bestowed in any tournaments, activities or events held or sanctioned by our club;
- suspension or termination of membership, participation or engagement in a role or activity;
- de-registration of accreditation for a period of time or permanently;
- a fine; or
- any other form of discipline that our club considers reasonable and appropriate.

10.4 Appeals

The complainant or respondent can lodge one appeal against decisions of or disciplinary measures imposed by the VUHC to Underwater Hockey Australia (as a Commission of the Australian Underwater Federation). Appeals must be based on either a denial of natural justice, because of unjust or unreasonable disciplinary measure(s) being imposed, or on the grounds that the decision was not supported by the information/evidence presented and available to the decision maker/VUHC.