



REGULATION H: 3.17 Pregnancy Policy

Summary

This Policy provide information about:

➤ **Regulation H – 3.17 Pregnancy Policy**

that the Joint Zone Associations Competitions will operate under.

The Regulations, Procedures and Policies in conjunction with the Constitution and By-Laws of the Zone Association shall, with the approval of NSW Football and duly Registered with FA, apply from the date of approval and shall take precedence over any previous Regulations of the Zone Association.

Issued by the Joint Board of Directors of Macquarie Football, Newcastle Football, and Hunter Valley Football.

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POLICY ON PREGNANCY

RATIONALE

All sporting organisations owe a duty of care to pregnant players, Team Officials or Match Officials participating in their sport.

Pregnancy *is not* an illness, but rather a part of life, the person best equipped to make the decision about the health of her child is the mother and her medical practitioner.

In Australia, Federal, State and Territory legislation exists in relation to discrimination.

This anti-discrimination legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate against a female on the basis of pregnancy, subject to specific exemptions.

There are a number of legal issues to be considered if there are pregnant players Team Officials, or Match Officials these include:

- providing reasonably safe playing environments,
- privacy of the pregnant participant, and
- responsibility of the pregnant player, Team Official, or Match Official for inherent and obvious risks.

Further information on these issues is available in the Australian Sports Commission's publication "Pregnancy, Sport and the Law".

As a result of developments in sport involving women who are pregnant, the Joint Zones Associations have recognized the need to develop a consistent policy and guidelines concerning females wishing to continue playing football or football related activities whilst pregnant.

This Policy and embedded Guidelines support the position that any pregnant player, Team Officials, or Match Officials should be given the opportunity to decide for themselves, in consultation with their medical advisers, whether or not to participate whilst pregnant.

The Joint Zones Associations and its Member Clubs support the Policy and Guidelines in relation to football or football related activities.

1. RIGHTS

1.1 Individual Rights

The Joint Zones Associations and Member Clubs respects and supports the rights of pregnant players, Team Officials, Match Officials who, in consultation with medical professionals, elect to continue to participate in the sport of football and its associated activities, provided that at all times the health and wellbeing of the player, Team Official, or Match Official and their unborn child are paramount.

1.2 Player, Team Official or Match Official Rights

Any individual, as part of a team or acting as a Team or Match Official, must recognize and respect the rights of all players, Team Officials or Match Officials to participate in a spirit of fair and safe football environment.

Other Players, Team Officials or Match Officials should respect and support a pregnant player, Team Official or Match Official in the same way as they would any other participant involved in the football activity.

- 1.3** The Joint Zones Associations' duty of care to pregnant players, Team Officials or Match Officials does not require them to place a blanket ban on the player's or Official's participation in football or it's associated activities from a specific stage of pregnancy.

The Zone Association will not make any recommendations to condone the continuance in the sport of football of a player, Team Official, or Match Official who is pregnant.

That decision shall be left entirely to the player or Official and based on sound medical advice.

Medical practitioner's opinions shall be sought so that informed decisions can be made.

However, this policy and guidelines seek to indicate that a sensible approach is to assume that, with appropriate advice and information from the Zone Associations, a pregnant individual, along with her medical practitioner, will make the right decision concerning her participation in football and its associated activities.

This policy and guidelines aim to give sound advice to all those involved.

2. ADVICE

2.1 Medical

The Joint Zones Association recommends that each individual player, Team Official or Match Official who is pregnant shall seek medical advice in respect of the player's, or Official's own medical position and the medical position of the unborn child.

2.2 Legal Advice

The Joint Zones Associations encourages the individual player, Team Official or Match Official who is pregnant to seek out any relevant advice as to the player's or Official's position, legal or otherwise, in respect of the mother's duty of care, both potential and actual, owed to the unborn child.

Whilst you are able to enquire as to whether or not the player has sought appropriate medical advice, you cannot request details.

The player is not obliged to provide a medical certificate however, if one is presented it is beneficial.

- 2.3** The Joint Zones Associations refers to Sports Medicine Australia, which reports that, in the first three months of pregnancy, the foetus is protected from blows to the abdomen because of its positioning lower in the pelvic girdle; however, as pregnancy continues, the foetus moves higher and becomes more susceptible to blows to the abdomen.

3 GUIDELINES:

3.1 Pregnant Participant (Player, Team Official or Match Official)

The following guidelines may assist Joint Zone Associations and Member clubs where a pregnant Participant (Player, Team Official or Match Official) may be involved.

A Pregnant Participant (Player, Team Official or Match Official) is encouraged to:

- Be aware that their own health, and the wellbeing of their unborn child, is of utmost importance in their decision about whether to continue as a Player, Team Official or Match Official.
- Make themselves aware of the current medical advice relating to physical activity during pregnancy (refer to the Resources section of this Policy).
- Obtain expert medical advice as to the risks associated with playing or officiating at football activities when pregnant.
- The Participant (Player, Team Official or Match Official) should ensure they understand this advice and where necessary question the advice until they are sure they understand the risks taken in participating in football activities.
- Take into account their changed physical condition, use common sense, and not take unnecessary risks
- Remember that the ultimate decision to participate in any football activities will always be the Participant's (Player, Team Official or Match Official), whilst having regard to all the circumstances.

3.2 Joint Zone Administration – Competition Administrators

The following guidelines may assist Joint Zone Associations and Member clubs when a pregnant Participant (Player, Team Official or Match Official) is involved.

The Zone Administration – Competition Administrator should:

- Evaluate the precautions they can take to avoid harm to all Participants (Player, Team Official or Match Official), including pregnant Participants (Player, Team Official or Match Official).
- Develop protocols and procedures to communicate with Participants (Player, Team Official or Match Official) regarding participation in any football activities during pregnancy, including:
 - a. Providing Participants (Player, Team Official or Match Official) with the opportunity to advise of their pregnancy should they wish to do so.

Any information collected in this way should be handled in accordance with the Joint Zone Associations **Privacy Policy**.
 - b. Being aware of Commonwealth, State and Territory anti-discrimination legislation and its application in the sport of football and review the rules, regulations, and constitution of the Team/Member Club/Association/Branch with respect to the relevant anti-discrimination legislation.

This legislation precludes discrimination on the basis of pregnancy status.

Therefore, Joint Zone Administrators should be aware of the need to ensure that proper systems are in place in order to mitigate the risk of discrimination on the basis of pregnancy status in accordance with relevant legislation and this Policy.
 - c. Promoting adherence to the rules of the game.
 - d. Create a playing environment that is reasonably safe for all Participants (Player, Team Official or Match Official).

3.3 Team Official (Coach, Manager or Trainer)

The following guidelines may assist Associations, Branches and Member clubs when a pregnant Participant (Player or Team Official) is involved.

A Team Official (Coach, Manager or Trainer) should:

- Be aware of the professional medical advice should the pregnant Participant (Player or Team Official) wish to share this information.

Personal information should be managed in accordance with the Joint Zones Association's Privacy Guidelines.
- Take reasonable measures to ensure that all Participants (Player or Team Official) are aware of the issues related to participation in any football activities during pregnancy.
- Respect and support the Participant's (Player or Team Official) right to make their own decisions in relation to their participation or non-participation in any football activities whilst pregnant.
- If the relevant Participant (Player or Team Official) wishes, advise the pertinent Team/Club/Association/Branch Officials that you are coaching or managing a pregnant player, Team Official or Match Official.
- The Joint Zones Associations Pregnancy Policy for Coaches, managers trainers, and other Team Officials who give pregnant Participants advice on how to train or being involved in football activities during their pregnancy must be very careful that they are not placing themselves in the position of medical practitioners.

They should not speak outside their scope of knowledge as they could face legal action for negligent advice.

A consultative approach between Participant, Coaches, managers trainers, other Team Officials, and medical practitioners is recommended.

3.4 Match Official

The following guidelines may assist Joint Zones Associations and Member clubs when a pregnant Participant (Player, Team Official or Match Official) is involved. A Match Official should:

- Apply the rules governing the sport equally and fairly to all Participants.

3.5 Other Participants

The following guidelines may assist Joint Zones Associations and Member clubs when a pregnant Participant (Player, Team Official or Match Official) is involved.

Other Participants (Player, Team Official or Match Official) should:

- Respect and support a pregnant Participant (Player, Team Official or Match Official) in the same way as they would any other Participant (Player, Team Official or Match Official).

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the Joint Zones Associations Member Protection Policy (MPP) and should be dealt with in accordance with the MPP and the Complaint Handling Procedures

The Joint Zones Associations Member Protection Policy explicitly precludes discrimination on the basis of pregnancy status.

Any allegations relating to discrimination on the basis of pregnancy status will be handled under the Joint Zones Associations Member Protection Policy and the complaint handling procedures therein.

The Joint Zones Associations and its Member clubs expressly condemns any discrimination occurring on the basis of a person's pregnancy status.

RESOURCES:

Australian Government Department of Health, '[For Pregnancy](#)'

Australia Institute of Sport (AIS): [Pregnancy Factsheets](#)

Australia Institute of Sport (AIS): [Female Performance and Health Initiative](#)

Australia Institute of Sport (AIS): [Female Athlete Resources](#)

Play by the Rules: [Pregnancy and Participation](#)

Sports Commission Australia: [Pregnancy in Sport Guidelines](#)

Sports Medicine Australia: [Women in Sport - Fact Sheet](#)

The Royal Women's Hospital (Victoria): [Active Pregnancy](#)

REFERENCES

- * Australian Rugby Union "Pregnancy Policy"
- * Australian Sports Commission "Pregnancy Sport and the Law"
- * Football NSW "Pregnancy Policy"
- * Hockey Tasmania "Pregnancy Policy/Guidelines"
- * Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport 5 (1): P 11-19 "SMA Statement-The Benefits and Risks of Exercise in Pregnancy"
- * Surf Living Saving Australia "Policy Statement: Pregnancy and the Surf Lifesaver-Competition and Patrols"
- * New South Wales Netball Association "Pregnancy Policy"
- * South Australia Netball Association "Pregnancy Policy Guidelines"
- * Sports Commission Australia: "Pregnancy in Sport Guidelines"
- * Sports Medicine Australia: "Women in Sport - Fact Sheet"

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APPENDIX A:

PREGNANCY CHECKLIST

The Joint Zones Associations and Member Clubs supports the position that a pregnant player, Team Official and Match Official should be given every opportunity to decide for herself, in consultation with her medical practitioners, whether or not to participate in any football activities whilst pregnant.

The Joint Zones Association has formed this position in light of the Australian Sports Commission Pregnancy in Sport – Guidelines for the Australian Sporting Industry and on the basis of current medical evidence and legal advice as to the risks of injury and potential liability surrounding the issue.

This checklist has been developed to assist Member clubs, associations, and branches in dealing with the issue prior to and post notification of player pregnancy.

It is essential that the steps within the checklist are followed and that the document is appropriately distributed to all your members.

PRIOR TO NOTIFICATION	YES	NO
<p>1. Has the Zones Association or Club included in Player, Team Official or Match Official or the like an obligation on the Player, Team Official to notify the Member Club, Association or Branch that the Player, Team Official is pregnant?</p> <p>For Example: “The Player, Team Official or Match Official undertakes that upon becoming aware that she is, or is reasonably likely to be, pregnant, or suffering any illness, injury, or other ailment, she will notify the Member Club/Association or Branch (as appropriate and, where practicable, in writing or email) of the pregnancy, illness, injury, or other ailment”.</p>		
<p>2. Has the Member club, association, or branch advised Players, Team Officials or Match Officials that continued participation in football activities during pregnancy poses theoretical risks to them and to their unborn child?</p>		
<p>3. Has the Member Club, association or branch suggested that the pregnant Player, Team Official or Match Officials seek advice from an appropriately qualified medical practitioner as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risks involved in participating in football activities while pregnant, • Whether it is safe for them to continue participating in football activities while pregnant and, if so, for how long they should continue to participate? 		
<p>4. Has the Member club, association or Branch reserved the right of the Member club, association, or branch to request from the Player, Team Official or Match Official evidence that she has obtained medical advice in respect of her participation whilst pregnant (note this does not refer to the substance of the medical advice as such information is confidential and subject to privacy considerations)?</p>		

POST NOTIFICATION		YES	NO
5.	Have the statements in 1 to 4 been included in the Player, Team Official, or Match Official registration online forms or similar documents?		
6.	Have the statements in 1 to 4 been displayed in a prominent place, website and/or Facebook page, where pregnant Players, Team Officials or Match Officials are likely to see it.		
7.	Have appropriate indemnities and/or releases been included in the Player, Team Official, or Match Official registration online forms or similar documents?		
8.	Does the Member club, association, or branch have appropriate insurance, which extends to claims which are made by a pregnant Player, Team Official, or Match Official or her child?		
9.	Has the pregnant Player, Team Official, or Match Official sought advice from appropriately qualified medical practitioner, independent to the Member club, association, or branch, as to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risks involved in participating in football activities while pregnant, • Whether it is safe for them to continue participating in football activities while pregnant and, if so, for how long they should continue to participate? 		
10.	Assuming the pregnant Player, Team Official, or Match Official obtained advice from an appropriately qualified medical practitioner, independent to the Member club, association, or branch, has she decided to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to participate? • If so, how long? 		
11.	Is the Member club, association, or branch aware that the pregnant Player, Team Official, or Match Official either has not obtained appropriate medical advice or is ignoring such medical advice? If YES , has the Member club, association, or branch taken positive steps to protect both the mother and the unborn child, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arranging for the mother to see an appropriately qualified medical expert? • counselling the mother to cease competing of her own accord, or out of regard to the unborn child? 		