



Zero Tolerance Plan of Management

At Football Mid North Coast we are fully committed to shifting the attitude towards match officials. This will mean a whole of game approach to changing behaviours, attitudes and actions of players, coaches and spectators.

In 2025, through the **Zero Tolerance Plan of Management** FMNC will introduce measures targeted at stamping out abuse and creating a safer, supportive and welcoming environment for match officials.

The Zero Tolerance Plan of Management will incorporate the following initiatives:

- 1. Clear messaging for everyone in the game**
- 2. Support for match officials**
- 3. Tougher sanctions**



Clear Messaging for Everyone in the Game

A clear and consistent message of Zero Tolerance of abuse towards match officials will be communicated through our competitions to ensure everyone participating in, or attending our matches are aware of the expectations and consequences for match official abuse.

1. Zero Tolerance signage at every ground

All clubs will display signage at their ground carrying the Zero Tolerance messaging. Where possible ground announcements will include the Zero Tolerance messaging.

2. Declaration of commitment signed by every club

Every FMNC club will be required to sign a commitment to support the Zero Tolerance Plan of Management. This commitment will reinforce the value of match officials to football and ensure their safety, welfare and value is supported by every club.

3. Youth match official armbands

All match officials under the age of 18 will wear a bright armband to remind players, officials and spectators that they are a child and, as such, are protected by [Football Australia's Safeguarding Policy](#) under the [Member Protection Framework](#).

4. Green shirt program

Green Shirts worn by match officials indicates that they are new referees usually in their first year of refereeing. FMNC will promote the green shirt program through social media and insist clubs do the same.

5. Social media campaign

A robust social media campaign will reinforce the Zero Tolerance messaging.



Support for Match Officials

Football Mid North Coast will provide support when and where match officials need it, including practical directives on how to deal with issues.

1. Specific directives on dealing with abuse

- Match officials will be educated on what constitutes abuse and directed to implement consistent sanctions across all FMNC venues. These standards will be widely communicated to players and coaches before any matches are played in 2025.

2. Referee Support Officer

- Duty Officers will be required for every competition match as well as being on duty and visible in venues while Mini-Roos matches are being played. Ideally visiting teams for competition matches will also supply a duty officer. Existing duty officers will fill the role of Referee Support Officer to escort the match officials to and from the pitch. Duty Officers should be prepared to support match officials by deterring undesirable behaviour and making reports on behaviour to be scrutinised within the Zero Tolerance Plan of Management.

3. Referee Wellbeing and Support

- FMNC commits to providing immediate ongoing support to match officials subjected to match official abuse incidents.

4. Reporting matchday experience

- **FMNC will encourage match officials to document reports of abuse.** Referees will have an easily accessible online form to report their experiences from match day.

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/FootballMidNorthCoast/ZeroToleranceRefereeReport>

- While major incidents have generally been reported, this form will encourage referees to report more often on good, bad and other experiences. Teams, venues or people will be able to be identified allowing FMNC to deal with issues sooner.



Tougher Sanctions

Zero Tolerance means exactly that. Tougher sanctions, which will be widely communicated, will be a key deterrent initially but will serve to make an example of those who continue to engage in match official abuse in 2025.

1. Points deductions for match official abuse

- Any first instance of match official abuse from a team will see that team given a suspended three-competition point deduction. This will be clearly communicated to the club and team delegate.
- Any second offence of match official abuse from that same team will see a three-competition point deduction for that offence, plus the enacting of the suspended three-competition point deduction from the first offence, for a total of six points for a second offence.
- Any third offence within the team will incur a further three-point deduction and the club will be required to attend a disciplinary hearing regarding further sanctions.

2. Significantly increased sanctions

- The minimum sanction for any players or team officials for offensive language or gestures against a match official will be increased from four matches (mandatory automatic + three) to six matches (mandatory automatic + five)
- The minimum sanction for any players or team officials for repeated use of offensive language or gestures (actions) against a match official will be increased from five matches (mandatory automatic + four) to eight matches (mandatory automatic + seven)

3. Minimum time suspensions for match official abuse against minors

- Any non-playing person aged 18 or over found guilty of match official abuse towards a minor will be suspended from all football for a minimum period of 12 months. This suspension will prevent any adult guilty of match official abuse towards a minor attending as a player, coach or spectator.

4. Reduced tolerance for coach and team officials' behaviour

- Yellow cards shown to coaches are for incidents in which they are in full control, unlike players in match situations. As such the accumulation of yellow cards for coaches that will lead to a mandatory one-match suspension will be reduced from three to two. A third yellow card will result in an immediate three week suspension. Further incidents of match official abuse will be referred to a disciplinary hearing.

5. Minimum mandatory suspensions for spectators in relation to match official abuse

- Any spectator identified, reported and found guilty of match official abuse will be banned from attending any football under FMNC jurisdiction for a minimum of 30 days. Any non-playing person aged 18 or over found guilty of match official abuse towards a minor will be suspended from all football for a minimum period of 12 months. This suspension will prevent any adult guilty of match official abuse towards a minor attending as a player, coach or spectator. If the abuse is directed at a minor the matter may be reported to the police for investigation.

6. Match officials advised of disciplinary outcomes

- All match officials will be formally advised of outcomes and sanctions issued in relation to match official abuse.
- Clubs will be required to be actively involved in supporting the Zero Tolerance of abuse towards Match Officials. While a number of these initiatives will have an immediate impact on the matchday experience for our match officials, this policy aims to drive genuinely long-term cultural change on the pitch, on the sidelines and online, to create an atmosphere where all clubs, along with Football Mid North Coast, have a Zero Tolerance approach to abuse against our match officials.



Support Documents

- [Football Australia Code of Conduct and Ethics](#)
- [Football Australia Member Protection Framework](#)
- [Football Australia Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Northern NSW Football Zero Tolerance Match Official Support Standards](#)



Zero Tolerance Club Commitment

Club Name:

This football club supports Zero Tolerance of Abuse Towards Match Officials.

- We will support FMNC in implementing the Zero Tolerance Plan of Management.

- We make a commitment to promote this plan of management to our players, coaches and supporters as a way of further supporting match officials.
- We also agree to display and promote the Football Australia Member Protection Framework as well as the Football Australia Code of Conduct and Ethics to our members.

We will display Zero Tolerance ground signage provided by FMNC and share details of the Plan of Management on our website and/or social media.

Signed agreement.

President: _____

Club Delegate: _____

Date: _____