



# Central Murray & Golden Rivers Leagues

## COMMUNICATION POLICY



### RATIONALE

Local and State media are vital partners in achieving the goals of the CM & GR leagues. In order to maximise the advantages of media presentation and minimise the risks of media misrepresentation it is necessary to establish guidelines for how media contacts will be conducted.

It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, the intention is to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship with the media, enhance communications between clubs and between the Board and clubs. The CM & GR leagues welcome the opportunity to talk to the media and, through them, to debate issues in the public arena.

In dealing with the media, clubs, Board members and other volunteers should be conscious that they may be seen as representatives of their club or league and should therefore avoid making comments or participating in photos that may damage the long-term reputation of their club or the CM & GR leagues.

### PURPOSE

The CM & GR leagues works with the media in order to;

- Advocate for the goals of the Leagues,
- Promote the work of the Leagues,
- Promote football and netball in our region,
- Inform the public of the details of the Leagues,
- Assist in fundraising for the Leagues.

In order to ensure that these purposes can be fulfilled, this policy regulates the choice entitled to speak for the Leagues and the consequences for breach of these rules.

The media themselves have a vital role to play on behalf of the community in holding and its clubs to account for its policies and actions. It is important that they have access to officers and members and to background information to assist them in this role.

To balance this, the Leagues/Board must have the capacity to defend itself from any unfounded criticism, and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts (if necessary using other forms of communication).

It is the responsibility of all club administrators, board members and volunteers to ensure that effective media relations are maintained in order to achieve the aims of the Leagues. Naturally, in doing this, certain legal constraints might apply (e.g. not making comment on current judicial matters).

### CORE VALUES

The CM & GR leagues operate on the values of;

**Honesty:** The Board will never knowingly mislead the public, media or staff on an issue or news story.

**Transparency:** The Board will promote openness and accessibility in our dealings with the media, whilst complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality when appropriate.

**Clarity:** All communications with the media will be written in plain English

**Balance:** Information provided to the media by the League will as far as humanly possible be objective, balanced, accurate, informative and timely.

### AUTHORISED SPOKESPEOPLE

**Board Chair:** Any political issues, involving matters of policy, the Board position, external liaison or dealings with the AFL, Netball Victoria, Local Government or state authorities,

**Operations Manager:** Issues relating to the day-to-day operations of the League that do not involve Board policy. This includes the League's normal programs and services.

**Board members:** have been elected and are free to speak to the media on any subject;

- Board members have the right to express personal opinions on any issue, but must make it

clear that they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the Board or Leagues, unless they are supporting a Board or Leagues' position,

- Board members will be quoted in media releases related to their portfolio,
- If a Board member has taken a lead role in a specific project or initiative, they will assume spokesperson responsibilities.

**Clubs:** The President of each member club is the official spokesperson for their club, unless this authority has been delegated and communicated to the League.

## **PROCEDURES**

The Board through the publication of this Communications policy and the 'Help Sheet - Media Crisis' is setting the expectations for all clubs in their communications with the media (including Social Media), with other clubs, with the Board and with their members and parents.

- Club media statements should only be made by the appointed club spokesperson,
- We expect our members to conduct themselves appropriately when using any form of communications, whether electronic or written, to share information with other members or posting material on public sites connected to the club or the leagues.
- Where there are multiple club social media sites an appointed moderator must be responsible for removing or blocking offensive posts. Where the site is for junior footballers or netballers this moderator must be an adult and appointed by the club committee,
- Social media posts on club linked sites should also be monitored and those that damage the reputation of the leagues, the Board or its members, or other clubs and their members should be immediately removed.

Electronic communication:

- Should be restricted to club matters,
- Must not offend, intimidate, humiliate or bully another person,
- Must not be misleading, false or injure the reputation of another person,
- Should respect and maintain the privacy of members,
- Must not bring the club, the league or football and netball into or likely to bring into disrepute,

## **NON-COMPLIANCE**

Any Board member, Club or club member (including player or official) or employee of the Leagues may face disciplinary action for making or sending inappropriate media statements, including photos or videos, electronic communication or posting online content or comments that;

- Attempt to harass, offend, intimidate or humiliate another member, as outlined in our Member Protection policy or Code of Conduct,
- Attempts to denigrate or influence the outcome of an impending tribunal matter,
- Are deliberately misleading, erroneous or constructed in such a manner as to bring the Board or another Club into disrepute,
- Is likely to bring the game of football or netball into disrepute.

At the discretion of the Board, the offender or Club may be charged under the Code of Conduct.

If a club official is found to have contravened this policy a Club may be vicariously liable for prohibited conduct engaged in by a participant connected to the Club if the Club is unable to establish that it took reasonable precautions to prevent the participant from engaging in that prohibited conduct.

Under certain circumstances, cyber bullying (e.g. bullying that is carried out through an internet service such as email, a chat room, discussion group, instant messaging or website) is a criminal offence that can be reported to the police.

In addition, members who publish false or misleading comments about another person in the public domain (e.g., Facebook, YouTube or Twitter) may be liable for defamation.