

# ALTONA



## Responding to suspicions and allegations of abuse and harm

This document is adapted from material produced by Basketball Victoria. It aims to help basketball clubs and people involved in those clubs respond to suspicions and allegations of abuse and harm. The document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Altona Pirates Child Safety Policy
- Altona Pirates Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Altona Pirates Members Protection Declaration

## Resources on responding to concerns about children

[This page](#) on the Department of Health and Human Services has information on how to make a referral or a report if you consider a child to be at risk of abuse, harm or neglect

There are also some excellent resources on the [Commission for Children and Young People website](#), including [this page](#) which has information on the Child Safe Standards, keeping children safe and responding to concerns about children.

## Responsibility to respond to suspicions and allegations

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for the Altona Pirates Basketball Club in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the child. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within our Club's activities and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

## Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed above or it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the child affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a child says or indicates that he/she is being abused, you should:

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the young person.
- **reassure** the child that he/she is not to blame and that it was right to tell.
- **listen** to the child, showing that you are taking him/her seriously.
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify.

- **inform** the child that you have to inform other people about what he/she has told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse from continuing.
- **safety of the child** is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue.
- **record** all information.
- **report** the incident to the Club's welfare officer.

### Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- the child's name, age and date of birth
- the child's home address and telephone number
- whether or not the person making the report is expressing his/her concern or someone else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incident
- the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
- has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

### Reporting a Concern

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

Altona Pirates Basketball Club expects its members and staff to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child **IMMEDIATELY** with the person in charge and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the nominated Club welfare officer is not available, you should take responsibility and seek advice from the duty officer at your local social services department or the police. Telephone numbers can be found in your local directory.

Where there is a complaint against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation.

- **Criminal** in which case the police are immediately involved
- **Child Protection** in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- **Disciplinary or Misconduct** in which case Basketball Victoria will be involved

As mentioned previously in this document, Altona Pirates Basketball Club's employees and volunteers are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for child protection.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

**NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern**

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an employee or a volunteer should be reported to Altona Pirates Basketball Club who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- we will refer the matter to social services department
- the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department
- the chairperson of our organisation will be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- if the Club welfare officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report will be made to the appropriate manager who will refer the matter to social services

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such an allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services. This is because other children in the sport or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

### **Concerns Outside the Immediate Sporting Environment (e.g. parent or carer)**

- Report your concerns to the welfare officer.
- If the welfare officer is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local social services department or the police immediately.
- Social Services and the welfare officer will decide how to inform the parents/carers.
- The welfare officer should also report the incident to Basketball Victoria. We will ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the organisation and act accordingly.
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis.