



## **Football South Coast - Social Media Policy**

Date: 10 December 2024 – Version 3.0

### **Background**

Social Media has become a more prominent communication tool and is a great way for Clubs to communicate to its players, referees, members, supporters, sponsors and other key stakeholders. Football South Coast (FSC) also uses Social Media and sees the benefits of this very important tool to engage our Football community and showcase our game.

Whilst there are many positives with the use of Social Media, there can also be a negative impact. We all need to be mindful and aware of what content is delivered in the Social Media space and ensure the image of Clubs, FSC, our sport and its stakeholders is not tarnished in anyway.

Our game is about encouraging respect, fair play and a family friendly environment and disparaging comments on social media about other clubs, players, referees or our key stakeholders are certainly not an appropriate form of communication. Likewise, posts that are demeaning to others or which display or glorify foul or unsafe behaviour within matches or associated with matches are not acceptable.

This policy aims to provide guiding principles to follow when using social media.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to outline a consistent and consecutive approach to social media activity which is not deemed to be appropriate and in the best interest of the sport.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to Members which includes; a Club, Club Official, a Team and/or Participants (ie Player, Referee, Club Office Holders, Coaches, Managers or other registered official within PlayFootball).

This policy covers all forms of social media. Social media includes, but is not limited to, activities such as:

- Maintaining a profile page on social or business networking sites (such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Shutterfly, Twitter, Snapchat, Whatsapp, MySpace or any other technology platform);
- Content creation or sharing including TikTok, VEO, Flickr (photo sharing, YouTube (Video Sharing) or other technology platforms;
- Commenting on blogs for personal or business reasons;
- Taking part in online votes and polls;
- Taking part in conversations on public and private web forums (message boards); or
- Editing a Wikipedia page

The intent of this policy is to include anything posted online where information, comments or footage is shared that might affect Members, sponsors or FSC as an organisation and the reputation of the sport in general.

### **Football South Coast Disciplinary and Dispute Regulations ('the DDR's')**

In order to protect football and ensure our game and our football community is not exposed to negative impacts of social media, the DDR's (Section 16) stipulate that:

No Member shall make any public statement, including any contribution to television, radio, print or social media (for the avoidance of doubt comments made via social media are regarded as public comment.) No person shall publicly comment or display content where such comment or content:

- Is libellous, defamatory or harassing content – this also applies to the use of illustrations or nicknames;
- Is confidential in any way;
- Brings the organisation or the sport into disrepute
- Breaches FSC and FA Codes of Conduct.
- Is disparaging or derogatory or may diminish the safety of a Match Official, opposition team or any Player or Official or Member of FSC;
- Is disparaging or critical of Football South Coast, any Football South Coast Rules and Regulations, or any FSC policy decision, without reasonable basis or justification;
- Is with respect to a matter the subject of proceedings currently before a Body; or
- Is disparaging of a Determination without reasonable basis or justification.
- Is unfair, unreasonable or excessive public criticism (including via social media) of a decision made by a Body or any other matter touching or concerning a Tribunal.

Any breach of these points will be treated as misconduct under the FSC Disciplinary and Dispute Regulations.

### **Breaches**

Any breaches to this policy, FA, FNSW and FSC Rules, Regulations or Codes of Conduct that relate to social media will be dealt with in accordance with the DDR's.

The club and/or individual/s may be subject to sanctions imposed by FSC in accordance with the Disciplinary Regulations.

A Club is deemed to have breached this policy where one of its Participants has allegedly breached this policy and FSC may, in its absolute discretion, take any relevant action against the Club pursuant to Article 8.2 Charges of Misconduct and Disrepute.

For the avoidance of doubt, a Club may be sanctioned in accordance with Article 24.7 notwithstanding the offender(s) have not been identified or had their identity produced.

Notwithstanding the above clauses, FSC may, in its absolute discretion, elect not to proceed against a Club for the conduct of one of its Participants where:

- i. the Club fully cooperates with any investigation by Football South Coast into the alleged conduct, including, without limitation, naming or identifying, upon request by Football South Coast, the Club's Participants or individuals known to the Club in relation to the alleged conduct;
- ii. Football South Coast, on review of the information available to it, forms the view that to proceed against the Club for the actions of its Participants is unduly harsh or unfair in the circumstances.

In addition, FSC has the right to request immediate removal of content upon direction being issued.

### **Communication to all Players and Officials**

Each club is responsible for ensuring that their officials and players are aware of this policy, the DDR's and expectations of the club to ensure the image of our sport and members are not tarnished in anyway.