



## CHILD PROTECTION...IT'S A REAL ISSUE FOR SPORT

'Play by the Rules'  
[www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)

By far the majority of people involved with children in sport are competent, safe and ethical. However recent media reports remind us that sport is not immune from people who want to gain access to children for ulterior purposes. In fact sport has many of the circumstances and characteristics targeted by people who wish to exploit or abuse children and young people.

While much attention has been given to the serious issue of child sex abuse (paedophilia) it is important for associations and clubs to be aware that other types of behaviour may be considered as child abuse. In particular coaches need to understand that they are in positions of trust and are able to assert authority and power over players or participants. Abuse of this authority and trust can lead to child abuse.

Examples of child abuse in sport are inappropriate touching when demonstrating techniques, inappropriate training methods that give extra physical loads to children as 'punishment', physical aggression when disciplining a child and constant negative criticism of a child's ability. The abuse of young umpires who often lack the experience and confidence to deal with abuse about their decisions is of increasing concern.

Clubs and associations should see that the culture of their sport and organisations are fun, safe, fair and respectful. It is important that associations seek to prevent and deal with any instance of child sexual abuse as well as other types of abuse.

'Play By The Rules' [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au) provides free information, resources and online learning to assist clubs achieve a child safe environment. Of particular relevance are three free online learning courses on child protection for Governing Bodies, Sporting Clubs & Groups and Coaches & Officials.

Associations and clubs should take a look at 'Play By The Rules' and encourage their administrators, managers, coaches, officials and others who work closely with children to complete the online learning courses.