



Member Protection – In the News and In Maccabi

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A Maccabi Circular for all
Club Presidents and
Committee Members

Issued by:

Maccabi Australia Inc
Level 1 176 Bambra Rd
Caulfield South VIC 3162
P: 03 9563 5865

New Victorian laws mean jail terms for those who either fail to report or put in place proper systems to deal with the sexual abuse of children

Member Protection remains top of mind for all us. Last week the Victorian State Government flagged its intentions to act on the findings of the Inquiry into Child Abuse in Institutions and effectively put the community on notice to be more vigilant in the area of child protection. This will undoubtedly take effect nationally in time.

For Maccabi the message is clear for all of us at all levels – Clubs, States and National:

- 1. Those who fail to report suspected child sexual abuse will face a jail term of up to three years under new laws in Victoria and**
- 2. Those who fail to take action to protect children from sexual abuse at the hands of someone associated with their organisation face up to five years in jail.**

Maccabi Australia had already prioritised the development of its Member Protection Policies to ensure all our members, in particular our children, are safe and protected, and this just affirms our decision. It will be essential for all of us, at every level of this organisation to embrace these policies and put them in place at each of our Clubs.

Victorian Premier Denis Napthine said the era of cover-up and silence was over.

“Every adult in Victoria who is aware of child sexual abuse must report it to police,” he told reporters.

“We need to speak up to protect our children.”

You can find more information here: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-13/inquiry-recommends-making-failure-to-report-sexual-abuse/5088212>

What is being done for our organisation about child protection?

Maccabi Australia has spent many months consulting lawyers, child protection experts and the Maccabi States to develop procedures and protocols for our organisation at the club, state and national levels. We expect to be in a position to roll out a comprehensive Member Protection Policy (**MPP**) document in the next month. We would particularly like to thank Katherine Levi for her work in the development of the Child Protection Policy.

We have also engaged an external consultant (Andrews Group) to assist us with the development and implementation of our MPP program. They will assist us to finalise the necessary MPP documentation and will also work with Maccabi State and Club Committees and Boards to better understand our needs and give you the opportunity to confidentially share your thoughts in how to best engage our members in this conversation.

We also propose to embark on a comprehensive training and education program to provide guidance in the following areas:

1. **Volunteer Committee Members** - Member Protection in your Club – what do you need to know as a Committee Member of a Maccabi Club
2. **Coaches** – what you need to know about Member Protection in Maccabi – topics will include Codes of Conduct requirements, do's and don'ts of being a coach: member interactions, penalties for breaches, signs of abuse you should be aware of in your players, your rights and obligations
3. **Adult Members and Parents** – Member protection – what are your rights and responsibilities? What should you be aware of in relation to not only Maccabi member protection? In addition, specifics on how to report an incident and to whom.
4. **Members Under 18** – age appropriate sessions will be conducted with children and youth to let them know what we deem as appropriate interactions with coaches and managers and provide them with the tools to deal with a situation or report an incident.

In the short term, here are a few actions that we can all take to get a head start on what is coming:

1 Working With Children Checks (WWC)

Do all of your volunteers and coaches have valid Working with Children checks if your club has members under the age of 18?

We risk fines and imprisonment if we do not require WWCs for our staff and volunteers who work with children. Following are a few additional [things important to know about WWC:](#)

- While the WWC database updates its information monthly, should one of your volunteers or staff have their WWC withdrawn, we may not be informed if we are not a registered organisation for that individual. It is up to the person to inform us that their WWC has been withdrawn.
- WWC only considers actual convictions, so if a past employer had suspicions that were unsubstantiated, or a circumstance was avoided due to early detection, nothing will show up on a WWC.
- People from Overseas – If we have coaches or volunteers who are from overseas, a WWC will only search the Australian database. We are encouraged to have them obtain a current Police Check from their country of origin, particularly if they have only recently arrived in Australia. Otherwise, we should be prepared to conduct thorough reference checks.

What can we do now?

2. Reference Checks

Should we be taking on new coaches or volunteers, even if they are known to us or people we know, it is worthwhile undertaking reference checks, and asking some very specific questions, for example:

- Were there any incidents that you are aware of with children while this person was employed with you?
- Why did they leave this position or other past positions
- Would you rehire this person if the opportunity arose?
- Do you think this person is well qualified to work with youth?
- What was the candidate's attendance record? Was the candidate on-time and dependable?
- How did adults and children interact with the applicant?
- Have you ever seen him/her discipline a child? If so, please describe what you saw him/her do? What sort of discipline does the applicant use with children?
- Would you leave your own children (if you have any) in the care of the applicant?

Where to from here?

This is the first of regular Member Protection Updates that we will be providing as we ramp up to implementation of our formal policies and procedures and beyond.

We have all, by volunteering for the positions we hold, taken on the responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for all of our members, and most specifically our children.

In addition to the training and education programs Member Protection Tool Kits are being developed which will contain copies of all relevant policies and procedures, FAQs, template forms, codes of conduct and everything else needed to be able to implement member protection policies.

Should you have any questions about member protection issues that are currently affecting your Club, you can contact via the office number below either Ellana Aarons, Executive Director, Maccabi Australia or Philip Sheezel, Chairman of the National MPP Sub Committee



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