



Vilification Framework

AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE



Respect and
Responsibility



Vilification Framework

1 Framework statement

The AFL industry does not tolerate vilification in any form and is committed to ensuring safe, welcoming and inclusive environments for all people involved in Australian Football.

To achieve this, the AFL adopts a consistent approach to a range of social issues, underpinned by education, awareness-raising activities, support services, social responsibilities, research and evaluation and compliance. This document exists to provide a framework for the AFL's commitment to social inclusion through the achievement of the objectives outlined in section three.

The AFL Vilification Framework establishes a shared understanding of what vilification is, and the impact it has on the industry, as well as how support should be provided to those within the industry who may have experienced vilification.

This framework ensures that Australian football is well positioned to stamp out all forms of vilification in our game.



Vilification Framework

2

Background

Research has established clear links between ethnic and race-based discrimination with issues such as depression, psychological distress, stress and anxiety. Whilst not as strong, there are also probable links with poor general health, quality of life, alcohol and substance misuse, smoking and peer violence.

Currently 44% of Australians were either born overseas or have a parent who was, whilst 4 million people speak a language other than English. Australians speak over 260 languages and identify with 270 ancestries. It has been estimated that by 2025, families born overseas will outnumber those born in Australia.

In 1995, the AFL introduced Rule 30: Discrimination and Racial and Religious Vilification into the AFL player rules. This clearly signalled that racial and religious vilification would no longer be tolerated in Australian Football. Since the introduction of the initial Rule 30, which is now Rule 35 in the AFL Player Rules, the AFL and its affiliates have committed to educating the wider football industry on the destructive effects that vilification has on individuals, clubs and the game itself.

The impact of this investment has seen an increased understanding and commitment to stamping out vilification, which has resulted in an increased involvement within the AFL Industry from across the community including Indigenous, Multicultural and Female participation.

In 2009, the AFL broadened the grounds on which a person can make a complaint under Rule 35 to include vilification on the basis of ability/special ability and sexual orientation, preference or identity. Given these changes, and the continual changing of the Australian demographic, it was important for the AFL to establish a framework that provides clear expected industry standards of behaviour for individuals and the industry as a whole.

The framework is designed to support the development and implementation of initiatives that inform or address the issue of vilification within Australian Football, at the national, state league or community level.

3 Objectives

The aim of the AFL Vilification Framework is to:

- Promote an inclusive environment for all people within the AFL industry irrespective of their personal characteristics, status or orientation;
- Identify strategies targeted at the prevention of vilification before it occurs;
- Ensure that individuals that have been subject to vilification within the AFL industry are supported by best practice services focused on their individual needs;
- Educate and raise awareness of the AFL industry to the impact that vilification can have on individuals, clubs, the industry and the wider community;
- Build the capacity of the AFL industry to recognise, respond to and provide support to persons who are affected by any form of vilification.

The framework objectives will be achieved through the six key areas outlined in diagram 1.

Diagram 1



4 Scope

The AFL's Vilification Framework may extend to all persons, whether working in a paid or voluntary capacity, within the AFL industry.

In considering this scope the AFL recognises the need for collaboration across a range of organisations, including the:

- AFLPA
- AFL Clubs
- AFL State and Territory Affiliates
- AFL Coaches' Association
- Health industry experts





Vilification Framework

5 Definitions

AFL – refers to the central organisation that manages the Australian Football League.

AFL Clubs – the 18 organisations that form part of the AFL competition.

AFL Coaches' Association – the representative body for AFL Coaches.

AFL Competition – refers to the 18 AFL Clubs that form the Australian Football League.

AFL Industry – refers to the AFL, AFL Clubs, AFL Affiliates (i.e. AFL SportsReady, etc.), AFL State Bodies and their Affiliates (i.e. AFLVIC, NEAFL, etc).

AFL Players' Association – the representative body for AFL Players (elite competition).

AFL State and Territory Affiliates – the representative body for each State and Territory in which the AFL has an interest.

AFL Vilification Working Group – the group responsible for development, implementation and evaluation of the AFL's Vilification Framework.

Conciliator – the person appointed by the General Manager Football Operations to manage the conciliation process related to this framework.

Duty of Care – is the AFL's obligation to take reasonable steps to avoid foreseeable harm to staff, trainees, contractors and visitors to the AFL.

Employee – for the purposes of this framework means all staff, contractors, trainees and visitors as defined below:

- **Staff:** any person who has a current employment contract with the AFL;
- **Contractor:** any person paid for providing services for the AFL that is not under a current employment contract;
- **Trainees:** any person who is providing services for the AFL as part of a recognised educational course run by a recognised educational organisation;
- **Visitor:** any person who is attending the AFL in course of normal business or by invitation to an AFL Function.



Vilification Framework

Industry experts and peak bodies – relevant experts and bodies that have expertise in vilification.

Social Inclusion – a state where all people feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society.

Vilification – Acting towards, speaking in a manner, or engaging in any conduct which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults a person on any basis but not limited to, a person's race, religion, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, special ability/disability or sexual orientation, preference or identities.





Vilification Framework

6 Roles and Responsibilities

As part of the AFL Vilification Framework the following stakeholders have key roles and responsibilities:

Australian Football League (AFL)

Participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, education and awareness-raising activities across the AFL industry.

AFL Clubs

Observe all facets of the AFL's Vilification Framework and endorse future activities including establishing and promoting connections with support services and developing social responsibility components of the framework.

AFL Coaches' Association

Participate as part of the AFL Inclusion and Vilification Working Groups. Participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of education, policies and awareness-raising activities targeted at AFL coaches.

AFL Coaches

As per the responsibilities outlined for 'person' in AFL Rule 35.

AFL Cultural Strategy & Education Unit

Oversee AFL Social Inclusion initiatives. Participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, education and awareness-raising activities across the AFL Industry.

AFL Players Association

Participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of education, policies and awareness activities targeted at AFL players.

AFL Players

As per the responsibilities outlined for 'person' in AFL Rule 35.

AFL Staff

As per the responsibilities outlined for 'person' in AFL Rule 35.

AFL State and Territory Affiliates

Participate as part of the AFL Vilification Working Group. Participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of the AFL's Vilification Framework.



Vilification Framework

AFL Vilification Working Group

Consists of representatives from the AFL, AFLPA, AFL Clubs, AFL State Affiliates, AFLCA and Industry Experts and had the responsibility of developing the AFL's Vilification Framework.

AFL Umpires

As per the responsibilities outlined for 'person' in AFL Rule 35.

Conciliator

Facilitate the conciliation process as per Rule 35.

Health industry experts

Provide advice and support where required to the AFL's Social Inclusion and Vilification Working Groups.



7

Awareness-raising activities

Through the AFL Vilification Framework, the AFL and key stakeholders within the AFL industry aim to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of the AFL industry being an inclusive environment for all people irrespective of their particular characteristics or background.
- Raise the awareness across the AFL industry of the impact that vilification can and does have on individuals, clubs, the industry and the wider community.

AFL Industry and community awareness-raising will be supported through:

- Training and education programs
- Media engagement
- Incorporation of key messaging within AFL campaigns
- Development of information resources

The following mediums will be used to communicate messages to the AFL industry:

- Online campaigns
- Social media
- Print and hard copy
- Television commercial campaigns
- Other mediums as identified





Vilification Framework

8

Education programs

Through the AFL Vilification Framework, the AFL and key stakeholders within the AFL industry undertake to:

- Educate the AFL industry on the impact that vilification can have on individuals, clubs, the industry and the wider community.
- Build the capacity of the AFL industry to recognise, address and to provide support to persons who are affected by vilification of any form.

Education programs will be developed and delivered across the industry by the following stakeholders in line with their roles and responsibilities:

- AFL Cultural Strategy and Education Unit
- AFL Players' Association
- AFL Coaches' Association
- AFL Clubs
- Health industry experts

The above stakeholders will work collaboratively on the development and delivery of education programs to ensure consistency of messaging relating to vilification. Through this collaboration, key messages will be tailored to varying industry groups and the duplication of programs will be limited.

The following mediums will be used to educate to the AFL industry:

- Online education
- Face-to-face programs
- Peer support programs

Education programs delivered in line with the AFL Vilification Framework will:

- Adhere to adult learning principles
- Be developed and delivered by suitably qualified people
- Be monitored, reviewed and evaluated

9

Support services

The AFL Vilification Framework places the health and wellbeing of the person who has been vilified at the centre of the response. The AFL will engage with appropriate services such as the AFLPA Wellbeing Services to ensure the AFL Vilification Framework is supported by recognised and qualified experts. In line with this the AFL will adhere to the following principles in offering support services:

- All support services offered through this framework will place priority on the needs and welfare of individuals who may have been involved in an incident of vilification.
- The AFL will work closely with the AFLPA, the AFLCA, and individuals within the AFL Competition to establish appropriate support networks.
- The AFL will draw upon established relationships (e.g. VEOHRC, Orygen Youth Health, etc.) to support the development and implementation phases of the AFL's Vilification Framework, including consultation on policy, education programs, resources and appropriate support services.





Vilification Framework

10 Social response

The social response component of this framework refers to the broader contribution that the AFL industry can make to the issue of vilification. The AFL has partnerships with a number of industry experts and peak bodies, who will be the key network through which the AFL will collaborate on a community response to vilification.

Vilification and discrimination can be linked to other key social issues such as depression, anxiety, alcohol and substance abuse. The relationships that the AFL have with suitably qualified organisations such as the Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission and Orygen Youth Health will allow the AFL industry to:

- Promote the organisation's contribution to addressing and eliminating vilification across the broader community.
- Continue to educate the broader community to the impact of vilification and the responsibility to eliminate it.
- Provide opportunities through established AFL networks to promote the relevant organisations that have partnered with the AFL.



11

Research and evaluation and continuous improvement

The AFL undertakes evaluation and research across a number of social issues, both internally and through various funding partnerships. There are, however, areas that require a more concentrated research and evaluation focus. The AFL's commitment to evidence-based evaluation and research practices will contribute to achieving a greater understanding of vilification for those involved in the AFL Industry.



The following are the research and evaluation principles that apply to this framework:

- Research and evaluation undertaken will be completed by a suitably qualified and recognised person or people.
- Wherever possible the AFL will communicate research in line with the education and awareness raising sections of this framework.
- Research and evaluation will be evidence-based and adhere to the AFL Research Board guidelines.
- Research and evaluation outcomes will be shared with relevant key stakeholders.



12

Compliance and accountabilities

The compliance and accountabilities of stakeholders to the AFL Vilification Framework occur through the following mechanisms:

AFL PLAYER RULES –

Rule 35: Discrimination and Racial and Religious Vilification

The purview of the AFL Player Rules extends only to those involved in Australian football at the AFL competition level.

Rule 35.1 Prohibited Conduct states:

No person subject to these Rules shall act towards or speak to any other person in a manner, or engage in any other conduct which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults another person (the person vilified) on any basis, including but not limited to a person's race, religion, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, special ability/disability or sexual orientation, preference or identity.

The AFL, on behalf of its AFL State and Territory affiliates, has developed a Vilification Rule which can be adapted to State League and community-football environments.

AFL MEMBER PROTECTION POLICY

The Member Protection Policy applies:

- to the AFL, the people within the purview of the AFL Player Rules and AFL Regulations, whether they are in a paid or unpaid/voluntary capacity; and
- to each Affiliated State Body, all people under the purview of that Affiliated State Body, whether they are in a paid or unpaid/voluntary capacity.

Clause 4.1 of the Vilification & Discrimination

Section of the Member Protection Policy states:

No league participant or Club Official shall engage in conduct which may reasonably be considered to incite hatred towards, contempt for, ridicule of or discrimination against a person or group of persons on the ground of their race, religion, gender, colour, sexual preference, orientation or identity, or special ability/disability.



Vilification Framework

RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION

The AFL recognises its legislative duty of care under the relevant Federal and State Anti-Discrimination Laws (i.e. Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth), Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth), State Anti-Discrimination / Equal Opportunity Acts, etc.)

In all states and territories across Australia, unless a specific exclusion applies, it is unlawful to vilify or discriminate against anyone on a variety of grounds including, but not limited to the following:

- Age
- Irrelevant criminal record
- Disability
- Political belief/activity
- Marital status
- Pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Parental/carer status
- Race
- Family/carer responsibilities
- Religious belief/activity
- Gender identity/transgender status
- Sex/gender
- Lawful sexual activity/sexual orientation
- Social origin
- Irrelevant medical record
- Trade union membership/activity

RELEVANT AFL CLUB POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The AFL Vilification Framework is considered complementary to relevant AFL Club Policies and Procedures. Compliance measures relating to actions that are not in line with the AFL Vilification Framework may also be applied through appropriate AFL Club Policies and Procedures.

RELEVANT AFL STATE AFFILIATE POLICIES

The AFL Vilification Framework is aligned with other relevant AFL State Affiliate Policies that related to vilification. and discrimination.