

29<sup>th</sup> May 2019

A Message from the Waikato Bay of Plenty Football Board to all affiliated Clubs and Schools

## **RE: Inappropriate and abusive behaviour**

The 2019 club winter football season has now been underway for 2 months with over 14000 people across the region participating.

Since the first ball was kicked this season, the WaiBoP Federation have been regularly notified and called upon to investigate incidents involving inappropriate and abusive behaviour rather than focussing on the management and delivery of competitions.

This behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- continued abuse of match officials by players, coaches and spectators
- on field and off field incidents including one alleged bullying incident by an adult on a child under 12 yrs of age
- alleged physical and verbal intimidation of the opposition
- anti-social behaviour by players, coaches and supporters across all grades of the game.

Most of our stakeholders enjoy their football. They play hard but fair and enjoy their experience without incident. However, a minority, through their negative behaviour, are detracting from the enjoyment that the vast majority get from the beautiful game in our region.

Football is an inclusive sport to be played and enjoyed by all. Being part of a sport involves being respectful to the game, the opposition and the match officials. The Federation is concerned at the nature and frequency of these incidents, in particular the abuse towards match officials and alleged bullying of children.

There are no football related circumstances which warrant such conduct and no defence can be offered that sanctions or excuses such conduct.

The Board reiterates our position on such behaviour, that there are no circumstances which justify the abusive incidents that we see being reported. The behaviour of some players, coaches and spectators would not be tolerated in a school environment, a work environment or on the streets. It will no longer be tolerated in our football environment either. The Federation is taking a **zero-tolerance** stance against any form of physical or verbal abuse of any kind.

This should be taken as a clear message that there will be consequences for the behaviours we are seeing reported on a weekly basis. We have a range of sanctions at our disposal which can ultimately result in the removal and exclusion of individuals and/or teams from competitions. The message is simple, those who cannot behave in



a civilized and respectful manner are not welcome in the game and will be removed from the game in our region.

Clubs and Schools have a critical role to play in managing and taking responsibility for the behaviour of their members and representatives. The Federation asks for your support and hopes all clubs and schools also have a zero-tolerance stance on abuse of any kind.

We ask that clubs and schools: a) send a clear and unequivocal message to all their players, coaches and spectators regarding expected behaviour standards;

b) that clubs and schools ensure they have a zero-tolerance, no excuses approach to abuse and have the policies and processes in place to manage any such behaviour.

If any clubs or schools would like assistance from the Federation regarding education opportunities for their members, please don't hesitate to ask your relevant Federation contact.

**We must ensure the physical, mental and emotional safety of all who are involved in our game.** Working together will enable football to retain the position it has earned – that of the most popular participation sport in New Zealand.

Yours faithfully

David Ireland  
Board Chair

Karyn Walters  
Chief Executive

**WaiBOP Football Federation**

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