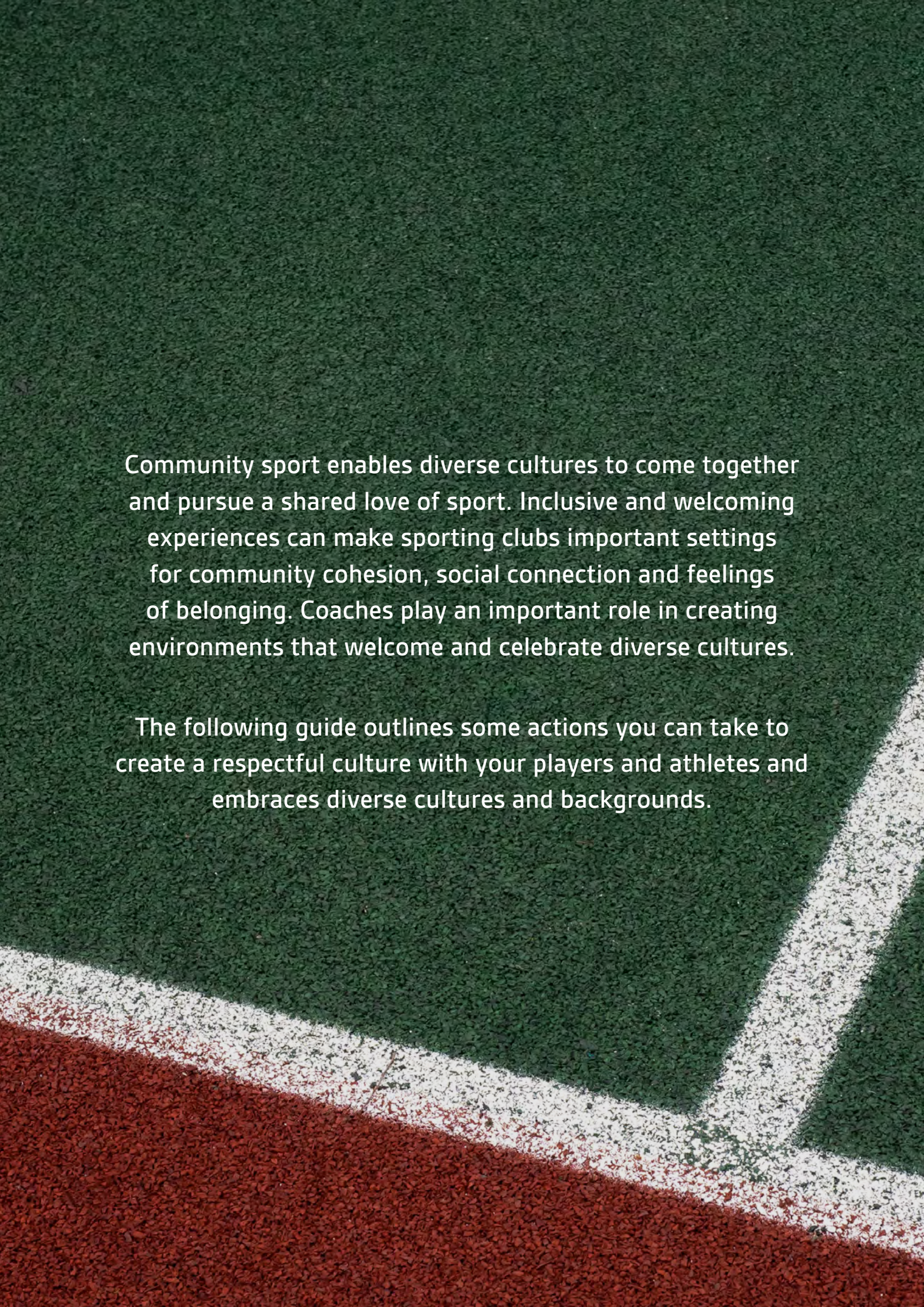


# Coaching Across Cultures: Building Connection and Cohesion

A guide for coaches

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Community sport enables diverse cultures to come together and pursue a shared love of sport. Inclusive and welcoming experiences can make sporting clubs important settings for community cohesion, social connection and feelings of belonging. Coaches play an important role in creating environments that welcome and celebrate diverse cultures.

The following guide outlines some actions you can take to create a respectful culture with your players and athletes and embraces diverse cultures and backgrounds.

# Creating a respectful culture

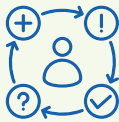




Get to know your players as individuals. Ask about cultural and family backgrounds, interests outside sport, and anything they would like you to be aware of as their coach. This can be done through an online form or one-on-one conversations.



Learn and use every player's correct name and pronunciation. Check in with players when you are unsure, and encourage the whole team to model this respect.



Set clear expectations around respect and behaviour. Discuss these with players, families, and volunteers. Co-create team norms together, behaviours you want to promote as a team and what behaviours are unacceptable. Support players to reflect on racism in sport and agree as a team that it will not be tolerated.



Create opportunities for players to share information about themselves with team mates. Use warm-up spotlights, icebreaker activities, or rotating pair discussions during training so players learn more about each other and build connections.



Rotate groups during training. Mix players regularly in drills and activities so they interact with a variety of teammates rather than only those they already know.



Learn about your players' cultural backgrounds. Once you have more information, take time to research relevant cultural practices. Use this knowledge respectfully in conversations, it helps players feel recognised and valued.



Be attentive to social dynamics. Notice if some players seem isolated or are participating less in side conversations. Encourage players that are looked up to in the team or captains to intentionally include quieter or less-connected teammates.



Acknowledge important cultural and religious celebrations. Recognise events that matter to your players, and invite them (if they are comfortable) to share their significance. This helps others learn about practices different from their own.



Be aware of cultural or religious practices that may affect participation. Work with players to identify ways you and the team can support them. For example, players who are fasting during Ramadan may need adjustments to training intensity or game time. Let players guide what support they need.



Plan inclusive social events. Ensure food options cater to diverse dietary needs and that alcohol-free choices are available so all players feel welcome.



Consider language diversity in your communication. If English is not the first language for some players, provide clear, simple instructions and use visual supports such as demonstrations, diagrams, or videos when explaining drills.



Offer translated information where possible. Use tools like Google Translate to provide basic information in the languages most commonly spoken by players and their families.



Assign a 'buddy' to new players. A peer can help a newcomer navigate team expectations, provide guidance, and support their inclusion in conversations and team activities.



Seek regular feedback. Ask players and their families about their experiences and whether there is anything that would help them feel better supported and included.



Reflect on your own biases and consider how they might influence your actions as a coach. For example, do you give more time and attention to particular players? Do you give more game time to particular players? What factors influence team selection? Do you make assumptions about the skills and abilities of a player based on their cultural or racial background? Do you make judgements about a player's attitude or commitment based on their cultural or racial background?



Be proactive about cultural or religious requirements that may affect participation. For example, check whether uniform policies accommodate modest clothing or items such as hijabs. Address potential issues with the club or league early so individual players are not left to resolve them

Although tailored for cricket, the resource [How can multicultural cricket teams thrive? Practical strategies for players, team leaders, parents, and cricket administrators](#) provides a more comprehensive and detailed overview of strategies for encouraging team cohesion, inclusion and fostering belonging that might be useful for coaches wanting to learn more.

There are a range of resources to support coaches on the [Centre for Multicultural Youth/CMSport](#) and [Australian Sports Commission](#) websites.



# **Working to prevent racism in community sport**





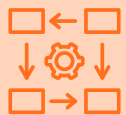
## Coaches can play a critical role in addressing racism within community sport.

Coaches can create a culture where it is clear that racism will not be tolerated and can also promote anti-racism and allyship with teams.

The following guide outlines some actions that you can take to address racism and promote anti-racism with the players and athletes you work with.



Set clear expectations around respect and behaviour and make sure it is clear to all players that there is no place for racism within your team. Be clear that this applies to all spaces in the club (including online spaces) and also any 'banter' or jokes within the team. Ensure that these expectations are communicated to all connected with the team (parents, volunteers, assistant coaches etc.).



Be clear with players about the consequences of racist behaviour, in line with your club's policies.

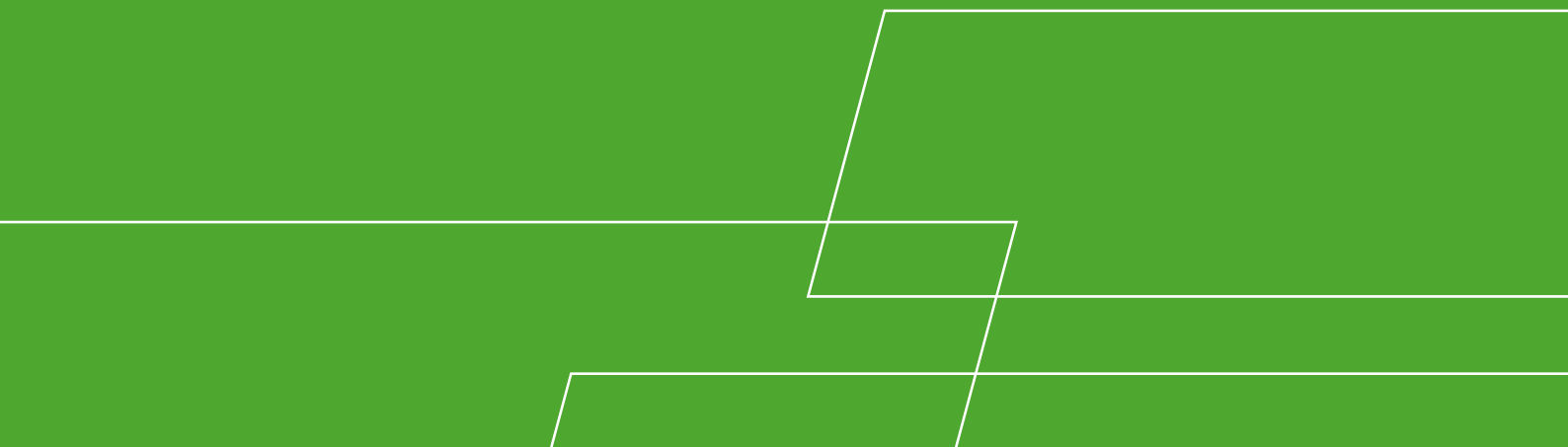


Create space for respectful discussions with players about racism and what is happening within their sport. You could ask players about their experiences, what they see happening and discuss why such behaviours are not acceptable.



Talk with your players about how comfortable they are to speak up if they witness racism. Let players know who they can raise issues with, in the club or ideally in the immediate coaching team to encourage them to bring issues forward. Reassure players that they will be taken seriously and supported if they raise issues.

# Dealing with racism in community sport: How to respond



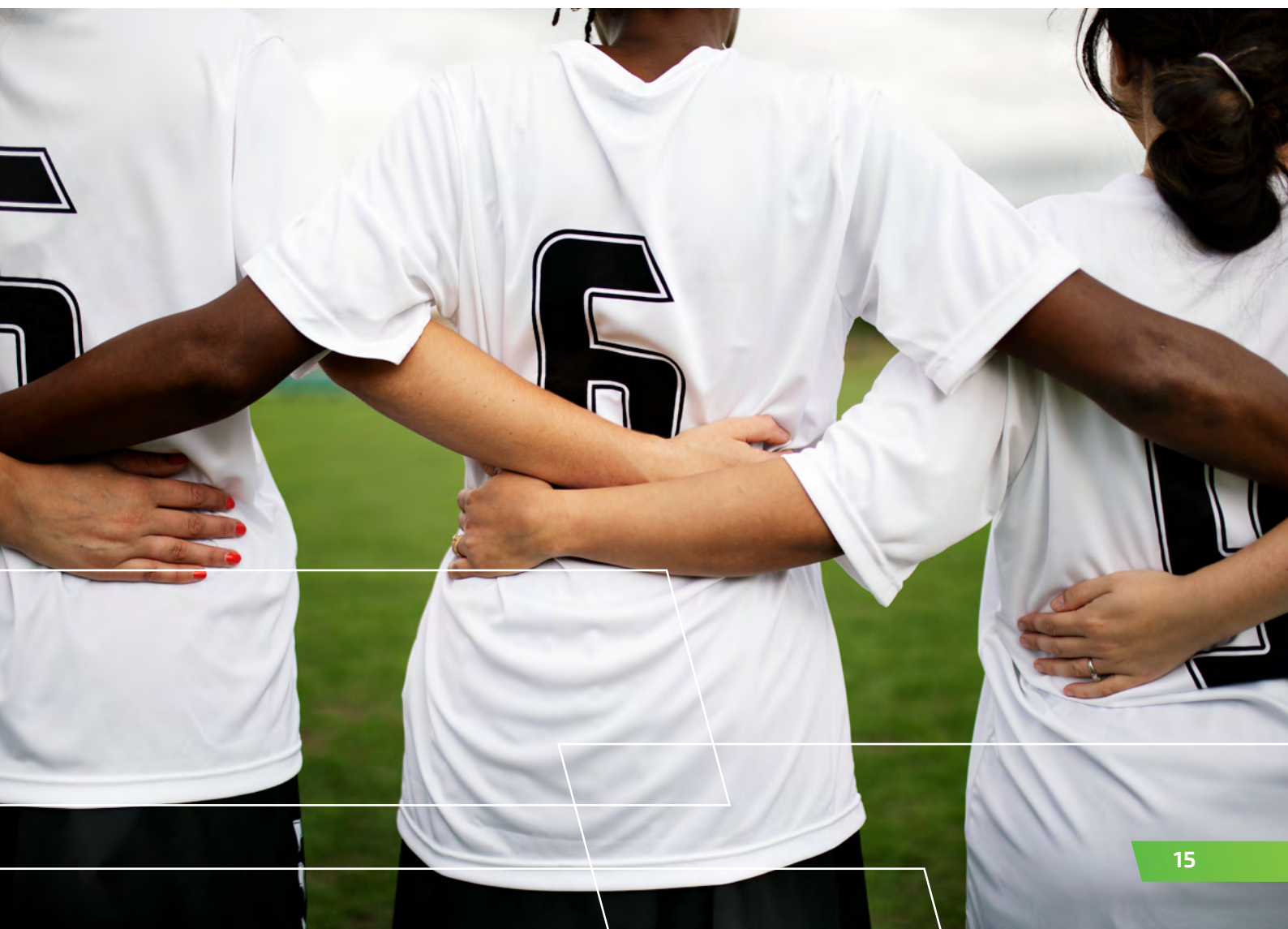


The following actions have been developed to support you with dealing with incidents of overt racism (such as racist slurs, names, racist jokes) providing guidance on how to respond where a member of your team is the perpetrator and when they are the victim.

These have been divided into incidents that occur internally within the context of your own club and incidents that happen in competition involving an external team.

These are suggested actions only, managing racism is complex and these may need to be tailored to support your club context and the individuals that you are working with.

The Australian Sports Commission also has an [online module](#) to support coaches and club members with responding to racism. This is a useful educational resource to engage with alongside this guidance.



# Dealing with internal incidents at your club



Respond as quickly as possible to either an incident that you witness directly or if a player brings an issue to you. A prompt reaction is key in setting the tone that you and the club are taking racism seriously.



Approach the issue calmly, particularly if players are upset and/or aggressive. It is important to stop any activities that are taking place at the time of the incident and respond to what has happened.

# Supporting players who experience racism



Respond to the victim as a priority, clarify what has happened if you didn't witness it yourself, check how they are and ensure they have some support from other team members and where relevant contact parents or family support and let them know what has happened. Dependent on the impact of the incident on the player you may wish to recommend mental health support.



In the immediate aftermath of an incident, ensure the player has support and reassure them that the incident will be taken seriously and action will be taken.

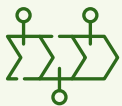


Consider if other players who have witnessed the incident are likely to be negatively impacted and take time to check in with them on their health and wellbeing.



Follow up with the player a few days after the incident to check in with them and to update them on actions that have arisen.

Acknowledge the negative impact of racism and that the incident is unacceptable. Reassure the player that they have yours, the club and team's support.



When the player feels able, discuss with them what practical steps they would like to see taken next and whether they feel it is possible to repair relationships within the team or wider club.

Often victims want acknowledgement of wrong doing by the perpetrator, a recognition of the significant negative impact it has had on them and an apology. This process will depend on the nature of the incident, its severity and the intent of the perpetrator.



Continue regular check-ins and updates with the player whilst the club works through the issue and continue these after the issue has been resolved to ensure that the player feels supported and included by the club.



## Working with the perpetrator

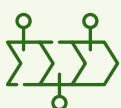
As soon as practically possible talk to the perpetrator about what has happened. It is important to be calm and non-accusatory within this conversation.



Ask for their perspective on what has happened, what they said or did and ask them to clarify why they have done this. Open and inquiring questions can help with this process and encourage the player to self-reflect, such as 'what did you mean when you said this?'. This conversation may need to occur with a family member or parent.



Acknowledge that whilst the person has been racist, the incident may also have had a negative impact on them, particularly if other team members are seen as turning against them. Ensure that they also have support and refer to mental health services where appropriate.



Be clear with the player the next steps that will be taken in addressing the issue and indicate that you will maintain regular communication with them.



Report the incident to your Club President and any other relevant club members (e.g. Head coaches, wellbeing officers, Member Protection Policy officer). Discuss together actions that need to arise from the incident, informed by the victims perspectives also.

You may wish to also seek advice from your relevant sporting association and organisations seeking to support clubs such as CMSport or Welcoming Clubs.



Collectively agree on actions that will be taken. These will likely depend on a number of factors including: the severity of the incident, the intent of the perpetrator, whether this is the first offence, whether they are remorseful & apologetic. Sanctions may be imposed at club level, such as being unable to play or train for a number of weeks.

The club may also suggest that a player undertakes education about racism and its harmful impacts before returning to play.



If the incident is particularly severe, or this is ongoing behaviour from the player, the club may want to consider whether they revoke the player's membership.

Discuss this action with your relevant sporting organisation to seek guidance.



Discuss proposed actions with the victim and seek feedback on whether they feel these are appropriate.



Meet with the perpetrator (and family members if relevant) and discuss actions that will be taken in response to the racist incident.

Reinforce that racism isn't tolerated in the club and that it is assumed that if the player is to remain with the club there will be no repeat issues.

Invite the player to share if there is further support they require or if needed direct to additional education opportunities.



Dependent on the course of action, it may be valuable to provide a space for mediation between the players (and families where relevant) where the victim can share the negative impact the incident has had on them and the perpetrator can have the opportunity to apologise.

This process does need to be supported though and coaches and club members need to feel confident to support the discussion.



Continue to regularly check in with the perpetrator once the incident has been resolved to ensure they are able to move forward with the team.

## Working with the wider team and players

Internal incidents of racism, particularly when they occur between team mates can have a detrimental impact of team dynamics and cohesion. They can lead to both the perpetrator and the victim being ostracised by members of the team and wider club members. There are a number of actions that coaches can take to support players with recovering from incidents and moving forward.



When an incident occurs, be open and transparent with the full team on what has happened and why.



Outline the actions that the club is taking/will take to address the issue. Involve parents and family members in these discussions.

Reiterate the club's commitment to zero tolerance of racism. Indicate that the club will work with both players to address the issue directly.



Ensure that the team is kept updated on the outcomes and actions that arise from the process.



When appropriate and with the approval of both the victim and the perpetrator bring the team together collectively to talk through the incident, offer space for the perpetrator to apologise to the victim and the team.

Invite the team to state their shared values and goals moving forward. Reflective questions such as what sort of team do we want to be? What do we need to do to ensure everyone feels safe and included in our team?



Emphasise with the team the importance of respecting each other.



Where possible, work with the team in training on team building activities and activities that bring people together and create dialogue and discussion and rebuild team cohesion.



## Dealing with racism that occurs within competition

The majority of overt racist slurs and racists comments occur during competitive games or tournaments. Whilst many of the actions detailed previously remain relevant there are additional considerations when managing incidents of racism that occur outside of the club environment.

### Dealing with racism in competitive games and tournaments



Respond as quickly as possible to either an incident that you witness directly or if a player identified an issue during a game. A prompt reaction is key in setting the tone that you and the club are taking racism seriously.



Approach the issue calmly, particularly if players are upset and/or aggressive. Emotions are often heightened within a game context and you are not only managing your own team but having to respond to an opposition team and coaches.



Where possible, stop the game and remove players from the context while the incident is reviewed. Avoid becoming accusatory or defensive, seek to diffuse tension, provide support to affected players and work through the issue.

## Supporting players who experience racism in competitive games and tournaments



Respond to the victim as a priority, clarify what has happened if you didn't witness it yourself, check how they are and ensure they have some support from other team members and where relevant contact parents or family support and let them know what has happened. Dependent on the impact of the incident on the player you may wish to recommend mental health support.



If you did not witness the racism directly, clarify gently with your player what happened and make it clear that you believe them and will support them in addressing this.



In the immediate aftermath of an incident, ensure the player has support and reassure them that the incident will be taken seriously and action will be taken.



Consider if other players who have witnessed the incident are likely to be negatively impacted and take time to check in with them on their health and wellbeing.



Dependent on the severity of the incident, the people involved and your confidence to do so, you may wish to speak directly with the opposition coach to discuss what has happened and next steps.

Do so calmly and invite discussion on what has happened and how they would like to manage it.



Report the incident to the referee or official, your Club President and any other relevant club members (e.g. wellbeing officers, Member Protection Policy officer). Dependent on the nature of the incident and existing relationships with the opposition club, there may be options for local resolutions working through the Club Presidents. Alternatively, it may be necessary to formally report the incident through the relevant sporting organisation or league.



Where possible, remove the responsibility for having to manage the issue and any reporting processes away from the victim so that reporting or discussions with the opposition club are managed by relevant club personnel.



In considering actions, where possible talk with the victim to discuss what action they would prefer and determine how this might be achieved.



Follow up with the player a few days after the incident to check in with them and to update them on actions that have arisen. Acknowledge the negative impact of racism and that the incident is unacceptable. Reassure the player that they have yours, the club and team's support.



Continue to connect regularly with the player to keep them updated on what is happening and how the incident is being addressed.



When able, discuss with the team what has happened, reiterate the club and the team's commitment to respect and inclusion and the team values. Encourage players to show support and solidarity with the impacted player.

## Working with players who perpetuate racism in competitive games or tournaments

Ideally stop the game and focus on addressing the issue. It is important to be calm and non-accusatory within this conversation.



As soon as practically possible talk to the perpetrator. Ask for their perspective on what has happened, what they said or did and ask them to clarify why they have done this. Open and inquiring questions can help with this process and encourage the player to self-reflect, such as 'what did you mean when you said this?'. This conversation may need to occur with a family member or parent.



Incidents of racism can prompt strong emotions and anger, remain calm and try to encourage opposition coaches and players to remain calm. Providing reassurance that the incident will be taken seriously and actions taken can be important in reducing levels of anger and emotions.



Acknowledge that whilst your player has been racist, the incident may also have had a negative impact on them. Ensure that they also have support and refer to mental health services where appropriate.



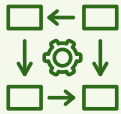
Report the incident to your Club President and any other relevant club members (e.g. Head coaches, wellbeing officers, Member Protection Policy officer). Discuss together actions that need to arise from the incident, you may wish to also seek advice from your relevant sporting association and organisations seeking to support clubs such as CMSport or Welcoming Clubs.



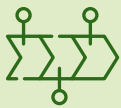
Work with the opposition club coaches and president on preferred courses of action and whether informal resolution between clubs is preferable or whether they will lodge a more formal report.



When appropriate communicate with the player that the incident is unacceptable and is not reflective of the team or club's values and culture. Discuss with them why the incident happened, what they intended from it and how they feel now after time to reflect.



Whilst there may also be external consequences for the incident, consider with Club leadership what internal actions the club wishes to take. This might include requesting the player participates in education on racism and its impacts, asking the player to write an apology to the victim and opposition club and imposing sanctions such as preventing the player from participating in training or games for a number of weeks.



Be clear with the player the next steps that will be taken in addressing the issue and indicate that you will maintain regular communication with them. Be clear that any repeat incidents will result in more extensive sanctions and potentially revoking the player's membership.



If external action is taken against your player, offer to provide support in helping them work through this process.



When appropriate look to discuss the incident as a team. If willing, offer the perpetrator the opportunity to apologise to the team. Reiterate team values and that there is no place for racism within the team and ensure everyone re-commits to this.



It may be difficult for the player to reintegrate into the team, maintain regular communication with them throughout any actions taken and ensure when the return to training that they are included by their teammates.



v1 (18 May 2026)

