



AFL (NSW / ACT) COMMISSION LIMITED

Coaching Box Card Policy

NOVEMBER 2025



1 GENERAL

1.1 Introduction

- (A) AFL NSW/ACT is committed to enacting measures that ensure the match day environment for all players, coaches, volunteers, umpires and spectators is a safe, inclusive and positive experience.
- (B) This *AFL NSW/ACT Coaching Box Card Policy* ('the Policy') is established in accordance with Rule 10.14.1 (referenced in 10.14.4) of the *AFL NSW/ACT Generic Rules* and sets out the objectives and application of a process aimed at addressing **unacceptable behaviour directed at umpires from the Coaching Box Area**.
- (C) The Policy recognises the influential role that a Coach plays in establishing the behavioural standards of a Team and places responsibility on that Coach to manage the behavioural conduct of those persons in the Coaching Box Area in accordance with Code of Conduct provisions.

1.2 Objectives

- (A) The objectives of this Policy are to:
- (i) Provide a safe, inclusive and positive environment for our Umpires;
 - (ii) Provide a 'real time' mechanism for Umpires and Coaches to address unacceptable behaviour coming from the Coaching Box Area;
 - (iii) Promote recruitment and retention of umpires through reduction in the incidence of umpire abuse.

1.3 Application

- (A) This policy applies to:
- (i) the 2026 Season; and
 - (ii) all Leagues and Competitions conducted by AFL NSW/ACT.

1.4 Definitions

- (A) Unless otherwise defined in Table 1, or elsewhere in this Policy, terms used in this Policy have the same meaning as defined in the Rules:

Table 1 – Policy Definitions

Term	Means
Captain	A person listed by each team as the Captain on the official team sheet.
Club Umpire	An umpire appointed by a Club to officiate as a Field Umpire in a Match
CMC	Competition Management Committee
Coach	The Head Coach. Where the Head Coach is also a player and is on the field in a playing capacity when a third phase card is invoked, the person who has assumed the Coaching responsibility on the sideline will be deemed to be the Coach.
Coaching Box Area	Incorporates the designated areas outside of the boundary line of a playing field where any person listed on the team sheet as a coach, team official or player is to be located to undertake their duties.
Competition	Refers to any Australian Rules Community Football competition conducted by AFL NSW/ACT in which Clubs participate in a Season, and for clarity, excludes any Masters, AFL9's and AFLX competitions.
Controlling Body	The League or AFL NSW/ACT.
Field Umpire	Any League appointed field umpire or Club field umpire officiating in a Match.
Handbook	The <i>National Community Football Policy Handbook</i> , as amended or varied from time to time.

Head Coach	The person listed on the official team sheet as the head coach.
MRP	Match Review Panel
Policy	This <i>AFL NSW/ACT Coaching Box Card Policy</i> as amended or varied from time to time
Rules	The <i>AFL NSW/ACT Rules</i> , as varied by each League, that are in place for the Season to which this Policy applies.
Season	A football season commencing from the first Home and Away Match until, and including, the Grand Final of a Competition
Unacceptable Behaviour	Any of the following behaviours arising from the Coaching Box Area that are heard or observed by the Field Umpire(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) continually questioning/disputing any umpiring decisions; (ii) abusing, threatening or insulting any umpire or making inappropriate comments to or about them; (iii) using inappropriate language or gestures towards or about any umpire.

2 PROCEDURE

2.1 Process Overview

- (A) Where a Field Umpire hears or observes any unacceptable behaviour emanating from the Coaching Box, a three-phase system, as summarised in Table 2, will be undertaken by the Field Umpire/s via the use of white and red cards to stop such behaviours in real time.

Table 2 – Three Phase System

Phase	Action Overview
Phase 1	Play immediately stopped. A free kick awarded against the offending team. A first warning (white card) shown to the offending team's Coach
Phase 2	Play immediately stopped. A free kick & 50m penalty awarded against the offending team. A second warning (white card) shown to the offending team's Coach.
Phase 3	A free kick, a 50m penalty awarded against the offending team and a red card (ejection from Match) issued to the Coach

2.2 Phase One

- (A) If, on a **first** occasion during a Match, a Field Umpire hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviour arising from the Coaching Box Area, regardless of whether an individual offending person can be identified, the Field Umpire is to:
- (i) blow the whistle to immediately stop play;
 - (ii) move within 20m of the offending Coaching Box Area; and
 - (iii) **hold up a white card.**
- (B) A Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was stopped and then once the card has been issued, will resume play by awarding **a free kick** against the offending team.
- (C) It is incumbent on the Coach to immediately address any unacceptable behaviour identified within the Coaching Box Area.
- (D) If any abuse or dissent is forthcoming from the Coaching Box Area during the card issuing process, a 50m penalty shall also be imposed.

2.3 Phase Two

- (A) If, on a **second** occasion during a Match, a Field Umpire hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviour arising from the same Coaching Box Area, regardless of whether an individual offending person can be identified, the Field umpire is to:
- (i) blow the whistle to immediately stop play;
 - (ii) move within 20m of the offending Coaching Box Area; and
 - (iii) **hold up a white card.**
- (B) A Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was stopped and then once the card has been issued, will resume play by awarding **a free kick and a 50m penalty** against the offending team.
- (C) It is incumbent on the Coach to again immediately address any unacceptable behaviour identified within the Coaching Box Area.
- (D) If any abuse or dissent is forthcoming from the Coaching Box Area during the card issuing process, the existing 50m penalty shall be upgraded to a 100m penalty.

2.4 Phase Three

- (A) If, on a **third** occasion during a Match, a Field Umpire hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviour arising from the same Coaching Box Area, regardless of whether an individual offending person can be identified, the Field umpire is to:
- (i) blow the whistle to immediately stop play;
 - (ii) move within 20m of the offending Coaching Box Area; and
 - (iii) **hold up a red card** to the Coach.
- (B) A Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was stopped and then once the card has been issued, they will resume play by awarding **a free kick and a 50m penalty** against the offending team.
- (C) If any abuse or dissent is forthcoming from the Coaching Box Area during the card issuing process, the existing 50m penalty shall be upgraded to a 100m penalty.

2.5 Reasons for Card

- (A) The Field Umpire shall not engage in any conversation when undertaking any phase of the process and shall not answer any questions that comes from the Coaching Box Area.
- (B) If a Club wants clarity as to why a white or red card was issued, the offending Team Captain can respectfully approach the Field Umpires in-between quarters to obtain an explanation.

Guidance Note: *This is not an avenue for the Captain to debate the decision. It's simply an opportunity to gain an understanding as to why a card was issued.*

2.6 Coach Ejection

- (A) Any Coach who receives a red card must either:
- (i) go and sit beside the Ground Manager's desk until the Match is completed and both teams have left the playing field; or
 - (ii) leave the venue and not return until the Match is completed and both teams have left the playing field.
- (B) The Coach cannot nominate someone else to leave the Coaching Box Area in their place, regardless of whether someone else's behaviour led to the red card
- (C) Any Coach who receives a red card shall be referred directly to the MRP.

- (D) Where the Coach refuses to vacate the Coaching Box Area, the Field Umpire shall stop the Match and report the Coach on a charge of *serious misconduct* under 22.2.2(bb) as defined by *Laws of Australian Football* which will be referred directly to the Tribunal.
- (E) Where, at the time of the issuing of a red card, the Coach is on the field in a playing capacity and there is no identifiable person in the coaching box who has assumed the coaching responsibility (as per the definition of 'Coach'), the Head Coach will be deemed to remain responsible for the conduct of the coaching box, and is therefore to leave the field of play under the red card requirements of this Policy, but may be replaced immediately on the field by another player.

2.7 White and Red Card Recording

- (A) The timekeeper/s will be responsible for noting the time and quarter of any white card or red card issued and to which team, and a record of all cards issued must be listed on the official timecard.
- (B) The Umpire shall check with the Timekeeper/s at the next quarter break to ensure the white card or red card has been recorded.
- (C) The Field Umpire is record the details of any card issued in the Umpire Match Report.

2.8 Reportable Offences

- (A) Nothing in this Policy prevents an Umpire from reporting a Player or Official for any act that is considered to be a reportable offence.
- (B) Where a Player or Official in the Coaching Box Area is reported for abuse or dissent toward an umpire, the umpire will still proceed with the issuing of any relevant white or red card.
- (C) Any circumstance involving the issuing of a red card under this Policy will be referred to the MRP regardless of whether the Coach has been reported or not.

2.9 Spectators

- (A) In the event a Team receives a card and they determine such behaviours have come from a person/s outside of the Coaching Box Area:
 - (i) it is incumbent on the Club to immediately seek to address the behaviour of that person/s; and
 - (ii) it does not negate the issuing of the card.

2.10 CMC Policy Breach Review

- (A) Where a phase 1 or phase 2 card is identified in an Umpire Match Report, the matter will be referred to CMC to determine if any further action is to be taken against an individual or the Club in accordance with Rule 26 ('Policy Breach') of the AFL NSW/ACT Rules.
- (B) Where a phase three card is identified in an Umpire Match Report and the MRP determines there is no reportable offence, the matter will be referred to CMC to determine if any further action is to be taken against an individual or the Club in accordance with Rule 26 ('Policy Breach') of the AFL NSW/ACT Rules.