



Special Olympics Australia

Guide to Keeping Athletes Safe

Special Olympics
Australia





1. Introduction

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Introduction

Keeping athletes safe is everyone's responsibility. Everyone needs to be aware of their responsibilities and who to contact if they have questions or concerns.

OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING ATHLETES

Special Olympics Australia is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all athletes regardless if they are a child, young person or vulnerable adult. All athletes have the right to feel safe and to participate in an environment where they are protected from any form of abuse.

Sport for our athletes should be about having fun, developing friendships, learning new skills and staying active. Putting athlete welfare and sport first should be the focus.

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is designed to assist Clubs to help inform committee members, officials, coaches, volunteers and parents to have an awareness of safeguarding athletes in sport, understand their legal obligations to children, young people and vulnerable adults and meeting community expectations.

This is intended as a guide and aims to provide important information around expectations around behaviour, practices and understanding responsibilities while involved with Special Olympics Australia.

It is important that you make yourself aware of other resources including the Special Olympics Australia Policies and Procedures manual, documents or material communicated from time to time and current procedures.

WHY IS SAFEGUARDING ATHLETES IMPORTANT?

All our athletes have the right to be free from harm when participating in sport. Not only is there a legal obligation to do so but there is a community expectation. By providing a safe and enjoyable environment for athletes to participate in sport, it keeps them engaged and involved.

This guide covers a range of areas that are important to provide this safe environment that are beyond just checks and screening of volunteers. Done in conjunction, Special Olympics Australia believes this gives us the best possible outcome in meeting our commitment to safeguarding athletes across our club and programs.



2. Safeguarding Athletes

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Safeguarding Athletes

CREATING A SAFE AND WELCOMING CULTURE

Creating a culture of positive, respectful and safe relationships with athletes is the cornerstone of any strong Club. This is about a commonsense and practical approach that involves everyone at the Club to not only understand but to put in practice.

Everyone at the Club has a responsibility to talk about safeguarding athletes and ensure everyone knows who to talk to if an issue arises.

Working with Children Checks and/or Police Checks

For each of our volunteer roles we have conducted a risk assessment and have determined that some roles require one or more checks. The Club is responsible for ensuring that they know who needs a working with children check and/or police check and ensuring that each volunteer meets this requirement.

As a volunteer they also have a responsibility to not only keep these checks up to date but also to notify the Club if there are any issues. Anyone with direct contact to children must meet their states/territory working with children check requirement.

Member Protection and Code of Conduct

To support our commitment to the health and safety of our athletes and volunteers we have in place a Code of Conduct that we ask everyone to adhere to.

Special Olympics Australia (SOA) is committed to a safe, fair and inclusive environment for everyone. Our Code of Conduct contains standards of behaviour that reflect our values of:

SOA Code of Conduct

Everyone who takes part in training, playing or participating in activities should be aware of our Code of Conduct.

A breach of this code may result in actions such as suspension, withdrawal from training/competition or expulsion.

At SOA, everyone including athletes, coaches, volunteers, officials, committee members, staff, families and supporters should:

- act within the rules and spirit of sport.
- promote fair play.
- support opportunities for participation in sport.
- treat each person as an individual.
- show respect and courtesy to all involved including athletes, coaches, volunteers, officials, committee members, staff, families and supporters.

- respect the decisions of official, coaches and club administrators.
- ensure that SOA activities are conducted in a safe environment.
- respect the rights and worth of every person regardless of their age, race, gender, ability, cultural or linguistic background, sexuality or religion.
- support child-safe policies and procedures.
- act with integrity and objectivity and accept responsibility for your decisions and actions.
- act responsibly in relation to smoking and drinking alcohol at SOA training and competitions.
- not use any illegal drugs at SOA training and competitions.
- model good behaviour and not abuse, bully or threaten others.

Athletes

- I will play by the rules.
- I will respect myself and others.
- I will participate for my own enjoyment and benefit.
- I will speak in an encouraging and positive manner
- I will give my personal best at all times.

Coaches, Volunteers and Officials

- I will understand my role and responsibilities and ensure that I deliver on them.
- I will be a positive role model.
- I will place the safety and welfare of athletes above all else.
- I will not make inappropriate physical, verbal or sexual advances on others.
- I will act honestly, in good faith and in the best interest of the sport I am involved with.
- I will resolve conflicts fairly and promptly through established procedures.
- I will comply with current SOA policies and procedures.
- I will conduct club responsibilities with due care, competence and diligence.
- I will maintain confidentiality with information gained in my role.

Families and Supporters

- I will remember that sport is for the enjoyment of athletes.
- I will focus on personal best performance, rather than winning or losing.
- I will never put down an athlete for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- I will positively support athletes in training and competition.
- I will model positive behaviour.
- I will respect the dignity of athletes, coaches, volunteers, officials, committee members, staff, families and supporters.
- I will not pressure athletes in any way.

- I will appreciate volunteers and those who give up their time to enable sport to happen.

For further information, please refer to the Member Protection Policy at:
www.specialolympics.com.au/members

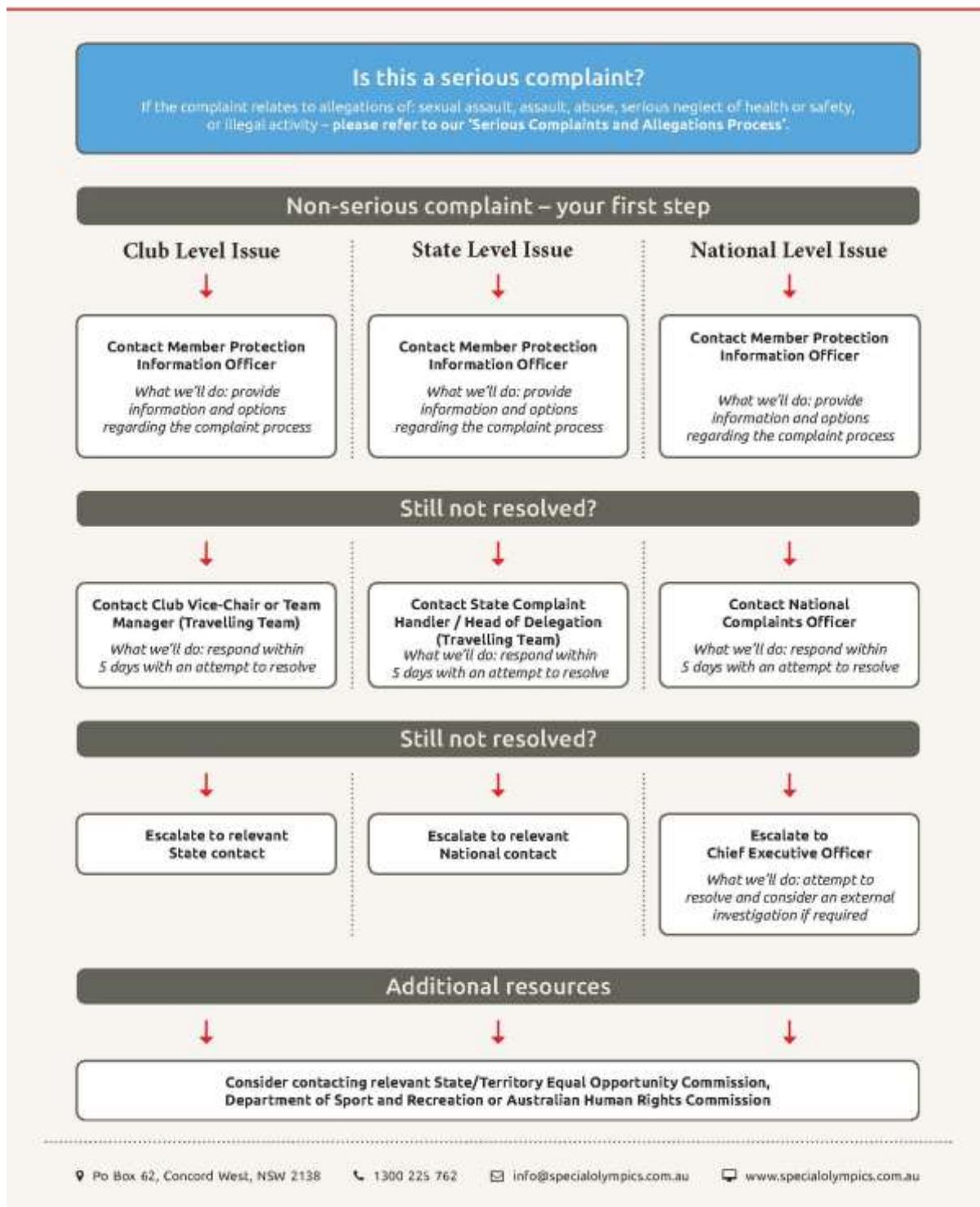
Complaints and Allegations Handling

We take complaints and allegations seriously. If you suspect anyone involved in our activities to have breached our code of conduct or you have concerns for the welfare of an athlete please immediately raise your concern to:
complaints@specialolympics.com.au or call 1300 225 762 (9am to 5pm AEST).

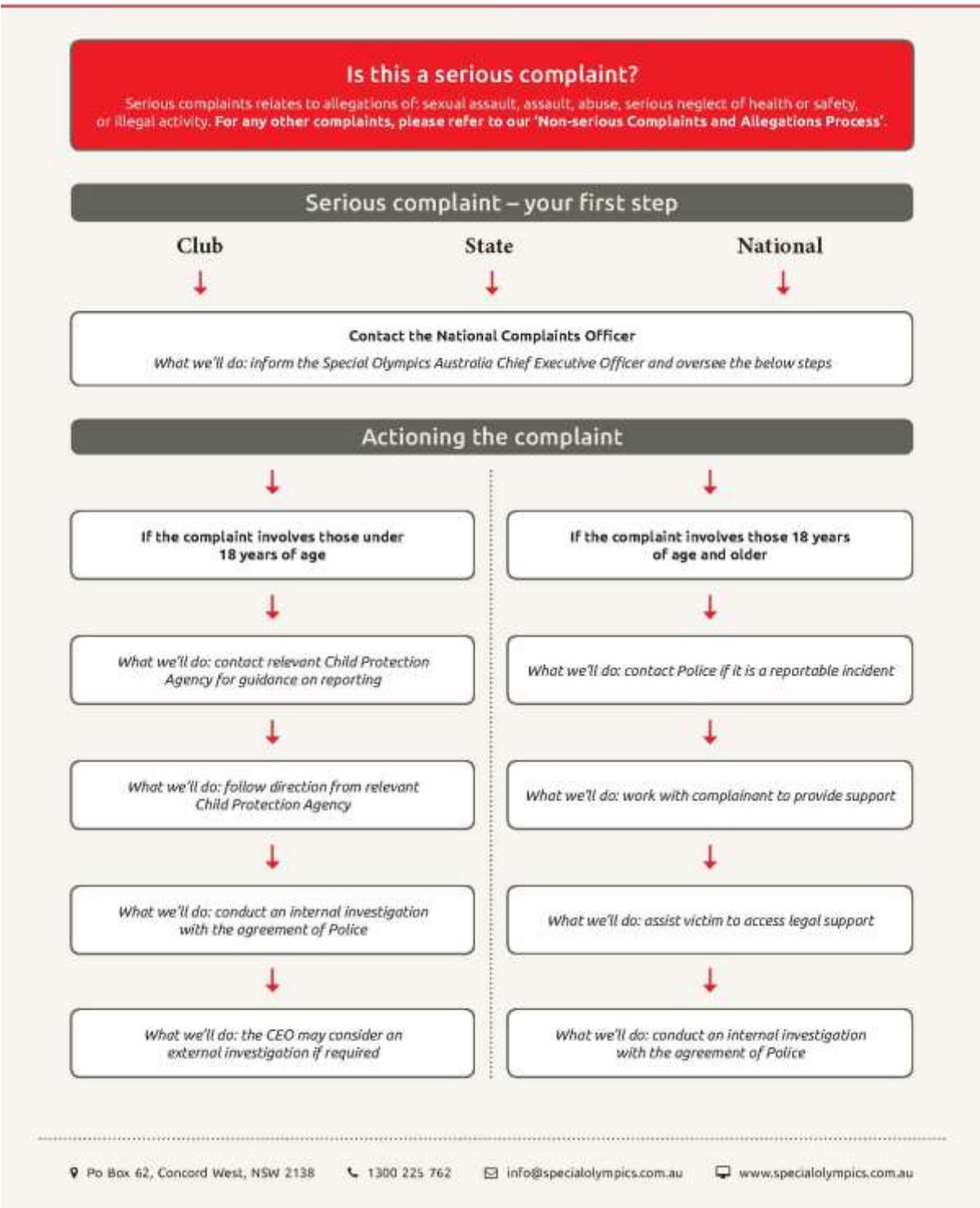
We have a clear complaints handling process and the flowchart can be found below or online on our member resources page on our website (www.specialolympics.com.au).

Non-serious Complaints and Allegations Process

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Serious Complaints and Allegations Process



Be Part Of The Solution

Making everyone aware of the risk and responsibility involved in delivering sport to athletes with an intellectual disability should be an important part of the Clubs ongoing commitment to a safe and more inclusive environment.

The best way to ensure this conversation happens, often and consistently is to make sure it happens through different mediums. Get everyone together to talk about the risks, issues and responsibilities, make sure it's on the agenda of every committee meeting, coaches meetings as well as newsletters. Bring new athletes/families and volunteers up to speed by including it as part of the induction and welcome discussions.

TIPS TO KEEPING SPORT SAFE

- Talk to your athletes so that they understand why this is important to Special Olympics Australia and what the club is doing in this space. Athletes need to also know what they need to do if they have an issue
- Include it as part of your training to the Athlete Representative in your Club Committee and explore ways that this person can play an active role in safeguarding athletes.
- Ensure everyone in the committee understands their legal obligations around Working with Children Checks (or its equivalent), the reporting of suspected assault, abuse, serious neglect or safety.
- Ensure the Club has the right people in place to deal with complaints, allegations or reporting of incidents. That these are dealt with in a timely manner, sensitively and consistent with the Complaints Handling Policy.
- Make sure the Club Committee has a way to ensure all volunteers are correctly registered and meet their specific screening including Working with Children Check and/or Police Checks
- Ensure you have defined roles and recruit suitable and appropriate volunteers, coaches and officials.
- Manage risks within the Club by looking at the practices around change rooms, taking photos of athletes, social media use, bullying & harassment



3. Understanding Child Protection and Safety



Understanding Child Protection and Safety

CHILD PROTECTION

While all Special Olympics Australia athletes are defined as belonging to a vulnerable group and deserve to be protected from harm from people, child protection relates to athletes under the age of 18. The principles of child protection extend to all adult athletes within Special Olympics Australia.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Abuse refers to sexual assault, physical, emotional, financial and systemic abuse, domestic violence, constraints and restrictive practices, and to neglect.

Child abuse can be when someone does something harmful, or does not provide for or protect, a child or young person. Child abuse can cause long-lasting emotional, physical and behavioural damage.

Abuse often occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power and/or trust.

INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

It is important that people working with children are aware of the indicators of abuse and have the confidence to respond to any indication that a child may have been abused. Some indicators of child abuse are:

- bruising, particularly in the face, head or neck region
- multiple bruising or injuries - for example, burns, scalds, sprains, dislocations or fractures
- injury left untreated
- differing versions of how an injury occurred
- child/relative advising of abuse
- a child, referring to someone else being abused, may mean him/herself
- sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for the age of the child
- nightmares/bedwetting/going to bed fully-clothed
- a high level of distrust of other people
- an inability to relate well with adults and/or children
- extreme attention-seeking behaviour, disruptive or aggressive behaviour and bullying
- seeking indiscriminate or inappropriate adult affection.

The presence of one indicator does not necessarily suggest that a child is the subject of abuse. People working with children need to consider the context in which the indicators are observed and use common sense. Young people, including those with disability, may display normal age-appropriate behaviours that

could be overtly sexual or test boundaries. The rights of children and young people must always be considered.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved at Special Olympics Australia to be vigilant of any potential abuse of a child or young person involved in Special Olympics Australia activities. Where an abuse is suspected or alleged then this must be forwarded to the National Complaints Officer at the earliest opportunity.

The National Complaints Officer will inform the Chief Executive Officer and assess the information received before taking the next steps.

CONTACTING RELEVANT CHILD PROTECTION AGENCY

The National Complaints Officer may contact the relevant Child Protection Agency for guidance on reporting or to make an official report. At all times, Special Olympics Australia will follow the direction from the Child Protection Agency.

- NSW: 133 627
- NT: 1800 700 250
- QLD: 1800 811 810
- ACT: 1300 556 729
- SA: 131 478
- VIC: 131 278
- WA: 1800 622 258
- TAS: 1300 737 639

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT

Bullying and harassment can be damaging to children and young people. Bullying and harassment in any form, whether overt or not is not tolerated at Special Olympics Australia.

DUTY OF CARE

Clubs have a responsibility to take reasonable measures to prevent foreseeable risks of injury to all our athletes. Bullying and harassment should be addressed as part of the duty of care to provide a safe and supportive environment.

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

All complaints and allegations need to be taken seriously, confidentially and sensitively. Attached below is the complaints and handling process. It is important to ensure you are familiar with this process.

Contact either a Member Protection Information Officer or visit the Special Olympics Australia Member Resources page for more information on how to handle complaints and allegations.



4. Take Action

Take Action

FIND KEY PEOPLE AND ASSIGN THEM TO ROLES

Recruiting the right people in the right roles is vital. This comes from communicating clearly the expectations of the role to prospective volunteers and defining the role.

Complaint Handler

Every Club needs to ensure they have someone available to not only champion the importance of safeguarding athletes but also to be the contact person when someone needs to ask question or talk through a potential complaint. At the Club this person is the designated complaint handler who needs to be trained appropriately in the Play By The Rules Complaint Handling course.

Member Protection Information Officer

Special Olympics Australia also will ensure that there are sufficiently trained Member Protection Information Officers who are also available to have initial issues and concerns raised directly to them.

It is important to understand the distinction between these two roles. A Member Protection Information Officer has the role of being someone that can listen and talk through objectively and impartially the options available within the Member Protection Policy with the individual. The Member Protection Information Officer does not investigate complaints which is where the Club Complaint Handler comes in.

Membership Officer

The Membership Officer has an important role in ensuring that athlete and volunteer registrations take place each year. This includes ensuring that all volunteers who are required to have a Working With Children Check are followed up, that records are maintained and when due to expire are checking in with the volunteer to ensure that this is done.

The Membership Officer is also plays an important role in ensuring Police Checks are completed for volunteers that require them. This includes following up with the correct forms, verifying IDs and ensuring that it is completed correctly.

In choosing the right people for these roles, consider the attributes that will be needed to succeed. This includes attributes like their communication style, approachability, friendliness and ability to give the time to follow through required actions.

INDUCTIONS

Ensure that you have appropriately trained people to deliver a consistent induction to all new athletes and volunteers. This is more than just showing them around and introducing them to a few people at the club.

You have a responsibility to ensure that they understand their responsibility at

the Club, expectations of the Club and the various policies/codes of conducts.

Their time with the Club needs to start on the right foot to not only make them feel welcomed but also to give them a starting base to succeed.

ONGOING SUPPORT AND TRAINING

Talking about safeguarding athletes is not a once of activity. It needs to be the cornerstone of the Club culture. This means providing the support and training to everyone at the Club to empower them in whatever role they have.

At every opportunity, the Club should talk openly about expected behaviours and encourage everyone to speak up about keeping every athlete safe in sport. Some ideas to implement include:

- At the regular committee meeting have this on the agenda and encourage athletes/parents/carers in attendance to raise questions and discuss solutions
- Recognise athletes and volunteers at the end of season. Celebrate those putting in the time and the right attitude to making the Club a success.
- Lead by example and display respectful behaviours at all times. Hold everyone to account with regards to the Code of Conduct.



5. Things to Think About

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Things To Think About

TWO ADULT RULE

Wherever practical it is recommended that no fewer than two adults are present at all times during training, competition or care of athletes on a travelling team. This is an important practice on a number of levels including:

- protects staff and volunteers from false allegations
- reduces the risk of an incident of abuse because a potential abuser is in constant sight of another adult
- reduces the possibility of a claim of negligence
- provides help if there is an accident or emergency
- sends a clear statement that children and vulnerable people are important and valued

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Physical contact is necessary from time to time during training in a coaching context. There may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable, such as providing comfort at times of distress, physical support in a contact sport or demonstrating a skill/technique. In all cases, contact should only take place with the consent of the athlete. Consideration should be given to whether the physical contact is appropriate in the setting.

TRANSPORTING OF ATHLETES

As a general rule, athletes should not be transported in the private vehicles of volunteers or staff without specific permission from their parents/guardian if they are a minor. In the event that an athlete needs to be transported for safety reasons the Two Adult Rule applies. It is not good practice to transport an athlete alone in a car, however short the journey.

The driver should be appropriately licensed and the vehicle should be registered and insured.

CHANGE ROOMS / TOILETS

All athletes should be afforded privacy when using toilets and change rooms. Where an adult needs to assist an athlete the principles set out above regarding physical contact apply. Supervising adults should work to maintain the privacy of the athlete at all times and the Two Adult Rule applies when entering change rooms.

MANAGING INJURIES or ILLNESS

Should an athlete be injured or become ill during training or competition, first aid should be rendered and parents contacted immediately. An ambulance should be called if the injury/illness cannot be alleviated by basic first aid.

The athlete should be appropriately supervised until either

parents/guardian/carer or the ambulance takes over their care. An incident report is to be completed and returned to the club.

LONE ATHLETE AT END OF TRAINING / COMPETITION

At no times should an athlete under the age of 18 years of age be left alone at the end of training or competition unsupervised. Where the athlete is waiting for a parent/guardian/carer to pick them up it is important to ensure that the Two Adult Rule is applied and the athlete is appropriately supervised until the parents/guardian or carer arrives to take over their care.

It is the responsibility of the coach, team manager or appropriate volunteer to ensure all athletes (regardless of age) have a safe way to get home at the conclusion of training or competition.

PHOTOGRAPHY / VIDEO

The taking of photography and video at training and competition is not uncommon; however it is important that all attendees do so with sensitivity. It is encouraged that permission to take photographs or video be sought from the athlete or adult before including them. For the privacy of everyone we would discourage anyone posting video or photographs containing athletes who aren't their own child on social media or other public forums.

All photography and video must be taken in a public setting and not be taken in change rooms or otherwise private facilities.

CONTACT with ATHLETES OUTSIDE of SPECIAL OLYMPICS AUSTRALIA ACTIVITIES

Staff and volunteers should not meet an athlete who is under the age of 18 years outside of an organised Special Olympics activity without consent from the parent/guardian/carer. This includes inviting the athlete to their home.