Managing Online Abuse in Surf Clubs

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Overview

Online abuse can affect the wellbeing, confidence and participation of surf club members. From cyberbullying and online hate to harmful content shared through social media and messaging apps, clubs have a role in promoting respectful behaviour and supporting members who experience online harm.

1

Understanding Online Abuse

Online abuse can occur across social media, messaging platforms, coaching and management apps, live streams and personal accounts. It can include cyberbullying, online hate and harmful or manipulated content, with artificial intelligence making deceptive content easier to create.

2

The Impact on Members

eSafety's Digital Sidelines research highlights the impact of online harm in sport. Among surveyed Australian children aged 10–17:

- 6% experienced online hate connected to sport.
- Around 18% experienced cyberbullying.

Online harm can affect a young person's wellbeing, willingness to participate and ongoing involvement in sport.

3

Responding to Online Incidents

When an incident occurs, clubs should act promptly, follow the relevant policies and procedures, and provide ongoing support.

- **Act promptly:** Check the wellbeing and safety of those affected, keep relevant evidence and report harmful content where appropriate.
- **Follow the correct process:** Use club policies, codes of conduct and complaints-management procedures, and seek guidance from SLSQ where needed.
- **Provide ongoing support:** Keep in contact with affected members and consider whether further support or action is required.

SLSQ's welfare, complaints-management and code-of-conduct processes can work together to help clubs respond appropriately.

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4 Preventing Online Misconduct

While clubs cannot prevent every incident, clear expectations and education can help reduce harmful behaviour between members.

Clubs can:

- Set clear expectations for respectful online behaviour.
- Include online conduct in relevant policies and codes of conduct.
- Educate members, coaches, officials and parents about online safety.
- Make reporting pathways clear and encourage members to speak up.

5 Resources for Surf Clubs

eSafety provides resources to help sporting organisations manage online safety, including its sport hub, downloadable guidance, platform safety information and free webinars.

eSafety Commissioner resources
eSafety website Online safety | eSafety Commissioner

eSafety Sports Hub www.esafety.gov.au/sport
Includes:

- Guidance on dealing with online misconduct and abuse in sport
- Advice for sport administrators, young people, parents, coaches, and competitors
- Downloadable posters and social media tiles

eSafety Guide The eSafety Guide | eSafety Commissioner
Find out how to protect your personal information and report harmful content on common social media, games, apps and sites.

Free online safety webinars
The eSafety Commissioner offers free webinars all year round for:

- Sport
- Parents and carers
- Older adults
- Teachers and youth workers

Other useful resources:
Sport Integrity Australia www.Sportintegrity.gov.au

- eLearning: Rights, Respect and Safety for Young Athletes (includes a module on online safety)
- eLearning: Cyber security and safety (includes a module of online abuse)

Play by the Rules www.playbytherules.net.au

Key Takeaway

Creating a safe and inclusive surf club means promoting respectful behaviour both online and offline, responding appropriately to incidents and ensuring members know where to seek help.