



# BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING POLICY

## Policy Overview and Purpose

Swimming Queensland (SQ) is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment where every participant, in every role, is treated with respect, dignity, and fairness.

Bullying denies participants these rights and can result in feelings of disgrace, embarrassment, shame or intimidation. Bullying can also affect an individual's athletic performance, level of enjoyment, work or school life, academic achievement, and physical and mental health.

Bullying can occur both in and out of the pool and can involve athletes, parents, coaches, spectators, or officials. Bullying is prohibited under the Swimming Australia Member Protection Policy and Safe Sport Framework and can result in penalties and punishments being applied. Some forms of bullying constitute assault, harassment or discrimination under federal and state legislation and are therefore illegal.

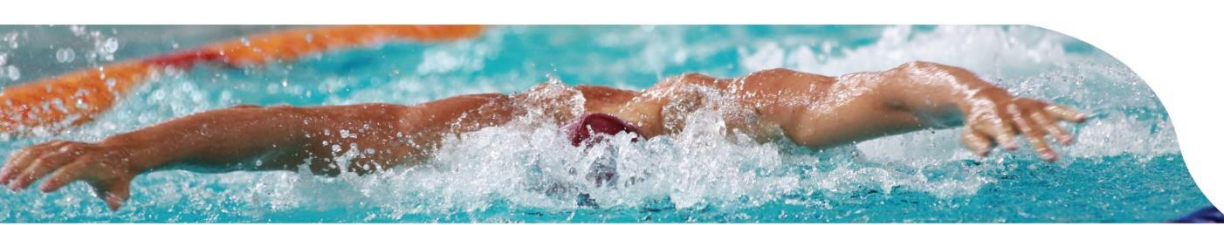
Bullying behaviour is damaging to all involved: the victim, the bully/bullies, family members, those that witness the behaviour and the sporting organisation involved. Athletes, parents, coaches, administrators and sporting organisations all have an ethical (and possibly a legal) responsibility to take action to prevent bullying occurring in sport and manage it should it occur. As such, **SQ will not tolerate bullying or cyberbullying.**

This policy has been developed to inform our community about bullying and cyberbullying so people feel enabled to participate, while being mindful of their responsibilities and obligations. This policy and the information below is provided to members to assist them with identifying and dealing with bullying and cyberbullying within swimming and to provide a process for reporting such behaviour should it occur.

## Coverage

This policy applies to all persons who are involved with the activities of SQ, whether they are in a paid or unpaid/voluntary capacity, and includes:

- Members, including life members of SQ;
- Persons appointed or elected to SQ's board;
- Employees of SQ;
- Members of the SQ Executive;
- Support personnel, including managers, physiotherapists psychologists, masseurs, sport trainers and others;
- Coaches and assistant coaches;
- Athletes;
- Officials;
- Regional Associations; and
- Affiliated clubs.



## What is Bullying?

Bullying is deliberately hurting a specific person either physically, verbally, or socially. It involves a power imbalance where one person has power or strength (e.g. physical, mental, social or financial) over another. It can be carried out by one person or several people who are either actively or passively involved. In a sports context bullying can take many forms, for example:

- A parent telling their child that they are incompetent, hopeless, useless, etc.;
- A coach alienating an athlete (adult or child);
- Several people ganging-up on an individual team member;
- Spectators verbally abusing swimmers from another club;
- An athlete calling an official names and using put-downs; or
- A parent intimidating a coach.

Bullying can be a 'one-off' incident, but usually involves repeated actions or incidences. It can occur everywhere: at home, school, work, playgrounds, while participating in sport, when using public transport, or walking to or from home. An individual may bully their victim face-to-face or use technology such as a mobile phone or computer.

## Types of Bullying

Bullies may use one or several types of bullying to hurt their victim. Verbal, physical and social bullying can occur in person or online, directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly.

**Physical** - pushing, shoving, punching, hitting, kicking, preventing a person from going somewhere, damaging or taking away a person's belongings (this may also constitute assault).

**Verbal** - name calling, banter, threatening, teasing, intimidating, yelling abuse, or insulting someone about physical characteristics such as their weight or height, or other attributes including race, sexuality, culture, or religion.

**Socially** - excluding, alienating, ignoring, spreading rumours or sharing information or images that will have a harmful effect on the other person.

## Cyberbullying (Online Bullying)

When bullying happens online it is called cyberbullying. This can take the form of verbal and social bullying as well as threats of physical bullying.

Cyberbullying behaviour might include:

- Abusive texts and emails;
- Hurtful messages, images or videos;
- Imitating others online;
- Excluding others online;
- Humiliating others online;
- Spreading nasty online gossip and chat; or
- Creating fake accounts to trick someone or humiliate them.



Bullying someone online can potentially have an enormous audience and be particularly harmful to the victim. For more information specific to Social Media, please see SQ's Social Media Policy available [here](#).

## The Effects of Bullying

Bullying has the potential to cause harm. The physical harm caused by some types of bullying is well recognised. Research has confirmed that short and long term psychological harm can result from bullying. This includes the harm to a person's social standing or reducing a person's willingness to socialise through bullying (particularly covert social bullying). The effects of bullying, particularly on the mental health and wellbeing of those involved, including bystanders, can continue even after the situation is resolved.

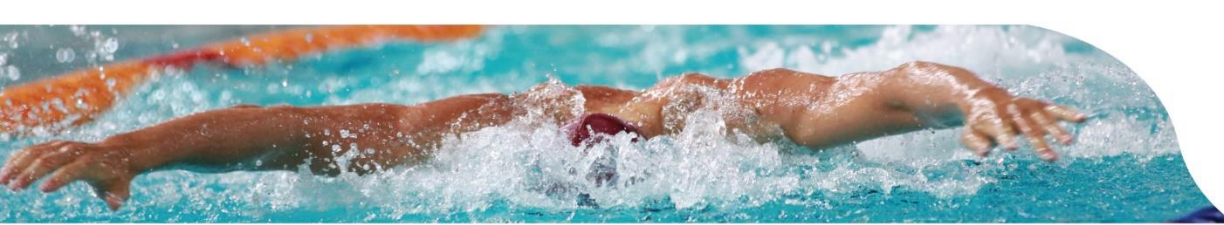
The fear of bullying happening alone can create distress and harm. The ongoing nature of bullying can lead to the person being bullied feeling powerless and unable to stop it from happening.

## Signs a Person is Being Bullied

A person, especially a child, may not always ask for support when being bullied. They may feel afraid, ashamed or embarrassed and that the person they tell will think they are weak. Victims of bullying may think that they deserve to be bullied or are 'dobbing' by telling someone what is happening to them.

The following are signs that a person may be being bullied in person:

- Finds excuses for not wanting to attend training or meets (e.g. feeling sick, has an injury, has too much work to do) or talking about hating their sport;
- Wants to be driven to training or meets instead of walking;
- Regularly the last one picked for team or group activities;
- Alienated from social or shared activities;
- Has bruising or other injuries;
- Becomes uncharacteristically nervous, worried, shy or withdrawn;
- Clothing or personal possessions are missing or are damaged;
- Repeatedly 'loses' money or possessions;
- Suddenly prone to lashing out at people either physically or verbally;
- Being upset after using the internet or their mobile phone;
- Unexpected changes in friendship groups;
- A decline in their school work;
- Changes in their sleep patterns;
- A decline in their physical health; or
- Becoming secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use.



## Managing Bullying

Bullying is more likely to occur in environments that are highly competitive and promote a 'win at all cost' mentality. It is important to emphasise other aspects of our sport such as enjoyment, team work, sportsmanship and skill development, especially at the junior level, to help prevent bullying behaviours.

### Legislation and Policy

Commonwealth legislation relevant to bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence include:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992;
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) Act 1986;
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975;
- Racial Hatred Act 1995; and
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984.

The Attorney-General's Department provides information and access to various [Commonwealth, State and Territory Acts](#) relating to human rights and anti-discrimination. Because bullying can contribute to psychological injury it may be covered under occupational health and safety legislation.

[The Swimming Australia Member Protection Policy](#) addresses a range of inappropriate behaviours including bullying, discrimination, harassment, abuse, and inappropriate use of technology for that purpose. Under the Member Protection Policy, there is an established procedure for dealing with incidents which should be followed in the event of bullying or cyberbullying.

### Reporting Cyberbullying to eSafety

If you are under 18 (or are reporting on behalf of someone under 18) you can make a complaint about cyberbullying to [eSafety](#). eSafety can take action to get serious cyberbullying material removed, and provide advice, support and assistance.

### How Do You Stop Cyberbullies?

- Keep a record including time and date. This may help you, or the police, to find out who is sending the messages.
- Tell someone. Talk to someone you trust, a parent, friend, school counsellor or teacher. Contact your telephone or Internet service provider and report what is happening. They can help you block messages or calls from certain senders.
- If messages are threatening or serious get in touch with the police. Cyberbullying, if it is threatening, is illegal.
- Do not reply to bullying messages – it may only get worse if you do. By replying the bully gets what he or she wants. Often if you do not reply the bully will leave you alone.
- Change your contact details. Get a new user name for the internet, a new email account, a new mobile phone number and only give them out to your closest friends.
- Keep your usernames and passwords secret. Keep your personal information private so it does not fall into the hands of someone who will misuse it.





### **If You Are A Parent, What Can You Do About Cyberbullying?**

- Discuss the incident with your child, assure them that you can help.
- Help your child implement strategies to minimise the harassment.
- Make your child's school or swimming Club aware of the problem.
- Share your experiences with other parents, and raise concerns through your swimming club or SQ. Remember the law is on your side and it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace or harass another person.

### **Reporting a Breach of This Policy**

If you experience or observe bullying or cyberbullying behaviour relating to SQ or any of its members, or content that may otherwise have been published in breach of this policy, you should report the circumstances immediately.

Tell a person in a position of authority as appropriate such as a coach, technical official, volunteer or employee of a Club, Member Association, SQ, or Swimming Australia.

Depending on the nature and seriousness of the complaint, formalise the complaint to your Club or Member Association as appropriate.

Under certain circumstances, such as harassment and making threats, cyber bullying is a criminal activity and illegal. If you feel your immediate safety is at risk, contact '000' in an emergency situation or your local police. Police around Australia work together to reduce this type of crime and there are serious consequences if people participate in such activities. You can report to the authorities any personal threat that you consider to be stalking. Personal threats are considered as an assault, even when no physical contact has been made.

### **Investigation**

Alleged breaches of this policy may be investigated in accordance with the Swimming Australia Member Protection Policy.

Where it is considered necessary, SQ may report a breach of this policy to police.

### **Disciplinary Process, Consequences and Appeals**

Depending on the circumstances breaches of this policy may be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary procedure contained in the Swimming Australia Member Protection Policy.

Employees of SQ who breach this policy may face disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment in accordance with the Swimming Australia Member Protection Policy or any other relevant policy.

Any person who is sanctioned under a disciplinary process for breach of this policy may have a right of appeal under the Swimming Australia Member Protection Policy.