

**MEMBER PROTECTION
PREGNANCY POLICY**

**Adopted by NSW Netball Association Ltd Board Meeting on
15th April 2008**



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1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Netball NSW Pregnancy Policy forms one part of the Netball NSW Member Protection Policy, and as such, should be read in conjunction with the Member Protection Policy.

Netball NSW is committed to providing an inclusive sporting environment for pregnant women involved in netball. Netball NSW expects everyone who is bound by this Policy to treat pregnant women with dignity and respect and to remove any unreasonable barriers to participation in our sport that disadvantage them. Netball NSW will not tolerate any unlawful discrimination or harassment against pregnant women or women who may become pregnant.

Descriptions of some of the types of behaviour that could be regarded as pregnancy discrimination or harassment are provided in the Definitions section at clause 11 of the Netball NSW Member Protection Policy.

If any person feels they are being harassed or discriminated against by another person or organisation bound by this Policy, please refer to the complaints procedure outlined in the Netball NSW MPP - Part C (Complaint Handling Policy). This will explain what to do about the behaviour and how Netball NSW will deal with the problem.

Netball NSW will take reasonable care to ensure the safety, health and well being of pregnant women and their unborn children. Netball NSW will advise pregnant women that there may be risks involved, and encourage them to obtain medical advice about those risks. Pregnant women should be aware that their own health and wellbeing, and that of their unborn children, are of utmost importance in their decision making about the extent and manner in which they participate in netball.

We encourage all pregnant women to consult with their medical advisers, make themselves aware of the facts about pregnancy in sport, and ensure that they make informed decisions about participation in particular sporting activities.

Netball NSW will only require pregnant women to sign a disclaimer if all other participants are required to sign one in similar circumstances. Women will not be required to undertake a pregnancy test.

2. BACKGROUND

Women are increasingly seeking to continue participation in sports, such as netball, throughout their pregnancy.

There are many positive outcomes from continuing physical activity during and after pregnancy, however as maternal and foetal responses to exercise can vary with pre-gestational maternal fitness levels, co-existing medical conditions and/or pregnancy complications all women are encouraged to seek individual medical advice before participating.

In Australia, Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation exists in relation to discrimination. This anti-discrimination legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate against a female on the basis of pregnancy, subject to specific exemptions.

There are a number of legal issues to be considered regarding the participation of pregnant players including providing reasonably safe playing environments, privacy of the pregnant participant and responsibility of the pregnant player for inherent and obvious risks. Further information on these issues is available in the Australian Sports Commission's publication "Pregnancy, Sport and the Law".

Further information regarding pregnancy can be found in the *Pregnancy and Netball Fact Sheet* on the Netball NSW website at www.netballnsw.com

Alternatively, the Sports Medicine Australia's "SMA Statement – The Benefits and Risks of Exercise in Pregnancy" *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport* 5 (1) : p11-19, also contains valuable information regarding pregnancy and exercise.

3. POLICY GUIDELINES

The following guidelines may assist District/League Associations when a pregnant player is involved.

3.1 A Pregnant Player should:

- 3.1.1 Be aware that her own health, and the well being of her unborn child, is of utmost importance in her decision about whether to continue playing sport.
- 3.1.2 Obtain expert medical advice as to the risks associated with playing sport when pregnant. She should ensure she understands this advice and where necessary question the advice until she is sure she understands the risks taken in participating in netball.
- 3.1.3 Have regular antenatal reviews with her doctor, including ongoing review of her exercise participation.
- 3.1.4 Take into account her changed physical condition, use common sense and not take unnecessary risks.
- 3.1.5 Remember that the ultimate decision to participate in netball will always be hers, whilst having regard to all the circumstances.

3.2 A Sports Administrator should:

- 3.2.1 Evaluate the precautions she/he can take to avoid harm to all players, including pregnant players.
- 3.2.2 Develop protocols and procedures to communicate with players regarding participation in netball during pregnancy, including:
 - providing players with the opportunity to advise of their pregnancy;
 - adding pregnancy advice and risk information to registration forms and prominent places where participants may view it.

(Note: legal advice about the form and wording of documents should be obtained).

- 3.2.3 Be aware of Commonwealth, State and Territory anti-discrimination legislation and its application in netball and review the rules, regulations and constitution of the District/League Association with respect to the relevant anti-discrimination legislation.
- 3.2.4 Seek professional advice, (including medical and/or legal,) if a situation arises where it is not clear what steps should be taken in a given circumstance.
- 3.2.5 Ensure that the organisation's insurance (including public liability and player injury insurance) is up to date and that it provides appropriate cover.
- 3.2.6 Promote adherence to the rules of the game.
- 3.2.7 Create a playing environment that is reasonably safe for all players.

3.3 A Coach should:

- 3.3.1 Be aware of the professional medical advice “SMA Statement - The Benefits and Risks of Exercise in Pregnancy” Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport 5 (1) : p11–19 in relation to exercise and pregnancy and the implications of participation in netball during pregnancy.
- 3.3.2 Take reasonable measures to ensure that all athletes are aware of the issues related to participation in netball during pregnancy.
- 3.3.3 Respect and support the player’s right to make her own decisions in relation to her participation or non participation in netball whilst pregnant.
- 3.3.4 With the agreement of the player, advise the pertinent team/club/association/member organisation officials that you are coaching a pregnant player.

NOTE: Coaches, trainers and others who give pregnant athletes advice on how to train during their pregnancy must be very careful that they are not placing themselves in the position of medical experts. They should not speak outside their scope of knowledge as they could face legal action for negligent advice. A consultative approach between athlete, coach and medical expert is recommended.

3.4 The Match Officials should:

- 3.4.1 Apply the rules governing the sport equally and fairly to all participants.

3.5 Other Players should:

- 3.5.1 Respect and support a pregnant athlete in the same way as they would any other participant.