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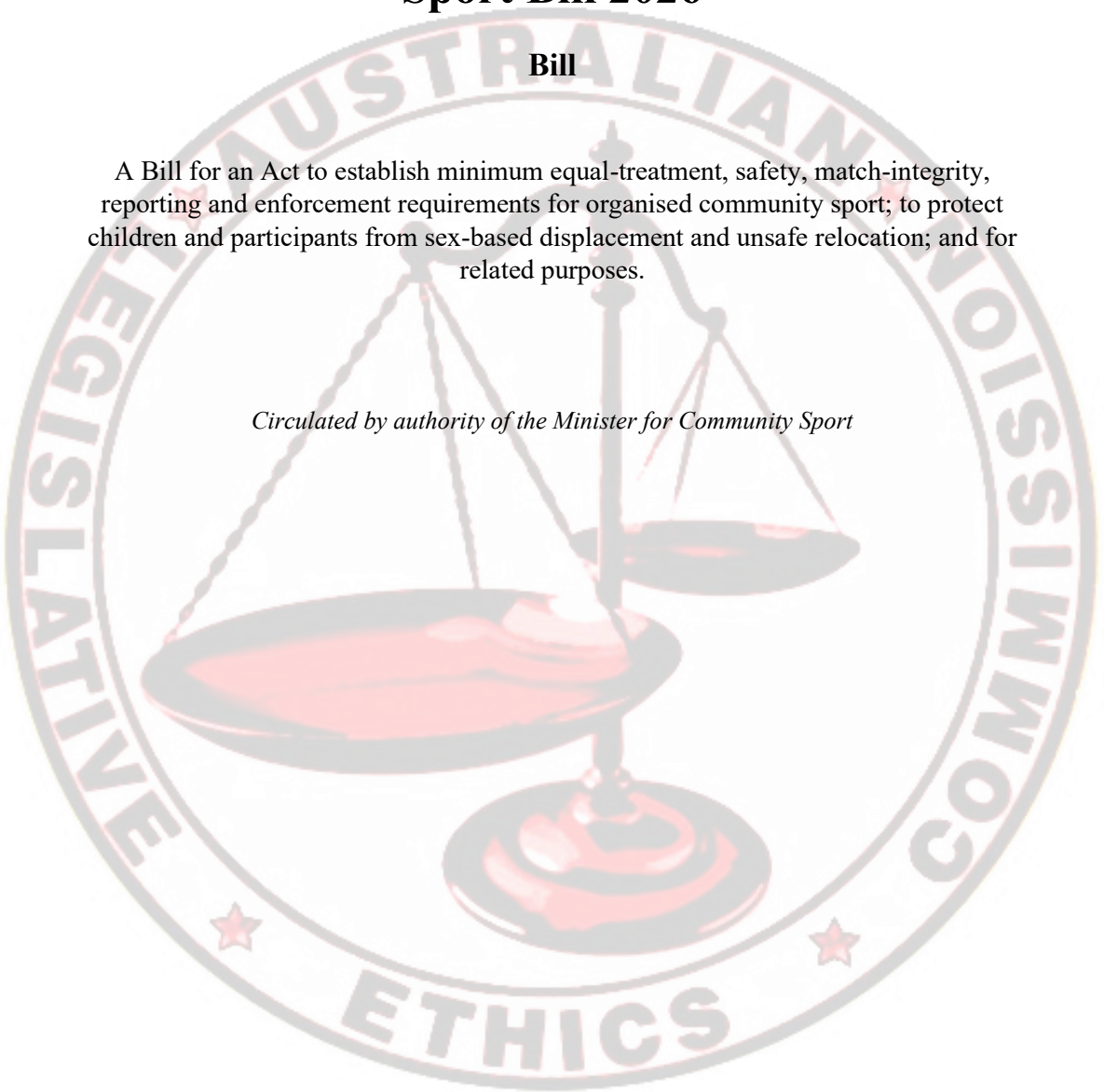
Parliament Of Victoria

Equal Treatment And Match Integrity In Community Sport Bill 2026

Bill

A Bill for an Act to establish minimum equal-treatment, safety, match-integrity, reporting and enforcement requirements for organised community sport; to protect children and participants from sex-based displacement and unsafe relocation; and for related purposes.

Circulated by authority of the Minister for Community Sport



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Schedule 1—Mandatory Match-Day Procedure

1 Purpose
2 Procedure

The Parliament of Victoria enacts:

Part 1—Preliminary

1 Purposes

(1) The purposes of this Act are—

(a) to secure equal status, access and respect for women, girls, men and boys in organised community sport;

(b) to protect the integrity of a fixture after it has commenced;

(c) to prevent a participant or fixture being displaced, downgraded or treated as less important because of sex, gender or age;

(d) to ensure that safety, the best interests of children and objectively relevant competition requirements govern match-day decisions;

(e) to establish transparent reporting, independent oversight, effective remedies and proportionate enforcement.

(2) This Act is intended to supplement, and not reduce, protections under anti-discrimination, child safety, occupational health and safety and human rights laws.

2 Commencement

(1) Subject to subsection (2), this Act comes into operation on a day or days to be proclaimed.

(2) If a provision does not come into operation before 1 July 2027, it comes into operation on that day.

3 Definitions

(1) In this Act—

child means a person who is under 18 years of age;

Commissioner means the Community Sport Equality Commissioner established by section 35;

commenced fixture means a scheduled sporting contest for which play has begun in accordance with the applicable rules, and includes a contest temporarily stopped, suspended or at an interval;

community sport means organised sporting activity conducted in Victoria principally on an amateur or community basis, whether or not a fee is charged;

fixture means a match, game, contest, race or other scheduled sporting event, including warm-up and reasonable access periods;

governing sporting body means a State sporting association, league, competition administrator or other body that sanctions or controls community sport;

host sporting body means the club, association or other body responsible for match-day hosting or venue operations;

match official includes a referee, umpire, match manager, technical official or person exercising authority over the conduct of a fixture;

participant includes a player, coach, team official, match official, volunteer and person supporting a child participant;

public authority includes a Council and a public entity that owns, manages, allocates or funds a sporting facility;

regulated entity means a governing sporting body, host sporting body, venue operator, public authority or contractor performing a function in relation to community sport;

sex-based includes a decision made because a person or team is, or is perceived to be, female, male, intersex, of a particular gender identity, or associated with a women's, girls', men's or boys' competition;

venue operator means a person or body that owns, controls, manages or allocates a sporting venue.

(2) A reference to the best interests of a child includes the child's safety, dignity, views, developmental needs and continued participation, assessed in the circumstances of the particular child or group of children.

4 Meaning of materially equivalent

(1) A playing area is materially equivalent to another playing area only if it provides substantially equivalent—

(a) dimensions, markings, goals and other sporting equipment;

(b) surface type, drainage, lighting and weather protection;

(c) safety, accessibility and proximity to change rooms, first aid and supervision; and

(d) conditions affecting competitive integrity.

(2) Minor differences that do not create a safety risk, material competitive disadvantage or loss of dignity do not prevent equivalence.

5 Application

(1) This Act applies to community sport conducted at a public or private venue in Victoria.

(2) This Act applies to a decision made before, during or after a fixture if the decision materially affects access, safety, status, competitive integrity or the treatment of participants.

(3) This Act does not apply to professional sport prescribed by the regulations, except to the extent prescribed.

6 Act binds the Crown

(1) This Act binds the Crown in right of Victoria and, so far as the legislative power of the Parliament permits, the Crown in all its other capacities.

7 Interaction with other laws

(1) Nothing in this Act limits a right or remedy under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 of the Commonwealth, child safety law or any other law.

(2) A term of a competition rule, contract, permit or venue agreement is void to the extent that it purports to exclude or reduce a duty under this Act.

(3) Compliance with a sporting rule is not a defence if the rule or its application is inconsistent with this Act.

Part 2—Equal Treatment And Match Integrity

8 Equal status of participants and fixtures

(1) A regulated entity must accord equal status, respect and operational protection to comparable fixtures and participants.

(2) A regulated entity must not treat a fixture as less important because it is a women's or girls' fixture, a junior fixture, or a fixture involving a protected attribute under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.

(3) Equality under this section does not prevent proportionate measures designed to remedy historic disadvantage or increase participation by an under-represented group.

9 Protection of a commenced fixture

(1) A commenced fixture has priority to remain on its allocated playing area until completion.

(2) A regulated entity or match official must not stop, relocate, curtail or abandon a commenced fixture merely to permit another fixture, training activity or event to use the playing area.

(3) This section is subject only to section 13.

10 No sex-based displacement or priority

(1) A person must not give preference to, or displace, a fixture or participant on a sex-based ground.

(2) A decision is sex-based if sex or the category of the competition is a reason for the decision, whether or not it is the dominant or only reason.

(3) A person relying on a non-discriminatory reason must identify the objective criterion and contemporaneous information on which the decision was based.

11 Neutral priority criteria before commencement

(1) Before any affected fixture commences, competing claims to a playing area must be resolved using published, sex-neutral and consistently applied criteria.

(2) Relevant criteria may include safety, a governing body's approved competition level, published booking time, travel impact, lighting limits and the number of affected participants.

(3) Revenue, tradition, crowd size or assumed prestige must not be used as a proxy for sex-based priority.

12 Later fixture bears operational disruption

(1) If scheduling or venue error creates a conflict after a fixture has commenced, the later fixture must be delayed, relocated or rescheduled.

(2) The regulated entity responsible for the conflict must take reasonable steps to minimise harm to all participants and bear reasonable additional costs caused by the error.

13 Emergency or unplayable surface exception

(1) A commenced fixture may be stopped, relocated, curtailed or abandoned only if a match official reasonably believes that—

(a) there is an immediate or serious risk to health or safety;

(b) the playing area has become unplayable under the applicable rules;

(c) an emergency direction by police, emergency services or the venue operator requires it; or

(d) continuation is impossible because of a failure of essential infrastructure.

(2) The action taken must be necessary, proportionate and applied without discrimination.

(3) A scheduling conflict, preference for a later fixture, or avoidable operational inconvenience is not an exception under this section.

14 Authority to alter a commenced fixture

(1) Only the appointed match official may direct a change to a commenced fixture, except where an emergency direction under section 13(1)(c) applies.

(2) The match official must consult the team officials, inspect any proposed alternative playing area and record the decision and reasons.

(3) A club official, venue employee or other person must not pressure or direct a match official to act inconsistently with this Act.

15 Refusal to accept unsafe or unequal treatment

(1) A team or participant may refuse a relocation or altered condition reasonably believed to be unsafe, materially unequal or inconsistent with this Act.

(2) A refusal under subsection (1) must not, without an independent determination, be treated as a forfeit, misconduct or failure to fulfil a fixture.

(3) The governing sporting body must determine the consequences in accordance with sections 19 to 21 and after procedural fairness.

Part 3—Safety, Relocation And Children

16 Preconditions to relocation

(1) A fixture may be relocated after commencement only under section 13 and only if—

(a) the alternative playing area is materially equivalent;

(b) a documented safety assessment has been completed;

(c) reasonable access, warm-up and transition time is provided; and

(d) both teams are given the same information and opportunity to raise safety concerns.

(2) If those conditions cannot be met, the fixture must be suspended or abandoned and dealt with under section 21.

17 Requirements for an alternative playing area

(1) An alternative playing area must comply with the rules and minimum facility standards applicable to the fixture.

(2) A visibly waterlogged, poorly lit, improperly marked, inaccessible or materially smaller playing area is not materially equivalent unless an independent safety assessment establishes otherwise and no competitive disadvantage results.

(3) Agreement by a child or team official does not cure a failure to comply with this section.

18 Recorded safety assessment

(1) The match official and host sporting body must complete the prescribed safety checklist before play resumes on an alternative playing area.

(2) The checklist must record the surface, weather, dimensions, markings, equipment, lighting, first aid access, accessibility, consultation and reasons for the decision.

(3) A copy must be given to each team and the governing sporting body within 24 hours.

19 Best interests of a child

(1) In every decision under this Act affecting a child, the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration.

(2) A person must not subordinate a child's safety, dignity or equal treatment to scheduling convenience, commercial preference or the perceived status of another fixture.

(3) Where groups of children are affected, the decision-maker must consider the interests of each group without assuming that one category is inherently more important.

20 Views and welfare of children

(1) Children affected by a proposed relocation, suspension, abandonment or replay must be given an age-appropriate opportunity to express their views.

(2) Those views must be given due weight having regard to age and maturity.

(3) The responsible sporting body must provide a safe point of contact and reasonable welfare support after a serious incident.

21 No compelled replay

(1) A governing sporting body must not direct a replay merely because an affected team refused an unsafe or materially unequal relocation.

(2) Before ordering a replay or determining competition points, the governing sporting body must consider—

(a) the cause of the interruption;

(b) any discriminatory or unequal treatment;

(c) the welfare and views of affected children;

(d) competitive integrity and the stage reached in the fixture;

(e) the burden of travel, cost and scheduling; and

(f) whether another remedy can restore fairness without requiring a replay.

(3) A child must not be personally compelled to participate in a replay.

22 Equal access to facilities and support

(1) A regulated entity must take reasonable and proportionate steps to provide equal access to suitable playing areas, change facilities, lighting, equipment, medical support and preferred scheduling.

(2) Facility constraints do not excuse inaction if reasonable planning, allocation or temporary measures could reduce the inequality.

(3) Separate facilities are permissible only if they provide equal safety, quality, accessibility and dignity.

Part 4—Duties Of Sporting Bodies And Officials

23 Positive duty of governing sporting body

(1) A governing sporting body must take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate, so far as possible, conduct contrary to Parts 2 and 3.

(2) Measures must include enforceable competition rules, education, monitoring, complaint pathways, data review and correction of known systemic risks.

(3) A governing sporting body must not delegate away responsibility for compliance.

24 Duty of host sporting body

(1) A host sporting body must provide a venue and match-day operation consistent with this Act.

(2) The host must appoint a responsible match-day contact, prevent unauthorised interference, preserve evidence and assist affected participants.

(3) The host must promptly disclose any double booking, surface defect or other known risk.

25 Duty of venue operator and public authority

(1) A venue operator or public authority must allocate and manage facilities using transparent, sex-neutral criteria consistent with fair access principles.

(2) A funding agreement, lease, licence or permit for community sport must require compliance with this Act.

(3) Repeated non-compliance must be considered in future funding, leasing and allocation decisions, subject to procedural fairness.

26 Duty of match official

(1) A match official must act independently, prioritise safety and competitive integrity, and apply this Act without discrimination.

(2) A match official must not implement an unauthorised instruction to displace or relocate a commenced fixture.

(3) A match official who reasonably refuses an instruction inconsistent with this Act must not be penalised or disadvantaged.

27 Policies, contracts and venue agreements

(1) Each regulated entity must align its policies, competition rules, contracts and venue agreements with this Act.

(2) An agreement must identify who has decision-making authority, who completes safety assessments and who makes mandatory reports.

(3) Unclear allocation of responsibility does not relieve any entity of a duty that otherwise applies.

28 Training and accreditation

(1) A governing sporting body must ensure prescribed officials and match-day decision-makers complete annual training approved by the Commissioner.

(2) Training must cover equal treatment, sex discrimination, child safety, trauma-informed communication, surface assessment, reporting and procedural fairness.

(3) The Commissioner may approve equivalent training and publish minimum competencies.

Part 5—Reports, Complaints And Evidence

29 Immediate incident report

(1) A host sporting body and governing sporting body must each notify the Commissioner within 24 hours after becoming aware of a reportable incident.

(2) A reportable incident is—

(a) the displacement, relocation, curtailment or abandonment of a commenced fixture;

(b) an allegation of sex-based priority or materially unequal treatment;

(c) a refusal to play based on safety or equality concerns;

(d) an injury or serious welfare impact associated with a relocation; or

(e) victimisation or retaliation connected with a complaint.

(3) The immediate report must identify the incident, affected teams, decision-maker, safety status and steps taken to protect children and evidence.

30 Detailed report

(1) Within 5 business days after a reportable incident, the host and governing sporting bodies must provide a detailed report in the prescribed form.

(2) The report must include relevant bookings, field allocations, official reports, safety checklists, communications, video or photographs held, witness details and proposed remedial action.

(3) A report must distinguish established facts, disputed facts and preliminary opinions.

31 Complaints and own-motion matters

(1) Any person may complain to the Commissioner about a suspected contravention.

(2) The Commissioner may investigate on the Commissioner's own motion, including where no affected child or family wishes to make a complaint.

(3) A complaint may be made orally or in writing and must be assisted where accessibility, language, age or disability requires.

(4) An anonymous complaint may be considered if sufficient information is available.

32 Protection of complainants and witnesses

(1) A person must not suffer selection, registration, accreditation, employment, volunteering, facility access or other disadvantage because the person made, supported or proposed to make a report or complaint.

(2) A good-faith report is protected even if it is not substantiated.

(3) The Commissioner may make an urgent interim direction reasonably necessary to prevent retaliation or preserve participation.

33 Preservation of evidence

(1) A regulated entity must preserve relevant records for at least 7 years after a reportable incident, or longer if directed by the Commissioner.

(2) Records include booking systems, rosters, communications, recordings, photographs, reports, policies and training records.

(3) A person must not destroy, conceal, alter or fabricate evidence relevant to a matter under this Act.

34 Confidentiality and child-sensitive handling

(1) Personal information obtained under this Act must be collected, used, stored and disclosed only for a lawful purpose and with safeguards proportionate to the sensitivity of the information.

(2) A child's identity must not be published by the Commissioner unless publication is lawful, necessary in the public interest and, where appropriate, supported by the child and parent or guardian.

(3) Interviews with children must be age-appropriate, minimise repetition and avoid requiring a child to confront an alleged wrongdoer.

Part 6—Community Sport Equality Commissioner

35 Establishment of Commissioner

(1) There is to be a Community Sport Equality Commissioner.

(2) The Commissioner is a corporation sole with perpetual succession.

(3) The Commissioner may sue and be sued in the name of the office.

36 Appointment and term

(1) The Governor in Council may appoint a person with relevant experience in equality law, child safety, sports administration, regulation or administrative justice as Commissioner.

(2) The Commissioner holds office for a term not exceeding 5 years and may be reappointed once.

(3) The Commissioner may be removed only for proved misconduct, incapacity or bankruptcy, on the recommendation of the Minister after procedural fairness.

37 Functions

(1) The functions of the Commissioner are—

(a) to receive reports and complaints and investigate suspected contraventions;

(b) to make findings, issue notices and orders, and accept enforceable undertakings;

(c) to approve training, publish guidance and promote systemic compliance;

(d) to collect and publish de-identified data;

(e) to advise the Minister and Parliament; and

(f) to refer matters to another regulator or law-enforcement body where appropriate.

(2) The Commissioner must perform the functions in a child-safe, accessible, timely and procedurally fair manner.

38 Independence

(1) The Commissioner is not subject to direction or control in relation to the investigation or determination of a particular matter.

(2) The Minister may issue a general written statement of expectations that is not inconsistent with subsection (1).

(3) A statement of expectations and the Commissioner's response must be tabled in each House of Parliament.

39 Powers to obtain information

(1) The Commissioner may, by written notice, require a regulated entity or adult person reasonably believed to hold relevant information to provide documents, information or reasonable assistance within a stated period.

(2) The notice must state the matter, the information sought, the time for compliance, available review rights and the consequences of non-compliance.

(3) The Commissioner may inspect and copy information lawfully provided and may require an explanation of a record or system.

40 Safeguards and privileges

(1) A person is not required to provide information protected by legal professional privilege.

(2) An individual may refuse to answer a question if the answer might tend to incriminate the individual or expose the individual to a penalty.

(3) The Commissioner must take reasonable steps to avoid unnecessary collection of personal or sensitive information.

(4) A child is not required to provide evidence and may do so only with appropriate support and informed, age-appropriate agreement.

41 Investigation timeframes

(1) The Commissioner must conduct an initial risk assessment within 2 business days after receiving a reportable incident.

(2) The Commissioner must aim to complete an investigation within 20 business days and, if that is not reasonably practicable, notify affected parties of the reasons and revised date.

(3) Urgent interim action may be taken at any time to protect safety, participation or evidence, subject to prompt review.

42 Procedural fairness and reasons

(1) Before making an adverse finding or final order, the Commissioner must give each materially affected person notice of the substance of the case and a reasonable opportunity to respond.

(2) The Commissioner must give written reasons identifying findings of fact, applicable provisions, evidence relied on and review rights.

(3) If a regulated entity failed without reasonable excuse to create or preserve a record required by this Act, the Commissioner may, for administrative findings only, draw an inference reasonably supported by the available evidence.

(4) Subsection (3) does not alter the burden or standard of proof for an offence or other proceeding in a court.

Part 7—Compliance, Remedies And Enforcement

43 Compliance notice

(1) If the Commissioner reasonably believes that a regulated entity has contravened or is likely to contravene this Act, the Commissioner may issue a compliance notice.

(2) The notice may require specified action, cessation of conduct, policy amendment, training, monitoring, reporting or facility remediation within a stated period.

(3) The notice must be proportionate and must state reasons and review rights.

44 Remedial orders

(1) After substantiating a contravention, the Commissioner may order one or more of the following—

(a) reimbursement of reasonable travel, venue and participation costs caused by the contravention;

(b) restoration or adjustment of competition points, or a replay, if consistent with competitive integrity and child welfare;

(c) a written acknowledgement or apology, unless an affected person does not want it;

(d) independent training, supervision, policy reform or facility reallocation;

(e) a safety audit or equality audit;

(f) another restorative measure agreed by affected persons and consistent with this Act.

(2) The Commissioner must not order a child to participate, meet an alleged wrongdoer or accept an apology.

45 Enforceable undertakings

(1) The Commissioner may accept a written undertaking in connection with a matter under this Act.

(2) An undertaking may include measurable actions, independent verification, publication and consequences for non-compliance.

(3) The Commissioner may apply to the Magistrates' Court for enforcement of an undertaking.

46 Administrative sporting sanctions

(1) For a serious or repeated contravention, the Commissioner may impose or direct the governing sporting body to impose—

(a) a formal reprimand;

(b) conditions on hosting, officiating or venue use;

(c) temporary suspension of hosting rights or accreditation;

(d) a requirement for independent match-day supervision; or

(e) an administrative monetary penalty not exceeding 60 penalty units for an individual or 300 penalty units for a body corporate.

(2) A sanction must not reduce opportunities for affected children unless no less restrictive means can protect safety or compliance.

(3) A monetary penalty must not be paid from funds quarantined for junior participation or child safety programs.

47 Aggravating and mitigating matters

(1) In determining a remedy or sanction, the Commissioner must consider the seriousness and duration of the conduct, impact on children, discriminatory motive, concealment, retaliation, prior conduct, cooperation, prompt correction and capacity to comply.

(2) A genuine emergency, honest and reasonable safety judgment, self-reporting and effective remediation may mitigate a sanction but do not eliminate the need to restore affected persons.

48 Failure to comply with notice or order

(1) A person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with a notice under section 39 or 43, or a final order under section 44 or 46, commits an offence.

Penalty 120 penalty units for an individual; 600 penalty units for a body corporate.

(2) A prosecution may be commenced only by the Commissioner or with the Commissioner's written consent.

49 Victimisation and retaliation

(1) A person must not subject, threaten to subject or cause another person to be subjected to detriment because that person engaged in protected conduct under this Act.

Penalty 120 penalty units for an individual; 600 penalty units for a body corporate.

(2) Protected conduct includes reporting, complaining, giving evidence, refusing an unlawful instruction, asserting a right or supporting another person.

(3) The Commissioner may also make restorative and protective orders in relation to victimisation.

50 False or misleading information

(1) An adult person must not knowingly provide materially false or misleading information in purported compliance with this Act.

Penalty 60 penalty units for an individual; 300 penalty units for a body corporate.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to an opinion honestly held, an immaterial error or a good-faith report that is not substantiated.

51 No penalty for a child

(1) A child is not liable to an administrative monetary penalty or offence under this Act.

(2) A disciplinary response to a child must be educational, proportionate, child-safe and consistent with the child's best interests.

52 Recovery and application of monetary penalties

(1) An administrative monetary penalty is a debt due to the State and may be recovered in a court of competent jurisdiction.

(2) Money recovered must be credited to a Community Sport Equality Fund established in the Public Account and used for education, accessible complaint support, facility equality and child-safe participation.

(3) The regulations may prescribe transparent governance and reporting requirements for the Fund.

Part 8—Review, Reporting And Miscellaneous

53 Internal reconsideration

(1) A person affected by a decision under section 39, 43, 44 or 46 may request reconsideration within 14 days.

(2) The reconsideration must be conducted by a person not involved in the original decision and completed within 10 business days.

(3) An urgent protective direction remains in force unless stayed by the reviewer or VCAT.

54 Review by VCAT

(1) A person whose interests are affected may apply to VCAT for review of a final decision under section 39, 43, 44, 46 or 53.

(2) An application must be made within 28 days after notice of the decision or, if reasons are requested, within 28 days after reasons are given.

(3) VCAT may affirm, vary or set aside the decision and make any decision the Commissioner could have made.

55 Annual equality and facility audit

(1) A prescribed governing sporting body and public authority must annually audit allocation of prime playing areas and times, cancellations, relocations, facility quality, funding and participation by sex and age category.

(2) The audit must identify material disparities, causes, targets, responsible officers and corrective timeframes.

(3) A public summary must be published in an accessible form, subject to privacy protections.

56 Annual report

(1) The Commissioner must report annually to the Minister on compliance, incidents, outcomes, systemic risks and recommendations.

(2) The Minister must cause the report to be laid before each House of Parliament within 10 sitting days after receiving it.

(3) The report must not identify a child or permit identification from small-cell data.

57 Public register

(1) The Commissioner must maintain a public register of final compliance notices, enforceable undertakings and serious or repeated contraventions.

(2) The Commissioner may withhold or redact information where necessary to protect a child, privacy, safety, an active investigation or the administration of justice.

(3) A resolved minor contravention must not remain published longer than is proportionate to the public interest.

58 Guidelines

(1) The Commissioner may issue guidelines about materially equivalent facilities, neutral scheduling, safety assessments, child participation, data standards and remedies.

(2) Before issuing substantial guidelines, the Commissioner must consult sporting bodies, participants, children and young people, equality and child-safety experts, Councils and venue operators.

(3) A guideline must be published and laid before each House of Parliament.

59 Delegation

(1) The Commissioner may, by instrument, delegate a function or power to an appropriately qualified member of staff, other than the power to make final remedial orders, impose administrative monetary penalties or issue guidelines.

(2) A delegation must be published, subject to redaction of personal information.

60 Regulations

(1) The Governor in Council may make regulations for or with respect to—

(a) forms, notices, reporting and record-keeping;

(b) facility and safety standards;

(c) training and accreditation;

(d) audits, data and publication;

(e) administrative monetary penalty procedures; and

(f) any matter necessary or convenient to give effect to this Act.

(2) Regulations must not authorise discrimination or reduce the minimum protections in Parts 2 and 3.

61 Review of Act

(1) The Minister must cause an independent review of this Act to begin no later than 2 years after section 8 commences.

(2) The review must consider effectiveness, enforcement, impacts on children, facility equality, interaction with other laws, regulatory burden and whether further rights or remedies are required.

(3) The reviewer must consult affected participants, including children and girls' and women's sporting organisations.

(4) The Minister must cause the review report and Government response to be laid before each House of Parliament within 6 months after the review begins.

Schedule 1—Mandatory Match-Day Procedure

1 Purpose

(1) This Schedule sets the minimum procedure when a playing-area conflict, safety concern or proposed alteration affects a fixture.

2 Procedure

(1) The responsible match official must immediately stabilise the situation and prevent unauthorised entry onto the playing area.

(2) The official must identify whether the fixture has commenced and, if so, apply the priority in section 9.

(3) If a section 13 exception may apply, the official must inspect the surface and consult both teams and the host match-day contact.

(4) The official must assess any alternative against sections 16 to 18 and must not resume play until the safety checklist is complete.

(5) The official must communicate the decision and reasons to both teams at the same time, using age-appropriate language where children are involved.

(6) The host must provide welfare support, preserve records and make the report required by section 29.

(7) The later fixture must not enter the playing area until the commenced fixture is completed or lawfully moved, suspended or abandoned.