

Football Australia Circular – Competitions



Competitions Circular No. 23-1221

21 December 2023

TO: A-LEAGUES CLUBS AND CLUBS PARTICIPATING IN THE AUSTRALIA CUP

SPECTATOR BEHAVIOUR AT FOOTBALL MATCHES

The purpose of this Circular is to reiterate Football Australia's policy with respect to spectator conduct at football matches and in particular at A-Leagues, Australia Cup and National Teams matches.

Football Australia recognises that active fan support is a unique part of football culture and is something which we embrace - provided such support is done in the appropriate manner. Unfortunately, Football Australia has identified a trend of increasing anti-social behaviour over recent weeks, in particular the possession and use of flares, smoke devices, and other pyrotechnics at A-Leagues matches, and wishes to reiterate its approach to spectator misconduct.

Football Australia is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable environment for all participants and spectators during football matches. The use of flares, smoke devices, and other pyrotechnics poses significant safety risks and is strictly prohibited in and around stadiums. The throwing of missiles and entry onto the field of play by spectators creates a heightened environment which also puts players, officials and other spectators at serious risk.

Codes and Terms of Admission

The use, possession, or distribution of flares, smoke devices, and other pyrotechnics is strictly prohibited within the premises of any football stadium hosting Football Australia sanctioned events. Throwing missiles (including on to the field of play or at other spectators) and entering the field of play or its surrounds without authority are also strictly prohibited. Attendees must comply with the venue conditions of entry and [Spectator Code of Behaviour](#), both which expressly forbid the use of pyrotechnics, throwing missiles and entering the field of play.

Further, all players, officials, and spectators, are expected to adhere to the Football Australia [Code of Conduct and Ethics](#) (the **Code**) which incorporates the Spectator Code of Behaviour. The Code provides that a Club is responsible and liable for the conduct of its Supporters.

Consequences for Violation of Flare Use

There are particular consequences for spectators identified as being in the possession or use of flares or pyrotechnics as follows:

1. **Stadium Ejection:** Any individual found using or in possession of flares will be immediately ejected from the stadium.
2. **Ban from Future Events:** Individuals may face a ban from attending future Football Australia sanctioned events, including matches and other football-related activities, and non-footballing events at that venue.

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3. **Legal Action:** Football Australia reserves the right to take legal action against individuals who violate the flare policy, seeking damages and pursuing criminal charges where applicable. Spectators found to have engaged in any other anti-social behaviour including violence, abuse and discrimination, throwing missiles and entering the field of play will also be subject to stadium ejection and bans from attending Football Australia sanctioned events and non-footballing events at that venue.

Sanctions for Spectator Misconduct

In determining appropriate sanctions for individuals and Clubs for breaches of the Spectator Code of Behaviour and the Code, particular attention will be given to incidents:

- which occur inside or immediately surrounding the stadium (noting that where the Football Match is held is the responsibility of FA, APL, clubs and venues);
- involve spectators located in the Active Supporter bays;
- involve spectators entering the field of play;
- that result in play being suspended;
- involve multiple spectators or multiple acts (i.e. the totality of the conduct); and
- involve dangerous activity such as the use of weapons, missiles, flares or pyrotechnics which puts spectators, players and officials at significant risk.

Additionally, FA takes into account the systems and processes that the Club has put in place to mitigate the risk of misconduct by the Club's Supporters.

This approach applies across all A-Leagues, Australia Cup and National Teams matches under the auspices of Football Australia.

Communication and Education

In terms of assisting Clubs with providing a safe and enjoyable environment for all participants and spectators during football matches, FA and the APL has committed to a number of initiatives:

1. **Awareness Campaigns:** FA and APL will conduct ongoing awareness campaigns to educate supporters, members, and the general public about the dangers of flares and the consequences of their use.
2. **Stadium Announcements:** Clear announcements will continue to be made before and at half time of all matches, reminding attendees of the prohibition on the use of flares, entering the field of play, throwing missiles and general anti-social behaviour and its enforcement.
3. **Reporting Violations:**
 - a. **Reporting Mechanism:** Individuals witnessing flare-related incidents and other antisocial behaviour are encouraged to report them to stadium security or relevant authorities promptly via the confidential text message reporting service displayed on the in stadia screen and/ or clearly visible static signage. Where text message reporting is not available, Football Australia and the APL will work with all Clubs to ensure their venues implement similarly effective reporting processes. Effective implementation of such processes by home Clubs (and their venues) will be relevant to FA assessing what systems the Club has put in place to mitigate the risk of misconduct by the Club's Supporters should there be a breach of the Code.
 - b. **Confidential Reporting:** In addition to reporting of incidents inside the venue as above, Football Australia has established confidential reporting mechanisms to encourage the reporting of flare-related incidents and other antisocial behaviour outside the venue or pre and post-match without fear of retaliation via footballaustralia.com.au/report.

Football Australia will continue to review its policy with respect to addressing anti-social spectator behaviour in consultation with the APL, Clubs, venues and law enforcement to ensure its effectiveness in maintaining a safe and secure environment for all stakeholders.

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We hope this Circular has been instructive and assists to inform you on the policy with respect to the use of flares and other anti-social behaviour in football. If you have any queries, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

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