



## **AUSTRALIAN LACROSSE ASSOCIATION (ALA) CRISIS COMMUNICATION POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

This policy provides a formal structure for Australian Lacrosse Association (ALA) to manage communications in a crisis. The structure is designed to shape how ALA makes decisions relating to communications in a crisis, including the allocation of primary responsibilities for the management of any crisis communications.

Communication plays an important role in managing any crisis event and how ALA communicates with key stakeholders in such scenarios – including, at times, the media and general public - will largely determine whether the event has a positive or negative impact of the organisation and sport's image.

### **2. Aim**

To provide ALA with a consistent and coordinated approach to all crisis communications.

### **3. Application**

For the purpose of this plan, a crisis is defined as an abnormal situation, real or perceived, which is beyond the scope of everyday business. The crisis may have real or potential impacts on the operation, safety and/or reputation of the ALA, a Member Association, lacrosse personnel and/or the wider sport of lacrosse in Australia.

In this plan the term 'ALA personnel' refers to all ALA appointed staff, coaches, athletes, officials and administrators.

#### **3.1. Crisis Leadership Team**

The Crisis Leadership Team (CLT) is a core group of experienced people, internal to the ALA, that can be convened by the team leader to handle key decision making and communication if a crisis arises. The team consists of:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Director\* - – Who is most directly linked to/involved with the area of business the crisis has occurred or Director with experience in HR, complaint handling or communications
- Operations Coordinator.

Additional members may be co-opted onto the CLT depending on the nature of the crisis and their expertise. For example, the Director responsible for the area of the sport most directly affected would most likely be required as part of a response to the crisis.

The role of the CLT is to perform a series of actions to manage such a situation:

- Determine that a crisis relevant to this policy exists
- Establish what has happened
- Assess the impact
- Resolve any conflicts of interest
- Identify and prioritise actions required including communications with stakeholders
- Retain control of crisis communications.

Examples of potential crises of concern for ALA are listed below.

### **3.2. Directly Related**

Directly related crises are those which threatens the operation, safety and/or reputation of ALA and its personnel. These may include the following:

- Organisational crises:
  - Unanticipated cancellation of match / series
  - Withdrawal of national teams from competition
  - Significant incidents at major FIL tournaments
  - Other overseas or international incidents.
- Personal crises involving ALA personnel or other Australian participants (as individuals or groups):
  - Breaches of anti-doping policies (at any level)
  - Death / serious injury
  - Felony / arrest
  - Lawsuit
  - Other Inappropriate behaviour
  - Significant breaches of the ALA social media policy.
- Member Association crises such as:
  - Financial impropriety in a Member Association
  - Significant breach of the Member Protection Policy
  - Inappropriate athlete / staff behaviour
  - An incident relating to Quick Stix
  - Withdrawal of state teams from national competitions.

### **3.3. Indirectly Related**

Indirect related crises are those which are not directly attributable to any action(s), or any lack of action, taken organisationally by ALA, Member Associations or personally by Australian lacrosse people.

These crises arise from the actions of others that may threaten the safety and / or welfare of ALA personnel, particularly teams travelling overseas, and create concern

because of a lack of timely and accurate information about what is occurring and whether ALA personnel are actually affected. These may include the following:

- Major transport or infrastructure failures
- Significant emergencies or disasters (hazardous materials, fires, earthquakes)
- Significant health risks (disease outbreaks)
- Acts of terrorism and armed conflict.

### **3.4. Key principles**

In the event of a crisis only authorised individuals are permitted to speak on behalf of ALA. The authorised individuals in the event of a crisis are (in order) the holders of the following appointments:

- ALA Chair (team leader, CLT)
- Director\*
- Vice Chair (if the crisis involves the Chair or that the Chair is incapacitated)
- National Coaches/High Performance Director (where it is appropriate, and the crisis is relevant to the senior national teams and does not specifically relate to these individuals)
- Team Manager (the single point of contact with the CLT and only source of local communications, if required).

Communication during a crisis should be honest, proactive, timely and as accurate as possible.

A holding statement is an acceptable option when facts are unknown or uncertain. Examples that may be considered include:

- “We are very concerned at the reports...”
- “We have great sympathy for...”
- “If confirmed, these facts would be concerning...”
- “Until such time as we can confirm the facts we are not able to add to the reports.”

“No comment” does not constitute an acceptable holding statement.

There should be no separate briefings outside of official communications unless agreed by the CLT.

#### 4. Authorities

The roles and responsibilities for CLT crisis communications under this plan may be limited by the following arrangements:

- **Legal Frameworks** – where the crisis involves serious events such as disasters, serious crime, deaths or terrorism; limitations on the availability of or release of information may be imposed by the Australian Government, local coronial, emergency management and privacy legislation. (For example, the identity of any killed or seriously injured individuals cannot be released until formal identification and notification of family has been completed)
- **Policy Frameworks** – ALA affiliations with the Australian Sports Commission, Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority and Federation of International Lacrosse may include policy restrictions, controls or limitations on crisis communications in accordance with their policies.

#### 5. Special Arrangements

All members of the Crisis Management Team are provided with a list of current team members names and contact numbers and, teleconference number and access code.

6. **Response** – Please utilise the Crisis Management Playbook template

ALA crisis communication responses will be activated and managed using the following procedures.

- **Reporting** – the reporting processes for any person who becomes aware of a (potential) crisis to which this plan applies are as follows:
  - The ALA Operations Coordinator, any ALA Director or staff members must notify the ALA Chair (or Vice Chair (VC) if Chair involved) as soon as practicable by face-to-face meeting or by telephone.
  - Any member of a travelling team (or person closely associated with the team) must report to the Team Manager (onsite leader). The Team Manager is then responsible for reporting to the ALA Operations Coordinator as soon as practicable.
- **Actions** – the Chair (or VC), as leader of the CLT will:
  - Consult, where relevant, with any onsite leader
  - Determine if there is a requirement activate the CLT
  - Identify the need for co-opting additional team members
  - Determine the most effective way for the team to communicate
  - Determine the need for any other actions.
- **Build Up** – The Chair (or onsite leader) must:
  - Ensure the available leadership team members are advised of the nature and scope of the (potential) crisis
  - Establish an appropriate CLT of authorised individuals and support staff, appropriate to the scale of the crisis to be addressed to:

- Assess all requirements (establish the facts, assess the impact(s), the availability and capability of ALA resources to manage the response to the crisis)
- Brief, delegate and direct ALA personnel to undertake tasks or roles to effectively deliver the required actions
- Activate initial responses (establish key communication channels, mobilise relevant people)
- Identify and prioritise key tasks for additional resourcing and action
- Establish and maintain on-going communications with key stakeholders
- **Operations** – The Chair is responsible for the overall management of CLT operations by:
  - Ensuring a consistent cycle of meeting times is planned and communicated for on-going operations
  - Allocating resources for the efficient and effective management of the communications required, under the provisions of this Policy.

The role of the CLT members is to support the Chair and take charge of their allocated responsibilities and coordinate the relevant resources to manage the tasks required.

To appropriately manage the operations of ALA crisis communications in accordance with this policy, the CLT must act consistently in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Develop and maintain situational awareness of the crises potential and actual impacts on Australian lacrosse
- Continuously assess and control risk as circumstances change
- Actively take responsibility, exercise initiative and apply leadership. It includes being proactive and responsive to changing or developing circumstances
- Make timely decisions based on the circumstances
- Conduct structured, focused and action orientated collaborative meetings
- Develop and share plans and strategies to meet the requirements of the activated ALA resources and assistance services
- Ensure the effective allocation and use of available resources
- Prioritize activities and monitor them, re-assess and amend if circumstances change
- Delegate appropriately and allow freedom of action within that delegation
- Monitor the number of tasks, activities or responsibilities allocated to individuals and maintain a manageable span of control for the situation
- Ensure all communications and records are clear and unambiguous (in plain English).
- **Run Down** – the Chair is responsible for determining the need for:
  - On-going operations dealing with crisis communications
  - Changes to the CLT membership and/or general support staff levels

- The closure or winding up and stand down of ALA personnel.
- **Review** – the Chair is responsible for determining the type of post-operational review(s) that may be conducted and reported on after all CLT operations have concluded. These activities are required to address a number of responsibilities, including
  - A continual improvement process cycle to check the adequacy of processes, procedures and policies
  - Sharing identified learnings with other ALA personnel as training or to increase the level of knowledge of all who may be involved in future operations
  - Reporting to key stakeholders (Member Associations, Australian Sports Commission, Federation of International Lacrosse etc, if applicable)

The Chair may conduct a 'hot debrief' (a less formal review meeting conducted immediately after operations conclude, for participants to share learning points while the response experiences are fresh) as required, prior to the winding up of CLT activities to:

- Ensure that any strategic operational issues are identified and recorded
- Address any immediate work health and safety issues
- Identify any long-term recovery support activities that may require further ALA support

Formal internal reviews (by formal meeting, written reports or a combination of both) should be conducted to identify and document actions such as:

- Those that worked well and should be used in the future
- Those that need to be improved prior to future use
- Changes required to this Policy and other ALA policies and practices
- Issues and actions to be reported to stakeholders.

The ALA Operations Officer is responsible for all review information management requirements such as:

- Ensuring that all records generated during the conduct of CLT operations are collated, available for formal review processes and retained in accordance with ALA policies
- Recording and documenting any 'hot debrief' or formal review meetings and collating all review records
- Documenting and actioning operational issues identified in the review.

The Crisis Team Leader (Chair or Vice Chair) is responsible for the review of this policy as follows:

- After any activation of the CLT in accordance with this policy
- As required by ALA policy review procedures.