



**ACTCA Umpires & Scorers Council,
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4 February 2009

Mr Mark Vergano
CEO
Cricket ACT

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Dear Mark

Please refer to the letter to you dated 2 February 2009 from Mr Rob Docker, the President of North Canberra Gungahlin Cricket Club, raising several issues concerning the administration of cricket in the ACT and umpiring in the Cricket ACT competition.

Mr Docker raises, as the first issue of major concern, "general umpiring competency", notes that he will continue "to agitate for improved umpiring standards" and claims that "it appears that little is being done on this front".

The Executive of the ACTCA Umpires and Scorers Council shares the interest of the President of North Canberra Gungahlin Cricket Club, and indeed the Presidents of all clubs in the Cricket ACT Competition, in umpiring in the competition being of high standard. It would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues with which he has concern with him and representatives of Cricket ACT and other clubs.

The highest priority of the ACTCAUSC is an education and training program for umpires to develop their knowledge of the Laws of Cricket, field craft and player management. The Council has established a Training Panel to this end, with Mr Bill Ruse, a member who has umpired over 100 first grade games in the ACT competition and many Cricket Australia Cup games, as its Chairman.

Aspiring umpires are required to attend a six to eight week course of instruction on the Laws of Cricket, to sit a test on these laws and obtain an 85 per cent pass mark before completing, successfully, a minimum five week on-the field assessment program to qualify for admission

as a Member of the Council. Those parts of the test paper in relation to which candidates responses were less than adequate are canvassed with the candidates by the course leaders.

Two of these instruction courses are held each year.

Additionally, each year a seminar is held which all members are expected to attend. The seminar focuses on the Laws of Cricket and Cricket ACT Competition Rules, field craft and player management.

At each monthly General Meeting high priority is accorded discussion of the Laws and Rules. This is led by Mr Ruse. The Umpires Observer, Mr Derek Gould who has over four decades of experience as an umpire, raises issues of Law/Rules, field craft and player management which come to his attention through facilitation reports. The Executive ensures the agenda provides for discussion of issues which come to its attention as a result of comments from the ACT cricket community, including those raised during the facilitation process. In relation to this I note that the agenda for the Council's February General Meeting provides for the discussion of LBW law and practice as a result of Mr Docker's comments and consistency in reporting as the result of informal comment from members of the Disciplinary Committee, a member of which attended a recent meeting of the Council at the invitation of the Executive.

Additionally, the Executive avails itself of opportunities to encourage good umpiring practice. An example of this was an email which I sent to all members prior to the One Day final and semi-finals last Friday.

I should note that the Director of Umpiring, Mr Brian Lawrence, who also has extensive practical experience as an umpire, accords attention, including through special briefing sessions, to developing the abilities of those umpires on our First Grade Panel and advising them on requirements of umpires who wish to progress through Cricket Australia Panel pathways.

Our training program is considered by Cricket Australia to be consistent with the standard required for Level 2 Accreditation, the standard required for umpiring at grade level.

The Council had also recently reconsidered the facilitation process, the perceived inadequacies in which have been the subject of recent consideration by a Working Group of the Council, the Council's Executive and its members. The aims included achieving a process which would best contribute to umpire development as well as facilitating the identification and resolution of more general match management issues. The Council is aware that there is continuing concern with the process and has made clear its interest in working with the Grade Cricket Committee to address this matter. The Council has no objection to the option put forward by Mr Docker being one of those considered.

The Executive is concerned by the claims that:

"high profile players are been given excessive latitude and favourable decisions by umpires";

"certain umpires can be "pressured";

"there is certainly a feeling amongst captains at all levels that adverse captain reports do not result in appropriate action by administrators";

"Captains perceive that it is not in their interests to provide negative reports as they are likely to have the same umpire allocated to their games in the near future regardless of their comments".

Mr Docker's concerns might be better addressed if he were to provide specific information to support his claims. I assure you that the Council would wish to work constructively with ACT Cricket to respond effectively to those matters which require such a response.

The facilitation process should be a place where the concerns regarding "latitude" and "pressure" can be raised, and through that process effectively addressed as the reports come before the Council. The Council has not received such reports. Mr Docker claims that this is the result of the concern of captains with the nature of the current facilitation process.

In relation to players pressuring umpires during matches, means for responding to this are raised during the annual seminar, from time to time at our monthly meetings and traditionally, prior to the two day finals.

In relation to Mr Docker's point that "there is certainly a feeling amongst captains at all levels that adverse captain reports do not result in appropriate action by administrators", I am not sure what the captains consider "appropriate action". If facilitation reports contain perceptions of unsatisfactory performance these matters are taken up with the relevant umpire by the Umpires Observer, and taken into account by the Appointments Panel. One report of unsatisfactory performance is unlikely to result in the demotion of an umpire, but a continuation of reports of unsatisfactory performance would be looked upon with concern by the Appointments Panel and taken into account in future appointments.

I would assure ACT Cricket, and through that the captains of teams participating in the ACT Cricket Competition, that if there is evidence of any umpire's decision-making being biased as a result of the facilitation process, or for any other reason, the Executive of the Council would take appropriate action.

The Council shares the concern regarding consistency in reporting and mentioning of players. This is, and will always be, a difficult issue. There will inevitably be grey areas and differences among umpires in their perceptions of conduct and the degree to which it is inconsistent with the Rules, Laws and Spirit of the Game. There are, however, some black and white issues which must lead to reports being made, leaving the Discipline Committee to consider issues which may have been relevant. This matter again will be addressed by Mr Ruse at the February meeting of the Council.

As a related matter, I have asked members of the Training Panel to review those matters which require reporting and mentioning with the view to reviewing the adequacy of the guidance on these matters currently available to members.

I assure Cricket ACT that the ACTCAUSC has given, and will continue to give, the highest priority to the training and development of our members so that they perform at high standards, and of our readiness to work constructively with ACT Cricket, club officials, team captains and players to this end.

Yours sincerely,

No signature: sent electronically

Ken Brazel
Chair