



# Affiliate Referee Development Framework

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Material Collated and Developed by (Author): Tim Wyld and Tara Steel– Touch Football Australia and Sport Operations Unit

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Touch Football Australia policies and procedures are living documents which reflect progress in administrative requirements and industry standards. As such, these documents to maintain currency, policy and procedures, are periodically reviewed and updated.

It is important the reader ensures that they are reading and using the most recent version. Updated versions and extracts of this handbook will be provided to affiliates. To confirm the version please contact TFA.

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## SECTION 1 – TFA REFEREE OVERVIEW

### 1. Introduction

Touch Football competitions rely heavily on referees, without them games could simply not proceed. Referees are in many ways the lifeblood of Touch Football competitions and are intrinsically linked to the participant experience, the quality of competitions and growth of our sport – without referee's growth is limited.

Referees at grassroots level are the shop window for the sport – they influence the enjoyment of participants and often provide the most interaction between participants and club/administrators. They are a conduit and perform much more than simply officiating matches. They ensure participants are safe, have an enjoyable experience, coach new (and experienced) participants and provide player feedback to organisers.

The purpose of this document is to provide members with a guide on how to develop, recruit and retain referees at affiliate competitions.

The Touch Football Australia (TFA) Affiliate Referee Development Framework outlines, for Touch Football, the process affiliates can adopt in order to develop referees at their competitions and benchmarks successful strategies from around the TFA affiliated network, with the aim to make affiliates more self-sufficient and viable given the critical importance referees play at competitions and influence they have on growth and the smooth operation of competitions.

It explains the Referee Accreditation Scheme and support systems that provide the necessary training and qualifications required to ensure referee development can occur. The aim of this resource is to enable affiliate members to understand how they can deliver these programs, and facilitate ongoing development within their own competitions to create, sustain and improve referees internally.

TFA has taken all care possible in the preparation of this publication; please contact TFA to clarify any errors, omissions or inaccuracies. This publication is of a general nature only and should be used in conjunction with related TFA policies and frameworks as published at [www.austouch.com.au](http://www.austouch.com.au)

## 2. Referee Accreditation

The TFA referee accreditation system provides pathway progression for referees. There are six competency levels which contain a specific set of required skills and knowledge to attain. The higher the badge level the more experienced and qualified the referee.

It is a requirement of the TFA National Insurance Scheme that TFA affiliates have accredited referees at competitions (minimum level 1). In circumstances where duty referees are used the recommended minimum standard is completion of the Australian Sports Commissions General Officiating Principles online course. This is to provide safety, manage risk and quality assurance of affiliated Touch Football to players and officials.

In addition accredited referees are valuable assets to affiliate competitions as they can provide valuable services such as referee coaching, assessing, mentoring, referee allocations, rule interpretations, conflict resolution and course delivery providing they have the necessary qualifications.

### How to become an accredited referee & progress

The following illustrates the six TFA Referee Badge Levels and the process for obtainment



### **To advance a referee should:**

- Enjoy the game;
- Be ambitious
- Endeavour to be consistent in their rulings; and
- Ensure the game is enjoyable for all participants.

In general, if a referee wishes to advance they should ensure that they meet the following:

- Have sound knowledge of the playing rules;
- Acceptable standard of fitness;
- Exhibit the keenness to be coached;
- Display acceptable 'People Skills' in relation to their handling of game participants; and
- Be prepared to referee on a consistent basis thus ensuring they gain experience.

More information on the Referee Accreditation system can be found at [www.austouch.com.au](http://www.austouch.com.au) .

### 3. Recruitment and Retention of Referees

One of the greatest challenges that confront new and established affiliates across the whole of the country is the recruitment and retention of referees. Referee numbers at all levels of the sport continue to fall short of demand.

It is important to understand that a qualified\* referee must officiate on every game conducted by your affiliate. This is for several reasons:

- a) It is a requirement of TFA sport insurance.
- b) TFA is affiliated with the Australian Sports Commission. The ASC require all sports to have suitably qualified officials for all games.
- c) It enhances the experience of all participants involved in the game.

One of the most effective ways recommended to recruit referees is to make it a requirement of entry for each competition that at least five (5) members of each team complete the online ASC General Officiating Principles course and at least one member completes the Level One Referees Course. The cost of the course could be built into the competition entry fee.

But this is only one of many strategies you should adopt. In order to recruit referees you need personnel in place to create and harness an enjoyable environment for all participants; referees included.

Enjoyable and organised environments are critical for the recruitment and retention of referees.

Referees, like everyone in the sport, are in it for the enjoyment and are often doing it to help the affiliate out. Therefore referees should be rewarded by recognition and an environment that is well organised and supportive.

The ability for participants to choose refereeing as a way to improve or maintain fitness, create friendships, assist your affiliate and have fun being involved in our sport are all avenues to both recruit and retain referees.

TFA have identified a vital ingredient to the recruitment and retention of referees is the support mechanisms and personnel put in place for not only referees, but any volunteer.

If your affiliate is committed to Referee Development then your first point of call should be the Clubhouse section of the TFA website.

The Clubhouse section of the TFA website at <http://www.austouch.com.au/index.php?id=1241> contains a series of documents and tools to help affiliates and volunteers in this area. In particular the **Affiliate Management Resource** contains a section for referees, which includes Referee Coordinator roles, Referee Coach Information and other useful resources.

Note - \*Minimum Level 1 accreditation or ASC General Officiating Principles for duty referees

## 4. Referee Coaches

A referee coach is a qualified person who can provide specialist advice to referees and coach on field performance based on the qualities required for the relevant referee badge level.

The Referee Coach (depending on the level of accreditation held) can perform assessments and upgrade referees.

Their main role is to provide support and mentoring to referees.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach at affiliate competitions</li> <li>• Mentor, support and encourage referees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach at affiliate and regional competitions</li> <li>• Formally assess Referees for Level 2 accreditation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach at state competitions</li> <li>• Formally assess Referees for Level 3 and 4 accreditation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach at National competitions</li> <li>• Formally assess Referees for Levels 5-6 accreditation</li> </ul>

More information on the Referee Coach Accreditation system can be found at [www.austouch.com.au](http://www.austouch.com.au) contact your local referee panel or regional/state association.

## 5. Course Presenters

An accredited Course Presenter is an individual that is trained to coordinate and present TFA courses. Having an accredited course presenter will assist affiliates to deliver their own courses for referees in particular as required throughout the season, and train them appropriately.

TFA through the State and Regional offices conduct both Presenter and Referee Coach Courses.

By combining these two courses participants can obtain their Level 1 Referee Coach and Level 1 Course Presenter accreditation, enabling them to perform key functions at affiliate competitions. In some exceptional occasions a person may achieve their Level 2 Course Presenter accreditation.

These functions include;

- Coaching referees
- Mentoring referees
- Provide advice and support to referees, players and committee members
- Presenting referee courses (once assessed/limitations apply)
- Perform on field referee assessments and grading at affiliate competitions (once assessed/limitations apply)

These functions will enhance an affiliate's ability to retain and recruit referees by having key personnel in support roles and enable the assessment of new referees on site enabling affiliates to self-manage their referees locally.



## SECTION 2 – IMPLEMENTING REFEREE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

### 1. Benefits of Referee Development

#### **Increased Participant Satisfaction (Enjoyment)**

Knowledge is power. Having accredited referees that are knowledgeable with the rules which have a strong support network behind them, gives referees the confidence to officiate in matches and to effectively communicate with participants.

Improved communication will improve refereeing and game standards through liaison with players. This manages conflict and effectively resolves unpleasant situations, resulting in an overall increase in participant enjoyment at your competition.

Participant enjoyment = retention and positive word of mouth.

#### **Referee Retainment and Recruitment**

Referees are hard to recruit and retain, especially if they are subject to abuse from players or overworked due to a lack of referees. By implementing a program that supports referees through regular coaching, feedback and mentorship not only does the referee improve their decision making and on-field performance but it also equips them to educate participants on appropriate behaviour.

**Creating a supportive referee environment** that people want to be a part of cannot be underestimated. This will reduce the stress of allocating referees to games, and the standard of refereeing will improve. Ultimately, achieving a reduction in on-field incidents and increasing the enjoyment of all involved at your competition.

#### **Enable growth**

The expansion of competitions is very often limited to the available referee resources to support additional games. With a strong referee support system in place, while using the accreditation systems provides an opportunity for self-sustainability to educate and support refereeing. With accredited referees, expansion becomes a viable option for affiliates.

#### **Freedom to accredit and coach referees when you want**

By undertaking a referee development program, your affiliate can have qualified individuals capable of running referee badge level courses and grading assessments at your competition. This gives you the freedom to schedule courses, and perform assessments when it suits you – there's no waiting until it suits your regional or State association

#### **Positive Culture Established**

By implementing a referee development program, supporting and providing ongoing training and advice to referees will improve on field performance and communication in turn rubbing off on players through increased respect, understanding (of rules/expectations) and game standard.

All these items will improve the overall culture of your competition. Your competition will be a respectful enjoyable place to play Touch Football and this will improve your marketability to new participants.

## 2. Key Considerations: Tips for Sustainable Referee Development

When implementing a referee development program it is important to consider a number of key factors before you commence in order to ensure your program is effective and achieves its desired results.

### 1. Establish goals and have a plan how you will achieve them

Before you get started, work out exactly what you want to achieve.

Do you need more referees?

Do you want to expand your competition but do not have the referees to do it?

Or do you want to have the ability to present courses and assess referees because of your regional location?

It could be for a variety of reasons.

Like any strategic or business plan it is important to work out what you want to achieve and then work backwards from there. Having clear specific and measurable goals will enable you to determine the steps that need to occur in what order for you to achieve your goals.

Your plan should be documented and made available to members of your affiliate to ensure continuity should committee member's change in the future.

In some instances there may be a number of steps you will need to achieve before implementing a program. For example you may not have any level 2 or higher referees at your competition which will limit your ability to appoint a referee coach or course presenter (or referee mentor). Therefore you will need to invest significant time to train local referees and provide them with enough experience to be able to fulfil any such position.

### 2. Consider the resources required

Your plan should consider the ongoing resources required to implement any program or initiative. Undoubtedly there will be financial costs involved and careful consideration should be applied prior to commencing.

There will also be human resources required (your time), and these items need to be carefully assessed prior to commencing to ensure the feasibility of your project. (There's no point having a grand idea if you don't have the means to support it).

### 3. Identify key individuals at your competition

Before you start you need to identify who is going to perform the key roles of your program. Some affiliates may have no problems as they already have numerous individuals who are suitably qualified and willing to assist your program, others may have no-one and need to start from scratch.

In some instances there may be a number of steps you will need to achieve before implementing a program. For example you may not have any level 2 or higher referees at your competition which will limit your ability to appoint a referee coach or course presenter (or referee mentor).

Therefore you will need to invest significant time to train local referees and provide them with enough experience to be able to fulfil any such position.

**4. Consider timings**

It is important to consider timings when implementing your program. Obviously most programs will occur concurrently with affiliate competitions. It may take multiple seasons to fully implement your program (especially if you need to meet certain prerequisites).

**5. Have a support structure in place**

Forming a support structure is one of the simplest tasks yet is often overlooked and is the cause of most failures. Developing a relationship with your State or regional referee panel will provide you with a sound support structure for your referees and will also ensure that frequent follow ups on your progress are maintained, keeping the program on track.

**6. Overcoming Obstacles**

Being prepared to make changes and alter your approach to implementation is important; things don't always go to plan. It's important to be able to identify if something isn't working and be willing review, evaluate and make changes if needed. By establishing clear communication channels, you provide your stakeholders with a platform to present challenges, and an avenue for implementing any changes that are needed. The early identification of potential challenges is key to your affiliate's sustainability.

### 3. Developing Junior Referees

TFA have a comprehensive [National Junior Development Framework](#) that also includes a section for Junior Referees.

The development of our junior referees has become an integral component to the overall success of referee programs. TFA has a commitment to coordinate the development of junior referees in conjunction with State, regional and local affiliates.

States have begun to implement specific junior programs to provide pathways for their young developing referees. The programs are mentoring systems that provide support and education with the aim of increasing the retention rates of junior referees. Built into an affiliates Referee Development program should be the target area of junior referees.

Some general principles to follow are:

- The minimum age is 11 years for junior referees, officiating in junior competitions with children a year younger than their age. This allows for the development of ideas, ability to understand the rules and their effect on the game and players.
- Generally, junior referees should be nurtured throughout junior competitions, progressing slowly as their confidence and on-field skills develop. Use of the Twin Referee System or Mirror Referee System (two referees on the field simultaneously) should be used as much as possible. This system allows for an experienced referee to be on the field at the same time as the junior referee and only 10 metres away, thus able to demonstrate correct behaviours, signals, rule applications and communicate and support the junior. The system also allows the more experienced referee to deal with conflict issues thus absolving the junior of the need to be abused and lose confidence.
- Junior referees, are not recommended to officiate at senior competitions unless they are 14 years and above, and deemed competent as a Level 1 referee as assessed by an accredited Level 1 Referee Coach.
- In the instance that they meet these criteria, then it is recommended they are only allocated games with an adult or more experienced buddy referee.
- Junior referees should be encouraged to provide refereeing services at all school and other junior events (e.g. State, regional and local affiliates). However, they should not be appointed to games that are above their capabilities.
- It is recommended that payment for officiating on junior games not be monetary, rather subsidies to attend junior workshops, school championships, junior State cups or, referee apparel. Payment should be with the view of incentive.
- The same incentives that are promoted to junior participants should be available to junior referees. Local affiliates together with State and regional Development Officers should promote the junior referee development program alongside the junior player program within the local school system by way of written advice, and regular visits to promote the knowledge of how to participate in becoming a junior referee.

## 4. Establishing Your Development Plan & Program

Referee Development Plan			
<b>Affiliate</b>		<b>Year/Season</b>	
<b>Goals &amp; Objectives:</b>	<p><i>Determine what you want to achieve E.g.: new referees, retain current referees, increase referee numbers, junior referees, referee coaches, referee mentors, duals/triples all games etc. It may also be worthwhile to prioritise what goals you consider the highest priority, and others which are great if you achieve, but not essential.</i></p>		
<b>Current Situation:</b>		<b>Limitations:</b>	
<p><i>Key points that are current situation, e.g. referee numbers, competition numbers, trends (declining, maintaining numbers etc.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>		<p><i>Key points that are or may inhibit development:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Use this information to help complete Action Plan Summary on the following page. An example is provided.</i></p>			

**Action Plan Summary**

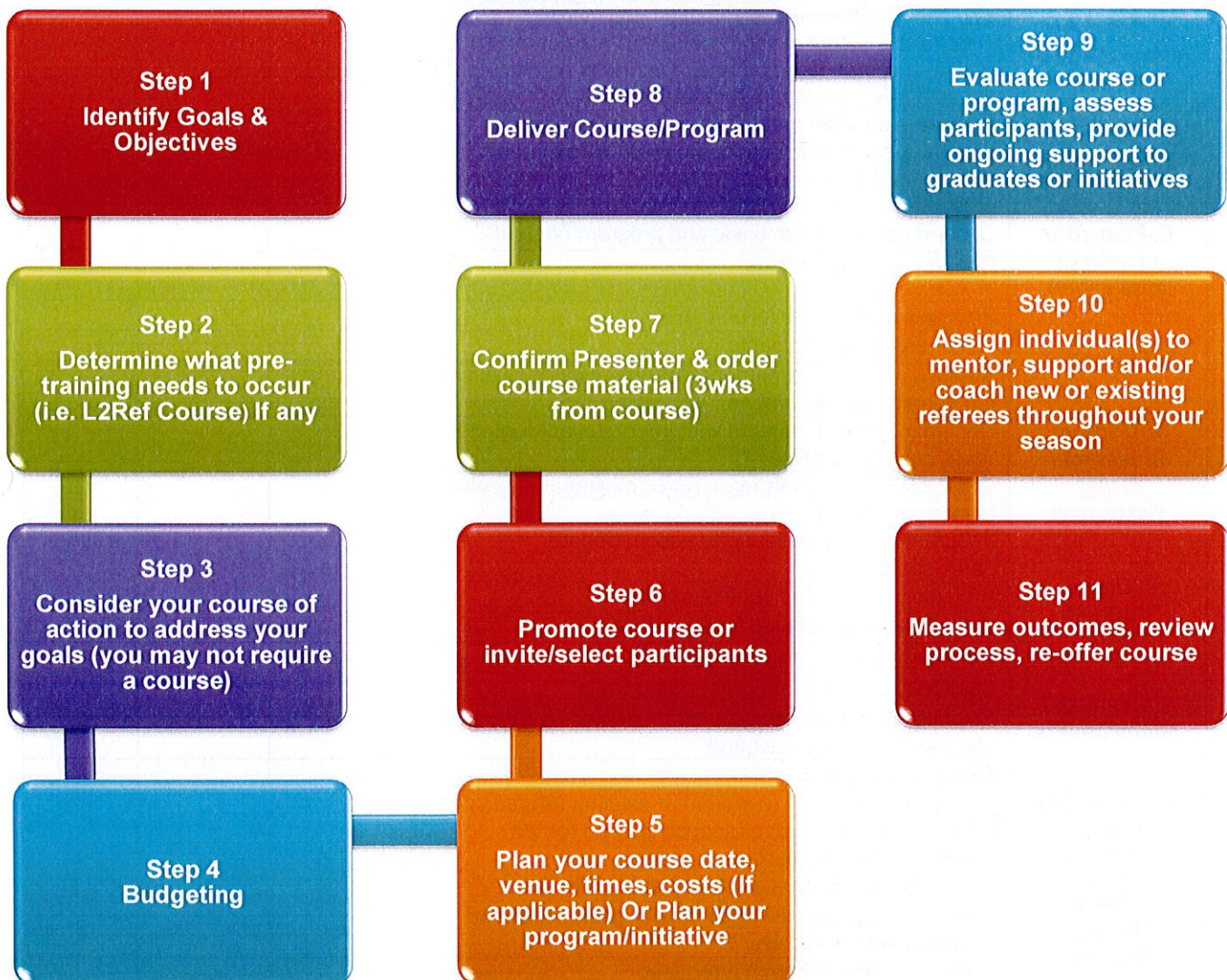
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Detail</b>
<p><i>EXAMPLE:</i> 1. Increase referee numbers from 25 to 35</p>	<p><i>Course for new referees</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Built into team fees is a free course per one team member to attend Referee Level 1 Course</i></li> <li>• <i>Promotion of course to all teams and individuals via email, flyers etc.</i></li> </ul>
	<p><i>Retention of current season referees</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Each referee is communicated with regularly from Referee Coordinator</i></li> <li>• <i>Each referee is offered a mentor to work with across the season</i></li> <li>• <i>Referee coaching occurring min 4 times a year per referee.</i></li> </ul>

## 5. Implementing Your Program - Establishing a Timeline

Although there is no set timeframe that your affiliate must adhere to when implementing a referee development program, having a project timeline will encourage progression and maximise efficiency to ensure your competition benefits from your program as soon as possible

Below is a suggested timeline that your affiliate can customise to suit your needs. The time it takes to complete this process be dependent on a variety of factors including;

- The size of your competition
- Number of volunteers present
- Level of training required
- Type of program you implement (degree of detail)



## 6. Checklist for Implementing a Referee Development Program

The following checklist will assist you implement a successful referee development program

Steps	Tasks	Assigned to	Due Date	Status
1. Goals and Objectives	Determine what you want to achieve from the Program (i.e. new referees, course presenters, referee coaches) and write them down			
	Determine the feasibility of your goals by developing a plan that considers the who, how, what and when			
2. Identify Pre-requisites and/or any potential barriers	Identify any potential barriers to your program (i.e. you may not have any Level 2 Referee's currently therefore you cannot complete the referee coach course until participants are accredited level 2 referees.			
	Determine if distance and cost are factors and implement solutions accordingly			
	Run a Level 2 Referee Course prior to any Referee Coach Course (if applicable) allowing enough time for assessment to occur.			
3. Consider your Course of Action	You should determine what action you need to undertake to achieve your goals. This may or may not require a course (for example, appointing a volunteer to act as a referee coordinator may address your needs)			
4. Budgeting	Prepare a detailed program budget considering presenter expenses, venue hire fees, refreshments, shirt costs (for new referee coaches), travel fees for presenters/assessors			
5. Plan your course (if applicable)	Confirm course dates, costs and program content			
	Confirm a suitable venue			
6. Promotion	Promote course via available mediums			
	Invite targeted participants			
	Release a statement on behalf of organisation outlining the benefits and your aims			
7. Confirm Presenter / Order Resources	Confirm course presenters with your relevant regional, State or national office			
	Order course materials from TFA a minimum 3 weeks before your course			
8. Deliver Courses	Ensure the venue is set up to accommodate participants			
	Projector, screen and speakers secured			
	Course Material collated for each member			
	Refreshments for course organised			
9. Evaluate / Assessments	Seek feedback from program participants			
	Establish plan to assess course presenters & referee coaches (when, how, where)			
	Assess participants			
9. Implement Support Systems	Assign new, recently upgraded or existing referees with either a mentor, coach or support person for the duration of the competition or season			
10. Review / Measure Success	Review the program – what was good, bad etc.			
	Measure the outcomes against your goals – Did you achieve them? If not why?			
	Repeat process/program if required			

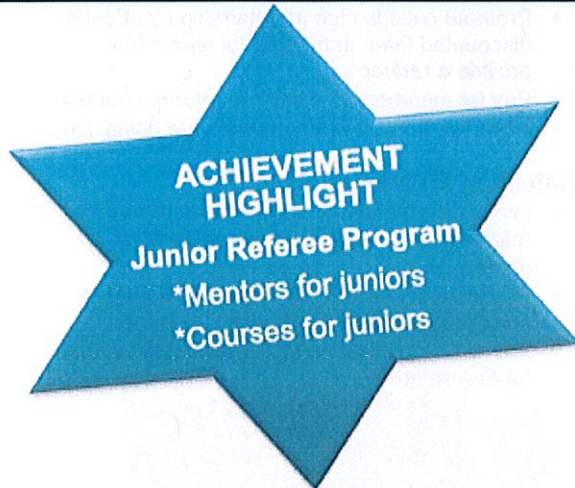


## SECTION 3 – SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

The following case studies depict successful referee development programs implemented by clubs and associations from around Australia which could act as a guide for affiliates looking to establish their own program.

### Affiliate Referee Profiles

#### Devonport Touch Association (TAS)



#### Recruitment

- Promote pathways and support for Referees
- Specific advertisements and promotion of courses
- Promote opportunity to attend other tournaments and events
- Use existing referees as role models for the referee arm assists greatly at all levels

#### Retention & Pathway Promotion

- Ensure game allocations are according to skill level
- Provide a support network through coaching where possible
- Provide development opportunities such as courses, access to other events and forums/workshops



#### Committee Support

- Support of Referee Director's and Coaches individual development
- Referee Abuse is not tolerated and having a formal policy around Judiciary procedures that will support referees and players alike

#### Other Advice

- Find and access some motivated individuals throughout your affiliate, State or National networks to assist in the set up of a development plan for your affiliate, and people to help implement it to achieve your goals

*Touch Football Australia would like to acknowledge and thank Jo Mason and Devonport Touch Association for providing this information for the Affiliate Referee Profiles.*

## Affiliate Referee Profiles

Adelaide University Touch Association (SA)

### ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHT

Recruitment and retention  
has led to ability to provide  
dual referees per game

### Affiliate Size

- Medium (30-100 Teams)

### Competition Nights

- 1 Per Week - Summer Season

### Referee Format

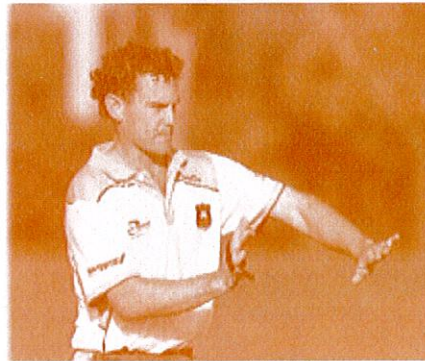
- Duals all games

### Recruitment

- Approach new club member who show traits of good refereeing
- Promote outside club membership by offering discounted team entry fees for teams that provide a referee
- Pay for members to complete referee courses
- Advertise heavily when courses are being run

### Retention & Pathway Promotion

- Inviting pay schemes, including more pay for referees who officiate certain amounts of games
- Provide a support network through coaching and feedback where possible
- Provide development opportunities and support for new referees



### Committee Support

- Encourage referees to contact the club with any issues
- Teams consistently reminded of the touch Code of Conduct, which includes conduct towards officials

### Other Advice

- Ensure point of contact for all referees. 2-way Communication between referees and administrators is key
- Value the referees, recognition and awards encourages them to come back

*Touch Football Australia would like to acknowledge and thank Adelaide University Touch Association for providing this information for the Affiliate Referee Profiles.*