

## THUNDERSTORM ASTHMA POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

Ballarat Associated Schools Inc. (hereinafter referred to as 'BAS') is committed to organising and strengthening interschool activities to provide opportunities for Member Schools to cultivate friendship, fair play, co-operation and healthy competition. These activities take place in a variety of facilities and venues. At times these locations may be affected by Thunderstorm Asthma.

Although each Member School is required to have its own robust policy and procedure in place, the Committee identified the need to develop a *Thunderstorm Asthma Policy* to ensure the duty of care to all participants is fulfilled and that each Member School has a clear procedure in place.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a consistent and risk aware approach is taken for holding sports activities during grass pollen season (generally 1 October- 31 December of each year).

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all activities and events organised or scheduled by BAS.

### DEFINITIONS

<i>Activity</i>	means a recreational pursuit or pastime and for the purpose of this policy may include events.
<i>Host School</i>	means <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For internal venues, the Member School who is under control of the venue.</li> <li>- For external venues, the Member School who is the first named team in the fixture.</li> </ul>
<i>Epidemic Thunderstorm Asthma Forecast-</i>	Operates between 1 October and 31 December and is available through Vic Emergency. It forecasts a certain uncommon type of thunderstorm and grass pollen counters across Victoria. The forecast uses the following scale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Low Risk (Green)</i>- means that the elements necessary for an epidemic thunderstorm asthma event are not expected and an incident is unlikely.</li> <li>- <i>Moderate Risk (Orange)</i>- means that one of the elements necessary for an event may be present and there is a moderate chance of an epidemic thunderstorm asthma event occurring.</li> <li>- <i>High Risk (Red)</i>- means that a high pollen forecast and severe thunderstorm with strong winds are likely to be present increasing the risk of an epidemic thunderstorm asthma event occurring.</li> </ul>
<i>Thunderstorm Asthma</i>	Means asthma triggered by a mixture of grass pollen in the air and thunderstorm conditions.

### DETAIL

#### Part 1- Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of the Committee to ensure this policy is enacted and implemented for all activities organised or scheduled by BAS.
2. It is the responsibility of the Head of each Member School to ensure the sport co-ordinator is able and willing to implement this policy.
3. It is the responsibility of the host school to facilitate all necessary communication required to enact this policy, as required.

## **Part 2- General**

1. It is recommended that all Member School representatives attending BAS events have the Vic Emergency App on their phone in order that weather forecasts can be monitored and staff have the most up to date information.
2. All Member School are required to have a Thunderstorm Asthma Policy in place, in which their staff and volunteers have received training in and are willing and able to implement. This policy must include the following:
  - 2.1 Internal procedures for providing training and education to the school community regarding the signs and symptoms of asthma and how to provide the four steps of asthma first aid.
  - 2.2 Robust internal procedures to ensure all students have an up-to-date asthma action plan (if they have asthma) and have relevant reliever medication accessible at all times.
  - 2.3 Internal procedures for who is responsible for checking the Vic Emergency App on a daily basis.
  - 2.4 Internal procedures for communication to the School community for moderate and high-risk days.
  - 2.5 Clear policies and strategies in place regarding identifying high risk students.
  - 2.6 Clear procedures for risk minimisation strategies, including for sporting events.
  - 2.7 Clear communication strategies for notifying the school community, including emergency contacts.
3. As part of planning, the host school must monitor the epidemic thunderstorm asthma forecast for any BAS activities scheduled between 1 October and 31 December of each year.
4. The day prior to the activity the host school or event organiser should complete the following:
  - 4.1 Check the predicted weather forecast in the event area as provided by Vic Emergency.
    - 4.1.1 If Vic Emergency has predicted a moderate or high risk for epidemic thunderstorm asthma occurring, the host school and/or the event organiser should communicate this prediction with the BAS Executive Officer and Heads of School.
    - 4.1.2 The BAS Executive Officer and Heads of Schools or their delegate (if relevant) should complete their own risk assessment of the prediction and the effect that it may have on the activity. This should include but not be limited to the following factors:
      - 4.1.2.1 The sports risk classification (see annexure 1).
      - 4.1.2.2 The location of the event.
      - 4.1.2.3 Whether the event is to be held inside or outside.
      - 4.1.2.4 The facilities available at the event location.
      - 4.1.2.5 The impact the weather may have on any marshals, volunteers or staff necessary to run to activity.
      - 4.1.2.6 How participants and staff are being transported to the event.
      - 4.1.2.7 The age of the students participating.
      - 4.1.2.8 Any risk mitigation strategies that can be put in place and their effectiveness.
      - 4.1.2.9 Lastly, any impact of the activity being postponed or cancelled may be considered.

- 4.1.3 If it is decided that the event and/or activity is to proceed as scheduled, the Executive Officer and Head of Schools are to continue to closely monitor the Vic Emergency App and the predicted forecast.
- 4.2 On the day of the activity the host school and/or event organiser should complete the following:
  - 4.2.1 Continue to closely monitor the predicted weather forecast provided by Vic Emergency.
  - 4.2.2 If the Vic Emergency has predicted a moderate or high risk for epidemic thunderstorm asthma occurring, the host school and/or the event organiser should communicate this prediction with the BAS Executive Officer and Heads of Schools (if relevant) as soon as circumstances permit.
  - 4.2.3 The BAS Executive Officer and Head of Schools should complete their own risk assessment of the prediction and the effect that it may have on the activity. This should include but not be limited to the factors outlined in Part 2 clause 4.1.2.
- 5. On high risk days, Member Schools must complete a risk assessment and have a strong risk mitigation strategy in place if an activity is going to proceed. This risk assessment needs to be provided to BAS for their approval.
- 6. Where possible, a decision regarding the event and/or activity proceeding should be made as early as possible, but at least half a day prior to the event. However, where weather conditions change, a decision will be made and communicated as early as practical.

### **Part 3- Implementation**

- 1. This Policy is implemented through a combination of the following strategies:
  - 1.1 Member training, education and information.
  - 1.2 Encouraging a collaborative, communicative and proactive approach.
  - 1.3 Promoting a positive reporting cultural.
  - 1.4 Initiating corrective action where appropriate.
  - 1.5 Member Schools annually signing their member agreement.

### **Part 4- Audit & Review**

- 1. BAS is committed to continuous review and improvement of all of its operations, including this policy.
- 2. It is the responsibility of the Committee to regularly monitor and annually review the effectiveness of the policy in practice.
- 3. It is the responsibility of the BAS Executive Officer to ensure spot audits are completed at least annually for each member school and relevant records are maintained.
- 4. As part of the review process it is the responsibility of the Member School to ensure the Sports Co-ordinator (or equivalent) is actively involved in reviewing this policy.

### **Part 5- Breach**

- 1. Any breach of this policy will be taken seriously and immediately followed up by BAS.
- 2. Any breach of this policy may lead to action being taken, for serious breaches, this may include but is not limited to termination of membership.

<i>Thunderstorm Asthma Policy</i>	<i>Person Responsible: BAS Committee</i>	<i>Approved by: BAS Committee</i>
<i>Date of Approval: 29 October 2025</i>	<i>Last Review: 6 August 2025</i>	<i>Next Review: Term 3 2026</i>

### ANNEXURE 1

The following sports risk classification by Sports Medicine Australia provides a basis for classifying activities based on the combined effects of exercise intensity and clothing/ equipment worn with 1 being the lowest classification to 5 being the highest risk classification.

Sport Risk Classification				
1	2	3	4	5
Walking (leisurely)	Archery Bowls Field Athletics Fishing Golf Lifesaving Surf Sailing Shooting (Pistol/Trap) Walking (brisk)	Abseiling Australian Football Basketball Cycling Canoeing Caving Kayaking Netball Oztag Rock Climbing Rowing Soccer Tennis Touch Football Long Distance Running Triathlon Volleyball	Baseball Bushwalking Cricket Equestrian Horseback riding Motor Cycling Rugby Union Rugby League Softball	Field Hockey Mountain Biking