



## MIXED GENDER DISPENSATION PROCEDURE

### BACKGROUND

Rugby Australia has created this procedure to ensure the suitability of mixed gender teams and the circumstances where girls should be permitted to play contact Rugby with boys. It takes into consideration the differences in physical and mental development of boys and girls at the various stages of progression through the established age-grade pathways within Australia.

The starting position for mixed gender participation is as follows:

**Boys and girls may participate in mixed gender rugby up to and including the calendar year (1 January - 31 December) in which they turn 12 years of age.**

Whilst boys and girls may often prefer to play sports with those of the same gender, Rugby Australia supports boys and girls playing rugby together up to and including the year in which they turn 12 years of age.

Rugby Australia is constantly seeking to grow the number of girls' competitions throughout Australia so that both boys and girls have access to regular rugby. However, where that opportunity for regular rugby is not available, Rugby Australia wishes to ensure that these girls are afforded the opportunity to continue their participation in our game, so long as it is safe for them to do so.

### WITH DISPENSATION – WHERE CAN A PLAYER PLAY?

The dispensation procedure sets out a step-by-step process to enable mixed gender participation as follows:

**A girl over 12 years of age may, subject to meeting the requirements of the dispensation procedure, play in a mixed gender team in the Under 13, Under 14 and Under 15 age groups where no other opportunity to play regular Rugby exists. A girl can participate in a mixed gender team in the calendar year up to and including the year in which they turn 15 (1 January to 31 December).**

Please note: Ad hoc tournaments and development programs should not be viewed as 'regular' Rugby competitions and should therefore not prevent an application being made for Mixed Gender Dispensation. When assessing whether or not a player has regular Rugby opportunities, consideration should also be given to the player's preferred format of Rugby.

### HOW DO THE 'SIZE FOR AGE' GUIDELINES APPLY?

Rugby Australia has published its ['Size for Age' Guidelines](#) that contain mandatory assessment requirements for male and female age-grade players. These guidelines require players in the age groups **Under 10 to Under 15** that fall above or below certain height and weight parameters for each age group to undergo an assessment by an **Independent Qualified Assessing Coach** to determine the child's appropriate playing age-grade.

The Mixed Gender Dispensation Procedure already requires mandatory assessment by an Independent Qualified Assessing Coach for all applicants. However, the height and weight parameters set out in the 'Size for Age' Guidelines should be used as a reference tool when undertaking the assessment in order to determine the physical development of the player relative to the norms of the age group and the competition that is most appropriate.





An Independent\* Qualified Assessing Coach must hold a minimum Level 2 Coach Accreditation, current Smart Rugby qualification and have completed the Assessing Coach Module within the [Rugby Learning Centre](#).

*\*A Qualified Assessing Coach is defined as being Independent if they are a coach registered with another Club or School OR in a Club or School with more than two teams per age group, or the Age Coordinator or Head Junior Coach for that Club / School.*

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the responsibility of all Coaches, Club Officials, Unions and Affiliates and Parents / Guardians to follow this procedure when seeking opportunities for young players to participate in age-grade rugby in order to ensure inclusion whilst having primary regard for the Rugby Australia Safety Policy.

**Please note that intentional or reckless disregard for the Rugby Australia Safety Policy, Rugby Australia Participation Policy or this procedure may result in disciplinary action under the Rugby Australia Code of Conduct.**

Each State / Territory Union must designate an appropriate person(s) to administer this procedure within a competition. The competition manager will generally be the person responsible; however, the State / Territory Union may nominate an alternate person and/or convene an advisory panel or group of subject matter experts to provide recommendations and/or make decisions on the application of this procedure.

This procedure is applicable to all registered players participating in an age-grade competitions except for the non-contact form of Rugby, Touch7s.



## STEP BY STEP PROCEDURES

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
1	<b>A girl wishes to participate in a mixed gender competition in an Under 13, Under 14 or Under 15 age-group.</b>	Accredited Coach / Club or School Official / Parent or Guardian	A girl, up to and including the year in which she turns 15, expresses a desire to participate in mixed gender competition in an Under 13, Under 14 or Under 15 age group. (This does not apply to girls turning 16 in the calendar year that she wishes to play in)
2	<b>The Mixed Gender Consent Form is obtained.</b>	Club / School Parent / Guardian	The Club / School provide the Parent / Guardian with the Mixed Gender Dispensation Consent Form OR the Parent / Guardian downloads it from the Rugby Australia website.
3	<b>The Mixed Gender Consent Form is completed.</b>	Parent / Guardian	The Mixed Gender Dispensation Consent Form is completed and returned to the Club / School.
4	<b>A Medical Practitioner who knows the player provides written support.</b>	Medical Practitioner who knows the player	Written confirmation is provided from a medical practitioner who knows the player that states that the player is in a physical condition to play contact sport with that view being supported by a musculo-skeletal evaluation and/or other appropriate assessments.
5	<b>The Mixed Gender Consent Form and Medical Practitioner Support sent to Competition Manager.</b>	Parent / Guardian OR Club / School	The Mixed Gender Dispensation Consent Form and the written confirmation from the medical practitioner is then sent to the relevant Competition Manager.
6	<b>The Consent Form and Medical Practitioner support is evaluated, and regular Rugby opportunities for the player assessed.</b>	Competition Manager	On receipt of the Consent forms and support from a medical practitioner, the Competition Manager considers what, if any, regular Rugby opportunities exist for the player, taking into consideration the players preferred format of Rugby.  If regular Rugby does exist, the Competition Manager informs the player that the process will not proceed and provides details of the competition.

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
7	<p><b>Union appointed Medical Practitioner and an Independent Qualified Assessing Coach are assigned.</b></p>		<p>If there are no regular Rugby opportunities for the player, the Competition Manager:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. informs the applicant of the details of a locally based medical officer approved by the Union and instructs the player to seek an assessment; and</li> <li>b. Assigns an Independent Qualified Assessing Coach</li> </ul>
8	<p><b>The Union approved Medical Practitioner provides an assessment of the player</b></p>	<p>Union identified Medical Practitioner</p>	<p>Written agreement from a medical officer with an understanding of the demands of Rugby (employed, retained or approved by the player’s Union) that the player is in a physical condition to play Rugby at the desired level with that view being supported by musculo-skeletal evaluation and/or other appropriate assessments. The medical practitioner may request video footage of competition/age-grade rugby that the player seeks to participate in</p>
9	<p><b>The Independent Qualified Assessing Coach undertakes an assessment of the player</b></p>	<p>Independent Qualified Assessing Coach</p>	<p>Assessment is undertaken with the player’s Physical Development, Physical Fitness (if required), Skill Development and Player Safety being considered and recorded as prescribed in the Assessing Coach Report.</p>
10	<p><b>The Assessing Coach Report is submitted (along with Schedule B – Front Row exemption- if required)</b></p>	<p>Independent Qualified Assessing Coach</p>	<p>The Assessing Coach Report is submitted online, <b>or</b> a copy is returned to the Competition Manager with a recommendation on whether to approve the Mixed Gender Dispensation <b>and</b> specifying the appropriate age grade for the player.</p> <p><b>Please Note:</b> Players seeking Mixed Gender Dispensation and requesting to play in the <u>Front Row</u> (prop or hooker) must also apply for approval from Rugby Australia prior to participation in rugby, as outlined in Schedule B* - Exception for Front Row. <i>*Not required for Sevens Rugby.</i></p>

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	
11	<b>All the material is reviewed, and the Mixed Gender Dispensation recommendation is approved or declined.</b>	Competition Manager (or designated Union representative)	<p>The competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) will review the assessment before deciding to either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approve or decline the application for dispensation; <b>OR</b></li> <li>• request a further independent assessment in line with the Rugby Australia Safety Policy; <b>OR</b></li> <li>• make a recommendation to the player (or their parent/guardian) as to the appropriate age grade or competition for that player based on the initial assessment or the subsequent independent assessment.</li> </ul>
12	<b>Environmental and social factors considered.</b>	Competition Manager	The competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) will contact the Club / School and ensure that all appropriate environmental and social factors have been considered with respect to the safety and wellbeing of the player and other participants in the competition.
13	<b>Changes made to competition management system and parties notified.</b>	Competition Manager	Appropriate changes are made in the Competition Management System (Rugby Link) to enable participation in the approved competition. The Club / School is notified along with the Parent / Guardian.
14	<b>Notification of other Clubs / Schools</b>	Competition Manager	Where dispensation is provided pursuant to this Mixed Gender Dispensation Procedure, Clubs / Schools with teams in the relevant competition in which dispensation has been granted are also notified.

## OTHER INFORMATION

Any grievance by players (or their parents/guardians) regarding decisions made pursuant to this Mixed Gender Dispensation Procedure must be dealt with in accordance with the grievance procedure of the relevant Union with jurisdiction for the competition.

Rugby Australia has the discretion to review any decision made pursuant to this Mixed Gender Dispensation Procedure and/or to conduct any enquiries or investigation as considered appropriate

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [Rugby Australia Code of Conduct](#)
- [Rugby Australia Member Protection PolicyWorld Rugby Mixed Gender Rugby Guidelines](#)
- [Mixed Gender Dispensation Consent Form](#)
- [Assessing Coach Report](#)
- [Dispensation Schedule B - Exception for Front Row](#)
- [Rugby Australia Safety Policy](#)
- [Rugby Australia Participation Policy](#)
- [Junior Age Grade/Senior Rugby Guidelines Table](#)
- ['Size for Age' Guidelines](#)