



SENIOR RUGBY DISPENSATION PROCEDURE

BACKGROUND

Any competition involving players over 18 years of age is classified as a Senior Rugby competition.¹ A player is automatically eligible to participate in Senior Rugby once they have turned 18 years of age. Rugby Australia's view is that generally players turning 16 or 17 years of age in the calendar year should not compete in Senior Rugby due to their physical development, maturity and experience. However, it does acknowledge that there may be occasions where it is appropriate for a player under the age of 18 to participate in Senior Rugby provided there is a robust procedure in place to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether it is appropriate for the player to participate at that level. Therefore, players that are under 18 years of age that wish to participate in Senior Rugby must gain approval through the *Senior Rugby Dispensation Procedure*.

RESPONSIBILITIES

This procedure sets out the step-by-step process to consider participation for under 18s in Senior Rugby and it applies to all registered players, except non-contact forms of Rugby (e.g. Touch 7s).

Each State or Territory Union must designate an appropriate person(s) (typically the Competition Manager) and/or consider setting up an advisory panel/expert group to administer this procedure within relevant competitions.

It is the responsibility of all Coaches, Club Officials, Unions, Affiliates and Parents/Guardians to follow this procedure which has, at its heart, the primary purpose of ensuring the safety of the participant and those that he/she is playing with and against.

¹ Senior competitions may have age limits (e.g. Under 20's or Over 35's) and administrators may decide if they wish to allow players over the age restriction to compete in these competitions. This is a matter for the respective competition rules and does not categorise the competition as an Age Grade competition.



STEP BY STEP PROCEDURE

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
1	Player under the age of 18 wishes to play Senior Rugby	Accredited Coach / Club or School Official / Parent or Guardian	A participant turning 16, 17 or 18 in the calendar year expresses a desire to participate in a Senior Rugby competition.
2	Parent / Guardian obtains and completes the <i>Senior Rugby Consent Form</i>	Club / School Parent / Guardian	The Club / School provide the Parent / Guardian with the Senior Rugby Dispensation Consent Form OR Parent obtains from Rugby Australia Website. Parent / Guardian completes Senior Rugby Consent Form.
3	Parent / Guardian of <u>player who turns 18</u> in the calendar year completes form and submits to competition manager	Parent / Guardian	If the participant is turning 18 during the calendar year (but has not yet turned 18), ONLY the parent / guardian consent form is completed, this includes accepting the associated risks of playing in Senior Rugby.
4	<u>Player turning 17</u> during the calendar year is assessed by Assessing Coach	Assessing Coach	If the participant is turning 17 during the calendar year and the player is NOT playing in the Front Row (Hooker or Prop), then the Senior Rugby Assessing Coach Report must be completed including an assessment by an Assessing Coach. An Assessing Coach must hold a minimum Level 2 Accreditation, current Smart Rugby Accreditation and should have completed the Assessing Coach Module in the Rugby Learning Centre.
5	Parent / Guardian of <u>player who turns 16</u> in the calendar year completes Consent Form and Competition Manager forwards to Rugby AU	Club / School OR Parent / Guardian	If the participant is turning 16 during the calendar year, the Competition Manager must forward the <i>Senior Rugby Dispensation Consent Form</i> directly to the Rugby Australia for consideration (refer to step 11).

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
6	<p>Players wishing to play in the <u>Front Row</u> in fifteen-a-side rugby must also complete <i>Dispensation Schedule B- Exemption for Front Row</i></p>	<p>Assessing Coach and Strength and Conditioning Coach</p>	<p>Please Note: Players who wish to utilise the Senior Rugby Dispensation process 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 <i>Dispensation Schedule B - Exemption for Front Row</i> (not required for 7s Rugby).</p>
7	<p>The <i>Senior Rugby Dispensation Consent Form</i> and Senior Rugby Assessing Coach Report(s) are forwarded to competition manager</p>	<p>Club / School OR Parent / Guardian</p>	<p>The <i>Senior Rugby Dispensation Consent Form</i> and the Senior Rugby Assessing Coach Report (and Schedule B where required) are forwarded to the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative).</p>
8	<p><u>Players turning 18</u> in the calendar year may be required to undergo an assessment at the discretion of the competition manager</p>	<p>Competition Manager</p>	<p>The competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) may, at their discretion, require that the Senior Rugby Assessing Coach Report (and /or Schedule B) be completed by an Assessing Coach for any player turning 18 during the calendar year (that has not yet turned 18). This may be utilised for instance where a player turns 18 late in the calendar year or the player requests to play in the Front Row.</p>

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
9	Assessment reviewed, and decision made on Senior Rugby Dispensation	Competition Manager	<p>The competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) will review the assessment where it relates to a player turning 17 or 18 and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approve or refuse the application; OR • request an independent assessment in line with the <i>Rugby Australia Safety Policy</i> and the <i>Rugby Australia Participation Policy</i> before making any decision; OR • make a recommendation to the player (or their parent/guardian) regarding the appropriate age grade / Senior Rugby competition for that player, based on the initial assessment or the subsequent independent assessment.
10	An Independent Assessing Coach may be appointed to undertake a further assessment	Competition Manager	If the competition manager (or other designated State or Territory Union representative) determines that the application requires review, he or she can appoint an independent assessing coach to help determine the application.
11	Rugby Australia will review applicants turning 16 during the calendar year	Rugby Australia appointed Coaches	For those applicants turning 16 during the calendar year, Rugby Australia will conduct such assessments as deemed necessary to fully consider the application. Rugby Australia has the discretion to accept, accept with conditions/ restrictions or refuse the application.
12	Recommendations of Assessing Coach(es) accepted or declined and changes to registration made	Competition Manager	The Senior Rugby Dispensation is approved or declined, and the appropriate changes are made in the Competition Management System (Rugby Link) to enable participation in a Senior Rugby competition. This may include remittance of any conversion fees from Junior to Senior Competition.
13	Notifications made	Competition Manager	The Club / School and Parent / Guardian is notified of decision and reasons for the decision.

OTHER INFORMATION

Save where there has been a recommendation made by the Rugby Australia High Performance Unit, this procedure does not preclude Affiliate or Member Unions from implementing Competition Rules restricting who is eligible to play Senior Rugby for the purposes of ensuring viable Age Grade Competitions.

Please note that any intentional or reckless disregard for the *Rugby Australia Safety Policy*, *Rugby Australia Participation* or this procedure may result in disciplinary action under the *Rugby Australia Code of Conduct* or the *Rugby Australia Member Protection Policy* (see links below).

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

Rugby Australia reserves the right to review any decision made pursuant to this Procedure or conduct any investigation arising out of the application or otherwise of this Procedure where it considers that it is appropriate to do so.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [*Rugby Australia Code of Conduct*](#)
- [*Senior Rugby Dispensation Consent Form*](#)
- [*Senior Rugby Assessing Coach Report*](#)
- [*Senior Rugby Dispensation Flowchart*](#)
- [*Dispensation Schedule B – Exception for Front Row*](#)
- [*Rugby Australia Safety Policy*](#)
- [*Rugby Australia Participation Policy*](#)