



RugbyWA

Dispensation Policy 2023

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Summary

The dispensation process in 2023 is aligned with Rugby Australia's policy¹ expectation, while significant education is required between RugbyWA (RWA) and club Dispensation Officers and Directors of Rugby to alleviate and streamline the process, so all clubs are compliant with national policy.

To assist and inform the policy process in 2022, RugbyWA staff:

- Conducted dispensation sessions in North, Central and Southern zones to assist parents and clubs with the dispensation process.

This process has seen a 40% decline in dispensations process however the whole process still caused a significant time drain on RWA staff, dealing with constant conflict amongst the community. Multiple club leaders failed to accept or understand the purpose of dispensation. In contrast, the information presented by club members lacked intended policy integrity. This misconception resulted in constant complaints to all RugbyWA staff, RWA Junior Executive Members, and even Rugby Australia.

Further communications with Junior club leaders have improved while procedural misconceptions exist among the wider community.

RWA will be supporting clubs on a larger scale in 2023 to align with the strategic planning in 2021 to enable clubs to do their own dispensations in-season. Clubs who meet RugbyWA criteria will have the ability to do their own dispensations in-season and then submit those dispensations to RugbyWA through Rugby Xplorer for processing.

As part of the competition agreement in 2023 each club will be **required** to have one club **Dispensation Administrator** (Appendix B) who will be the main contact between the club and RugbyWA for all dispensations. Dispensations need to be submitted via the club administrator and all communications between players/parents will be done via the appointed club member.

Should clubs wish to have their own **Dispensation Officer** they will be required to hold the following:

- Minimum Level 1 Coaching certificate,
- Assessor Coach certificate (assigned by RugbyWA).

On completion of the certified courses, and ongoing quality assurance from RugbyWA, clubs will be capable of assisting with internal in-season dispensations (UP dispensations only).

One person can be nominated for both positions should there be a lack of available personnel, but all clubs **MUST** have a **Dispensation Administrator** prior to the beginning of the Junior 2023 season start.

¹ Rugby Australia Safety Policy - <https://australia.rugby/about/codes-and-policies/safety-and-welfare/player-dispensation>

RugbyWA will be running four main dispensation sessions in 2023 (dates listed below).

These dates are to get majority of the flagged participants assessed by RWA Staff. Following these dates, club Dispensation Officers, with the approval from RWA, will be able to conduct in-house dispensations required for two year up dispensations. For late registrations or other dispensations that may arise in-season, the 17th of May will provide a free of charge dispensation opportunity.

Club **Dispensation Administrators** to communicate with RWA prior.

These new changes will allow clubs to process in-season dispensations in a timely manner and be assisted by RugbyWA in the process. Strict guidelines will however be placed on clubs doing their own dispensations and clubs that manipulate or take advantage of this position may be sanctioned accordingly within competition guidelines.

Accordingly, for the 2023 season, RWA aims to ensure the national policy is applied as consistently and efficiently as possible.

The accompanying proposal outlines the recommendations to achieve these goals.

Dispensation Approved Recommendations 2023

- Documents and RWA 2023 procedure to be approved and signed off by Rugby Australia.

Reasoning- Reiterates that RWA is following the national safety policy correctly.

- Procedure document (Appendix A) to be sent to club leaders in October 2023 to explain the process for 2023. Dispensation Nomination Document (Appendix B) requires presidents to sign off on having read the procedure document.

Reasoning – Allow clubs time to communicate and adjust plans for a procedure. Creates accountability for clubs as they have agreed to the conditions of the assessment.

- Junior Safety Concern Report document to be developed (Appendix C) for in-season concerns. Junior Safety Concern Report policy to outline the correct procedure for complaints. Only presidents or Dispensation Representatives should be communicating with RWA. The document will also reiterate some common misconceptions and state that presidents are supporting/promoting claims if elevating complaints to RWA or Rugby Australia.

Reasoning - Communications and complaints should be first addressed at the club level before being elevated to RWA staff. Presidents and Dispensation Administrators are responsible for club communication to parents and players on the dispensation process. The club president or dispensation administrators are the first point of call for member concerns and should only elevate serious matters to RWA.

- Assessments to be run over 5 Days, 3 of these will be prior to the 2023 junior season in each Zone (North, South & Central) with another held at RWA just after the commencement of the junior season to assist latecomers to the competition.
 - Central: **25th March, RugbyWA**
 - North: **5th April, Wanneroo Rugby Club**
 - South: **26th April, Southern Lions Rugby Club**
 - Final: **17th May, RugbyWA Headquarters**
 - Regional: **Southwest Visit (Dates TBC)**

Reasoning – Condense the dispensation process and provide the most accurate environment for assessment. Also reinforces that dispensation should not be an everyday occurrence.

- **\$100 fee** to be charged to clubs for each non-mandatory assessment performed by RWA outside the free dispensation times held in each zone (North/South/Central). A subsequent **\$150 fee** will also apply to reassessments. A panel of independent² assessors will be used to make an assessment. In-game assessments to occur in actual age to act as the review process for reassessments. Players unable to demonstrate 100% intensity during the initial assessment will need to be assessed in-game in their existing age grade.

Reasoning - Help to cover the costs of the process and to encourage clubs to only nominate genuine cases. After assessment via a panel at RWA, a confident assessment can be made. Therefore, 2nd assessments are likely to be unnecessary. Review in actual age will provide a clear picture of players capability to play if needed.

- Nomination document (Appendix B) to be used for club presidents or **Dispensation Administrators** to nominate players for dispensation. The document outlines that the club Dispensation Administrators are responsible for communicating results. Assessments will decide if a player is competent to play in actual age. In-depth detail and communication with parents will not be provided.

Reasoning – Clubs to screen and only nominate suitable candidates for assessment. Providing in-depth analysis is not part of the process or practical. It also gives a platform for people to argue technicalities that are not relevant. In addition, clubs hold greater accountability for nominations and communications for members.

Clubs recommended to perform weight and height checks through club registration days.

² Rugby Australia Safety Policy - <https://australia.rugby/about/codes-and-policies/safety-and-welfare/player-dispensation>

- RWA to relinquish some responsibility for clubs to assess players that wish to play up (non-mandatory), girls, mixed dispensations, and under 8's and below (non-contact). To be signed off by an accredited club personnel who has fulfilled Club **Dispensation Officer** requirements (Appendix D).

Reasoning - Reduces the number of assessments RWA must complete when safety is not a concern. Involves clubs in-process and prevents fees from being charged. Starts the process where clubs take greater responsibility for the assessment process without endangering others.

- Clubs failing to adhere to the policy will be in breach of the Dispensation Policy and will be issued a show cause as per RWA Competition Guidelines.

Reasoning - There needs to be a consequence of deterring clubs from not adhering to policy, either deliberately or through misinterpretation. Consistent penalties must be decided and communicated before the season for transparency, fairness and to limit opportunities for debate.

- Clubs will be required to pay for any non-mandatory assessment or reassessment prior to RWA assessors coming out to conduct any in-season assessments. Club Dispensation Administrators, where possible, to coordinate submissions to allow RWA staff to complete multiple assessments for club visits.

Reasoning - RWA staff do not have the capacity to visit multiple clubs during the week and reserves to right to coordinate multiple clubs to one venue in order to conduct in-season dispensations, as a panel of Assessors is required.

- Participation element of the Dispensation Policy to be taken into consideration after safety considerations for regional areas and for the female game if there are limited playing opportunities available. As an example, Southwest to be provided one pre-season and one mid-season opportunity for dispensation.

Reasoning - Limited playing opportunities mean consideration may be needed to allow participants to play, if safe to do so.

- Club Dispensation Administrator and Officers will convene with RugbyWA postseason to review the process to ensure alignment with National Policy for 2024.

Reasoning - Review and reflect on the process. RWA can pass on information to RA and then endorse or modify the process.

Appendix A

Dispensation Policy 2023

RugbyWA is committed to ensuring alignment with the rest of Australia and compliance with the national safety policy. This approach from RugbyWA is to ensure correct policy implementation regarding dispensation has been supported by Rugby Australia.

This document outlines the dispensation process for 2023 and has been approved by RugbyWA Board, and Rugby Australia General Manager of Community Game. The changes are to ensure that the dispensation priority is for safety reasons.

Procedure:

- For the 2023 season, dispensation up an age grade may be performed by accredited club **Dispensation Officer** after complying with Appendix D as required.
- Dispensations down an age grade and mandatory height and weight will occur over the three weeks before the season at North, South and Central venues. Another dispensation to be held at the commencement of the junior season at RugbyWA and an additional regional visit will also be organised for the Southwest. Details are to be confirmed and communicated prior to season commencement.
- Dispensation down will only be provided if a player cannot play in their actual age due to significant developmental differences. Participation element of policy to be taken into consideration after safety considerations for regional areas and for the female game if no playing opportunities available.
- During the five designated dispensation days, staff nominated by RugbyWA will perform dispensation assessments for players wanting to play down, two years up and for mandatory height and weight. Clubs will not be charged a \$100 fee for non-mandatory assessments per player, however all other dispensations requested by club in-season will incur this fee. Club **Dispensation Administrators** must fill in a Dispensation Nomination Form (Appendix B), only nominating players that fulfil the 2023 criteria. Players must be approved by presidents before the assessment to be considered eligible. RugbyWA will provide the schedule for the days to **Dispensation Administrators** once all forms have been submitted. Club **Dispensation Administrators** are then responsible for communicating and coordinating with parents and members (Appendix B).
- The player requesting the dispensation **must bring at least 1 player from the age group they are wanting to play in**, to be dispensed against. If playing up two years, the assisting player needs to be of a **higher physical and skill competency level in their age group**. If playing down, the assisting player needs to be of an **intermediate physical and skill competency level in their age group**. These assisting players need to be there for the designated dispensation day or any in-season requests.

- Assessments will be completed by a panel of three qualified assessors appointed by RugbyWA, providing a decision based on player safety. Any reviews that occur in-game in the player's actual age grade will result in an additional **\$150 fee** charged to the club. Results will be sent to club **Dispensation Administrators** after the dispensation days have been completed. As listed in the Player Dispensation Nomination Form (Appendix B), club **Dispensation Administrators** are responsible for communicating results to parents and players.
- Dispensations for players to play up, female, mixed or under 8's dispensations may be performed by accredited personnel at club level for no cost. Dispensation Officers at the club will need to complete and fulfill the criteria outlined in the Club Dispensation Administrator document (Appendix D). RugbyWA will approve appropriately qualified assessors and retains the right to reassess or override dispensations. Dispensations down, disability or for mandatory height and weight will need to be assessed by RugbyWA.
- Clubs in breach of policy will be issued a "show cause" as per RWA Competition Guidelines. In addition, extreme cases may be elevated for a code of conduct hearing.
- In season safety concerns raised by parents, coaches or community members will be redirected to the club **Dispensation Administrator** (Appendix C). Presidents and club **Dispensation Administrators** should ensure that only genuine issues are elevated to RugbyWA. RugbyWA will then investigate such issues and concerns with an in-game assessment.
- School and club dispensations are not transferable as they represent different levels of competition. Fees will not be charged for school dispensations. A player would need two separate dispensations for school and club competitions. Feedback will be sought postseason to evaluate the process and pass on any complaints or concerns.

Appendix B

Dispensation Nomination Form

This document is for the club to nominate **Dispensation Administrators** and to nominate players that the club is proposing receive dispensation. Clubs will be charged a non-refundable \$100 fee per dispensation assessment for in-season non-mandatory assessments performed by RugbyWA. This fee will not apply to female, mixed, mandatory, disability or dispensations to play up, performed by accredited club **Dispensation Officers** signed off by RugbyWA.

RugbyWA's aim is to ensure the intentions of Rugby Australia's dispensation policy are correctly enacted. This is to ensure that WA is aligned to the rest of the country and compliant with national policy. Rugby Australia has supported and confirmed that RugbyWA's approach in its alignment with the intentions of the policy. Individuals and clubs have the right to provide feedback or submit a complaint regarding the policy however RugbyWA staff are enacting the policy as intended by the national governing body and will not enter debate regarding policy.

Dispensation Costings

All dispensation costs will only apply to dispensations outside the five dispensation sessions conducted by RugbyWA. The costings will align with the Dispensation Process of **having three assessors** attend the clubs or games for dispensation sessions, re-assessments, and appeals.

All costs needs to be paid in full before assessments are conducted with a minimum of 7 days to arrange a suitable time and staff to conduct the assessments.

Fees (fees will only apply for non-mandatory dispensations performed by RugbyWA staff in-season):

Type of dispensation:	RWA Assessment:	Club Dispensation Administrator Assessment:
Mandatory height and weight	\$0	In-Season
Disability	\$0	No
Gender Identity	\$0	No
Male Requested dispensation down	\$100	In-season
Male Requested dispensation up	\$0	Yes, with Parental Consent
Male Requested dispensation 2 years up	\$0	In-Season
Non-contact	\$0	Yes
Female non mandatory	\$0	No
Mixed gender	\$0	No
2 nd assessment in game	\$150	No
Regional assessment	\$0	In-Season
Appeal of dispensation decision	\$150	N/A

Club Dispensation Administrator Nomination (to be submitted by 10th March 2023)

I _____ (club president), nominate _____ to act as the Dispensation Administrator on behalf of _____ Rugby Club.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I _____ (nominated Dispensation Administrator) promise to act with integrity and honesty to ensure player safety is upheld at all times and that best interest of the player is put first.

I have **club administration access on Rugby Xplorer** for my nominated club.

I understand that RugbyWA has final say in matters of dispensation for players. I will always follow Rugby Australia dispensation policies.

I will endeavour to report findings and concerns back to RugbyWA as soon as possible.

Please Note:

To adhere to Rugby Australia's dispensation policy procedure, I will remain independent from dispensations where I am registered with the same club as the player being assessed by ensuring that I:

- *Do not coach the specific age-grade of the player being assessed.*
- *Do not coach the specific age-grade that the player participated in the previous season, if applicable.*
- *Do not coach the specific age-grade that the player wishes to participate in, if applicable.*

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Player Dispensation Nomination Form

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I, _____ (club **Dispensation Administrator**) am representing _____ rugby club and only nominating players that fulfil the criteria for dispensations as set out by Rugby Australia and implemented by RugbyWA. I understand that all participants in rugby and RugbyWA are bound to uphold the intentions of Rugby Australia's dispensation policy. Dispensations will only be applied for safety reasons. If a player can play in their own age grade, they will not be provided dispensation down.

Non-Mandatory assessments for dispensation performed by RugbyWA outside the five nominated dispensation days advertised by RugbyWA days will cost the club a non-refundable cost (refer to fees table).

Player's height and weight will be confirmed at assessment.

I, as the Dispensation Administrator am aware that dispensation will not be provided for the following reasons exclusively:

- Dispensation was given last year.
- Previous injury.
- To build confidence.
- To play with friends.
- Because the club does not have a team in the player's actual age.
- Because of health conditions that do not incapacitate the player from competing in their actual age.
- Based exclusively on the players height and weight.

Dispensations will only be provided if the player is unable to play in their actual age due to significant developmental reasons raising a safety concern.

I, as the Dispensation Administrator understand that it is my responsibility to communicate dispensation procedures, implementation, and decisions to my club members. I also understand that RugbyWA will not enter debate regarding the application of policy, having been approved by Rugby Australia.

Dispensation Administrator: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

President Signature: _____

Date: _____

Player Dispensation Nomination Form

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_____ Rugby Club are proposing the following players for dispensation and parents/club have completed on-line consent forms in Rugby Xplorer.

Player Name	DOB	Dispensation type

Venue: (Tick box for the location you would like to have players assessed):

<input type="checkbox"/>	RugbyWA:	<i>Saturday 25th March</i>	No fee applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wanneroo:	<i>Wednesday 6th April</i>	No fee applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	Southern Lions:	<i>Wednesday 26th April</i>	No fee applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	RugbyWA:	<i>Wednesday 17th May</i>	No fee applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	IN-SEASON Club:		See fees table (Appendix B)

Dispensation Administrator: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Junior Safety Concern Report

This report is to be used where there is a safety concern during the junior rugby season due to players being a safety risk to those they play against or themselves.

If there is a concern that a player is unsafe to play in a specific age group due to their size, ability and physical development club presidents or referees are encouraged to flag the player with RugbyWA so that a check-up and or assessment can be made. Reminder that size is not an automatic indication that a player needs to be moved, their ability to generate power, development, impact on the field and overall capability are vital considerations.

This report is for club presidents or referees that wish to flag a concern for opposing teams only. This is not a means to appeal dispensations at your own club. RugbyWA will only accept reports from club presidents or from referees who adjudicated over the match where the player in question participated. Safety Concern Reports will need to address why a player is considered a safety risk on field with examples to support. A player being especially large or small are not grounds for a report in isolation.

Please note that RugbyWA will contact and question clubs, where a player who has been deemed a threat, has been reported. We ask that individuals and clubs **do not** question opposing players, parents, or club representatives.

Junior Safety Concern Report

Reporter's details:

President Name: _____ Club: _____

Person who initially flagged the player: _____

Contact details: _____

Their role at club: _____

Flagged players details:

Age group: _____ Club: _____

Position: _____ Jersey Number: _____

Reason for concern: _____

Evidence to support this concern (what incidents occurred in game to suggest the player is a safety concern):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

President Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Club Dispensation Administrator (Mandatory)

Purpose:

RugbyWA is looking to partner with clubs and the community to nominate appropriate personnel to aid junior players in the dispensation process. Our goal in 2023 is to upskill community members to help with the dispensation process.

Benefit:

- Clubs' **Dispensation Administrator** will speed the dispensation process.
- Clubs and RugbyWA will save time relating to the dispensation process.
- Our wider rugby community has a great deal of knowledge and experience that we wish to utilise to benefit rugby in WA.
- The appointment allows experienced community club members to stay involved in the game without the time commitment of other roles.
- It will assist RugbyWA staff to effectively cope with the volume of participants needing dispensation each year in a timely fashion.
- The initial step for clubs is to take greater responsibility for the dispensation process for future years.

Club Dispensation Officer (Optional)

Purpose:

To allow clubs to perform in-season, two years UP dispensations, non-contact dispensations and aid junior players in the dispensation process.

Accreditation Requirements:

- Completion of online RA Assessing Coach accreditation.
- Working with Children's card.
- Smart Rugby accredited.
- Minimum Level 1 coach (preferable - Level 2; or higher RA coaching qualification).

Desirable:

- Significant rugby knowledge and experience.
- Possess an understanding of the importance of dispensation and the belief that a child's safety is the number one priority in the process.

Process:

- Once clubs have nominated an appropriate person, they must complete the online course - Assessing Coach Program (to be assigned by RugbyWA).
- Nominated club members can then attend a RugbyWA workshop to receive training on the dispensation process.
- Participate in dispensation days with RugbyWA staff before the season.
- **Dispensation Officers** will then act on behalf of their club to dispense junior players at their club if they are independent from the individual and team.