

## PLAYER WELFARE & SAFETY INITIATIVES 2018

### BACKGROUND

Rugby Australia has been extensively researching issues in regard to our 'Size for Age' Guidelines for well over two years. Rugby Australia has also been trialling the Blue Card Concussion Management Tool throughout 2017. The purpose of this was to ensure that Rugby was adapting to the ever-changing sporting landscape and ensuring that we continued to be the leading the way with regards to player welfare.

The purpose of these changes IS:

- To ensure that Rugby continues to lead the way with regards to player safety with our juniors, backed by mandatory 'Size for Age' Guidelines; and
- To provide assurances to parents that Rugby continues to be a safe contact sport and to encourage participation in the sport.
- To enhance our already sport-leading concussion management procedures and ensure recording of concussion incidents plus ensure players removed from the field don't return to play again that day

### SIZE FOR AGE

- The new guidelines require mandatory assessment by a qualified, independent coach for junior participants who are above or below height and weight guidelines for the age groups from Under 10 to Under 15 years. Likewise, players that fall outside the guidelines but are within the age groups Under 8 and Under 9 OR Under 16 to Under 18 may be considered for assessment but assessment is not mandatory.
- The guidelines are designed to identify situations where a player's physical development is either significantly bigger or smaller than the majority of their age group peers. An Independent, qualified coach will make an assessment, starting with the player's physical development compared to their age group and take into consideration maturity, physical fitness, skill level, and experience, not only their height and weight.
- The guidelines and the associated Coach Accreditation Program, provide a clear process for coaches, team managers, Clubs, Schools and competition managers to follow in order to clarify the appropriate age grade for a participant deemed less or more physically developed than their age peers.
- The Age Grade Dispensation Procedure is the mechanism that enables Member Unions, School Conveners, Competition Managers and State Heads of Game Development to recommend or mandate players play in a specific age grade based on safety for that participant or other participants. It is important to stress that the safety of junior Rugby players takes priority over any team requirements, such as filling squads or winning matches.
- For players who are to be classified into to a different age grade, the individual can be moved one age group down or two age groups up, depending on the assessment from a coach under the Age Grade Dispensation Procedure.

## BLUE CARD

- The Blue Card Concussion Management system, trailed in 2017, will be rolled out across all competitions nationally in 2018 to ensure that Rugby continues to lead the way in concussion management.
- Whilst team management, medical staff and match officials have always had the responsibility to remove a player from the field if they are presenting signs and symptoms of concussion, the new Blue Card ensures the recording of such an incident, and formally triggers an off-field process to begin.
- The Blue Card system is Rugby's method of ensuring maximum player welfare and safety in relation to head injuries and putting in place protocols to ensure a safe return for any affected players.

Rugby Australia, State & Territory Unions and Affiliates will now commence a period of education and upskilling of the community prior to the full material on both projects going live on at the beginning of March.

## MORE INFORMATION

Rugby Australia policy register <http://www.rugbyaustralia.com.au/runningrugby/PolicyRegister.aspx>  
Rugby Australia concussion management <http://www.rugbyaustralia.com.au/concussion>

*\*As of 15 February 2018*