

WA Football.

**Tribunal Handbook for
Community Football League Administrators**

How can this guide help me?

This handbook is designed to assist League Administrators with the penalty process and referrals to the WA Football Community Tribunal. It provides general information to support administrators in understanding their responsibilities and the steps involved in managing reports, applying penalties, and referring matters to the Tribunal when required.

Handling disciplinary matters can be complex and, at times, challenging. This guide aims to ensure League Administrators feel informed, supported and confident in navigating the penalty and tribunal referral process in a fair, consistent and timely manner.

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WA Football Community Tribunal Overview

The WA Football Community Tribunal has been established to provide an effective, efficient, independent, transparent, and specialised forum for the fair hearing and resolution of Community Football offences.

As a centralised body, the Tribunal oversees approximately fifty community competitions across Western Australia, including Junior and Senior Leagues across Metro and Country regions. This ensures consistent treatment, guidelines, and penalty determinations for all participants, regardless of where they play in the state.

By centralising the disciplinary process, the Tribunal helps ease the pressure on local leagues and their volunteers, many of whom already contribute significantly to the day-to-day running of Community Football. In regional and rural areas, it also provides a helpful layer of independence, giving Leagues the support they need to manage serious matters in a fair and consistent way.

By upholding the rules of the game, the Tribunal plays a vital role in maintaining the spirit of fair play and integrity that defines Australian Football in Western Australia.

Tribunal Function

The primary function of the WA Football Community Tribunal is to hear and determine any Reportable Offence referred to it. A Reportable Offence occurs when a Player or Official is alleged to have committed an offence as outlined in the current *AFL Laws of the Game*.

A matter will be referred to the Tribunal if:

- An individual is charged with a 'Direct to Tribunal' Offence
or
- An individual has been offered an Early Guilty Plea but elects to contest the charge

All cases referred to the Tribunal must be approved by the WA Football Competitions Specialist before being heard. If a Notice of Charge has not been submitted in accordance with the proper procedures, has been graded incorrectly, or falls outside of the relevant League Competition Rules and Regulations, it will be rejected and will not proceed to the Community Football Tribunal.

With the exception of Vilification matters, **Policy breaches cannot be contested at the Tribunal**. Vilification cases may only be heard if they have been managed in accordance with the *AFL Community Football Management Guidelines*.

Process and deadlines for Tribunal Referrals

This section outlines the step-by-step process for managing reports and referring cases to the WA Football Community Tribunal. Most of the activity takes place between the weekend and Thursday, and the process moves quickly to ensure that all matters are dealt with before the next round of games.

Community football operates on a weekly cycle, which means there is limited time to investigate reports, lay charges, offer penalties, and conduct Tribunal hearings before players are expected to take the field again. These tight deadlines are in place to protect the integrity of the competition, minimise disruption to teams, and ensure that players and officials have clarity about their availability for upcoming matches.

As a League Administrator, staying on top of each step in this process is essential. Prompt communication, accurate documentation, and timely referrals will help ensure cases are handled fairly, consistently, and without unnecessary delay. Your role in managing this process is a vital part of keeping community football safe, fair, and well-organised.

The following pages break down each stage of the process and what is required on each day.

Post-match (usually the weekend)

- **Receive Umpire Reports and Referrals**
Umpires will submit reports for any incidents that occurred during matches.
- **Request Additional Information (if needed)**
Contact Umpires or Clubs to clarify details within the report or request additional information about the incident or injuries sustained.
- **Match Review Panel Review**
The League's Match Review Panel reviews each report and uses the League's Rules, Regulations, By-laws and the WA Football Penalty Matrix to determine whether a charge should be laid and what penalty should be offered.
- **Confirm On-Field Penalties**
If the Match Official offered a penalty on match day, check that the grading and penalty offered aligns to the WA Football Penalty Matrix.
- **Grading of Offences**
All offences must be graded using the *National Community Football Policy Handbook* (see excerpt at the end of this handbook).

Monday morning

- **Notify the Reported Individual's Club in writing**

Email the Notice of Charge and ensure it includes;

- the alleged offence
- the grading of the offence
- the base sanction penalty
- any Early Guilty Plea that is being offered

*Note: The Early Guilty Plea must have an acceptance deadline of **12pm Tuesday***

- **Notify your relevant Operations Contact**

- Country Leagues – advise your CFWA Operations Specialist of all reports and any possible Tribunal cases
- Perth Football League – advise the WA Football Competitions Specialist of any confirmed and potential Tribunal cases
- Metro Junior Leagues - advise the WA Football Competitions Specialist of any confirmed and potential Tribunal cases

Tuesday midday

- **Confirm Tribunal cases**

Confirm with your Operations Contact which matters are progressing to the Tribunal.

- **Send Tribunal Referral Email**

Email tribunal@wafootball.com.au with the following;

- WA Football Tribunal Charge Sheet
- Match Official Report
- Reported Individual's details
- Match Official's details
- Aggrieved Individual's details (if applicable)
- Copy of the Notice of Charge sent to the Reported Individual's Club
- You can also include the Advocate details of each party now, or the next day once confirmed

Tuesday afternoon

- **Notify all parties**

Let all parties know the case will be heard at the Tribunal.

Email all parties the link, date, and time of the hearing once received.

- **Check for Availability Issues**

If anyone is unable to attend, inform the Tribunal as soon as possible.

- **Update PlayHQ**

Record the offence in PlayHQ and mark the outcome as *Pending*.

Wednesday

- **Confirm League Observer (if required)**
If a League Representative wants to observe the hearing, provide their details to the Tribunal by **9am** on the day of the hearing.
- **Send any additional evidence**
Any extra evidence or details about Advocates must be sent to tribunal@wafootball.com.au by **9am**.
- **Tribunal Hearing Held**
All WA Football Community Tribunals are conducted online, typically on **Wednesday evenings**. If there are a large number of cases to be heard in one week, some hearings may be scheduled to take place on Thursday evenings. Whenever possible, cases involving minors will be scheduled for earlier time slots.

Thursday

- **Notify the Reported Individual's Club of Tribunal Outcome**
The Tribunal will send an outcome email to the League. This email needs to be forwarded on to the Offender's Club.
- **Include Appeal information**
Make sure the outcome email clearly includes details of how to submit an appeal and the deadline (which is **5pm the day after the Tribunal**)
- **Advise Tribunal of Appeal**
Only the Reported Individual's Club or the League is able to submit an appeal for a Tribunal decision. If an appeal is received or likely, notify the Tribunal **as soon as possible**.
- **Update PlayHQ**
Update the offence record in PlayHQ and add the outcome details.

Friday

- **Notify the Appellant of Outcome**
The Tribunal will send an Appeal outcome email to the League. This email needs to be forwarded on to the individual who lodged the Appeal.

Grading Matrix – Auditory Offences

An Auditory Offence is a Reportable Offence specified below;

- Using Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Language
- Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language towards or in relation to an Umpire

Conduct	Directed At	Volume	Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea
Threatening	Umpire	Any	6+ Matches (or Tribunal)	Not Applicable
	Another Person	Loud	5+ Matches (or Tribunal)	Not Applicable
		Low	4 Matches	3 Matches
Abusive / Obscene	Umpire	Loud	4 Matches	3 Matches
		Low	3 Matches	2 Matches
	Another Person	Loud	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Low	2 Matches	1 Match
Insulting	Umpire	Loud	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Low	2 Matches	1 Match
	Another Person	Loud	2 Matches	1 Match
		Low	1 Match	Yellow Card

Threatening	Any verbal communication or gesture that intimidates, harasses, causes fear, or implies harm or aggression towards another individual. This includes direct or implied threats of physical violence, verbal abuse, emotional harm, or any form of aggressive behaviour that creates a hostile or unsafe environment.
Obscene / Abusive	Any verbal communication or gesture that is offensive, vulgar, or demeaning. This includes the use of profanity, personal insults, slurs, or any form of verbal abuse intended to humiliate, insult or belittle another individual, disrupting a positive game day environment.
Insulting	Any verbal communication or gesture that is disrespectful, derogatory or intended to provoke or demean another person. This includes mocking, belittling, or ridiculing others based on their abilities, appearance, skill level or other personal characteristics, undermining the principles of fair play and mutual respect.
Loud	Could be heard more than 50 metres
Low	Could be heard less than 50 metres

Note: For auditory offences, if the individual is unrepentant, one (1) match may be added to the Base Sanction and Early Guilty Plea at the discretion of the Match Review Panel or Tribunal.

Determining the Grading of Auditory Offences

An Auditory Offence is a Reportable Offence specified below;

- Using Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Language
- Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language towards or in relation to an Umpire

For a League or the Tribunal to arrive at a grading set out in the penalty matrix, they must use the interpretation provisions set out below to assess whether:

- a) the Conduct is Threatening, Abusive / Obscene or Insulting;
- b) the Receiver of the Conduct is an Umpire or Another Person; and
- c) the Volume of the Conduct is Loud or Low.

Note: in respect of a charge graded by the League or Tribunal as Threatening language directed at an Umpire, that charge will be classified as *Behaving in an Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Manner Towards or in Relation to an Umpire*, a Direct Tribunal Offence;

and

In respect of a charge graded by the League as Threatening language directed at Another Person of Loud Volume, the Controlling Body may refer that charge directly to the Tribunal.

In respect to both these charges, if only the minimum prescribed sanction is sought, the League will, at its discretion, specify that minimum prescribed sanction and the Player may enter an Early Guilty Plea and accept the sanction without the matter being referred directly to the Tribunal. If the League does not specify that the minimum prescribed sanction is sought, the charge will be referred to the Tribunal and the charged Player will not have the option to enter an Early Guilty Plea.

Grading Conduct

- a) The Conduct of an Auditory Offence will be graded as:
 - i. Threatening;
 - ii. Abusive / Obscene; or
 - iii. Insulting.
- b) Threatening language means any verbal communication or gesture that intimidates, harasses, causes fear, or implies harm or aggression towards another individual. This includes direct or implied threats of physical violence, verbal abuse, emotional harm, or any form of aggressive behaviour that creates a hostile or unsafe environment.
- c) Obscene / Abusive language means any verbal communication or gesture that is offensive, vulgar, or demeaning. This includes the use of profanity, personal insults, slurs, or any form of verbal abuse intended to humiliate, insult or belittle another individual, disrupting a positive game day environment.
- d) Insulting language means any verbal communication or gesture that is disrespectful, derogatory or intended to provoke or demean another person. This includes mocking, belittling, or ridiculing others based on their abilities, appearance, skill level or other personal characteristics, undermining the principles of fair play and mutual respect.

- e) In grading whether language is Threatening, Abusive, Obscene or Insulting, the following factors will be considered:
- i. the nature of language;
 - ii. the tone of the language;
 - iii. the extent of aggression in the language;
 - iv. the actual or potential hurt caused by the language;
 - v. the body language of the offending Person.

Guidance note: Where any auditory offence involves the use of words or sounds that are considered to constitute vilification or discrimination, the offence is to be dealt with under the Vilification Policy.

Grading Receiver

- a) The Receiver will be graded as Umpire or Another Person.
- b) Umpire means a field, boundary, goal or emergency umpire who has been appointed to officiate in the relevant Match.
- c) Another Person means any person who is not an Umpire, regardless of whether that person is able to be identified or not.

Grading Volume

- a) The Volume of an Auditory Offence will be graded as Loud or Low.
- b) Loud means the language could be heard from more than 50 metres away or heard by spectators.
- c) Low means the language could be heard from no more than 50 meters away, and/or heard by other Players and/or heard by Football Officials

Grading Matrix – Junior Leagues

The below matrix is to be used by **Junior League's** for grading *Classifiable Offences*. A Classifiable Offence is a Reportable Offence specified below;

- Striking
- Kicking
- Kneeing
- Charging
- Rough Conduct
- Tripping
- Forceful Front-On Contact
- Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact to the Face or Eye Region
- Headbutt or Contact Using Head
- Behaving in an Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene manner towards or in relation to an Umpire

Conduct	Impact	Contact	Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea
Intentional	Severe	All	6+ Matches (or Tribunal)	Not Applicable
	High	High / Groin / Chest	5+ Matches (or Tribunal)	Not Applicable
		Body	4 Matches	3 Matches
	Medium	High / Groin / Chest	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Body	2 Matches	1 Match
	Low	High / Groin / Chest	2 Matches	1 Match
		Body	1 match	Not Applicable

Careless	Severe	All	4+ Matches (or Tribunal)	Not Applicable
	High	High / Groin / Chest	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Body	2 Matches	1 Match
	Medium	High / Groin / Chest	2 Matches	1 Match
		Body	1 Match	Not Applicable
	Low	High / Groin / Chest	1 Match	Not Applicable
		Body	1 Match	Not Applicable

Note: Chest applies to Female Footballers only

Grading Matrix – Senior Leagues

The below matrix is to be used by **Senior League's** for grading *Classifiable Offences*. A *Classifiable Offence* is a Reportable Offence specified in the *National Community Football Policy Handbook*.

Conduct	Impact	Contact	Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea
Intentional	Severe	High / Groin / Chest	5+ Matches (Tribunal)	Not Applicable
		Body	4+ Matches (Tribunal)	Not Applicable
	High	High / Groin / Chest	4 Matches	3 Matches
		Body	3 Matches	2 Matches
	Medium	High / Groin / Chest	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Body	2 Matches	1 Match
	Low	High / Groin / Chest	2 Matches	1 Match
		Body	1 match	Fine and/or reprimand

Careless	Severe	High / Groin / Chest	4+ Matches (Tribunal)	Not Applicable
		Body	3 Matches (Tribunal)	Not Applicable
	High	High / Groin / Chest	3 Matches	2 Matches
		Body	2 Matches	1 Match
	Medium	High / Groin / Chest	2 Matches	1 Match
		Body	1 Match	Fine and/or reprimand
	Low	High / Groin / Chest	1 Match	Fine and/or reprimand
		Body	1 Match	Fine and/or reprimand

Note: Chest applies to Female Footballers only

Standard Range of Penalties

The below matrix is utilised by the Community Tribunal for *Direct to Tribunal Offences* and also *Classifiable Offences* when the matrix does not dictate a penalty.

STANDARD RANGE OF PENALTIES	
Intentionally or carelessly; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Striking another person; - Kicking another person; - Kneeing another person; - Charging an opponent; - Engaging in Rough Conduct against an opponent; - Bumping or making forceful contact to an opponent from front-on when that Player has their head down over the football; - Head-butting or making contact to another person using the head; - Making unreasonable or unnecessary contact to the eye region of another person; - Making unreasonable or unnecessary contact to the face of another person; - Tripping another person whether by hand, arm, foot or leg; 	4 – 16 matches
Carelessly eye-gouging another person	2 – 10 matches
Intentionally eye-gouging another person	4 – 16 matches
Stomping on another person	4 – 16 matches
Intentionally making contact with an Umpire	4 matches – 2 years
Intentionally striking an Umpire	2 – 10 years
Attempting to strike an Umpire	5 matches – 2 years
Spitting at an Umpire	10 matches – 2 years
Spitting on an Umpire	1 – 5 years
Behaving in an insulting manner towards or in relation to an Umpire	2 – 6 matches
Behaving in an abusive or obscene manner towards or in relation to an Umpire	4 – 10 matches
Behaving in a threatening manner towards or in relation to an Umpire	6 matches – 2 years
Spitting on another person	5 – 10 matches
Using threatening language	4 – 16 matches
Engaging in any other act of misconduct	2 – 5 matches
Engaging in any other act of serious misconduct	4 matches – 3 years

Note: If this is the second offence within the last twelve months, then penalty range above is to be doubled.

Determining the Grading of Classifiable Offences - Grading Conduct

The **Conduct** will be graded as Intentional or Careless.

Intentional Conduct

- a) A Person intentionally commits a Classifiable Offence if the Person engages in the conduct constituting the Reportable Offence with the intention of committing that Reportable Offence.
- b) An intention is a state of mind and may be formed on the spur of the moment.
- c) Whether or not a Person intentionally commits a Reportable Offence depends upon the state of mind of the Person when the Person engages in the conduct with which they are charged. What the Person did is often the best evidence of their intention. In some cases, the evidence that the conduct itself provides may be so strong as to compel an inference of what the Person's intent was, no matter what they may say about it afterwards. If the immediate consequence of conduct is obvious and inevitable, the deliberate engaging of the conduct carries with it evidence of an intention to produce the consequence.
- d) As an example, a strike will be regarded as Intentional where a Person delivers a blow to another Person with the intention of striking them.
- e) The state of a Person's mind is an objective fact and has to be proved in the same way as other objective facts. The whole of the relevant evidence has to be considered. It is necessary to weigh the evidence of the Person as to what their intentions were along with whatever inference as to their intentions can be drawn from their conduct and/or other relevant facts. The Person may or may not be believed. Notwithstanding what the Person says, it may be able to be concluded from all the material that the Person intentionally engaged in the conduct constituting the Reportable Offence.

Careless Conduct

- a) A Person's conduct will be regarded as Careless where it constitutes a breach of the duty of care owed by the Person. Each Person owes a duty of care to other Persons not to engage in conduct which will constitute a Reportable Offence being committed against those Persons.
- b) To constitute a breach of that duty of care, the conduct must be such that a reasonable Player would not regard it as prudent in all the circumstances.
- c) Further, a Person will be careless if they breach their duty to take reasonable care to avoid conduct which can be reasonably foreseen to result in a Reportable Offence

Guidance Note: An example of careless conduct would be where a Player collides with another Player who has taken a mark and where contact occurs just after the mark has been taken. The offending Player has a duty of care to take reasonable care to avoid acts which may be reasonably foreseen to result in a Reportable Offence. For instance, a failure to sufficiently slow their momentum or change direction to reasonably attempt to avoid or reduce the impact of any contact may constitute carelessness.

Determining the Grading of Classifiable Offences - Grading Impact

The **Impact** will be graded as Low, Medium, High or Severe. In an assessment as to the level of Impact, the following factors will be considered:

- a. the extent of force and, in particular, any injury sustained by the Person who was offended against (as set out in any relevant medical report).
- b. the absence of injury does not preclude the classification of Impact as Low, Medium, High or Severe;
- c. the potential to cause injury must also be factored into the determination of Impact, particularly in the following cases:
 - i. intentional strikes, such as those with a swinging clenched fist, raised forearm or elbow;
 - ii. high bumps, particularly with significant head contact and/or momentum;
 - iii. any head-high contact with a Player who has their head over the ball, particularly when contact is made from an opponent approaching from a front-on position;
 - iv. forceful round-arm swings that make head-high contact to a Player in a marking contest, ruck contest or when tackling;
 - v. any contact that occurs when the other Person should not reasonably be expecting or is not reasonably prepared for contact (i.e. contact off the ball);
 - vi. any dangerous tackle.
- d. Low Impact is the minimum impact required for a Classifiable Offence which requires more than just negligible impact. However, the potential to cause injury may result in an upgrade to the level of Impact, including from negligible to a higher level of Impact;
- e. strong consideration will be given to the distance the incident occurs from the ball and the expectation of contact of the other Person (especially in the case of intentional strikes);
- f. consideration will also be given not only to the impact between the offending Person and the other Person, but also any other impact to the other Person as a result of that impact;

Guidance note: For example, where the other Person as a result of the impact from an offending Person is pushed into the path of a fast-moving third Person, the impact to the other Person may be classified as High or Severe Impact, even though the level of impact between the other Person and offending Person was only Low or Medium Impact.
- g. the body language of the offending Person in terms of flexing, turning, raising or positioning the body to either increase or reduce the force of impact; and
- h. the following table sets out Impact guidelines and provides a summary of indicative Impact guidelines for Low, Medium, High and Severe Impact incidents:

Impact Guidelines	
Low	<p>Player: Minimal or no impact on the Match - the Player continued to play the majority of the Match and suffered no or minimal ongoing issues.</p> <p>Person (other than Player): Person continued in their relevant capacity in relation to the Match for the majority of the Match and suffered no or minimal ongoing issues.</p> <p>The Impact grading may be raised under the potential to cause injury provisions.</p>
Medium	<p>Player: Clearly some impact on the Player, and/or the Player left the field for a lengthy period of time, and/or some possible lower level ongoing treatment(s) required, and/or may miss one Match.</p> <p>Person (other than Player): Clearly some impact on the Person, and/or the Person was prevented from continuing in their official capacity in relation to the Match for a lengthy period of time, and/or some possible lower level ongoing treatment(s) required.</p> <p>The Impact grading may be raised under the potential to cause injury provisions.</p>
High	<p>Player: Major impact on the Player, and/or the Player was unable to participate in the remainder of the Match, and/or major ongoing issues that require medical intervention and/or may miss some Matches.</p> <p>Person (other than Player): Major impact on the Person, and/or the Person was unable to continue in their official capacity in relation to the Match for the remainder of the Match, and/or major ongoing issues that require medical intervention and/or may miss some Matches.</p> <p>The Impact grading may be raised under the potential to cause injury provisions.</p>
Severe	<p>Person (including Player): Major impact and serious injury to the Person, and/or likely to miss a significant number of Matches.</p> <p>The sanction determination may be raised under the potential to cause injury provisions.</p>

For the avoidance of doubt, this table is included for guidance purposes and must be considered together with factors set out earlier.

Determining the Grading of Classifiable Offences - Grading Contact

The Contact will be graded as High / Groin / Chest / Body.

Grading Contact (High/Groin/Chest, Body)

- a) High Contact is not limited to contact to the head and includes contact to the top of the shoulders or neck.
- b) A classification of High Contact may apply to a Careless or Intentional Dangerous Tackle which has the potential for injury to be caused through dangerous high contact with the ground and where high contact does not actually occur.
- c) Contact to the Groin includes contact to the crease or hollow at the junction of the inner part of each thigh with the trunk together with the adjacent region, including the testicles and vulva.
- d) Contact to the Chest means contact to the breast(s) of the other Person (females only).
- e) Where contact is both High and to the Body, it will usually be classified as High Contact.
- f) Where contact is both to the Chest and to the Body, it will be classified as Contact to the Chest (females only).
- g) Contact will be classified as High, to the Groin or, in the case of females only, to the Chest, where a Person's head, groin or chest makes contact with another Person or object such as the fence or the ground as a result of the actions of the offending Person. By way of example, should a Person tackle another Person around the waist and as a result of the tackle, the tackled Person's head makes forceful contact with the fence or the ground the Contact in these circumstances would be classified as High, even though the tackle was to the body.
- h) The League or Tribunal has the discretion to grade contact as Body contact rather than High contact where the Body impact would result in a more significant sanction.

Determining the Grading of Classifiable Offences – Additional Factors

- a) A Person will not receive an automatic reduced base sanction for their exemplary Disciplinary History.
- b) The sanction for Classifiable Offences may be increased where a Person has a bad Disciplinary History.
- c) WA Football has the power to directly refer a Person to the Tribunal as a result of the Person's bad Disciplinary History. In this instance, the Tribunal will not be bound by the Penalty Matrix. Evidence in relation to the record of a Person must be tendered to the Tribunal if this clause is being used.
- d) WA Football, Leagues and the Tribunal can inquire and receive information as to the nature and extent of any injury suffered by a Person in relation to a Reportable Offence. The nature and extent of injury may be a relevant factor in determining the level of Impact, Contact and in some instances, the nature of the Conduct. A Club must provide a medical report upon request by WA Football, the League or Tribunal.
- e) The League or Tribunal may apply (at its absolute discretion) a loading of up to 100% in relation to the base sanction for any Reportable Offence committed during a Grand Final.

Guidance note: For example, if the usual base sanction for an offence was 2 matches and the Controlling Body applied the full 100% loading, the base sanction would become 4 matches. An early guilty plea discount would then apply to the 4 match base sanction, i.e. 4 matches reduced to 3 matches if the plea is accepted.

- f) Where a Person is found guilty of multiple Reportable Offences from a single match, the individual sanctions must be added together to form the final sanction applicable to the Person.

Determining the Grading of Classifiable Offences – Other Factors regarding certain Reportable Offences

General

- a) The Laws of the Game sets out a non-exhaustive list of specific Reportable Offences in AFL Law 22.2.2 as well as providing for various categories of permitted contact which will not constitute a Reportable Offence (for example, legally using a hip, shoulder, chest, arms or open arms, providing the football is no more than five metres away, and contact which is incidental to a marking contest where a Player is legitimately marking or spoiling or attempting to mark or spoil the football).
- b) The Laws of the Game define certain Reportable Offences, but provide that in interpreting/classifying Reportable Offences, words, terms or phrases which are not defined in the Laws of the Game will be given their ordinary meaning.
- c) The below provides guidance in relation to the characteristics of particular Reportable Offences and other relevant factors.

Striking

- a) Striking and kicking are interpreted in accordance with their ordinary meaning. A strike would usually be by hand, arm or elbow and would generally not apply to other contact using the body. A strike can also occur with an open hand. A kick is generally applied to contact by foot or leg.
- b) A strike or kick requires more than negligible impact to be a Classifiable Offence. A Controlling Body may, however, consider the potential to cause injury to upgrade impact from negligible to a higher level of impact.
- c) Where a strike or kick does not have more than negligible impact, it is open to a Controlling Body to charge a Person with Striking or Kicking under the Penalty Matrix where it is satisfied that notwithstanding the result, the intention of the Person was to commit a Reportable Offence. Where no contact is made, a Controlling Body may charge a Person with an Attempt to Strike or Kick, which are both Low-level Offences.

Classification of certain strikes

The following factors will be considered when determining the classification of the Reportable Offence of Striking:

- a) Intent: Notwithstanding any other part of this Handbook, the fact that an act of striking occurred behind the play or off the ball or during a break in play or with a raised forearm or elbow is usually consistent with the strike being intentional. Further, where a Player intends to forcefully push or fend an opposition Player off the ball (including to gain separation for the purpose of contesting the ball) and the effect is that the Player commits the Reportable Offence of Striking, the strike will usually be graded as Intentional.
- b) Impact: Notwithstanding any other part of this Handbook, any Careless or Intentional strike which is of an inherently dangerous kind and/or where there is a potential to cause an injury (such as a strike with a raised elbow or forearm) will usually not be classified as Low Impact even though the extent of

the actual physical impact may be low. Such strikes will usually be classified at a higher level commensurate with the nature and extent of the risk of injury involved. Strong consideration will also be given to the distance the incident occurs from the ball and the expectation of contact of the other Player.

Misconduct

- a) Misconduct has a wide meaning and generally is any conduct which would be reasonably regarded as unacceptable or unsportsmanlike or where it has the effect or potential to prejudice the reputation of any Person, Club or Controlling Body or to bring the game of Australian Football into disrepute.
- b) Acts of Serious Misconduct will be referred directly to the Tribunal.
Guidance note: Generally, for conduct to constitute Serious Misconduct, the Controlling Body will consider that a sanction of at least 4 Matches is appropriate as a sanction for that conduct.
- c) Any other act of Misconduct will be a Low-level Offence unless the Controlling Body determines that:
 - i. the Low-level Offence sanction is inappropriate; and
 - ii. the act of Misconduct is not Serious Misconduct,

in which case the Controlling Body may impose a sanction of either a 2 Match or 3 Match suspension, with the relevant Person entitled to receive a 1 Match reduction in the sanction with an Early Guilty Plea (i.e. a 2 Match suspension reduced to a 1 Match suspension with an Early Guilty Plea).

Forceful Front-On Contact

- a) Bumping or making contact that is at least Low Impact to an opponent from front-on when that opponent has their head over the ball is a Reportable Offence. Unless Intentional, such conduct will be deemed Careless except where:
 - i. the Player was contesting the ball and it was reasonable for the Player to contest the ball in that way; or
 - ii. the contact was caused by circumstances outside the control of the Player which could not reasonably be foreseen,

in which case such conduct will not constitute a Reportable Offence.

- b) Any Careless or Intentional Forceful Front-On Contact where High Contact has been made and that has the potential to cause injury will usually be graded at a minimum as Medium Impact, even though the extent of the actual physical impact may be low.
- c) A Player may bump another Player's body from side-on but any contact forward of side-on will be deemed to be front-on. A Player with their head down in anticipation of winning possession of the ball or after contesting the ball will be deemed to have their head over the ball for the purposes of this Clause.

Rough Conduct

Rough Conduct is interpreted widely and may be any contact which is unreasonable in the circumstances. It is a Reportable Offence for a Person to intentionally or carelessly engage in Rough Conduct against another Person which is unreasonable in the circumstances. Without limiting the wide interpretation of Rough Conduct, regard will be had to the following recognised forms of Rough Conduct:

a) Rough Conduct (High Bumps)

A Person will be guilty of Rough Conduct where in the bumping of another Person (whether reasonably or unreasonably) the Person causes contact that is at least Low Impact to be made with any part of their body to that Person's head, top of shoulders or neck. Unless Intentional, such conduct will be deemed to be Careless, except where:

- i. the Person was contesting the ball and it was reasonable for the Person to contest the ball in that way; or
- ii. the contact to the other Person's head, top of shoulders or neck was caused by circumstances outside the control of the Person which could not be reasonably foreseen,

in which case such conduct will not constitute a Reportable Offence.

Any high bump which constitutes Rough Conduct that has the potential to cause injury will usually be graded at a minimum as Medium Impact, even though the extent of the actual physical impact may be low.

The purpose of Clause is to, as far as practicable, minimise the risk of head injuries to Persons and this purpose must be front of mind for all Persons and will guide the application of the Clause.

For the purposes of this Handbook, head clashes that occur when a Person has elected to bump are circumstances that can reasonably be foreseen. Players will ordinarily be liable if they elect to bump if not contesting the ball.

b) Rough Conduct (Bumps to the Body)

If the above Clause does not apply (for example, in the case of a bump to the body), a Person may still be guilty of Rough Conduct if the Person's conduct was unreasonable in the circumstances. In determining whether a bump was unreasonable in the circumstances the following factors will be considered (without limitation):

- i. whether the degree of force applied by the Person bumping was excessive for the circumstances;
- ii. whether the Person being bumped was in a vulnerable position; and
- iii. whether the Person could reasonably expect the contact having regard to the Person's involvement in play or ability to influence the contest.

c) Rough Conduct (Dangerous Tackles)

The application of a tackle may be considered Rough Conduct where the tackle is unreasonable in the circumstances. In determining whether the application of a tackle constitutes a Reportable Offence and whether the tackle is Careless or Intentional, the following factors will be considered (without limitation):

- i. whether the tackle consists of more than one action, regardless of whether the Person being tackled is in possession of the ball;
- ii. whether the tackle is of an inherently dangerous kind, such as a spear tackle or a tackle where a Player is lifted off the ground;
- iii. whether the Person being tackled is in a vulnerable position (for example, arm(s) pinned) with little opportunity to protect themselves;
- iv. whether the Person being tackled is slung, driven or rotated into the ground with excessive force (for example, a run down tackle where the tackled player is driven into the ground with excessive force or where the tackle consists of a player dropping their knees and using their full body weight to bring the tackled player to the ground with excessive force).

d) Rough Conduct (Contact Below the Knees)

Under the Laws of the Game, making contact with an opponent below the knees is prohibited. A Person who keeps their feet is vulnerable to serious injury from other Persons who lunge, dive or slide toward them and make contact below the knees. This Clause aims to protect such Persons from the risk of foreseeable injury.

A Person may be guilty of Rough Conduct if the Person makes contact below the knees of another Person and does so in a manner which is unreasonable in the circumstances. It is not a defence that the Person who made contact below the knees was contesting the ball or was first to the ball.

The primary responsibility of Persons with respect to contact below the knees is to avoid the risk of foreseeable injury. In determining whether contact below the knees is unreasonable in the circumstances, the following factors will be considered:

- i. the degree of momentum and/or force involved in the contact;
- ii. whether the Person causes contact below the knees by sliding with their foot, feet, knee or knees in front of them;
- iii. whether the other Person was in a position that was vulnerable to contact below the knees (for example, standing over the ball or approaching from the opposite direction); and
- iv. whether the Person making contact had any realistic alternative ways of approaching the contest or situation.

Where contact is not made below the knees of the other Person but to another part of that Person's body, a Person may still be guilty under the general definition of Rough Conduct for making unreasonable contact by sliding or dropping into another Person with their knees or feet first.

e) **Rough Conduct (Smotherers)**

Where a Player elects to leave the ground in an attempt to smother the football, any reasonably foreseeable high contact with an opponent that is at least Low Impact will be deemed to be Careless at a minimum, unless the Player has taken all reasonable steps to avoid that high contact and/or minimise the force of that high contact (for example, by adopting a body position that minimises the force of the high contact).

Contact with an Umpire

Intentional Contact with an Umpire

- a) In considering whether contact with an umpire is intentional, regard may be had to whether the contact is aggressive, forceful, demonstrative and/or disrespectful. Where contact with an umpire is deemed intentional, the Person will be referred directly to the Tribunal. In determining the sanction for Intentional Contact with an Umpire, the Tribunal must have regard to the number of elements of the offence (aggressive, forceful, demonstrative and/or disrespectful) which are established.
- b) A Player may also be charged with the offence of Intentional Contact with an Umpire by pushing or holding an opponent into an Umpire or their direct path.
- c) Where contact with an umpire is forceful but only incidental (i.e. it is not otherwise aggressive, demonstrative or disrespectful), the Controlling Body has the discretion to not charge the Player with Intentional Contact with an Umpire (resulting in a direct referral to the Tribunal) and instead charge the Player with Careless Contact with an Umpire (but provided such Contact is not otherwise disrespectful, demonstrative or aggressive).

Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Umpire

- a) Where contact with an Umpire is not aggressive, forceful, demonstrative or disrespectful but could otherwise be regarded as intentional, it will be classified as Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Umpire which is a Low-level Offence

Careless Contact with an Umpire

- a) A charge of Careless Contact with an Umpire is a Low-level Offence. In determining whether the contact was careless, the following factors will be considered:
 - i. whether contact occurs at a centre bounce or ball up;
 - ii. whether the Person has set up behind the Umpire;
 - iii. whether the Person has taken a path that intersects the Umpire's exit line from a stoppage;
 - iv. the force of the contact;
 - v. whether the Umpire's decision making is impeded;
 - vi. whether the Umpire goes to ground as a result of the contact;

- vii. any mitigating factors (for example, effort to avoid contact, offline bounce or throw, pushed by opponent into Umpire's path).

A Player may also be charged with the offence of Careless Contact with an Umpire by pushing or holding another Person into an Umpire or their direct path.

Umpire Abuse

- a) Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language Towards or in relation to an Umpire will be an Auditory Offence unless the Controlling Body determines that the conduct constitutes the Direct Tribunal Offence of Behaving in an Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Manner Towards or in Relation to an Umpire.
- b) Where a Person is reported for an Auditory Offence that is directed at, or in relation to, an Umpire, and responds with further abuse that is directed at, or in relation to, an Umpire, the Controlling Body or Tribunal, may increase the penalty for the Auditory Offence by one (1) additional match.

Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language

Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language will be an Auditory Offence unless the Controlling Body determines that the conduct constitutes the Direct Tribunal Offence of Serious Misconduct.

Melees

Engaging in a Melee / Wrestling

- a) A Melee/Wrestle is defined as an incident involving Persons who are grappling or otherwise struggling with one another, and which is likely to bring the game of Australian Football into disrepute or prejudice the interests or reputation of the Controlling Body. In determining if a Person's conduct constitutes Engaging in a Melee/Wrestle, the following factors will be considered:
 - i. the duration the Person is involved in the Melee/Wrestle;
 - ii. the vigour applied by the Person;
 - iii. whether the Melee/Wrestle occurs at a break in play, particularly at quarter breaks and half time;
 - iv. whether the Person contributed to an escalation of the Melee/Wrestle; and
 - v. the role of the Person (for example, Player or Football Official).

Instigator of a Melee / Wrestle

Where a Person's conduct results in retaliatory action which leads to a Melee/Wrestle, that Person's conduct may constitute a Reportable Offence of Instigator of a Melee/Wrestle. The Reportable Offence of Instigator of Melee/Wrestle is separate to the Reportable Offence of Engaging in a Melee/Wrestle and a Person may be found guilty of both Reportable Offences.

Staging

Staging includes excessive exaggeration of contact in an unsportsmanlike manner. In determining whether a Person's conduct constitutes the Reportable Offence of Staging, the following factors will be considered:

- a) whether the conduct affected, or was likely to affect, the Umpire decision making;
- b) whether the conduct incited a melee; and/or
- c) whether the conduct was in the spirit of the game.

Tripping

- a) Tripping is interpreted in accordance with its ordinary meaning. In determining whether a Person's conduct constitutes the Reportable Offence of Tripping, the following factors will be considered:
 - i. how fast the opponent was moving;
 - ii. whether the trip was by hand or by foot/leg; and
 - iii. whether contact was made with a swinging motion.
- b) To constitute a Classifiable Offence, Tripping requires more than negligible impact. Where a trip does not have more than negligible impact, it is still open to the Controlling Body or Tribunal to charge a Person with Tripping under the Penalty Matrix where it is satisfied that notwithstanding the result, a Reportable Offence was committed. Where no contact or minor contact is made, the Panel can charge a Person with an Attempt to Trip, which is a Low-level Offence.

Community Tribunal Charge Sheet

Hearing Details			
Hearing Date		Facilitator	
League		Match Round	
Competition		Venue	
Match Teams		Match Date	

Reported Individual			
Name		Date of birth	
Club		Jumper #	
Contact number		Contact email	
Advocate Name		Relationship	
Contact number		Contact email	

Reported Offence			
Charge	Choose an item.		
Grading	Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Penalty Offered			
Additional charges			

Aggrieved Person			
Name		Date of birth	
Club		Jumper #	
Contact number		Contact email	
Advocate Name		Relationship	
Contact number		Contact email	

Reporting Match Official			
Reporting Official #1		Role	
Contact number		Contact email	
Reporting Official #2		Role	
Contact number		Contact email	
Advocate Name		Relationship	
Contact number		Contact email	

Comments (including confirmation of charge)