

Gippsland League Match Review Panel

POLICY & PROCEDURE

Rational

The Gippsland League Match Review Panel (MRP) has been formed to process complaints of alleged incidents which may have been missed by officiating umpires. In the past, incidents of this nature have typically been referred to an Independent Investigator which is a process which can take up to a month to resolve and is at a high cost to the League and clubs. Please note that it is not practical or feasible to review video footage of every game, every weekend. The Gippsland League will still be reliant on clubs primarily to raise alleged incidents as appropriate.

Purpose

1. To provide a safer environment for all players, officials and supporters.
2. To reduce the potential need for time consuming investigations.
3. To reduce the work load of the Tribunal.
4. To encourage clubs/officials/players to accept responsibility for the on-field behavior.

Implementation and By Laws

Match Review Panel (MRP) - 39

- I. The MRP will assess all referrals lodged in respect of potential Reportable Offences. A referral may be lodged by the officiating Umpires, the Gippsland League Umpire Officer, the Board of Management, the General Manager, the Operations Manager, the President or Secretary of a club competing in the relevant match, or the MRP itself during its video review of matches.
- II. Annually a Match Review Panel shall be formed which will be made up of one independent member with no official club affiliation and the Gippsland League Operations Manager.
- III. All referrals must be lodged by the official Gippsland League MRP Incident Referral form.
- IV. The MRP may only review footage produced by Gippsland League TV and League approved camera operators.
- V. The MRP will review an incident (from official Gippsland League footage or approved footage) and determine whether that matter should be referred to the Gippsland League Independent Tribunal, if in the opinion of the Panel there is a breach of the (AFL) Laws of Australian Football. The AFL laws referred typically relate to the AFL's Reportable Offences (as per the traditional AFL Victoria report sheet/Appendix 1 of the National Community Handbook).
- VI. The MRP may offer a Set Penalty & Early Guilty Plea referred in the National Community Handbook reportable offences via a Notice of Charge. The Notice must be in writing and set out particulars of the matter via an official Gippsland League MRP Incident Referral form.
- VII. The MRP members cannot be called as witnesses to any subsequent Independent Tribunal hearing where one of their recommendations is being heard.
- VIII. The MRP recommendations cannot be appealed. The Appeal process is contained within the rules of the Independent Tribunal.

Submitting an incident – 39.1

- I. The MRP Referral Form must be submitted to the Operations Manager by no later than 12pm on the first business day after the incident accompanied by a \$250 bond (evidence of the payment to be attached in the email).
- II. The footage will be sourced by the League and be sent for review to the MRP by no later than 5:00pm on the day that the MRP request form is received. Unless, the official footage is not available at that point in time.
- III. The MRP will review the footage and forward their recommendations to the General Manager within 24 hours of receiving their video footage.
- IV. The MRP may list any of the following recommendations

Recommendations:

1. There is insufficient video evidence to prosecute a Notice of Charge,
 2. The incident should potentially go to the Independent Tribunal, with an opportunity for the player to apply for a Set Penalty or Early Guilty Plea,
 3. The incident is seen as more serious and should go to the Independent Tribunal for resolution, without the player being offered the opportunity to take a set penalty,
 4. The video is inconclusive or more complex and the incident needs to be referred to the League investigation officer.
- V. **Notice of Charge:** On receiving the MRP recommendations 2 or 3 the General Manager must contact the club of the offending player and issue a Notice of Charge as per 22.2 b III of the National Community Handbook.

Outcome & Penalties – 39.2

- I. If a player is charged by the MRP, the charged player may challenge the imposed Set Penalty at tribunal. This request must be made via email by 5pm of the following business day from when the notice of report was distributed and be sent to the General Manager accompanied by a \$250 bond (evidence of the payment to be attached in the email) as per the League bylaws to have the case heard at the tribunal.
- II. As per Appendix 1, 3d I of the National Community Handbook. Where a player or official has received a previous reprimand for an incident, that player will not be eligible to receive an Early Guilty Plea including another reprimand for an offence under the same classification in Appendix 1, 2a – Table 1 of the National Community Handbook.
- III. A club's player or official who is reported and subsequently found guilty at the tribunal will be charged a fee of \$250.
- IV. If the player accepts the Set Penalty/Early Guilty Plea or is found not guilty, no fee is payable.
- V. If a request by a club to review an incident is deemed frivolous by the MRP, the requesting club will be fined \$250.

APPENDIX 1 – Reportable Offences

1. Application

- (a) This Appendix 1 sets out the different categories of Reportable Offences and appropriate sanctions and courses of action in respect of Reportable Offences.
- (b) The categories of Reportable Offences are as follows:
 - (i) Classifiable Offences (Clauses [2](#) and [3](#) of this Appendix 1);
 - (ii) Direct Tribunal Offences (Clause [4](#) of this Appendix 1); and
 - (iii) Low-level Offences (Clause [5](#) of this Appendix 1).
- (c) This Appendix 1 is to be used by a Controlling Body (including any Match Review Panel, Match Review Officer or other person(s) responsible for assessing a Reportable Offence) to determine the appropriate category of offence, sanction or course of action prior to any Tribunal involvement under Section [25](#).

[Guidance note: Examples of Reportable Offences committed in the AFL/AFLW Competition are listed in Appendix 2. The AFL will make vision of these examples available to Controlling Bodies from time to time.]

2. Classifiable Offences

(a) Which Reportable Offences are Classifiable Offences?

A Classifiable Offence is a Reportable Offence specified in Table 1 below which may be graded by a Controlling Body in order to determine an appropriate base sanction for that Reportable Offence.

Table 1 – Classifiable Offences
Charging
Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact to the Eye Region
Forceful Front-On Contact
Headbutt or Contact Using Head
Kicking
Kneeing
Rough Conduct
Striking
Tripping
Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact to the Face

(b) **Grading Classifiable Offences**

- (i) Unless otherwise specified in this Policy Handbook, a Controlling Body must grade a Classifiable Offence in accordance with Table 2 below:

Table 2 – Classification Table				
Conduct	Impact	Contact	Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea
Intentional	Severe	High/Groin/Chest	5+ Matches (Tribunal)	N/A
		Body	4+ Matches (Tribunal)	N/A
	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)	N/A
		Body	3+ Matches (Tribunal)	N/A
	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

[Guidance note: Where 'Tribunal' is noted above, the matter will be referred directly to the Tribunal.]

- (ii) If applicable, a Controlling Body may grade a Classifiable Offence in accordance with the specific classification table adopted by the relevant Controlling Body provided such table has been approved by the AFL.
 - (iii) For a Controlling Body to arrive at a grading set out in Table 2, the Controlling Body must use the interpretation provisions set out in Clause [3](#) of this Appendix 1 to assess whether:
 - (A) the Conduct is Intentional or Careless;
 - (B) the Impact is Severe, High, Medium or Low; and
 - (C) the Contact with the other Person is High/Groin/Chest or to the Body.
 - (iv) A Controlling Body may refer a Classifiable Offence directly to the Tribunal on the basis that:
 - (A) it is a Classifiable Offence which the Controlling Body has graded as Severe Impact (together with any Contact or Conduct grading); or
 - (B) it is a Classifiable Offence which attracts a base sanction that the Controlling Body finds inappropriate.
- [Guidance note: Refer to Section [22.4\(c\)](#). See also Clause [4](#) (Direct Tribunal Offences) of this Appendix 1.]*
- (v) References to 'Chest' in this Appendix 1 apply to Persons participating in female Competitions only.

3. Determining the grading of Classifiable Offences

(a) Grading Conduct

- (i) The Conduct will be graded as Intentional or Careless.
- (ii) 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.

(iii) **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.

(b) **Grading Impact**

- (i) 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 the 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 be factored into the potential to cause injury, particularly in relation to the following conduct:
 - (1) intentional strikes, such as those with a swinging clenched fist, raised forearm or elbow;
 - (2) high bumps, particularly with significant head contact and/or momentum;
 - (3) 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;

- (4) forceful round-arm swings that make head-high contact to a Player in a marking contest, ruck contest or when tackling;
 - (5) 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);
 - (6) 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 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 3 sets out base level Impact guidelines and provides a summary of applicable base level Impact guidelines for Low, Medium, High and Severe Impact incidents:

Table 3 – 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 in this Appendix 1.</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.</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 in this Appendix 1.</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 in this Appendix 1.</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>

(c) **Grading Contact (High/Groin/Chest, Body)**

- (i) High Contact is not limited to contact to the head and includes contact above the shoulders.
- (ii) A classification of High Contact may apply to a Careless or Intentional Dangerous Tackle (refer to Clause [7\(f\)\(iii\)](#) of Appendix 1 below) which has the potential for injury to be caused through dangerous high contact with the ground and where high contact does not actually occur.
- (iii) 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.
- (iv) Contact to the Chest means contact to the breast(s) of the other Person (females only).
- (v) Where contact is both High and to the Body, it will usually be classified as High Contact.
- (vi) Where contact is both to the Chest and to the Body, it will be classified as Contact to the Chest (females only).
- (vii) 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.

- (viii) The Controlling Body has the discretion to grade contact as Body contact rather than High contact where the Body impact would result in a more significant sanction.

(d) Impact of a bad record on Classifiable Offence

- (i) The sanction for Classifiable Offences may be increased where a Person has a bad Disciplinary History.
- (ii) Where a Person has been found or pleaded guilty to two low-level Classifiable Offences within a 12 month period (those Classifiable Offences with a base sanction of 1 match as per Table 2), any third or subsequent low-level Classifiable Offence (with a base sanction of 1 match as per Table 2) within the same 12 month period (as at the date of the offence) will result in a base sanction of 2 matches, with the Person able to accept 1 match with an Early Guilty Plea. For the avoidance of doubt, the Low-level Offences referred to in Clause [5](#) of this Appendix 1 will not be affected by this bad record provision.
- (iii) A Controlling Body has the power pursuant to Section [22.4\(c\)](#) 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 Table 2. Evidence in relation to the record of a Person may be tendered to the Tribunal without the leave of the Chairperson.

(e) Reduction in base sanction for an Early Guilty Plea

The base sanction for a Classifiable Offence will be decreased where a Person submits an Early Guilty Plea (if available). As per Table 2:

- (i) an Early Guilty Plea in respect of a Classifiable Offence with a fixed base sanction of a two, three or four Match suspension will result in a one Match reduction in that suspension; and
- (ii) an Early Guilty Plea in respect of a Classifiable Offence with a base sanction of a one Match suspension will result in a reprimand and/or fine (at the discretion of the Controlling Body).

(f) No automatic reduction for exemplary record

- (i) A Person will not receive an automatic reduced base sanction for their exemplary Disciplinary History.
- (ii) If a Classifiable Offence is contested or referred to the Tribunal, a Person with a verifiable exemplary Disciplinary History may argue that their Disciplinary History constitutes exceptional and compelling circumstances under Section [25.4\(a\)\(iv\)\(A\)](#) (which may make it inappropriate to apply the sanctions in Table 2 to the determined classification). In such

circumstances, the Tribunal may determine the appropriate sanction in its absolute discretion.

(g) **Multiple offences in a single Match**

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.

(h) **Injury**

The Controlling Body 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 the Controlling Body or Tribunal.

4. Direct Tribunal Offences

(a) **Which Reportable Offences are Direct Tribunal Offences?**

Direct Tribunal Offences are those Reportable Offences which are referred by the Controlling Body directly to the Tribunal for determination without grading (i.e. without an assessment of the Reportable Offence using Table 2), including the following Reportable Offences:

Table 4 – Direct Tribunal Offences
Attempting to Strike an Umpire
Behaving in an Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Manner Towards or in Relation to an Umpire
Eye Gouging
Intentional Contact with an Umpire
Spitting on Another Person
Spitting on or at an Umpire
Stomping
Striking an Umpire
Serious Misconduct

(b) **Determination of Direct Tribunal Offences**

The Tribunal will determine a Direct Tribunal Offence in accordance with Section [25](#). The Tribunal will determine the appropriate sanction for a Direct Tribunal Offence in its absolute discretion.

5. Low-level Offences

(a) Which Reportable Offences are Low-level Offences?

Low-level Offences are the following low-level Reportable Offences which, having regard to the provisions of this Clause 5 and Clause 7 of Appendix 1, do not require classification (i.e. do not require an assessment of the Reportable Offence using Table 2):

Table 5 – Low-level Offences
Attempt to Strike / Kick / Trip
Careless Contact with an Umpire
Disputing Decision
Instigator of a Melee / Wrestle
Interfering with a Player Kicking for Goal
Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Injured Player
Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Umpire
Not Leaving the Playing Surface
Obscene Gesture
Pinching
Prohibited Boots, Jewellery or Equipment
Scratching
Shaking, Climbing or Interfering with Goal or Behind Post
Spitting at Another Player
Staging
Striking
Kicking
Time Wasting
Tripping
Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language Towards or in relation to an Umpire
Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language

Engaging in a Melee / Wrestle
Any Other Act of Low-Level Misconduct which is not a Classifiable Offence or Direct Tribunal Offence

(b) **Sanctions for Low-level Offences**

- (i) Unless otherwise specified in this Policy Handbook, for Low-level Offences a Controlling Body must impose the base sanctions (with a reduced sanction for an Early Guilty Plea) set out in Table 6 below:

Table 6 – Low-level Offence Base Sanctions			
1st & 2nd Low-level Offence		3rd & Subsequent Low-Level Offence	
Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea	Base Sanction	Early Guilty Plea
1 Match	Reprimand	2 Matches	1 Match

- (ii) If applicable, a Controlling Body may impose base sanctions for Low-level Offences in accordance with the specific Low-level Offence sanctions table adopted by the relevant Controlling Body provided such table has been approved by the AFL.
- (iii) A reference to second, third and subsequent Low-level Offences is a reference to a second, third or subsequent Low-level Offence occurring at any time in the previous 12 months (as at the date of the current offence). The second, third or subsequent Low-level Offence need not be the same offence as the first or any other Low-level Offence. For the avoidance of doubt, a prior offence other than a Low-level Offence will not count as a first offence for the purposes of the above Table 5.
- (iv) A Controlling Body may refer a Low-level Offence directly to the Tribunal on the basis that it is a Low-level Offence which attracts a base sanction that the Controlling Body finds inappropriate.

6. Reportable Offences in a Grand Final

The Controlling Body or Tribunal (as applicable) 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.

7. Other factors regarding certain Reportable Offences

(a) **General**

- (i) The Laws of the Game sets out a non-exhaustive list of specific Reportable Offences in 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).

- (ii) 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.
- (iii) This Clause [7](#) provides guidance in relation to the characteristics of particular Reportable Offences and other relevant factors.

(b) **Striking, Kicking**

- (i) 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.
- (ii) A strike or kick requires more than negligible impact to be a Classifiable Offence.
- (iii) 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 Table 5 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.

(c) **Classification of certain strikes**

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

- (i) Intent: Notwithstanding any other part of this Policy 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.
- (ii) Impact: Notwithstanding any other part of this Policy Handbook, any Careless or Intentional strike which is of an inherently dangerous kind and/or where there is a potential to cause serious 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 serious 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.

(d) **Misconduct**

- (i) 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.

- (ii) Acts of Serious Misconduct will be referred directly to the Tribunal.
- (iii) Any other act of Misconduct will be a Low-level Offence unless the Controlling Body determines that:
 - (A) the Low-level Offence sanction is inappropriate; and
 - (B) 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 reduction in the sanction equivalent to the reduction applicable in Table 2 with an Early Guilty Plea (i.e. a 2 Match suspension reduced to a 1 Match suspension with an Early Guilty Plea).

(e) **Forceful Front-On Contact**

- (i) Bumping or making forceful contact 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:
 - (A) the Player was contesting the ball and it was reasonable for the Player to contest the ball in that way; or
 - (B) the bump or forceful 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.

- (ii) Any Careless or Intentional Forceful Front-On Conduct 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.
- (iii) 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 [7\(e\)](#).

(f) **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:

- (i) 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 forceful contact to be made with any part of their body to that Person's head or neck.

Unless Intentional, such conduct will be deemed to be Careless, except where:

- (1) the Person was contesting the ball and it was reasonable for the Person to contest the ball in that way; or
- (2) the forceful contact to the other Person's head 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 [7\(f\)\(i\)](#) of Appendix 1 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 Policy 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.

(ii) Rough Conduct (Bumps to the Body)

If Clause [7\(f\)\(i\)](#) 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):

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

(iii) 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):

- (A) whether the tackle consists of more than one action, regardless of whether the Person being tackled is in possession of the ball;
- (B) 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;

- (C) whether the Person being tackled is in a vulnerable position (for example, arm(s) pinned) with little opportunity to protect themselves; and
- (D) whether the Person being tackled is slung, driven or rotated into the ground with excessive force.

(iv) **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 7(f)(iv) 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:

- (A) the degree of momentum and/or force involved in the contact;
- (B) whether the Person causes contact below the knees by sliding with their foot, feet, knee or knees in front of them;
- (C) 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
- (D) 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.

(g) **Contact with an Umpire**

(i) **Intentional Contact with an Umpire**

- (A) Contact with an Umpire that is aggressive, forceful, demonstrative or disrespectful will be deemed intentional and 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).

(ii) Unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Umpire

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.

(iii) Careless Contact with an Umpire

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:

- (A) whether contact occurs at a centre bounce or ball up;
- (B) whether the Person has set up behind the Umpire;
- (C) whether the Person has taken a path that intersects the Umpire's exit line from a stoppage;
- (D) the force of the contact;
- (E) whether the Umpire's decision making is impeded;
- (F) whether the Umpire goes to ground as a result of the contact;
- (G) 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.

(h) **Umpire abuse**

Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language Towards or in relation to an Umpire will be a Low-level Offence unless the Controlling Body determines that:

- (i) the Low-level Offence sanction is inappropriate; and
- (ii) the conduct does not constitute the Direct Tribunal Offence of Behaving in an Abusive, Insulting, Threatening or Obscene Manner Towards or in Relation to an Umpire,

in which case the Controlling Body may impose a sanction of either a 2 Match, 3 Match or 4 Match suspension, with the relevant Person entitled to receive a reduction in the sanction equivalent to the reduction applicable in Table 2 with an Early Guilty Plea (i.e. a 2 Match suspension reduced to a 1 Match suspension with an Early Guilty Plea).

(i) **Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language**

Using Abusive, Insulting or Obscene Language will be a Low-level Offence unless the Controlling Body determines that:

- (i) the Low-level Offence sanction is inappropriate; and
- (ii) the conduct does not constitute the Direct Tribunal Offence of 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 reduction in the sanction equivalent to the reduction applicable in Table 2 with an Early Guilty Plea (i.e. a 2 Match suspension reduced to a 1 Match suspension with an Early Guilty Plea).

(j) **Melee**

- (i) Engaging in a Melee/Wrestle

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:

- (A) the duration the Person is involved in the Melee/Wrestle;
- (B) the vigour applied by the Person;
- (C) whether the Melee/Wrestle occurs at a break in play, particularly at quarter breaks and half time;
- (D) whether the Person contributed to an escalation of the Melee/Wrestle; and
- (E) the role of the Person (for example, Player or Football Official).

- (ii) 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.

(k) **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:

- (i) whether the conduct affected, or was likely to affect, the Umpire decision-making;

- (ii) whether the conduct incited a melee; and/or
- (iii) whether the conduct was in the spirit of the game.

(l) **Tripping**

- (i) 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:
 - (A) how fast the opponent was moving;
 - (B) whether the trip was by hand or by foot/leg; and
 - (C) whether contact was made with a swinging motion.
- (ii) 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 Table 5 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.