

WORLD RUGBY TACKLE HEIGHT GLOBAL LAW TRIAL

RUGBY AUSTRALIA – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the new tackle height?

The tackle height will be lowered to below the base of the sternum for all community competitions from February 10, 2024.

Why is the tackle height changing?

The risk of concussion is 4.2 times higher when a tackler's head is positioned above the sternum of the ball carrier.

Research has proven there to be a significant reduction in concussions with the lowering of the tackle height.

Who will be affected by the law change?

The change in law will be applicable to all matches played within Australia at Community level, including, all Premier Grades, School Competitions, and pathway competitions.

Who will NOT be affected by the law change?

Super W, Super Rugby, and all national teams.

What are other Unions doing?

Rugby Australia joins 10 other world Unions in responding to World Rugby's recommendation to participate in a global tackle height trial to reduce concussion.

Which other Unions are participating in the global trial?

Argentina, England, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa, and Wales.

What has been the outcome of the law change in other countries?

Global trials of lower tackle heights have proven to deliver positive advancements in player safety and overall game experience.

How will a change in tackle height from the previous position of the shoulder to the base of the sternum, reduce the risk of concussion?

Changing the legal tackle height to the base of the sternum ensures the tackler's head is lower relative to the ball carrier's body, minimising the risk of head-to-head, and head-to-shoulder contact, and reducing the risk of head injury to both players.

How will the new tackle height be sanctioned?

Contact which starts and ends above the base of the sternum may be liable to sanction (e.g., penalty, with further sanctions for repeated infringements).

Contact which starts above the base of the sternum and ends with contact to the ball carrier's head will be liable for sanction under World Rugby law guidelines and head contact process (e.g., yellow or red card).

Does the law change impact secondary tacklers?

The secondary tackler must also tackle below the ball carrier's sternum.

How is the law change applied to the pick and go?

The new law will not change the ability for an attacking player to "pick-and-go" where the ball carrier typically starts and continues at a low body height. The defender will still be required to avoid contact with the head and neck of the ball carrier as stipulated in the existing World Rugby Head Contact framework.

How can players know where the base of the sternum line is when tackling?

When defending, players should target the belly of the ball carrier.

What support is available to players, coaches, and match officials in adjusting to the law change?

Resources and training materials are available to all members of the Rugby Community to better understand and adapt to the change in tackle height.

A new Smart Tackle eLearning course in the Rugby Learning Centre has been designed to provide all coaches and referees with clear understanding of the new Global Law Trial Experimental Law Variation (ELV) and the safety aspects that underpin its implementation. Additional coach education sessions will be held, game management guidelines sessions, club and school webinars and a range of online resources will be continually added to the dedicated page on the Rugby AU website.