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# UNDER 18.5 OVER-AGE DISPENSATION POLICY

Drafted February 2025

The Essendon District Football League is committed to working with clubs to improve and enhance our Under 18.5 Men's and Women's competitions by way of maximising team entries across each division.

While the EDFL has experienced an increase in the number of Under 18.5 teams entered into competitions in recent seasons, many of our clubs still face significant challenges in being able to field and sustain a viable Under 18.5 team.

Within the past 12 months, the EDFL has received requests from some clubs to allow over-aged players to play in their Under 18.5 team due to an ongoing lack of on-field success, and/or a sustained period of difficulty in fielding and maintaining an Under 18.5 team.

Clubs were recently asked to provide feedback on a proposal to allow over-aged players to play in the Under 18.5 competition, should they and their club meet any criteria as set by the EDFL.

This policy has been developed to set out the parameters and criteria by which an over-aged player may be granted dispensation to play in the Under 18.5 competition.

## PARAMETERS & CRITERIA

The intention of this policy is to enhance a club's ability to establish and maintain an Under 18.5 Men's or Women's team for the duration of the current or upcoming season where they have struggled to do so in recent seasons.

Any such club applying for Over-Age Dispensation must be able to demonstrate to the EDFL that they have struggled to establish, and/or maintain an Under 18.5 Men's or Women's team in the current or previous season.

All applications for Over-Age Dispensation under this policy must be supplied to the EDFL in writing by no later than May 31 of the relevant competition year.

Approved and active Over-Age Dispensations may be reviewed and/or revoked at the EDFL's discretion at any time.

### 1. Club Eligibility Criteria

- a. A club will only be given consideration for Over-Age Dispensations if they can demonstrate a genuine lack of recent on-field success and viability in Under 18.5 football.
- b. A club will only be given consideration for Over-Age Dispensations if they can demonstrate genuine recent difficulty in establishing, and/or maintaining a stable Under 18.5 team.
- c. A club will only be given consideration for Over-Age Dispensations if they can demonstrate a genuine shortage of Under 18.5 players for the relevant competition year.
- d. A club may submit Over-Age Dispensation applications for no more than three individual Men's players and no more than three individual Women's players per season.



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- e. A club will be entitled to no more than three individual Men's players and three individual Women's players with an approved and active Over-Age Dispensation, of any kind, at any given time.
- f. A club that has multiple teams entered into the Men's Under 18.5 competition is not permitted to apply for any Men's Over-Age Dispensations.
- g. A club that has multiple teams entered into the Women's Under 18.5 competition is not permitted to apply for any Women's Over-Age Dispensations.
- h. A club that has had their Men's Under 18.5 team re-graded into a division lower than their current senior division is not permitted to apply for any Men's Over-Age Dispensations.
- i. Where a club has made a request to the EDFL and had their Men's or Women's U18.5 team re-graded into a lower division after the season has commenced, all of their previously approved and active Over-Age Dispensations will be revoked.

## **2. Player Eligibility Criteria**

- a. A player will only be eligible for Over-Age Dispensation if their 19th birthday falls between 1 January and 30 June during the relevant competition season.
- b. A player must not have been registered to play for any other club in the previous season to be eligible for Over-Age Dispensation.
- c. Any player that has a total of more than two suspended matches over their career will be ineligible for Over-Age Dispensation.
- d. A player's Over-Age Dispensation will be instantly revoked if they are found guilty of a Reportable Offence that results in a match suspension of any kind during the season.
- e. A player's Over-Age Dispensation will be instantly revoked if they incur three Blue Cards across all competitions during the season.
- f. Any player that has ever played a Senior Grade match for any community club will be ineligible for Over-Age Dispensation.
- g. Any player that has been approved for Over-Age Dispensation may play in any EDFL competition match for which they are eligible in accordance with EDFL rules and regulations, however if any such player plays in a Men's or Women's Senior Grade match, their Over-Age Dispensation will be revoked for the remainder of the season.
- h. Any Men's or Women's player that has ever played in a VFL, SANFL, WAFL, National Representative Championships or Coates Talent League match will be ineligible for Over-Age Dispensation.
- i. Any Men's or Women's player that holds an active Season Permit to any VFL, SANFL, WAFL or Coates Talent League club will be ineligible for Over-Age Dispensation. For the avoidance of doubt, if a Men's or Women's player is approved for an Over-Age Dispensation and then afterward gains an active Season Permit to a VFL, SANFL, WAFL or Coates Talent League club, their Over-Age Dispensation will be revoked for the remainder of the season.
- j. Any player that has ever played a Representative Interleague match will be ineligible for Over-Age Dispensation.
- k. Any player that has ever won a competition Best & Fairest Award with any league will be ineligible for Over-Age Dispensation.

## **Contact**

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