



## MEMORANDUM

To: **Community Football stakeholders**

From: **AFL Game Development, AFL Legal & Regulatory**

Date: **13 February 2026**

Re: **Summary of amendments to 2026 Laws of Australian Football**

Dear all,

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a summary of amendments to the 2026 Laws of Australian Football.

The changes from 2025 to 2026 are summarised below:

1. **Removal of “Bouncing” the ball in the centre square** – all references to “bouncing” the ball in the centre square (and any variations of that term) have been removed, leaving only references to “throw ups”. This reflects the change announced at the end of 2025 that the ball will no longer be bounced in the centre square to resume play at the start of a quarter or after a goal.
2. **Law 13.1 (Starting Positions)** – the requirement for a Player to start in the Goal Square as part of the 6-6 Starting Position has been removed. As a result, six Players from each Team are now permitted to start in any position within the area defined by the Boundary Line and the Fifty Metre Arcs when resuming play at the start of a quarter or after a goal.
3. **Law 11.3 (Incomplete Matches)** – a new Law 11.3 has been introduced to replace the previous Law 11.1.2. The changes address two key issues:
  - a) **Removal of the 30-Minute Restart Restriction** – the previous law prevented a match from resuming if there had been a 30-minute delay in the first half. This created unintended outcomes, particularly where a delay occurred before the match or early in the first quarter, and sufficient time still remained to complete at least one half (allowing a result to be determined).

Delays caused by serious injuries requiring ambulance attendance or by lightning (for which AFL recommends a minimum 30-minute delay) often exceed the 30-minute threshold, forcing matches to be abandoned even when at least half of the game could still be played.

The revised law adopts a clearer guiding principle that Matches should recommence wherever possible so that at least one half can be completed within the scheduled time. This ensures that delays—particularly those related to lightning—do not automatically prevent a restart when a result could still be achieved.

- b) **Controlling Body Discretion Over Forfeits** – previously, under Law 11.1.2(e), if a team was instructed to recommence play after a delay and failed, refused, or neglected to do so, the team was automatically deemed to have forfeited. Stakeholder feedback highlighted the need for discretion in exceptional circumstances. For example, if a team experiences a traumatic incident

(such as a player suffering a cardiac arrest), it may be unreasonable to expect the team to continue.

The updated law retains the default position that a team refusing to recommence play forfeits the match, however, provides Controlling Bodies with the flexibility to determine an alternative outcome—such as a draw or match abandoned—where exceptional circumstances justify it.

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