

WORLD DEAF RUGBY HEARING LOSS POLICY

January 2020

BACKGROUND

During **2018/19**, following agitation at the 2018 Sydney WDR AGM for the WDR qualifying hearing loss level to be raised from 25dB to at least 40dB, the then *World Deaf Rugby Executive* (Tony Stoyles, Nicholas Marlor & Lyndon James) consulted with *WDR Members* about what the minimum hearing loss should be for players to qualify and be eligible to play in official *World Deaf Rugby* competitions - *fixtures, tournaments & tests*.

The consultation process culminated in the then *WDR Executive* issuing an email in early **2019** to all *WDR General Committee Delegates* on the subject of **“Qualifying Hearing Loss”**.

This included a letter from the then *WDR Secretary* (Lyndon James) outlining what he believed to be the *WDR Member* majority decision in relation to the level of hearing loss and its consequences. It stated that:

*“Following receipt of responses from the membership and taking into account the majority views expressed, henceforth **WDR shall only officially recognise matches played by players whose hearing loss equals or exceeds an average of 40dB across both ears.***

*This **does not** mean that matches cannot be arranged and played at greater or lower hearing loss. That remains a matter for the host team to determine when inviting participation or agreed bilaterally between the two teams.*

*But this **does** mean that in order for a competition to be recognised as representing either a global or regional title, **the teams must adhere to the official hearing loss of 40dB.***

Further, all current rankings will henceforth be considered to be provisional until re-assessed once sufficient games have been played at 40dB hearing loss.

Finally, this decision will impact participation in international events. As a result, I recommend that this decision be reviewed no later than three months after the next World Deaf Rugby Sevens.”

This forms the basis for the current WDR Hearing Loss Policy detailed below.

WDR HEARING LOSS POLICY

- 1. To qualify/be eligible to play *World Deaf Rugby* and participate in official *WDR 7s/15s competitions* (matches, fixtures, tournaments, tests etc), **Deaf rugby players must have an average bilateral hearing loss across both ears of at least 40dB****

This means that the sum (total) of a player’s left ear hearing loss plus their right ear hearing loss must be at least 80dB. So, even if a player has full hearing or very low hearing loss in one ear, if they have a sufficiently high hearing loss in the second ear they can still qualify.

2. For a competition to represent itself and/or be recognised as an official *WDR* event, the teams competing must adhere to the official *WDR* hearing loss of 40dB
3. Only competitions (*matches, fixtures, tournaments, tests etc*) adopting a 40dB qualifying hearing loss will be used to assess world rankings
4. All current rankings will be considered provisional until re-assessed once sufficient games have been played at the 40dB hearing loss level
5. Competitions that are not represented as “*WDR*” events can be played at whatever level of hearing loss is agreed bilaterally/multilaterally between the participants. However, such events must not represent themselves as “*WDR*” events, will not be recognised as such and cannot be used in assessing *WDR* rankings

WDR has no jurisdiction over international, regional and national Deaf rugby events that are not “WDR” events and hence has no authority to specify or dictate hearing loss levels for any such non-WDR events - just as the ICDS and other national/regional bodies have no authority to dictate hearing loss levels to WDR.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER DEAF SPORTS & DEAFLYMPICS

It should be noted that the above definition of required hearing loss differs from most if not all other Deaf sports as well as the *Deaflympics*.

Other Deaf sports events and the *Deaflympics* do not specify the required minimum hearing loss as an **average hearing loss across both ears**. Instead they specify the required hearing loss as the **actual hearing loss in each ear**, with hearing loss eligibility officially worded in terms of a minimum dB pure tone average in the better ear (*3-tone pure tone average at 500, 1,000 and 2,000 Hz, air conduction, ISO 1969 Standard*).

- *Deaf Sports Australia (DSA)/Australian Deaf Games* requires a hearing loss of at least 40dB in **each** ear (“*at least 40dB in the better ear*”), so if the hearing loss in either of the player’s ears is less than 40dB they cannot qualify
- *ICSD/Deaflympics* requires a hearing loss of at least 55dB in **each** ear (“*at least 55dB in the better ear*”), so if the hearing less in either of the player’s ears is less than 55dB they cannot qualify

Hence players can only qualify for such events if they have a substantial hearing loss in **each** ear, not just in one ear.

EXAMPLES

To provide clarity about both the interpretation of the *WDR Hearing Loss Policy* and its positioning *vis-à-vis* other Deaf sporting event hearing loss policies, some examples have been provided below.

HEARING LOSS (HL) EAR ONE	HEARING LOSS (HL) EAR TWO	AVERAGE HL ACROSS BOTH EARS	QUALIFIES FOR "WDR" EVENTS	QUALIFIES FOR "DSA" EVENTS	QUALIFIES FOR DEAFLYMPICS
0dB	50dB	25dB	NO	NO	NO
10dB	40dB	25dB	NO	NO	NO
20dB	50dB	35dB	NO	NO	NO
30dB	40dB	35dB	NO	NO	NO
0dB	80dB	40dB	YES	NO	NO
10dB	70dB	40dB	YES	NO	NO
20dB	60dB	40dB	YES	NO	NO
30dB	50dB	40dB	YES	NO	NO
0dB	110dB	55dB	YES	NO	NO
10dB	100dB	55dB	YES	NO	NO
20dB	90dB	55dB	YES	NO	NO
30dB	80dB	55dB	YES	NO	NO
40dB	70dB	55dB	YES	YES	NO
50dB	60dB	55dB	YES	YES	NO
40dB	40dB	40dB	YES	YES	NO
55dB	55dB	55dB	YES	YES	YES