

Media Release
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Free TV welcomes greater audience protection for live and free sport on TV but urges further steps to give modern audiences digital choice

Free TV today welcomed the planned expansion to stop live and free sport slipping behind streaming paywalls, but urged further reform to ensure the scheme meets the needs of the modern TV audience.

Free TV Chair, Gregory Hywood said: "Live and free sport on TV remains a crucial part of the Australian way of life. Minister Rowland and the Albanese Government recognise this, and we enthusiastically welcome the Government's proposal to extend the current anti-siphoning framework to subscription streaming platforms so that the iconic sporting moments cannot disappear exclusively behind the paywalls of streaming providers.

"This is something that Free TV has been calling for almost 10 years. Without it, we risk losing the cultural moments that bring us together as a nation. Australians should not be forced to pay to watch these events that they currently enjoy for free and this is more important than ever with current cost of living pressures," Mr Hywood said.

Free TV CEO, Bridget Fair said: "You only need to look at the record numbers watching the Matildas triumphant World Cup campaign to see that Australians turn to their Free TV broadcasters for the best in sporting events. More than 11 million people watched the Matildas in their brave fight to make it to the Cup Final. And we expect to see huge numbers continue in the current AFL and NRL footy finals.

"Minister Rowland has also recognised that the list itself also needs to be modernised. She has acted quickly to already place the Matildas on the list and has addressed the inherent gender bias in the current list with proposals to include other women's sports that are growing in importance as part of the cultural life of our nation.

"This is probably the most important review of the anti-siphoning rules since they were established. One area that the Government must get right is to see the rules recognise that the way Australians watch their Free TV services is gradually evolving and here we would urge Minister Rowland to go further than the discussion paper recommends.

"Millions of Australians continue to watch sport on TV through the linear broadcast delivery. But as audience preferences evolve, more Australians are opting to view free local TV services through a live stream in a BVOD (broadcaster video on demand) app. And in many modern housing developments, this might be the only way they can access their Free TV broadcasters as aerials may not be installed." Ms Fair said.

The proportion of the audience choosing BVOD to watch free sport has more than doubled in the last three years. Up to 20% of audiences are now choosing a free TV BVOD option for live and free sport, and this is particularly the case with younger demographics.



“Australians now expect that they can choose to watch live and free sport either over the air or using a live stream. In fact, increasingly they don’t distinguish between the delivery technologies. The anti-siphoning scheme must keep pace with this audience expectation.

“Only Australia’s free TV networks can offer the community the best of a ubiquitous free broadcast network and streamed content via our BVOD apps offering live and free sport to all Australians no matter where they live or how much they earn and providing a seamless experience as audience preferences evolve.

“The Government has rightly rejected an alternative model put forward by the subscription TV sector that would drastically reduce the number of sports available for free. This model must be seen for what it is a marketing strategy to loss lead with a small number of sports in front of a paywall in the hope of driving increased subscriptions. Australians can’t afford marketing strategies to take the place of good public policy.

“We look forward to working with the Government on the finalisation of the reform process. Given the importance of this issue to Australians, we urge the Government to aim to finalise the necessary legislation this calendar year,” Ms Fair said.

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