

26 September 2011

Attention: Mr Stephen Palethorpe
Committee Secretary
Senate Environment and Communications Reference Committee

Sent via email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir,

RE: Inquiry into recent ABC programming decisions

As one of two regional representative teams in the Victorian Football League, we are aware of the Inquiry into recent ABC programming decision and our submission is made both as support to the AFL and the AFL Victoria submissions. Our Club's submission however specifically reflects the views from a Victorian Regional City perspective. We would particularly like to address point (e) in the terms of reference which states: "the future potential implications of these cuts on ABC television's capacity to broadcast State League football and rugby".

The North Ballarat Football Club have real concerns that the ABC may elect to cease covering State League level competition matches around Australia and, in particular, no longer broadcast Victorian Football League (VFL) matches. It is not only the importance of this coverage to our sport and our club that would be hurt; it is also the exposure and promotion of regional Victoria that would be disadvantaged by any such decision. We believe the ABC provides a vital link and service to the numerous football followers in our region and brings a localised representation on a state wide and national basis.

The North Ballarat Football Club provides the talented player pathway program for the talented youth from a region expanding from Ballarat, South to Warrnambool, West to Hamilton and North West to Horsham and the Wimmera and is an essential sporting program that allows for regional players to progress to the VFL and AFL levels. The talented player pathway in Victoria, which the VFL competition plays an important role, provides on average 50% of new talent into the AFL competition annually, the most attended and watched sporting competition in Australia. The broadcast of the VFL competition helps promote this new talent before they are drafted into the AFL competition and contributes to the enormous interest that is generated in these players. The VFL competition also provides an opportunity for young AFL listed players as they strive to develop into accomplished AFL players. The football following public is interested in seeing the next generation of AFL players' progress through the ranks.

Whilst we understand the ABC guidelines regarding sponsorship arrangements at VFL broadcast games, the importance of these televised games to the competition and the VFL Clubs involved should not be underestimated. The exposure that the City of Ballarat receives alone is significant and important to its positioning as a regional capital City and much would be lost if ABC telecasts of VFL matches was discontinued. Without the exposure and promotion of the competition and the clubs through the ABC broadcasts, the standing of the competition will be diminished and, in the long term, could impact on the viability and sustainability of some of the oldest football clubs in Australia. These clubs support not only players but numerous volunteers, supporters and partners.

Our club would suffer enormously without the wonderful support received from the ABC.

Yours Sincerely

Mark Patterson
Chief Executive Officer