



AFL NORTHERN TERRITORY LTD.

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Environment and Communications References Committee for Inquiry
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

AFL Northern Territory wishes to advise that the following correspondence is a formal submission to the inquiry into recent ABC programming decisions. This correspondence pertains to item e) as set out in the terms of reference namely 'the future implications of those cuts on ABC Television's capacity to broadcast state league football and rugby'.

AFL Northern Territory (AFL NT) is the not for profit peak body for administration, development and delivery of Australian Football in the Northern Territory. AFL NT's mission is to promote and develop Australian Football throughout the Northern Territory maximising sporting, social, lifestyle and cultural benefits for the entire population.

Introduced into the Northern Territory a century ago Australian Rules Football is an important part of the Northern Territory's unique social and cultural identity. The Northern Territory has the AFL's highest participation rates in Australia with the rate of participation standing proudly at 23.19% compared to 11.00% nationally.

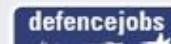
The Northern Territory Football League (NTFL) is an eight (8) team competition played in the wet season (October to March) and for close to a century the NTFL has been considered the Territory's premier sporting competition.

The ABC has broadcast NTFL games for decades and the success, popularity and Territory wide appeal of the NTFL is directly attributable to this weekly broadcast. The weekly NTFL broadcast is an iconic element of the NT sporting calendar that is firmly ingrained into the football psyche of the NT, indeed commentator Charlie King is probably the most respected and most recognisable local sports personality in the NT.

The ABC is contracted to broadcast NTFL games until 2013 however we note with alarm that the ABC is moving towards a reduction and/ or a cessation of football broadcasts in a number of states.

If ABC were to cease broadcasting NTFL games in the NT upon expiration of the existing contract we believe that the impact (both social and economic) on AFLNT, local clubs and the community as a whole would be catastrophic.

The NTFL is a unique league in that it is primarily an Indigenous league with each club having a rich clan-like family affiliation. Due to the geography of the NT and the remote location of many





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communities the weekly broadcast of the NTFL games is sometimes the only opportunity family members have to watch games in a particular season as travel into Darwin is impossible by road in the wet season and air fares are increasingly becoming cost prohibitive. It also a source of immense pride for a particular community or family to see one of their own playing football on ABC. The importance of family to Indigenous Australians is well documented therefore there is no need to detail here how important it is for a visual connection to remain between NTFL football players and their families who cannot, for a myriad of reasons, attend games in Darwin.

Many young Indigenous Territorians aspire to play NTFL football and the weekly broadcast is a key element in retaining this important mindset. The marquee value of the NTFL will be diminished should the broadcast cease after 2013. The risk of young males finding participation in football programs and playing in the NTFL less attractive due to a cessation of broadcasting is a cause of major concern for AFLNT. Engaging young Indigenous Territorians in sport can be challenging for a number of reasons therefore AFLNT requires ABC's support to meet these challenges head on and to utilise the weekly broadcast to reach the target audience and promote active participation in sport.

The ABC broadcast also affords local teams the opportunity to generate much needed revenue by way of selling sponsorship space on their respective Guernseys. Local business finds this offering attractive as they are aware that their logo will be seen by many viewers throughout the season. Local business benefit from aligning their services and/or product to a local football team who in turn benefit from the much needed cash injection. If ABC were to cease broadcasting NTFL games this important traditional revenue generating opportunity would evaporate.

As per the above, signage and naming rights at TIO stadium would see their value diminish and this would have a significant financial impact on AFLNT which in turn could hinder efforts to grow the game in the NT and to continue to use AFL football as one of the best weapons in the fight against Indigenous disadvantage.

In short the ABC broadcast of NTFL football games has long been a crucial component of the football landscape in the NT. The growth and the health of the game are greatly assisted by the broadcast and the community as a whole benefits in many ways from this growth and health.

AFLNT has an excellent working relationship with the ABC and looks forward to a continuation of this relationship for generations to come.

