

Thursday 8th 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 the state body for Australian Rules football in Victoria, the CEO of the Australian Football League (AFL) Mr Andrew Demetriou has passed on your letter dated the 19th of August for our input/response. 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".

AFL Victoria 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. The professional ABC production that the VFL competition has enjoyed for many years is first class and is a direct result of the wonderful team at the ABC led by Kirsty Bradmore. We believe it provides a vital link and service to the numerous football followers that are interested in supporting and watching State League level football via the coverage.

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. 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.

In closing, our partnership with the ABC in delivering this outstanding product to the wider football community has played an extremely valuable role in the promotion of our great game and without its continued support the game at State League level would suffer enormously.

Yours Sincerely

Grant Williams
General Manager - AFL Victoria

Cc: Simon Lethlean & Simon Laughton (AFL)

AFL Victoria

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