

PREMIER MEDIAGROUP

PREMIER MEDIA GROUP SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO WOMEN IN SPORT AND RECREATION IN AUSTRALIA

July 20, 2006

Committee Secretary
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References
Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Sent by email ecita.sen@aph.gov.au.

Premier Media Group (PMG) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry. We have set out below a number of brief factors relating to PMG and the factors involved in our decision making process regarding televising of sports events. PMG would be willing to appear before the Committee at its public hearings to further discuss some of the issues raised below should the Committee be interested in doing this.

1. PMG currently produces three full time sports channels (FOX SPORTS 1, FOX SPORTS 2 and Fuel TV). These are distributed on the FOXTEL, AUSTAR and OPTUS subscription television platforms as well as directly to hotels and clubs throughout Australia. More than 1.8 million homes currently subscribe to PMG's channels representing more than 5.5 million Australians who can directly access us at home. In addition, our channels can be seen in more than 6000 commercial outlets across the country.
2. PMG will launch two new sports channels in October this year- FOX SPORTS 3 and the first 24 hour a day sports news network in Australia- FOX SPORTS NEWS.
3. PMG broadcasts more sports than any other broadcaster in the country and our commitment to sports broadcasting will obviously increase even further once our new channels are launched.
4. PMG's future depends on being relevant to our subscribers and in ensuring that as a business we can sustain our substantial and continued sports investment. To that end, we must ensure that what we broadcast has commercial and community appeal. As a result, we have increasingly focused on live sport, and have invested significantly in Australian programming and sports where there is significant Australian interest.
5. The Australian anti-siphoning scheme is the major ongoing impediment to PMG continuing to further invest and re-invest in Australian programming and sports codes. The scheme is so broad, and so weighted in favour of the free-to-air broadcasters, that it makes it extremely difficult for PMG to find a workable economic model to broadcast not only those events listed, but all other Australian sports events which are not on the list.
6. If the Australian anti-siphoning scheme was substantially reformed to reduce its most odious characteristics and to produce a more level playing field, PMG could acquire and televise not only those events on the list, but a much greater quantity of Australian sports programming which is not currently listed. Second tier sports across the country would benefit greatly from increased television exposure on FOX SPORTS. This would in turn have a massive flow-on effect in increasing interest in those sports, which in turn would

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drive greater participation, sponsorship, media interest and attendances. A virtuous circle would therefore develop which would improve the financial status, success and viability of these sporting events and sports.

7. PMG does not take into account gender in considering whether or not to acquire and televise a particular sporting event- what is relevant is a range of factors including the following:

- Whether the sport or event is likely to be attractive to viewers;
- The nature of the broadcast rights available – for example are they exclusive to FOX SPORTS;
- The economics of producing and transmitting the event.

8. PMG also considers a range of matters relating to the event itself. These include:

- Whether the event is a one-off or is played regularly at similar points over a particular time period (e.g. a competition held each year or every second year). The latter is important to PMG because events which are held regularly in a consistent time period can attract and build consumer interest over time, making them potentially more attractive to our viewers;
- Where the event is being held;
- At what time of day and the day or days of a week the event is available for broadcast;
- The participants, and for team sports the teams involved; and
- The time of year the event is being held and what other sporting properties FOX SPORTS intends to broadcast at that time.

9. PMG also regards it important to work closely with sports administrators. Therefore, the overall professionalism of the sports body and its aims are important factors to understand, to ensure there is common ground on what the strategic aims of both organisations are.

10. PMG broadcasts a range of events and female sports programming using the criteria outlined above. Recent events on FOX SPORTS include the USLPGA, ANZ Ladies Masters Golf, Women's Golf World Cup, all 4 Tennis Grand Slams, the WTA, various swimming championships, European Championships and World Cup Gymnastics and the Women's Hockey Champions Trophy.

FuelTV has also commissioned, produced and broadcast several programs specifically focusing on Women's sport - these programs include; Gone Mentawais and Behind The Scenes @ Roxy Pro.

In 2006 to date, PMG channels have broadcast in excess of an estimated 1,000 hours of sports coverage featuring women.

11. In addition, through our nightly FOX SPORTS NEWS program, we report extensively on female sports events and programming. We expect this to continue once our 24 hour sports news channel FOX SPORTS NEWS is launched in October this year.

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