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MEDIA RELEASE

Anti-siphoning Scheme

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the Government reforming the anti-siphoning scheme?

The anti-siphoning scheme was established in 1994 before digital television.

The scheme doesn't require broadcasters to televise nationally significant events live or in-full, pass on unused rights to other broadcasters, or allow broadcasters to fully utilise digital multi-channels to televise sports.

The Government's reforms will address these issues, and update the list of events protected by the scheme to reflect current free-to-air coverage and the growing popularity of some sports.

Free-to-air broadcasters will, for the first time, be required to meet coverage obligations for anti-siphoning listed events to which they acquire the rights, or offer those rights on to other broadcasters who will.

Free-to-air broadcasters will also be able to premiere certain events on their digital multi-channels, providing the flexibility for broadcasters to enhance overall sports coverage.

The current list expires on 31 December.

Will there be more sport on television?

The Government's reforms will increase the total amount of sport that can be televised on free-to-air television, as it will allow broadcasters to use digital multi-channels to increase sports coverage and choice.

The anti-siphoning list has also been updated, with popular sports such as Twenty20 cricket matches involving Australia added to the list.

Will there be more live sport?

Live coverage was a significant issue raised as part of the Sport on Television review, conducted in the latter half of 2009.

Where they acquire the broadcast rights to events on the anti-siphoning list, a free-to-air broadcaster will be required to meet specified coverage requirements for those events.

These requirements include an obligation for free-to-air broadcasters to televise nationally iconic sporting events – such as the Melbourne Cup and NRL Grand Final – live in all markets in which they hold the rights.

For regionally iconic and nationally significant events – such as rounds of the AFL Premiership or the Australian Open golf tournament – free-to-air broadcasters will be able to use digital multi-channels, which will give them flexibility to show events in regions where they are less popular (for example, NRL in Victoria) live on a digital multi-channel.

What sports will be protected under the scheme?

The Government's new anti-siphoning list will protect sporting events that occupy an important place in Australian society.

The new list will include nationally iconic events, such as the Melbourne Cup and the finals of the domestic football premierships.

The list will also include regionally iconic and nationally significant events, such as the preliminary matches of the major international and domestic sports competitions.

The new list will also be updated to reflect the growing popularity of certain sports, including some Twenty20 cricket matches and FIFA World Cup qualifying matches involving Australia added. Australian events that are no longer broadcast on free-to-air television – for examples NRL and AFL games only shown on pay television – and less popular overseas events – for example non-Australian group games of the Rugby Union World Cup – have been removed from the list.

How will AFL and NRL coverage be affected?

The new anti-siphoning list will include all AFL Premiership finals matches (including the Grand Final) and four games of the regular 'home and away' season. This listing is consistent with the number of weekly games that are currently shown by free-to-air broadcasters. The NRL listing will also include all finals matches (including the Grand Final) of the Premiership, each State of Origin match, various Test matches involving Australia and three matches per week of the regular 'home and away' season. This listing is consistent with the number of weekly games that are currently shown by free-to-air broadcasters.

The actual AFL and NRL events televised in any particular market will be a matter for the relevant sporting organisation and free-to-air broadcaster to determine. However, changes to the listing of these events will not be made until the Government has held further discussions with stakeholders, and is satisfied with a mechanism to protect the quality of NRL and AFL games that will be shown on free-to-air.

When will these changes take effect?

Changes to the list will take effect once a new regulation is made by the Minister. Most changes to the anti-siphoning list will be implemented shortly. Changes to the listing of AFL and NRL premiership games will not be made until the Government has held further discussions with stakeholders, and is satisfied with a mechanism to protect the quality of NRL and AFL games that will be shown on free-to-air. The details of listing of the FIFA World Cup and Socceroos World Cup qualifiers will be finalised after further consultation with stakeholders.

Changes to the rules that enforce how events on the List are protected and how they can be used, will take effect when legislation is passed in Parliament.