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Media Statement
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AUSTRALIANS LOVE SPORT ON FREE TV

The Australian public has demonstrated the high value they place on free coverage of major sporting events through an overwhelming response to Free TV Australia's Keep Sport Free campaign. During the four week campaign 60,267 people signed the online petition to keep sport on Free TV.

Official ratings data also clearly shows that the popularity of sport on free to air television has not diminished, with Australians consistently tuning into sport in huge numbers.

- To date in 2009, 33 of the top 40 highest rating programs have been sporting events. In 2008, 32 of the top 40 programs for the year were sport. The Olympics, tennis, AFL, Rugby League State of Origin and Melbourne Cup race all secured top 10 spots.
- During the coverage of the 2008 Olympics, 17.2 million people watched all or part of the free to air coverage. This was the largest audience in Australian history! An average of over 11.6 million people tuned in to the free-to-air coverage every single day of the games.
- 3.4 million Australians saw the first match of the State of Origin on free to air television this year. The AFL Grand Final is consistently one of the top-rating programs on television in any year and in 2009 attracted 3.8 million viewers. The NRL Grand Final attracted an average audience of more than 3.6 million.

These numbers speak for themselves and clearly contradict recent claims from the pay TV industry that Australians are not interested in sport on television. ASTRA would be well aware of the popularity of sport on television as sporting programs also dominate pay TV, comprising the top 20 programs in 2008.

The claims form part of the pay TV lobby's latest attempts to dismantle the anti-siphoning regime and force people to pay to watch sport they currently enjoy for free.

One statistic not mentioned in ASTRA's submission to the current government review is that over 70 per cent of people cannot afford or choose not to pay up to \$135 per month for pay TV.

The public policy principle underlying the anti-siphoning rules remains sound; that *all* Australians are able to watch major sporting events on TV for free. In its submission to the anti-siphoning review, Free TV has urged the Government to renew the scheme and keep sport free for all Australians.

For more statistics on the popularity of sport on television [Click here](#)

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For media enquiries contact Free TV Australia on 02 8968 7100