

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**20 December 2006****Sport on Free TV still at risk**

The Federal government's 'use it or lose it' guidelines for sports on the anti-siphoning list have failed to provide certainty for viewers.

Free TV CEO, Julie Flynn, said "it is disappointing that the new guidelines do nothing to reassure Australian sports fans that in the future they will not be forced to pay for sports they currently see for free."

"While we welcome the Minister's statement that no one guideline will determine whether an event is retained on the list, we remain concerned that there is a level of uncertainty around how individual guidelines will be applied and what events viewers may soon have to pay to watch.

"However, Free TV is pleased to see that the Government has recognised the particular requirements of multi-round simultaneous events, such as tennis tournaments and the Commonwealth and Olympic Games by amending the guidelines to take into account the entirety of a broadcaster's treatment of an event in determining if it has been used.

"We continue to be opposed to any guidelines that result in events currently available to all Australians for free, being removed from the list," Ms Flynn said.

"For example, the requirement to broadcast events to 50% of the population puts at risk free AFL coverage in states with a smaller population (such as South Australia and Western Australia) where viewers can currently see games involving their local teams rather than a single national game.

"We also think it important that the guidelines take into account any contractual obligations such as delays against the gate, and consider existing coverage of sporting events on pay television so that events are only de-listed if this will improve audience access.

"International experience demonstrates that there are no second chances. When events are taken off anti-siphoning lists they move exclusively to pay television. This is precisely what happened in the case of the current Ashes series in England, which can now only be seen by viewers who are prepared to pay.

"It should be remembered that 75 per cent of Australians cannot afford or choose not to pay an average of \$90 a month to subscribe to sport on pay TV. This means that the vast majority of Australians miss out when an event is broadcast exclusively on pay.

"The fact is Free TV broadcasters show all the sporting events to which they acquire rights and all other rights are available to pay TV. We believe any fair application of the guidelines will recognise this," Ms Flynn said.

More than 53,000 viewers have voted on Free TV's Save My Sport website ([www.savemysport.com.au](http://www.savemysport.com.au)) with more than 50,000 (94%) saying they do not want to pay for major sporting events they currently see for free.

“Free TV has been delighted by the strength of the support we have received from our viewers.”

“We remain committed to delivering them the best televised sports coverage in the world. And we will keep them informed of any major sporting event which is at risk in the future from the application of these guidelines.”

**For media enquiries or interviews please contact Free TV Australia on (02) 8968 7100 or Julie Flynn on 0408 455 456.**