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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **ENGLISH ALREADY THE LOSERS IN ASHES TEST SERIES**

While Australian viewers can enjoy watching the 2006–2007 Ashes test cricket series on free-to-air television, English fans will not be so lucky.

They will have to pay to watch the series or miss out because the Ashes cricket has been taken off the British sports anti-siphoning list.

"There is no doubt that English cricket fans are already the losers," said Julie Flynn, CEO of Free TV Australia, "and that's before their team has faced a ball from Shane Warne."

It's the first time in history that live coverage of the Ashes series in the United Kingdom will only be available on pay television.

Under the exclusive pay television deal, free-to-air TV in Britain can only air a highlights package of the action the following night and the highlights package can only be broadcast after 10pm.

The pay television deal means more than 50 per cent of Britons will miss out on watching one of the most anticipated Ashes series of all time.

"It is a tragedy that half of all English cricket fans won't be able to watch their team defend the Ashes. I'd just like to extend the sympathy of all Australian cricket fans, who can still enjoy watching great innings by the likes of Ponting, Hussey and Gilchrist for free, not to mention Andrew Flintoff's debut as England's Ashes captain" Ms Flynn said.

"This situation is particularly hard on the large Australian expatriate community based in Britain who will not be able to watch the Australian team win back the Ashes."

Successful lobbying to have the Ashes cricket taken off the British anti-siphoning list led to the series being bought exclusively by pay operator BSkyB – owned by News Corporation.

At the time, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) assured the British Government that cricket would always remain on free-to-air television, regardless of whether it was protected by the anti-siphoning list. However, as soon as cricket was removed from the top tier of the anti-siphoning list, the ECB sold exclusive live rights to pay television, and free-to-air viewers were left out in the cold.

In Australia, the Ashes remains on the anti-siphoning list which means it will be screened on a free-to-air TV network. Yet the Australian list is currently under attack by News Corp's Australian pay TV operation, Foxtel.

"The ECB delivered a Gattling Ball to the British Government," said Ms Flynn, referring to the 1993 Ashes test series in which Shane Warne's spin famously deceived English batsman Mike Gattling and claimed his wicket.

"Australian viewers need to be vigilant to make sure that the same thing doesn't happen here."

The facts are:

- There are only 10 sports on the Australian anti-siphoning list, plus the Olympics and Commonwealth Games
- When pay TV says there are over 1300 events on the list, what they don't say is that 838 of them are made up of matches in the Wimbledon and Australian Open tennis tournaments. AFL and NRL make up a further 183 and motor sports another 38 giving a total of 1257!
- 1648 hours of listed sport was shown on free-to-air television last year
- Pay TV already provides additional coverage of listed sports
- A pay TV subscription including sports channels costs between \$600 and \$1000 a year

**For media inquiries and interviews:**

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