

RESEARCH FINDINGS

October 29, 2009

ATTITUDES TO SPORT ON TV AND ANTI-SIPHONING LAW

In June this year Auspoll completed research commissioned by ASTRA to understand modern Australian attitudes to sports coverage on TV, with particular attention to how the anti-siphoning list serves the national interest.

The research included a mix of focus groups – held during May in Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast – and an online survey. In total, 1,500 Australians were surveyed, and were weighted to be representative of the national population by age, gender and residential location.

What the research shows

Auspoll has identified two key groups that describe how Australians view televised sport. The first are 'keen sports fans'. Comprising just 21 percent of the population, they are passionate about sport – and want to watch it live on TV.

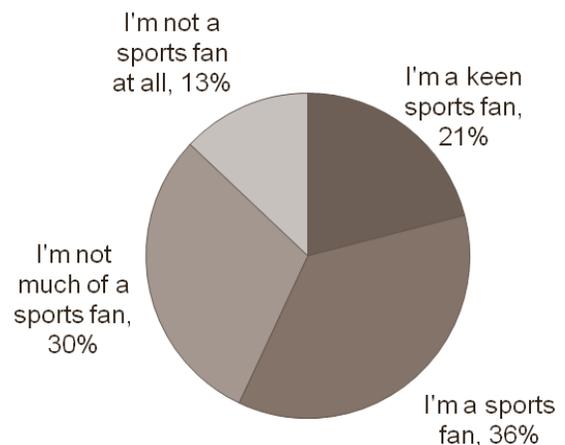
In contrast, 40 percent of Australians believe there is too much sport on the old television networks. They form part of a larger group researchers termed 'ambivalents': a surprising 78 percent of Australians who feel there is already too much sport on TV, or that what is currently being shown is enough.

This finding explodes the myth that all Australians want sport to dominate their TV viewing and that changes to the anti-siphoning list would cause widespread backlash.

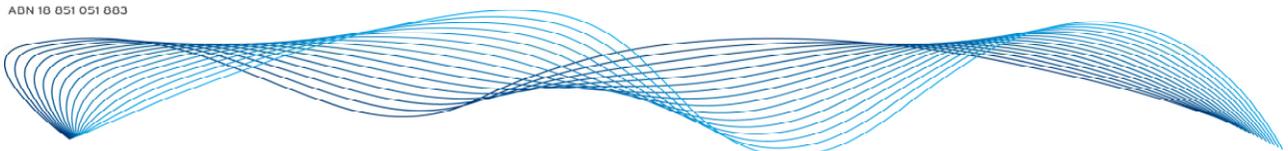
Implications for the anti-siphoning list

The research shows that the anti-siphoning list doesn't work – for anyone. The passionate minority of keen sport fans are let down because the list prevents the subscription networks from showing their events live. Instead it gives first grab to the old networks who often choose not to show them on delay, interrupted – or not at all.

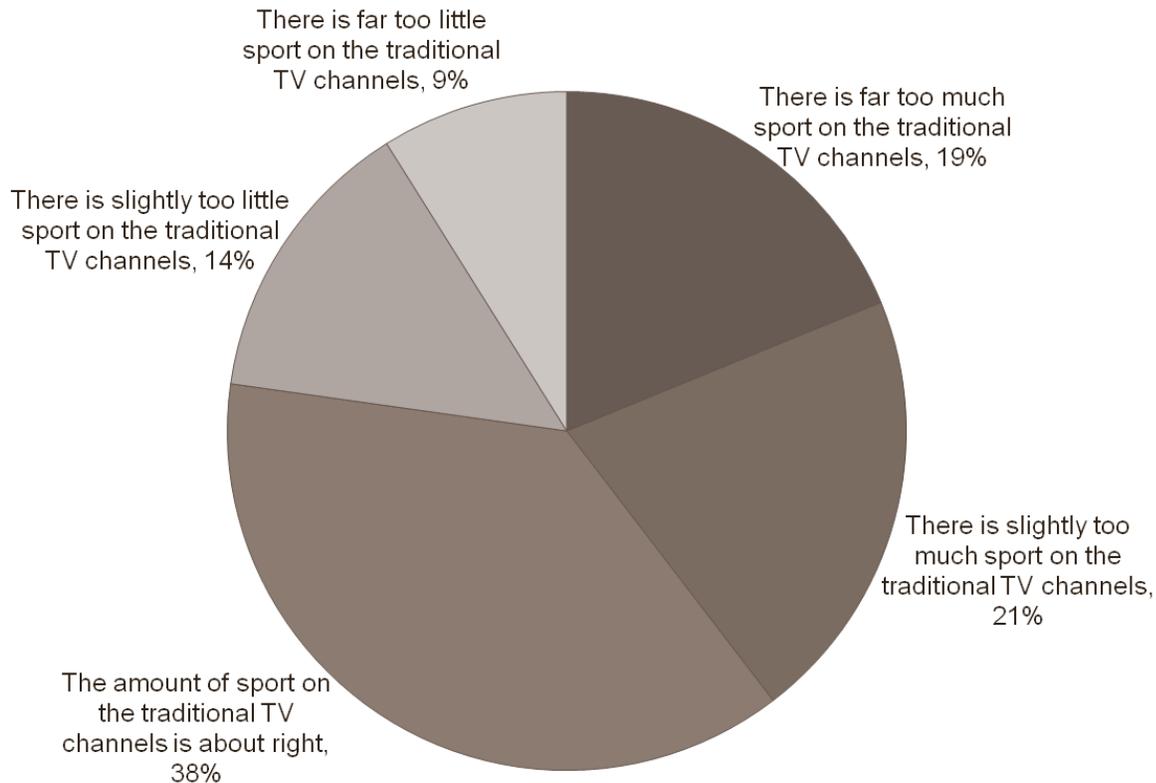
The majority of Australians – who are indifferent to sport – are inconvenienced by the operation of the list, which means that too much sport must be screened on old TV to meet its requirements.



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The ambivalence of these viewers is a powerful commercial disincentive for the old networks to show more live sport. This finding also indicates that the ambivalent 78 percent of Australians will not be concerned by the removal of extraneous sports events from the anti-siphoning list.



Sport fans want live sport, while Australians disagree with old TV protectionism

The research found that 70 percent of keen sports fans felt that old networks were not showing enough sport live, with many venting frustration about delayed and interrupted telecasts in focus groups. Eighty-five percent of them believe the old networks should be forced to allow subscription TV to screen events they can't show live.

However the wider community has misgivings about how the anti-siphoning list allows old networks to withhold events they do not intend to broadcast, with 49 percent saying they should only have exclusivity over events they will actually broadcast.

Twenty percent of Australians were supportive of all listed events being sold on the open market rather than handed to the old networks, and 31 percent agreed with the status quo.

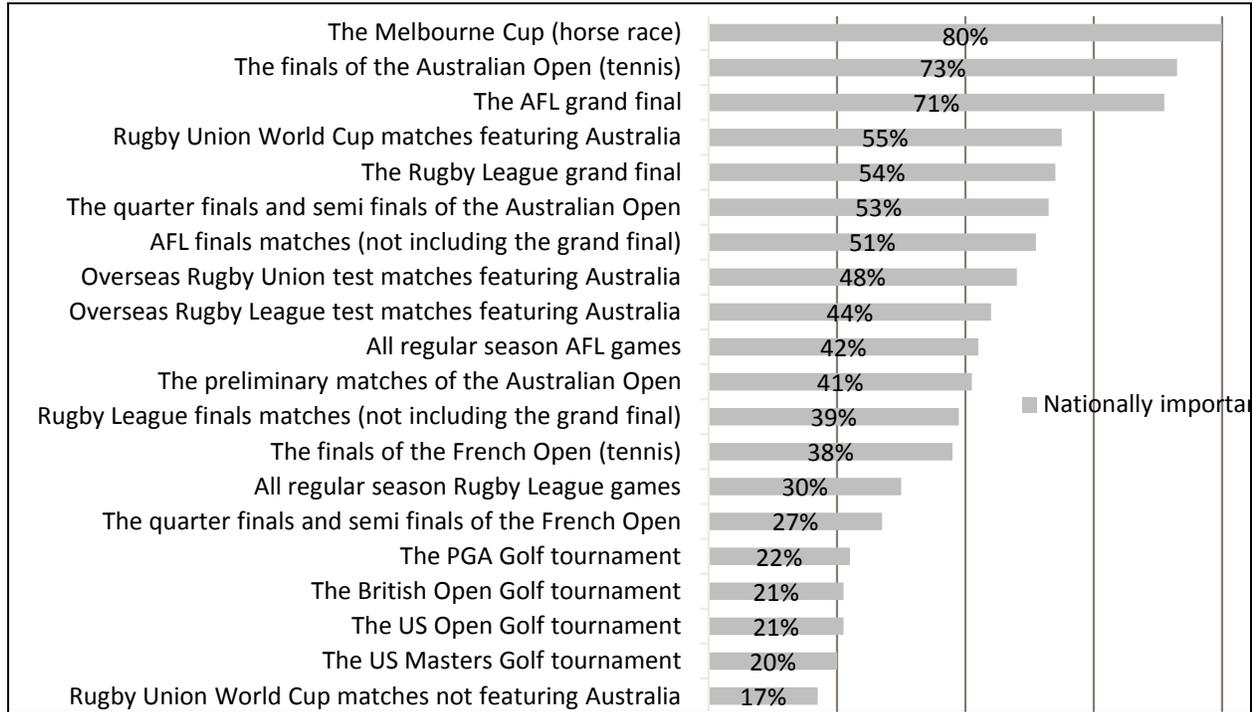
The majority of Australians (67 percent) agreed that the sports codes should be able to sell their television rights to any broadcaster they choose. And 73 percent of people believe it is unfair that the traditional networks have control over broadcasting negotiations for listed sports.

All in all, 65 percent of people feel the anti-siphoning law is a bad thing for sports in Australia.

National significance

Auspoll's research findings also redefines what Australians consider to be 'nationally significant' sporting events, as only the Melbourne Cup, the Australian Open finals and the AFL Grand Final were described as such by more than 60 percent of respondents.

Most football code matches, all major golf tournaments and the French Open tennis have low national significance in Australia. However, this question did not address the question of state-by-state significance which would presumably ascribe more significance to the football codes.



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