

WAFL telecast

Hello

I am writing in regards to the proposed cancellation of WAFL football on Western Australian tv - and as I understand other state Australian football leagues and sports that may not be televised otherwise by commercial stations.

The ABC has always been a channel that provided a level of broadcast to special interest groups that was not available from commercial stations. In fact, the ABC has changed the way commercial broadcast stations operate. I remember ago watching nature documentaries on the ABC that are now popular on commercial stations - largely because of their earlier popularity on the ABC. Shows that make quality arts, music and current affairs programs more accessible, e.g. Rage (the greatest music program ever), the First Tuesday Book Club, 7:30 report and (well arts isn't my thing, but I know they are appreciated) are required on Australian television.

The ABC has always been a channel that led, not followed. Because it was paid for by Australian tax payers, rather than by its ratings, it could take risks, and on occasion, programs would by far exceed expectation. On other occasions, the number of viewers would disappoint. None of that changed (or should have changed) the purpose of the ABC, which is to provide the people of Australia, with their varied interests, the opportunity to see their particular interest on tv.

I understand that every taxpayer pays for the operation of the ABC. Therefore, there is the potential to think the ABC should be designed for the most people and that the highest ratings are the preferred result. The problem with this thinking is that commercial stations also operate under this philosophy. The philosophy of the ABC needs to be a focus on informative, special interest and localised matters that would not otherwise be shown on Australian television. If this is not the case, Australia would be better off with another commercial station in place of the ABC - at least it would know what it stood it for.

What does all of this have to do with the WAFL, and the other uncommercial sports for that matter? The WAFL is both a development league for elite athletes into Australia's premier sport as well as a bastion to the past, with numerous people still preferring to back their local club rather than any club in the purported national (still Victorian controlled) league. There is also a number of people in the country that will only get to see their team on tv. And I continue to either watch every week that my club (South Fremantle) is televised, as I know many others do. As I know many that talk about your Arts programs, though I tune out when I hear mention of them.

I have no idea what the WAFL rates, however, I find this number irrelevant. The relevance is in the ABC itself and what it stands for. Hopefully, in 20 years time, it means something more than Anything But Chardonnay.

Regards  
Russell Murray