



CITY OF JOONDALUP SUBMISSION – RECENT ABC PROGRAMMING DECISIONS

The City of Joondalup formally requests the Environment and Communications References Committee as part of the Senate Inquiry into recent ABC programming decisions, not to support the ABC's proposal to discontinue live telecasts of local sports in Western Australia including the ABC's live coverage of Western Australian Football League (WAFL) games. The City of Joondalup supports the campaign to protect local sports coverage and the retention of local ABC Television production in Perth, Western Australia.

In addition the City supports the submission made by the Western Australian Football Commission (WAFC) to the Senate Inquiry.

The City of Joondalup

The City of Joondalup is in the fastest growing north-west region of Perth. With a population of approximately 164,000, covering an area of 97km square from beach to bushland, and with the Joondalup City Centre located 25 minutes north of Perth along the Mitchell Freeway, it is the second largest local government in Western Australia by population.

The City Centre has a relaxed, casual atmosphere and combines cultural, civic, commercial and residential properties built on the edge of the stunning Lake Joondalup. Residents and visitors enjoy the cosmopolitan feel and excellent selection of restaurants and cafes around the City Centre, as well as the many beaches and parks there are to explore.

With a large migrant population, the City has always attracted international guests and visitors and prides itself on offering a high level of retail, education, health and lifestyle options to its community.

Located in close proximity to the City Centre, Arena Joondalup is a major regional sporting complex which accommodates entertainment, leisure, cultural, social and business functions, in addition to major sports programs. Arena offers a full range of sports and fitness activities and is the home ground for the West Perth Football Club.

Community Well Being

A major role of any local government is to build communities and improve the quality of life of its residents.

The City of Joondalup is committed to enhancing the wellbeing of all people in its community, both socially, emotionally, culturally and physically and to this end, includes 'community wellbeing' as a key focus area of its current Strategic Plan.

One of the City's major corporate initiatives is its Clubs in Focus program, which supports local sport and recreation clubs in their short and long-term development. The program provides opportunities for clubs to:

- foster and develop players, members and volunteers;
- effectively manage their club activities;
- gain financial support and recognition; and
- enhance the delivery of sport and recreation within the community.

West Perth Football Club (The Falcons)

The West Perth Football Club is the oldest WAFL club, having been formed originally as "The Victorians" on 2 May 1885.

For a major part of the 20th century, the Club was based at the historic Leederville Oval, and had strong links with the local ethnic community, with many of its supporters hailing from European backgrounds.

In 1994, the Falcons relocated to Joondalup to play an integral role in the growth and development of the game in the rapidly expanding northern corridor.

Since that time, the Club has remained strong to its belief that being an integral part of the development of its aligned communities is a key to its long term sustainability. By being a cultural icon for aligned districts, retaining and respecting the Club's history and through astute financial management, the club will continue to be a significant and prominent part of WA's sporting landscape.

After 17 years of the Club being located in Joondalup, more than 5,000 young people between the ages of 6 and 18 years play football in this strong multi-cultural region.

From boys and girls at 6 years of age through to senior community football competitions, the Falcons' players and development staff run a vast array of annual programs and events in the local sporting community. In addition, the Club supports a range of broader programs and activities to further foster community relations. It is estimated these programs and support mechanisms reach 25,000 people annually in the Joondalup community, ensuring that Australian Rules Football (and the West Perth Football Club) are viewed as both a positive and integral component of that community.

The Club is also committed to ensuring that first generation Australians and growing Indigenous communities have an opportunity to see the social and cultural benefits of participation in and support of both the Club and local amateur football.

The televising of State League football provides more than just an opportunity for audiences to watch their favourite team in action. Excellent TV ratings also enhance the profile of football, and allow the game to achieve additional outcomes and significant community benefits.

The promotion of the WAFL through the ABC telecast plays an important role in linking the WAFL competition and its clubs to the community, which in turn assists the league structure and network in delivering community benefits.

Sport in general, and football in particular, delivers a wide range of outcomes, some of which include:

- The use of football as a vehicle to engage indigenous students, which has a strong record of achieving success.
- Assimilation programs enabling new migrants the opportunity for smoother transition into the community.
- Programs for the intellectually disabled which provide not only an outlet, but also a great thrill for participants and their carers.
- Mental health programs targeting the significant issue of suicide prevention in regional areas.
- The building of positive community values and appropriate decision making through involvement in a quality football club environment.

Discontinuing ABC television coverage of the WAFL will severely impact the profile of the competition, which will greatly affect its ability to deliver the community benefits of football.

Economic Impacts

The West Perth Football Club, along with all the other eight WAFL clubs could not survive without the injection of funds from corporate sponsors. With these sponsorship arrangements come the expected benefits one of which is exposure of the sponsors' brand on televised games through the ABC.

The discontinuation of televising WAFL games would significantly impact the benefits offered to sponsors. This could potentially have a negative effect on the sponsor's commitment to the proposal, and subsequently impact on a clubs' ability to generate corporate funds. This may in turn lead to an increase in the need for financial support from other sources, including government funding.

Connecting Communities and Families

The WAFL is the pinnacle of grassroots football in WA and a launching pad for the most talented players in Western Australia. A number of the programs developed and implemented by the City of Joondalup and the West Perth Football Club are focussed on assisting community based players develop into achieving WAFL club representation.

ABC TV plays a vital role in showcasing this talent to a wider audience, whilst also allowing players to identify with their WAFL club from an early age, no matter where they grow up. This is particularly important in demonstrating the talent pathway for those players in regional areas, who may have to relocate to Perth to be drafted through their WAFL club. Televised games also allow their families and friends to watch their progress each week and instill a sense of community pride in their place of origin.

Conclusion

Viewers identify with their team, their favourite players, and those players who carry the good name of their city, club, ethnic heritage, or other characteristics, into the contest. Fans become familiar with those real individuals and their teams, following them, learning about them, living and dying with them, or even experiencing with them the "joy of victory and the agony of defeat."

The televising of WAFL games increases the profile of football and promotes the healthy outcomes that the sport delivers, particularly for juniors. The high profile of WAFL can greatly assist children align with a local team and illustrates the pathway that juniors need to follow to go on and play at higher levels. The loss of this might cause some marginal players to drop out of the sport before reaching their full potential.

Sports on television is live television, it is history in the making, it is being "up close and personal" (thanks to ABC) as possibly momentous events unfold. To thrill in the victory of a favourite, to join the excitement of the moment in an exhilarating game or to learn more about the teams, players or games on television are among possible satisfactions that are obviously specific to sports on television.

GARRY HUNT
Chief Executive Officer
City of Joondalup
PO Box 21
JOONDALUP WA 6919