



Supporting coverage of under-represented sports 2019–2020

November 2020

Many sports that occupy a central place in the Australian community struggle to secure consistent coverage in the mainstream media. The under-represented sports grant, which initially formed part of the Government's 2017 Broadcasting and Content Reform Package, is an important step in addressing this coverage imbalance to enable sporting bodies to lift participation rates and maximise growth.

From 2017–18 to 2020–21 the Australian Government provided \$30 million to Fox Sports from 2017–18 to 2020–21 to support television and online coverage of sports that receive low or no broadcast exposure: women's sports, niche sports, and those sports that command high levels of community involvement and participation. In July 2020, the Australian Government committed an additional \$10 million in funding to Fox Sports to continue its support of broadcasting coverage of women's, niche, emerging and other under-represented sports over the next two years. This brings total funding for the under-represented sports grant to \$40 million over six years.

Fox Sports' deliverables in 2019–2020

Fox Sports has provided its 2019–2020 Performance Report to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and the Arts. The report outlines Fox Sports' performance against the requirements set out in the funding agreement, including the sports that benefited from funding, breakdown of expenditure, and coverage for the selected sports.

In summary, the report shows:

- more than 4,888 hours of content covered by the funding agreement was broadcast during the 2019–2020 financial year, including around 1,167 live hours
- it exceeded the forecast broadcast hours in the 2019–2020 Strategic Roadmap by 5 per cent
- total coverage represented a 73 per cent increase compared to the number of broadcast hours during the 2016–17 financial year
- 36 different sport competitions benefited from funding, with 5 new programs or events receiving coverage or benefiting from grant funding
- Fox Sports achieved all of its key performance indicators for the 2019–2020 financial year, despite the significant impact of COVID-19, which began impacting many of the sports captured under the grant from March 2020.

Success stories in 2019–2020

Fox Sports has worked closely with a range of sports bodies and rights holders to establish partnerships to assist the sports beyond just improving their coverage. This includes:

- Showcasing a week-long schedule of women's sports programming on a special pop-up channel FOXW (Channel 507) in celebration of International Women's Day, Sunday, March 8. This included the following programming:

- the premiere of a six-part series *Call My Name* featuring special interviews of some of Australia’s biggest and best current female athletes, including cricketer Ellyse Perry, Matilda Sam Kerr, Basketballer Liz Cambage, AFLW star and boxer Tayla Harris, major golf champion Hannah Green and professional rugby league player Tiana Penitani;
- live coverage of various women’s sports events including Game 2 of the WNBL Grand Final Series, six games of Round 5 of AFLW and Game 1 of the Hockeyroos in their series against Argentina, and the ICC Women’s T20 World Cup Final; and
- a range of supporting programming across the week, including a special ‘women’s week’ edition of *The Back Page*; *Sportswoman*—a series showcasing inspiring stories, action and development of female athletes from around the world; *Beyond the Boundary*—a two-part documentary series on the Australian Women’s Cricket team’s 2019 Ashes campaign in the UK in 2019; and *Amazing Wins*—which re-lives amazing moments in women’s sport.

Sports supported in 2020–21

In 2020–21 it is expected that Fox Sports will broadcast at least 1,000 hours of live coverage, and around 3,600 hours of coverage in total, of women’s, niche and emerging sports.

Details of the sports that will be supported through the grant in 2020–21 are outlined below, representing 86 per cent of the total planned hours for 2020–21. A broader range of sports are likely to be supported through the initiative once sports resume play coming out of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This should extend to broadcasting more sports competitions from a broad range of sporting codes including lawn bowls, surfing, basketball, baseball, softball, and cycling.

Sport	Competition	Anticipated coverage increase in 2019–20*
AFL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFLW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15%
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W-League • Matildas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43% • -27%
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WBBL • Australian Women’s Cricket Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No coverage in 2016–17 • No coverage in 2016–17
Rugby Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rugby Sevens - Men’s and Women’s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -67%
Rugby League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s Test and State of Origin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 980%
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIH Hockey Pro League—Men • FIH Hockey Pro League—Women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No coverage in 2016–17 • No coverage in 2016–17
Surfing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Boardriders Battle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11%
Baseball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Baseball League • Women’s Australian Baseball League 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No coverage in 2016–17 • No coverage in 2016–17
Softball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia Pacific Cup • Summer Slam—Fully Loaded Softball • Men’s Summer Slam—Fully Loaded Softball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No coverage in 2016–17 • No coverage in 2016–17 • No coverage in 2016–17
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road National Championships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -50%

*Under the funding agreement, the increase in coverage is assessed against the coverage in the 2016–17 Financial Year. The rationale for this is that many sports events are cyclic and happen every few years and competition structures change, meaning not all years will show an increase from the previous years in terms of broadcast hours. Comparing coverage against 2016–17 Financial Year coverage more accurately shows how the grant has provided a meaningful increase from the pre-grant period.

Sport selection

In accordance with the requirements of the funding agreement, Fox Sports will determine in consultation with the relevant sporting bodies the competitions and events that will receive enhanced coverage. A governance team established within Fox Sports will oversee, review and assess the sports to be funded each year and report on performance.

Benefits of the program

The increased media coverage that selected sports will receive under the program is expected to deliver a range of benefits for consumers and sports bodies alike, including:

- supporting sporting bodies to return to broadcasting sporting codes and games interrupted by the COVID-19 Pandemic by providing certainty and support to assist with the planning and the re-commencement of play in 2020–21
- greater media exposure will lift the profile of female athletes and produce role models for the next generation
- increased media coverage for sports that have a history of low or no broadcast exposure is expected to boost crowd attendance, community engagement and participation
- greater media exposure will provide sporting bodies with opportunities to secure commercial support, sponsorships and strengthen long term financial viability.