



Supporting coverage of under-represented sports 2020–2021

September 2021

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.

The Australian Government provided \$30 million to Foxtel from 2017–2018 to 2020–2021 to support television and online coverage of sports that receive low or no broadcast exposure: women's sports, niche sports, and sports that command high levels of community involvement and participation. In July 2020, the Australian Government committed an additional \$10 million in funding to Foxtel 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.

Foxtel's deliverables in 2020–2021

Foxtel has provided its 2020–2021 Performance Report to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications. The report outlines Foxtel's 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 4,700 hours of content covered by the funding agreement was broadcast during the 2020–2021 financial year, including around 1,400 live hours
- total hours broadcast exceeded the forecast broadcast hours in the 2020–2021 Strategic Roadmap by 25 per cent
- total coverage represented a 85 per cent increase compared to the number of broadcast hours during the 2016–2017 financial year
- 25 different sport competitions benefited from funding, with 8 new programs or events receiving coverage or benefiting from grant funding
- Foxtel achieved all of its key performance indicators for the 2020–2021 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 2020–2021

Foxtel 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 month-long schedule of women's sports programming on a special pop-up channel FOXW (Channel 511) in celebration of women's sport from 1 April to 30 April, including:

- live coverage of women’s sports such as the AFLW Finals series, the W-League Finals series, Matildas International Friendlies, One Day International (ODI) cricket, the WSL Surfing Championship Tour and the FIH Hockey Pro League;
- a range of supporting programming across the month showcasing women in sport including *The Heat Repeat*, *Trailblazers*, *Masterclass: Alyssa Healy*, and *The Season*.
- live broadcasting *The Athena*, the WPGA’s inaugural women’s two-day golfing competition, on Foxtel and Kayo Sports. The competition was introduced to address a lack of competition opportunities for Australian female golfers due to COVID-19 international travel limitations.
- live broadcasting the three-day event of *Wheelchair Rugby National Championship* on Foxtel and Kayo Sports. This broadcast represented the largest broadcast investment for a single disability sport in Australia.

The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sport

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all sporting competitions in Australia. This grant activity supported many sporting bodies to re-establish themselves financially following the cessation or delay of women’s, niche or under-represented sports due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this difficult period, Foxtel worked with sporting bodies to manage the delay and rescheduling of coverage of women’s, niche and underrepresented sports, helping these sports to recommence competition sooner, as well as assisting to ensure the financial viability of these sports into the future.

The Department required Foxtel to provide a Re-establishment and Acceleration Plan (the Plan) in February 2021. The Plan provided an update on expected delays or changes to the grant activity due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While this plan revised down some of Foxtel’s planned broadcast coverage targets for 2020-21, the 2020–2021 Performance Report shows that for most sports, Foxtel delivered at least the number of hour’s coverage as originally planned. Targeted hours for 2020-21 were not achieved for some sports and competitions due to cancellations or postponements. However, overall broadcast hours increased due to total coverage across all sports.

Sports supported in 2021–2022

In 2021–2022, it is expected that Foxtel will broadcast at least 1,500 hours of live coverage, and around 4,700 hours of coverage in total, of women’s, niche and emerging sports.

Details of the sports that will be supported through the grant in 2021–2022 are outlined below, representing 94% per cent of the total planned hours for 2021–2022.

Sport	Competition	Anticipated coverage increase in 2021–2022*
AFL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFLW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73%
Basketball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIBA Women’s Asia Cup • WNBL • National Junior Championships (U20, U18, U16) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No coverage in 2016–2017 • No coverage in 2016–2017 • No coverage in 2016–2017
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WBBL • Australian Women’s Cricket Team • ICC Women’s Cricket World Cup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No coverage in 2016–2017 • No coverage in 2016–2017 • No coverage in 2016–2017
Lawn Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawn Bowls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6%

Sport	Competition	Anticipated coverage increase in 2021–2022*
Rugby League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's Test/State of Origin NRLW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 320% No coverage in 2016–2017
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIH Hockey Pro League – Men FIH Hockey Pro League – Women Hockey 1 League – Men Hockey 1 League – Women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No coverage in 2016–2017 No coverage in 2016–2017 No coverage in 2016–2017 No coverage in 2016–2017
Surfing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -59%
Baseball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Baseball League Australian Women Baseball League 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No coverage in 2016–2017 No coverage in 2016–2017
Softball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia Pacific Cup Summer Slam – Fully Loaded Softball (Women's) Summer Slam – Fully Loaded Softball (Men's) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No coverage in 2016–2017 No coverage in 2016–2017 No coverage in 2016–2017
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road National Championships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64%

*Under the funding agreement, the increase in coverage is assessed against the coverage in the 2016–2017 Financial Year. The rationale for this is that many sports events are cyclical 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 2016–2017 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, Foxtel will determine, in consultation with the relevant sporting bodies, the competitions and events that will receive enhanced coverage. A governance team established within Foxtel 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 ensure continuity for competitions in 2021–2022
- 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.