

# AFL MEDIA

**PETER CAMPBELL**  
GENERAL MANAGER

AFL Media continues to provide relevant and timely information all year round and is exploring a range of options to improve its service to supporters.

**A**FL Media used the strong operational and performance outcomes garnered in previous seasons to attain solid growth in 2015 across all our key deliverables and aspirations.

With the AFL season stretching from the NAB Challenge in February through until the NAB AFL Draft at the end of November, our aspiration has been, and continues to be, to serve our supporters with relevant and timely information that a supporter requires all season long. The integration of news, video, live streaming, transactional, ticketing, fixturing, participation, AFL Fantasy and AFL Tipping, coupled with and supporting our 18 clubs, has afforded the entire AFL and Club Digital Network with a platform to ensure we continue to put the supporter at the centre of all we do.

As a result, the AFL and Club Digital Network, comprising the 18 club mobile and desktop sites, the 18 club apps, *AFL.com.au* and the AFL Live app saw traffic grow by 8.5 per cent from November 1, 2014, to October 31, 2015, to 104 million monthly unique visitors.

The ever-changing disruption that a multitude of different digital options for

consumers provides ensures that AFL Media must continue to explore a range of options to capitalise on whatever device or technology platform a supporter uses to access the AFL and clubs.

To meet these changes, the AFL, in partnership with our digital rights partner Telstra, continues to explore and develop a range of new offerings. The use of social media is a great example of extending the reach afforded by personalised digital offerings. In 2015, the AFL saw growth of 36 per cent in our social media accounts. Importantly, we have also launched our official Weibo social media service – a native Chinese language social media tool that allows us to offer up tailored content to the Chinese language community.

The opportunity that new delivery platforms offer is to continue to reach existing and new supporters to our game. The evolution of platforms such as Snapchat, which saw us reach more than 77 million worldwide users on Grand Final day, to the development of Telstra TV and the content that will be provisioned for it in 2016 enables us to ensure our product and offering is available to as wide an audience as possible. →

#### POWERFUL FORCE

Port Adelaide fans are able to watch captain Travis Boak strut his stuff on various platforms.





The continuing success of the AFL women's exhibition matches also provided a new opportunity to engage fans. AFL Media produced and streamed the first match in 2015 and simultaneously streamed the second match with our broadcast partner, the Seven Network. Both matches were a resounding success. Coupled with our coverage of the AFL Women's Draft, the emergence of the strong and growing interest at participation and viewing engagement level augurs well for continued development and opportunity of women's football in the digital consumption landscape.

AFL Media also produced and live-streamed six NAB Challenge matches which Fox Footy was unable to schedule for logistical purposes, and we produced and live-streamed the Grand Final Day NAB AFL All Stars game.

The strength of the AFL Digital Network revolves around the contribution and engagement that, together with the AFL Media team, our 18 clubs also bring with their own personality, content, supporter and member engagement tools, social media activation and connectedness. The coming together of our respective teams provides a total AFL Network approach which maximises opportunities for corporate partners and provides a direct link to a fan's club of support. The great diversity of club content and products is a tangible link to the market-leading results of 18 clubs and the AFL combining to make the AFL Digital Network.

## TELSTRA PARTNERSHIP

Telstra has been the valued and long-term digital partner of the AFL. In 2015, that relationship was strengthened even further with the completion of the Digital Rights Partnership which will see the AFL and Telstra cement greater digital opportunities through until the end of the 2022 AFL season.

The continued rise of the mobile platform and extensions into connected televisions provides more opportunities for our clubs, the AFL and Telstra.

In 2015, the AFL Live App Pass for domestic live streaming on mobile devices saw total subscriptions increase by 49 per cent year on year. Total live minutes streamed to mobile devices was up 51 per cent on the 2014 total (of 1.18 million hours) to more than 1.78 million hours. Each match generated nearly 30 minutes of viewing time per user per match.

Telstra also continues to be an enormous supporter of our other programming initiatives – be it establishing Wi-Fi via Telstra Air at the Foxtel Grand Final Live Site Precinct, supporting our Live broadcasts of the NAB AFL Pre-Draft Show, supporting NIRS in the broadcast of AFL matches via radio into indigenous communities throughout Australia, or supporting our pre-season two-hour daily live program *First Bounce*.

The support the AFL receives from Telstra Corporation CEO Andy Penn and Chief Marketing Officer and Group Executive Media Joe Pollard and their teams ensures we are able to deliver the best possible experience for our supporters with the knowledge we have the full technical and operational support which Telstra provides. Continued development of new product offerings, such as the AFL Live App for the Apple Watch (which won a 2015 Melbourne Design Award for Best Digital Experience – Mobile) is one example of our forays into new and expanded product offerings.

The extension of our partnership until at least 2022 and the role AFL Media plays with Telstra in that relationship will ensure our supporters will be provided with the best possible digital presence and communications in any Australian sport.

## 2015 KEY METRICS

1. Aggregate video streams (excluding Live Pass domestic streaming) of 123 million, up 21 per cent (2014; 84 million, up 23 per cent).



2. Aggregate monthly unique visitors of 104 million, up 8.5 per cent.
3. Nielsen online monthly unique audience measurement for the AFL Network (clubs and AFL) ranked the AFL as the No. 1 digital sporting network throughout the entire season. Additionally, when Smartphone and Tablet analytics through the Nielsen measurement system were provided for the first time in August, September, October and November, the AFL Network ranked as the No. 1 digital sporting network for those devices.
4. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Weibo) grew by 36 per cent to have more than 1.53 million followers.
5. The total number of downloads of the AFL Live App, AFL Fantasy App and club apps totals more than 4.7 million (3.8 million same time last year). Importantly, and aside from just downloads, the engagement metrics for our apps have also grown.
6. International Digital Rights revenue associated with our WatchAFL service grew by more than 20 per cent, with subscriptions up by a similar percentage.

In addition to the key performance metrics, AFL Media introduced a range of new non-match video content and other initiatives to ensure the voracious consumption of this type of consumer-led content continues at pace. In 2015, AFL Media introduced:

1. *Friday Front Bar* – featuring Mick Molloy, Andy Maher and Sam Pang.
2. *Pick a Winner* – featuring Wayne Carey, Ben Dixon and Campbell Brown.
3. *Whistleblowers* – a weekly program explaining umpiring decisions.
4. *First Bounce* – a daily live two-hour program during the NAB Challenge period featuring Matt Thompson, Nat Edwards, Cameron Ling, Mark Bickley and Campbell Brown.
5. *NAB AFL Pre-Draft Show* – a two-hour pre-draft live show featuring Garry Lyon, Matt Thompson and Callum Twomey as part of our Road to the Draft series.
6. Multi-Language audio commentary on all nine games in the Multicultural Round.

These programs were in addition to our daily *Footy Feed* news program, weekly *Access All Areas* program, weekly *Charged* program, our vignettes as part of the AFL Football Operations 'Respect &

### PERFECT TIMING

Magpie Jamie Elliott flies high above Hawks full-back Brian Lake to complete this spectacular mark at the MCG.







#### POWERFUL IMAGE

Michael Willson's shot of Geelong coach Chris Scott comforting a distressed Mitch Clark was recognised as the AFMA's photograph of the year.

Responsibility' series, the emotive Hall of Fame vignettes, the AFL season-opener, the popular series featuring players returning to their original clubs in *Where it All Began* and a host of live streams associated with major football, coaching and playing announcements.

We also expanded our commercial 'native' production of acclaimed features and series such as those for Treasury Wines Estate *Here's to The Chase*, British Paints' *Home Ground*, indigenous personnel in the Australian Defence Force and Virgin Australia's *Gary Ablett Story*.

Important in also showcasing the evocative and emotive history of our game through the eyes of past and present AFL club captains was the second in the series of the Peter Dickson-produced/directed feature documentaries – *The Chosen Few: Captains*.

Commissioned by the Seven Network for screening in the week leading up to the Grand Final, Dickson was rightly awarded two prestigious international awards of excellence for his work – a feature documentary which will grace our AFL archives as a wonderful piece of storytelling reflecting AFL captains as they view themselves and their impact on the game as they see it in 2015.

In the centenary year of the landing of Australian troops at Gallipoli, AFL Media – with Slattery Media's valued assistance – was pleased to fund and launch the Barbara Cullen-authored *Harder Than Football: League Players at War*. Cullen painstakingly researched and detailed

the military history of those men who served our nation and who had played football in Victoria at the highest level. This hard-back book covering the period from the Boer War through to those who served in Vietnam was proudly launched by Kevin Sheedy and former Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu in the lead-up to Anzac Day. It is a seminal piece of work that AFL Media was pleased to be associated with.

Entering its 105th year of publication in 2016 will be the much-respected and valued *AFL Record*. While the digital disruption continues to challenge traditional media products such as magazines and newsprint, this publication continues to hold its place in the AFL sporting landscape. With extension products such as the *AFL Record: Great Footy Decades 80s*, the *AFL Record Season Guide* and *AFL Record for Kids*, our *AFL Record* and *AFL Record*-branded publications continue to buck the trend of declining circulations – holding their own year-on-year aggregated together. With meticulous care and pride, this hallmark of "going to the footy" still provides our supporters and advertising partners with a unique and cherished place at our venues and in homes around the country.

In a year that was marked by the devastating events surrounding the death of Adelaide Crows coach Phil Walsh, there were also other significant social issues that AFL Media tried to shine a light on. Our on-going editorial and production efforts to discuss

and raise awareness of mental health is one we will continue to pursue. Sometimes it is a simple image that can say more than words ever will, and we were extremely pleased to see Michael Willson's black and white photograph of Geelong player Mitch Clark recognised by the Australian Football Media Association as its Photograph of the Year.

AFL Media has, with the strong commitment to quality content, innovative product and digital extensions and placing the supporter at the centre of what we do, positioned ourselves as a leading destination for our corporate partners and advertisers.

Our design team has a strong reputation in the AFL community for providing creative and results-orientated work and, increasingly, our video production team is also adding to the editorial video content it delivers with client-activated native video production. This is supported by our commercial team which has consistently found outcomes and solutions across AFL Media assets for our partners and advertisers.

The new broadcast rights cycle and our ongoing digital partnership with Telstra provides AFL Media with an opportune moment to continue to invest in our digital engagement with supporters at all levels of football. We will continue to solidify the gains we have made in 2015 to ensure we are primed for the new rights cycle with innovative fan and club-led digital content and products which connect with supporters through the shifting sands of the technology landscape.

#### THIS ONE'S FOR YOU, MADDIE

Tiger star Jack Riewoldt looks skywards in memory of his cousin Madeleine, the sister of St Kilda skipper Nick Riewoldt, after kicking a goal against Carlton during the opening round clash at the MCG.

