

ALL CLASS
Fremantle's
Nat Fyfe was
one of the
stars of the
competition
in 2014.
←



BROADCASTING, SCHEDULING & INFRASTRUCTURE

SIMON LETHLEAN
GENERAL MANAGER

BROADCASTING, SCHEDULING & INFRASTRUCTURE

The AFL delivered another successful year across a variety of media platforms while fans enjoyed first-class facilities at state-of-the-art stadiums.

SIMON LETHLEAN
GENERAL MANAGER – Broadcasting, Scheduling and Major Projects



The AFL continued to work with key stakeholders in 2014 to deliver the game to fans nationally and internationally through our broadcast agreements with television, radio, print and digital media partners.

The ever-evolving consumption preferences of fans, in addition to a dynamic media and broadcast landscape, ensured 2014 was another year of innovation across a range of media platforms.

Innovation and development also remained pivotal to the AFL's national stadium footprint with a key focus on enhancing existing facilities around the country and working with government and local stakeholders to secure the game's next generation of facilities.

The capacity to engage fans and celebrate the game was again at the forefront of AFL Media's agenda throughout 2014 as it further cemented its foothold as the game's foremost news and content platform.

In addition, the AFL in 2014 focused on:

- A review of the AFL's competition formats for 2015, including developing a new three-match format for the 2015 NAB Challenge, including more regional and suburban matches.
- Developing a fixture for the 2015 Toyota AFL Premiership Season, including the balancing of requests and expectations from multiple stakeholders but with a focus on attendance and making the game more accessible for all fans around Australia, including:

- A new 7.20pm eastern seaboard start time for Saturday night matches.
- More Saturday afternoon football in Victoria.
- Continued focus on Thursday night 'event' matches.
- No Sunday or Monday night matches.
- Servicing television broadcast partners, the Seven Network, Foxtel and Fox Sports, and working with each to help deliver first-class broadcasts and increased access to players and coaches in broadcast.
- Servicing radio rights partners, international television partners and newspaper partner News Limited.

TV AND DIGITAL MEDIA RIGHTS

The AFL's broadcast rights agreements with the Seven Network, Foxtel, Fox Sports and Telstra continue to deliver to fans extraordinary access to live coverage of AFL matches across a multitude of platforms.

Highlights of this coverage included:

- Live Friday night football on the Seven Network in every state and territory.
- Four games in every round live on the Seven Network (7mate) in New South Wales, ACT and Queensland.
- Every game, every week live on Fox Sports/Fox Footy on Foxtel and live on IPTV.
- Every game, every week live on Telstra mobile.
- All finals matches were broadcast live nationally on the Seven Network and all finals, excluding the Toyota AFL Grand Final, were broadcast live by Fox Footy on Foxtel.
- South Australia and Western Australia, along with expansion markets New South Wales, the ACT and Queensland, each saw all 42 matches involving their home state teams broadcast on both free-to-air and subscription television across the season.



BROADCAST & MEDIA PARTNERS



The AFL's broadcast rights agreements continue to deliver to fans extraordinary access to live coverage of AFL matches across a multitude of platforms



BLOCKBUSTER

The Anzac Day match between Collingwood and Essendon attracted the biggest television audience for the 2014 premiership season.

TELEVISION IN 2014

The 2014 Toyota AFL Premiership Season again attracted strong audiences around the country, via the Seven Network's free-to-air television broadcast or through Foxtel/Fox Footy's subscription television platform.

The average gross national audience per round of the premiership season across free-to-air and subscription television was 4.727 million (4.729 million in 2013).

The cumulative gross national audience during the home and away season was nearly 109 million (108,735,321) – an almost identical result to that in 2013. The Toyota AFL Finals Series saw a total cumulative audience of 16.578 million across the four weeks, including the Toyota AFL Grand Final.

Seven Network metropolitan audiences were down slightly year-on-year (2.6 per cent), a smaller decline than the decline for Australian television ratings generally. Free-to-air regional audiences recorded a marginal increase of 0.5 per cent, while viewership on subscription television increased by 2.1 per cent year-on-year.

The 10 most watched matches of the 2014 Toyota AFL Premiership Season (national average audiences across free-to-air and subscription television) were:

- Round 6:** Collingwood v Essendon – 1.595 million (Anzac Day)
- Round 8:** Sydney Swans v Hawthorn – 1.508 million
- Round 18:** Hawthorn v Sydney Swans – 1.314 million
- Round 7:** Carlton v Collingwood – 1.310 million
- Round 5:** Geelong Cats v Hawthorn – 1.274 million (Easter Monday)
- Round 17:** Adelaide Crows v Hawthorn – 1.273 million
- Round 13:** Carlton v Hawthorn – 1.246 million
- Round 14:** Richmond v Sydney Swans – 1.241 million
- Round 19:** Sydney Swans v Essendon – 1.206 million
- Round 10:** Port Adelaide v Hawthorn – 1.201 million

The Toyota AFL Grand Final was the most watched program of the year on Australian metropolitan free-to-air television with an audience of more than 2.828 million people in the five mainland metropolitan markets.

The national average audience in metropolitan and regional Australia for the Seven Network's telecast was 3,733,409.

The average Grand Final audience was slightly higher than last year's audience of 3.634 million for the match between Hawthorn and Fremantle.

It was, however, down on the 4.081 million who watched the 2012 match between Hawthorn and the Sydney Swans – with this disparity between 2012 and 2014 largely due to the one-sided nature of the 2014 contest.

In terms of total reach, the Grand Final coverage was seen by 6.24 million people nationally, on par with 2013.

Major AFL events during the year also proved popular, with the Brownlow Medal attracting a total average national audience across free-to-air and subscription television of 1.658 million for the vote count and 1.160 million for the Red Carpet arrivals event.

FOXTEL/FOX FOOTY

With every game every week broadcast live on Fox Sports/Fox Footy on Foxtel, fans were able to enjoy the entire AFL season as it unfolded, complemented by proven weekly magazine programs such as *On The Couch*, *AFL 360*, *AFL League Teams*, *Open Mike*, *Ed and Derm's Big Week in Footy* and *Bounce*.

The AFL's key events such as the Toyota AFL Season Launch, the Australian Football Hall of Fame ceremony, the NAB AFL Rising Star presentation, the Virgin Australia AFL All-Australian team announcement, the Toyota AFL Grand Final Parade and the NAB AFL Draft were all again showcased by our broadcast partners and were first-class events to attend and first-class broadcasts watched by millions around Australia.

The most-watched regular Foxtel-produced match across the season was the Saturday twilight timeslot, with an average of 234,519 viewers nationally each round. The most-watched regular Foxtel broadcast timeslot overall was Friday night, with an average of 279,887 viewers nationally each round.

The highest-rating Foxtel broadcast match for the home and away season was the round 18 clash between Hawthorn and the Sydney Swans, which attracted 381,421 average national viewers.

Another standout success for Foxtel was the reality series *The Recruit*. The inaugural 10-episode series, which saw 13 aspiring footballers battle it out for a spot on an AFL list, was a hit for Foxtel's flagship general entertainment channel, FOX8.

Its average national weekly audience of 136,126 saw it become the fifth most-watched sports program on subscription television for 2014. Series winner Johann Wagner was drafted to Port Adelaide, while Irish contestant Pdraig Lucey was recruited by the Geelong Cats.

The program was also a big winner at the prestigious Australian Sports Commission Media Awards, claiming the award for 'Best depiction of the value of sport to Australians in a community setting'. A second season has been confirmed for broadcast in 2016.

POPULAR

Reality series *The Recruit* was a hit with fans, with winner Johann Wagner drafted to Port Adelaide. →

INTERNATIONAL TV RIGHTS

With a commitment to strengthening viewer access to Australian Football internationally, increased broadcast coverage of Premiership Season matches, Finals Series matches, the Grand Final and AFL Events brought international fans across the globe closer to the game than ever before in 2014.

Nine incumbent rights holders, ESPN, Fox Soccer Plus, Australia Network, Orbit Showtime Network, Eurosport, Viva Sports, Sky New Zealand, Sommet Sports and Over the Line Sports Media, broadcast AFL matches and events into more than 250 territories worldwide. Two long-term rights holders, Eurosport and Sky New Zealand, secured further rights until the end of 2016, with highlights of these renewals including extra content in the offerings such as:

- One delayed Premiership Season and Finals Series match every week on Eurosport into Asia (a new territory for Eurosport's coverage of AFL) along with the Grand Final on delay.
- One delayed Premiership Season and Finals Series match every week into New Zealand on Sky Television along with broadcast of the Grand Final.

The AFL's digital streaming service on watchafl.com.au broadcast every match of every round live internationally, ensuring fans outside Australia had the greatest possible access to the game across all media platforms. Viewers were also treated to 29 episodes of the AFL's own Toyota AFL Highlights program every week throughout the Premiership Season and the ensuing Finals Series. The program format delivered a range of entertaining content, covering AFL news and match highlights from every round of the season.

RADIO IN 2014

Radio again played a significant role in taking the game to all corners of the country in 2014, including metropolitan and regional areas.

The AFL's radio partners in metropolitan areas are 3AW, Triple M, ABC Radio, SEN, FIVEaa and 6PR. Regional audiences are broadcast AFL matches via ABC Radio, K-Rock (Geelong), Gold FM (Gold Coast), Crocmedia, Southern Cross Austereo and the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS).

In Victoria, all nine matches each round during the 2014 Toyota AFL Premiership Season and all matches in the Toyota AFL Finals Series were broadcast on radio, while every match featuring an AFL club from Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales was broadcast into its respective home states.

All Toyota AFL Finals Series matches (including the Toyota AFL Grand Final) were broadcast nationally.

An average 1.220 million people a week listened to AFL matches during the radio survey periods 4-6 in 2014 (these being the three survey periods that fall during the six months of the season).

The app/web stream for AFL radio broadcast rights holders via the popular AFL app had an average unique audience of 24,000 per match-day for the Premiership Season and an average unique audience of 20,000 per match-day for the Finals Series. A further 13,000 average unique listeners tuned into web streams on the AFL website per match-day for the Premiership Season.





STADIUM INFRASTRUCTURE

The AFL continues to work with a number of partners such as federal and state governments and venue managers to progress major stadium projects across Australia to benefit AFL supporters and the broader community. These projects include new and revitalised facilities designed to enhance the match-day experience for fans. →

ADELAIDE OVAL

One of the most successful stadium redevelopments in the history of Australian sport, the \$535 million Adelaide Oval redevelopment was opened on time and on budget for the first AFL match at the stadium on Saturday, March 29, 2014, featuring a local derby between Port Adelaide and Adelaide.

Enhancements to the iconic ground include new southern and eastern stands to seat 14,000 and 19,000 people respectively, plus redevelopment works to the western stand and northern mounds.

The venue is operated by the Adelaide Oval Stadium Management Authority, which is co-owned by football and cricket in South Australia.

Not only is the venue an exceptional home ground for the two SA AFL clubs (along with SA cricket), it has also played a major role in revitalising the northern end of the Adelaide CBD and has been the catalyst for wider economic development in the CBD, in addition to the broader Adelaide community.

The tourism impact of the new Adelaide Oval is a major contributor to the 12 per cent increase in the number of interstate visitor nights in South Australia in 2013-14.

NEW PERTH STADIUM

The West Australian Government has committed to a new multi-purpose stadium on the Burswood Peninsula, due for completion by the start of the 2018 AFL season.

The new Perth stadium will hold around 60,000 people, making it the third-biggest AFL stadium behind the MCG and ANZ Stadium.

It will be the home venue for Fremantle Dockers and the West Coast Eagles and is expected to cost in excess of \$800 million. More than \$300 million is also being spent on associated public transport infrastructure.

The West Australian Government selected the WestStadium consortium (led by Brookfield-Multiplex) following an interactive tender process to design, build, finance and maintain the new Perth stadium. The West Australian Government is currently undertaking a process to determine its preferred stadium operator.

A joint football working group comprising the WAFC, AFL, Fremantle and West Coast is working closely with WA Government officials to ensure the scope of the stadium development matches the expectations of the two WA teams and AFL fans collectively and to agree upon the terms of access to the new stadium.

SCG

The Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust has completed a master plan for the redevelopment of the SCG. The plan includes improved traffic management, pedestrian access and a light rail service for the precinct. The AFL and the Sydney Swans are working closely with the SC&SG Trust in the redevelopment process.

In April 2014, a \$210 million redevelopment of the Noble, Bradman and Messenger stands was completed. The redevelopment included 13,000 seats, new media facilities, new away change rooms and enhanced fan facilities for SC&SG Trust Members and the general public.

GABBA

The completion of new football facilities was achieved at the Gabba throughout 2014. This development included a new playing field – including a new artificial turf strip between the boundary line and the perimeter fence, new coaches' boxes and a new interchange bench area. The AFL thanks Stadiums Queensland for its financial support towards these venue improvements.

BLUNDSTONE ARENA

The redevelopment of Blundstone Arena in Hobart was completed in time for the 2015 ICC Cricket World Cup.

The \$33 million project, co-funded by the Tasmanian and Federal governments (\$15 million each) and Cricket Tasmania (\$3 million), will increase the capacity of Blundstone Arena from around 15,000 to 20,000 patrons.

A large part of the redevelopment is the construction of a new Western Stand, which includes new facilities for players and coaching staff of cricket and AFL, modern and officials facilities, new function rooms and suites and undercover seating for the general public. The redevelopment also includes a new gate entry at the south and other improvements to catering and toilet facilities for the general public.

SUCCESS STORY

Adelaide Oval proved a winner for fans and the city of Adelaide.



(Adelaide Oval)...
one of the most
successful stadium
redevelopments
in the history of
Australian sport

2015 FIXTURE

Season 2015 will kick off later than usual over Easter, with the smorgasbord of AFL action offered in the opening round just the start of a year studded with blockbuster matches that will see fans enjoy the tradition, passion and memorable moments that define our game week in, week out.

The popular Thursday night season-opener between Carlton and Richmond is back, to be played on Easter Thursday in front of a packed MCG.

Matches at ANZ Stadium, Adelaide Oval and Domain Stadium will excite on Easter Saturday and Sunday, while 2014 premier Hawthorn will unveil the premiership flag before its faithful fans in an Easter Monday clash with the Geelong Cats to close out a spectacular round one.

In round four, the AFL will commemorate the Anzac Centenary, marking the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing of Australian and New Zealand forces, with a feast of football. Richmond and Melbourne, two clubs with strong war-time histories, will meet under Friday night lights to open the round before five matches are played across Australia and New Zealand on Anzac Day.

St Kilda and Carlton will again celebrate the historic links between our country and near neighbour New Zealand with an encounter in Wellington, just the third match played for premiership points off Australian shores.

The traditional Collingwood and Essendon clash at the MCG will follow, before a twilight encounter between the GWS Giants and Gold Coast Suns in the nation's capital at StarTrack Oval.

Two night matches will wrap up the day, with Fremantle to take on the Sydney Swans in the Len Hall tribute match in Perth and Port Adelaide to host an epic rematch with 2014 preliminary final foe Hawthorn at Adelaide Oval.

Round five will see Carlton coach Mick Malthouse cement his name in history when he surpasses Jock McHale's all-time coaching record. Malthouse will steer his Blues against former club Collingwood in a Friday night spectacular at the MCG, marking his 715th outing as a senior coach at AFL/VFL level.

The Dreamtime at the 'G match between Richmond and Essendon will be the showpiece of Indigenous-themed round nine, while Multicultural Round will be celebrated in round 19, with several marquee matches acknowledging the cultural diversity and collaboration harnessed by our game.

The 2015 season comprises 23 rounds, with all clubs to play 11 home and 11 away matches and have one bye each. Twenty rounds will consist of nine matches, while three rounds (11, 12, 13) will consist of six matches, enabling six clubs to enjoy a mid-season bye in each of those rounds.

Under the arrangements with our broadcast partners, the Seven Network, Foxtel/Fox Footy and Telstra, a standard round of nine matches will be scheduled as follows:

- One Friday night match.
- Two Saturday afternoon matches.
- One Saturday twilight match.
- Two Saturday night matches.
- One Sunday early match.
- One Sunday afternoon match.
- One Sunday twilight match.

The AFL has sought to develop a consistent and equitable schedule of matches, which connects with the community, assists in growing the game and continues to build the financial stability of the AFL competition.

In order to achieve this, our guiding principles are:

- To develop, as close as is possible, a fixture which gives all clubs equal opportunities.
- To maximise attendances at AFL matches in all markets, ensuring the best possible accessibility for fans.
- To maximise viewing audiences across our television broadcast partners, ensuring national exposure for the game.
- To take into account the specific requests of AFL clubs, players and other key competition stakeholders, particularly venues and broadcasters.

- To continue developing the game nationally by scheduling matches across all markets throughout the season;
- To ensure the welfare of the players by providing minimum six-day breaks between matches for regularly scheduled rounds.

Matches will also be played on key public holidays (Easter Thursday, Easter Monday, Anzac Day and Queen's Birthday), in addition to five Thursday night event matches in rounds one, 12, 13, 14 and 15, as features of the season for fans in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth.

The AFL has again utilised the 'weighted rule' in constructing the 2015 fixture to address the issue of on-field equity for all clubs. The final ladder from the previous season has been grouped into the top six teams, middle six teams and bottom six teams, in order to manage the equality of double match-ups as well as possible while also ensuring our venue and broadcast obligations are met.

The Toyota AFL Premiership Season fixture aims to enable our fans to access the game in strong numbers and provide all clubs with the opportunity to contest the finals, while continuing to reaffirm our sport as the number one code in this country.

It is our objective to deliver a great outcome for all key stakeholders in the AFL competition – including players, clubs, officials, broadcast partners, corporate sponsors, venues, state affiliates, local communities and Federal and State governments – while also ensuring that our fans enjoy and embrace the game week in, week out.

A total of 198 matches in season 2015 will again be played across every state and territory, with matches outside the regular capital cities in locations including Alice Springs (one), Darwin (one), Cairns (one), Hobart (three, up on two in 2013 and 2014), Launceston (four) and Canberra (three), as well as the match in New Zealand. →



The AFL will commemorate the Anzac Centenary, marking the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing of Australian and New Zealand forces, with a feast of football

INSPIRATIONAL
Dane Swan led Collingwood to victory in last year's Anzac Day clash against Essendon. ↻

KEY FEATURES OF THE 2015 TOYOTA AFL PREMIERSHIP SEASON INCLUDE:

- Opening round to start on Thursday, April 2, with a Thursday night match between Carlton and Richmond.
- Round one to continue over Easter, with the Sydney Swans to face off against Essendon at ANZ Stadium on Saturday twilight, while Brisbane Lions recruit Dayne Beams will immediately face his former club Collingwood at the Gabba. Back-to-back premier Hawthorn and the Geelong Cats will close out the holiday weekend with an Easter Monday blockbuster at the MCG.
- New timeslot for Saturday night matches in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland with start times to come forward by 20 minutes from 7.40pm to 7.20pm.
- Domain Stadium to host a Friday night match in round two, with West Coast to meet Carlton, with big matches involving last year's finalists at Adelaide Oval (Port Adelaide v Sydney Swans) and Simonds Stadium (Geelong v Fremantle).
- Seven matches to be played in Tasmania, with North Melbourne to play three home matches at Hobart's Blundstone Arena for the first time, against Richmond (round six), West Coast (round 10) and St Kilda (round 20), while Hawthorn will play four matches at Launceston's Aurora Stadium, hosting Western Bulldogs (round three), Gold Coast Suns (round nine), Fremantle (round 15) and Brisbane Lions (round 22).
- GWS Giants to host three matches at Canberra's StarTrack Oval, in rounds two, four and 17, against Melbourne, the Gold Coast Suns and the Geelong Cats.
- Two matches in the Northern Territory, with Melbourne to host Port Adelaide in round nine in Alice Springs and then hosting West Coast in Darwin in round 14.
- Western Bulldogs-Gold Coast Suns match at Cazalys Stadium in Cairns will take place in round 15.
- Five Thursday night matches across the season, with one to be played at the MCG, one at the SCG, one at Domain Stadium and two at Adelaide Oval. Four Thursday night matches will be played in consecutive weeks from rounds 12-15 when the AFL is able to manage appropriate breaks for all competing clubs around the bye rounds.
- Essendon's turn to host Collingwood on Anzac Day at the MCG as one of five games on the day, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli. St Kilda will play Carlton at Wellington as the opening game, while Canberra will see the GWS Giants host the Gold Coast Suns in the twilight slot before night matches involving Port Adelaide and Hawthorn at Adelaide Oval and Fremantle to host the traditional Len Hall tribute match in Perth against the Sydney Swans.
- Carlton coach Mick Malthouse to break former Collingwood coach Jock McHale's all-time AFL/VFL coaching record of 714 games, with his 715th senior game as a coach against his former team Collingwood under lights on Friday night in round five at the MCG.
- The removal of Monday night from the 2015 fixture in round six, across the Mother's Day weekend, means there will be six games played on the Saturday in this round, with a second twilight match that afternoon featuring the GWS Giants against Hawthorn at Spotless Stadium.
- The rematch between 2014 Toyota AFL Grand Final opponents Hawthorn and the Sydney Swans to take place in round eight at the MCG before a return meeting in round 16 at ANZ Stadium.
- Indigenous Round to be celebrated in round nine, highlighted by the showpiece Richmond-Essendon Dreamtime at the 'G match on the Saturday night.
- A mid-season break for all clubs to be spread across rounds 11, 12 and 13. Six matches will be played in each round, enabling six clubs to enjoy a bye across each of the three weeks.
- Melbourne and Collingwood to meet in the traditional Queen's Birthday Monday holiday match at the MCG in round 10.
- The Adelaide Crows to celebrate their 25th season in the national competition with a round 12 encounter against reigning premier Hawthorn, the club they played in their first match in 1991.
- Multicultural round to be celebrated in round 19.
- Intrastate rivalries in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales to be maintained, with two QClashes between the Brisbane Lions and Gold Coast Suns (rounds five and 19), two derbies between the West Coast Eagles and Fremantle (rounds three and 20), two Showdowns between the Adelaide Crows and Port Adelaide (rounds five and 16) and two derbies between the Sydney Swans and GWS Giants (rounds three and 21).
- Matches scheduled both home and away between strong-drawing Victorian clubs to maximise attendances and television audiences – Carlton-Richmond (rounds one and 15); Hawthorn-Geelong Cats (rounds one and 20); Essendon-Hawthorn (rounds two and 13); Essendon-Collingwood (rounds four and 23); Carlton-Collingwood (rounds five and 19); Collingwood-Geelong Cats (rounds six and 22); Richmond-Collingwood (rounds seven and 21) and Richmond-Essendon (rounds nine and 22).
- No teams to play each other for the second time until after round 10. There must also be a minimum of six weeks between clubs' first and second meetings.
- All clubs to play each other once by round 22.
- Minimum six-day break for all clubs between each match.
- All Victorian-based clubs to travel interstate on a minimum of five occasions.
- All clubs to play at least one match at the MCG as part of a minimum four in Victoria.
- Round 23 matches to remain as a floating fixture to maximise scheduling flexibility for the first week of the 2015 Toyota AFL Finals Series.

mighty effort

Mick Malthouse will break the all-time games coached record in 2015. →

