



AUSTRALIA

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New polling shows millions will miss out on free sport unless laws are updated

New research has found 69 per cent of Australians access TV via the internet and millions will miss out on watching sport if proposed anti-siphoning laws are not applied to streaming services.

The national polling by Resolve Strategic found only 29 per cent of Australians watch TV exclusively through an aerial and 18 per cent of those are considering switching to digital soon.

If anti-siphoning laws are not extended to digital services, around half (49%) of people who use free streaming services such as 7plus, 9Now and 10 Play reported they would simply miss out on watching sport.

Seventeen per cent said they would reconnect their aerial and only 9 per cent would sign up to paid streaming services.

The research also found 67 per cent of Australians support anti-siphoning laws which protect access to free sport and 69 per cent support extending those laws to digital services.

“This research shows that most Australians are watching TV through the internet and this proportion will only increase as more people either ditch their aerials and new homes are built without them,” said Free TV CEO Bridget Fair.

“New anti-siphoning laws must be updated to reflect this reality otherwise millions will be forced to buy expensive streaming subscriptions during a cost of living crisis or miss out altogether on the great sporting events that bind our nation together.

“All Australians deserve access to sport, regardless of their income or whether they have an antenna on their home.”

Free TV announced that it would also launch a major new “Keep Sport Free” advertising campaign across TV, print, outdoor and social media to highlight the imminent threat to Australians of losing free sport, potentially costing people thousands of dollars a year to watch their favourite events.

The government's anti-siphoning bill prevents subscription streaming services such as Amazon, Apple and Disney from buying exclusive terrestrial broadcast rights to iconic sporting events like the Olympics, AFL, NRL and cricket.

But they can still acquire exclusive digital rights and lock out the vast majority of Australians who watch free sport on services such as 7plus, 9Now and 10 Play.

The Resolve polling, commissioned by Free TV Australia which represents free-to-air broadcasters including Seven, Nine and Ten, found that extending the rules to apply to streaming rights would be extremely popular.

Almost a third (32%) of voters would be more likely to vote for a major party acting on this issue while only three per cent would be less likely.

"The Australian public clearly values access to free sport and supports politicians who act to protect it," said Ms Fair.

"While the intent of the anti-siphoning bill is good, its current form does not guarantee the availability of free sporting coverage for those who are reliant on the internet for their free TV.

"This major oversight must be fixed to protect the free universal access to sport for every Australian."

Key findings:

- 67% support anti-siphoning and 69% support extending laws to digital services
- 69% access TV through a digital connection
- Only 29% of Australians watch TV exclusively through an aerial and 18% of those are considering switching to digital soon
- Around half (49%) of those using an aerial and four-in-ten of digital users have encountered issues with watching sports, mostly because the games were not available to them
- If anti-siphoning laws are not extended to digital services, around half of people (49%) who do not use an aerial reported they would simply miss out on access to sport. 17% would reconnect their aerial and 9% would pay for streaming services

- Almost a third (32%) of voters would be more likely to vote for a major party acting to extend anti-siphoning laws while only three per cent would be less likely

Note to editors: *This poll was a nationally representative survey of 1,202 people conducted 3rd-7th June 2024*

ENDS

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Find out more

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ABOUT FREE TV AUSTRALIA

Free TV Australia is the peak industry body representing commercial television broadcasters. It represents all of Australia's commercial free-to-air television licensees through advocacy, innovation and strategic advice. The members of Free TV Australia are Seven West Media, Nine Entertainment Co, Network 10, Southern Cross Austereo, WIN Network and Imparja Television.