



SENATOR SARAH HANSON-YOUNG
Australian Greens' Senator for South Australia

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Mr Grant Hehir
Auditor-General
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Hehir

Fox Sports

I write to request an audit of the \$40million given to Fox Sports for the purpose of broadcasting women's sport. The Federal Government gave Foxtel, a privately-owned corporation, \$30million in 2017 followed by another \$10m in 2020.

The issues surrounding this program have been widely published. But I note in particular:

1. Taxpayer funding was given to a privately owned pay-tv corporation. Australia has two public broadcasters who could have received the funding instead. In order for taxpayers to watch women's sport on Foxtel they need to pay for a subscription, effectively paying twice.
2. It was revealed in Senate Estimates last year that the ABC pays Foxtel to broadcast some matches. In order to broadcast a match of our national women's soccer team, the Matildas, the ABC pays \$35,000 to Foxtel.
3. Increasing the broadcast of women's sport does not necessarily increase viewership and questions have been raised about whether more viewers were actually reached on free-to-air television. If viewership is limited, the funding is hardly raising the profile of women's sport.
4. There have been numerous complaints regarding the quality of the broadcast. For example during a W-league match the broadcast cut to an analyst sitting in a room in his home for a period of time.
5. The \$10m given in 2020 was listed in the Budget Papers as a Covid Response Measure. The Federal Government has failed to explain how this could be so. It is significant that the funding was given to broadcast women's sport that was not even being played during Covid restrictions and lockdowns.
6. In 2017, \$30m was given to Foxtel through a 'no tender' grant. \$10m was then given as part of a Covid rescue package in 2020, again without a tender process on the open market, excluding all other broadcasters.
7. FOI documents show that Foxtel did not have to submit a plan for the \$10m for how it would deliver outcomes under the grant program. In fact, they were basically given a blank cheque and were not required to submit any documentation or plan until 2021.
8. The decision was fast-tracked through Cabinet breaking the normal "10-day Rule".
9. Further, documents show that the Minister for Sport personally intervened to block documents from his office about the grant being released.

10. FOI documents also show public servants worked on the weekend and into the night to get \$5.5million to Foxtel processed before an end of financial year deadline.

I hope you will agree that this program raises serious questions about value for money, processes undertaken for spending taxpayer funds, and ultimately the ability for the so-called intent of a funding program to actually be delivered.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Hanson-Young', written in a cursive style.

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young
Australian Greens Spokesperson for Media and Communications