

Tuesday, 25 August 2026

Seven delivers a blockbuster AFL season

Australia's #1 winter sport reaches 15.5 million, up 7% so far in 2026

As footy fever builds ahead of the **Legends Game for Prostate Cancer** this Thursday and the start of the **2026 Final Series** on Friday, the AFL has cemented its status as Australia's #1 winter sport and increased its audience across Seven and [7plus Sport](#).

The regular **AFL Premiership Season**, which wrapped on Sunday, reached 15.5 Australians, up from 14.6 million in 2025. The audience reach on 7plus Sport alone jumped from 2.5 million to 4.7 million.

This year has seen AFL retain the title of Australia's most watched winter sport, reaching 11% more people than Nine Network's NRL coverage so far in 2026.

Seven's live and free AFL coverage generated an average national total TV audience of 585,000, up 7% on the regular 2025 premiership season. Viewing on 7plus Sport soared 127% to an average of 84,000. Fourteen per cent of Seven's AFL audience watched it on 7plus Sport, up from 7% in 2025.

Perth has been Seven's fastest growing AFL market this year, with the audience there jumping 40% thanks to the strong performance of the West Coast Eagles and the Fremantle Dockers. Seven's AFL audience is up 11% in both Brisbane and Sydney.

All of Seven's key prime time AFL sessions have seen growth in their total TV audiences this year, with Thursday Night Football up 19%, Friday Night Football up 5% and Sunday Night Football up 1%.

The Fremantle Dockers v Sydney Swans match on 9 July was a standout in the 2026 season. It had 930,000 viewers, the biggest audience for a regular season prime time game since the 2022 season opener and the biggest Thursday night game in more than five years.

Other big matches so far this year included the 8 June King's Birthday between Collingwood and Melbourne, which drew 923,000 viewers and was up 7% on 2025; the Fremantle Dockers v Adelaide Crows game on 14 August which had 823,000 viewers and was bigger than any Friday night broadcast in 2025; and the 5 March clash between the Sydney Swans and Carlton with 774,000 viewers, the biggest Opening Round audience since the round was introduced three years ago.

A huge week for footy fans kicks off on Thursday night, as the **Four’N Twenty Legends Game for Prostate Cancer** (exclusive to Seven) brings together a host of AFL greats before the inaugural **AFL Wildcard Round** starts on Friday night, all live and free on Seven and 7plus Sport.

Seven is the only place fans can catch every game of the finals, including the Legends Game and **AFL Grand Final**, live and free.

Seven’s Head of AFL and Innovation, Gary O’Keeffe, said: “With a record-breaking home and away season now behind us, our attention turns to the annual **Legends Game for Prostate Cancer**, before the inaugural **Wildcard Round** kicks off on Friday night, with the Western Bulldogs taking on Collingwood.

“The introduction of the **Wildcard Round** has kept more teams in contention and fans engaged for longer this season, with strong numbers across the board, including 7plus Sport up 127% year-on-year.

“Congratulations to the Fremantle Football Club on finishing as minor premiers. We can’t wait for the Finals action to begin, and Seven is proud to be the home of the nation’s biggest footy moments, bringing fans closer to the action than ever before. You can catch every moment of the AFL Finals, live and free on Seven and 7plus Sport,” he said.

Seven’s Director of Sales, Television and Streaming, Katie Finney, said: “There is no winter sport bigger than the AFL and this year’s regular premiership season has been a runaway success, reaching an incredible 15.5 million Australians on Seven and 7plus Sport and growing its audience year-on-year.

“The AFL continues to cement its position as one of Australia’s most powerful platforms for connecting brands with audiences, reaching more Australians in 2026 and delivering unmatched scale, engagement and impact for sponsors and advertisers across every screen. With the Finals Series kicking off this weekend, brands still have a unique opportunity to align with some of the most anticipated moments in Australian sport, from every Finals match through to the Brownlow Medal and the Grand Final, live and free on Seven and 7plus Sport.”

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Source: VOZ 5.0 National. Average audience and come reach. 2026 AFL regular season vs 2025 regular season. Average audience figures are match only (including pre/post), reach includes pre/post-game telecasts. "Most watched winter sport" compares Seven's AFL vs Nine's NRL for season to date. Data overnight (excluding spill).