



AFL licensed product also maintains its position as Australia's number one licensed sports brand with retail sales of more than \$150 million in 2006.

#### **HISTORY**

In 1857, a young man named Tom Wills returned to Australia after going to school in England where he was football captain of Rugby School and a brilliant cricketer. In 1858, Wills was appointed the Secretary of the Melbourne Cricket Club, and he published his now famous letter suggesting that cricketers should keep fit in the winter by playing football.

Given the oval shape of cricket grounds, a different style of football game was required to that normally played on rectangular fields. Hence, this new game was devised by Wills, his cousin H.C.A. Harrison, W.J. Hammersley and J.B. Thompson. The Melbourne Football Club was formed on August 7, 1858, the year of the code's first recorded game between Scotch College and Melbourne Grammar School.

#### **THE MARKET**

Australian Football League competes in a much broader market than simply sport. Its obvious competitors are Rugby League, soccer and basketball. In reality the AFL exists in the extremely diverse and dynamic entertainment industry, in which Australians spend more than \$5 billion every year.

The market in which the AFL directly operates is equally diverse, composed of revenue generated

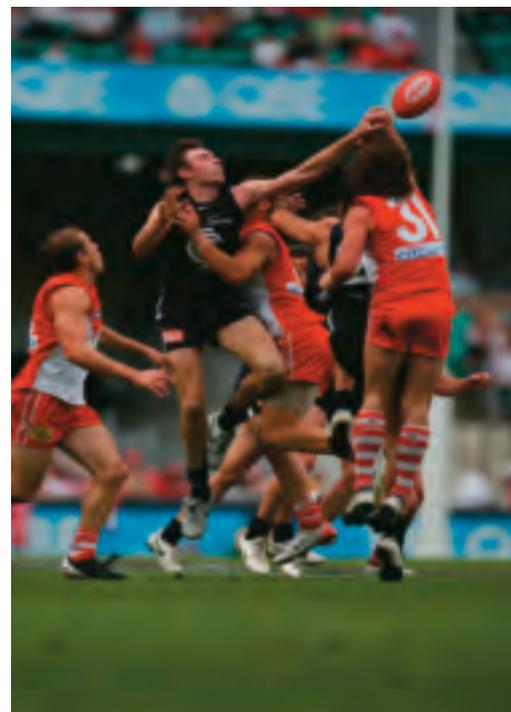


two largely populated northern states are still considered growth markets.

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

The AFL regularly breaks attendance records. The 2005 season saw 6,763,852 go through the turnstiles, breaking the previous season record 6,691,897 previously set in 1998, this was then followed by 6,736,234 in 2006. This is more than double the figure for the AFL's nearest competitor. Club membership has also exploded in recent seasons, rising from 217,474 in 1994 to 519,121 in 2006 - an increase of more than 139%.

AFL football continues to maintain its position as Australia's most valuable television sports property with cumulative national audiences each week of up to 5 million people. Each year, the AFL Grand Final is televised live and is the most watched sports program in Australia as well as being viewed in 150 countries around the world.



by match attendance, media rights, corporate sponsorship, membership and sales of licensed products. The combined effect values the AFL's market contribution at \$276 million per year.

While the AFL enjoys a growing national following, its heartland is in the southern states where Australian Rules Football has been part of the culture for over a century. Given the dominance of Rugby League in NSW and Queensland, the



Australian football quickly blossomed. The Victorian Football League was established in 1897 and the following year the League's first games were played among the foundation clubs; Carlton, Collingwood, Essendon, Fitzroy, Geelong, Melbourne, St Kilda and South Melbourne. In 1925 North Melbourne, Hawthorn and Footscray entered the competition.

The national spread started with the relocation of South Melbourne to Sydney in 1982. The competition grew to 14 in 1987 with the birth of West Coast Eagles in Perth and a new team in Brisbane. To reflect the growing national stature of the game, the VFL changed its name to the Australian Football League (AFL) in 1990. The following year the Adelaide Football Club joined the competition, and the number of clubs grew to 16 in 1995 with the admission of Fremantle. The AFL celebrated its centenary year in 1996. In the following year Port Adelaide joined the League, and foundation club Fitzroy merged with Brisbane.

## THE PRODUCT

As an acronym for the Australian Football League, AFL is ostensibly a corporate entity. However, it is more popularly viewed as a pseudonym for the game of Australian football or, as it is sometimes



referred to colloquially, "Aussie Rules".

The game itself is a unique hybrid of Irish Gaelic Football, English Rugby and, as some historians suggest, a mutation of an aboriginal sporting pastime. But to the millions who follow it with parochial passion, it's simply "footy".

Today, the competition can boast of being the oldest codified football game in the world. From its early suburban origins in Melbourne, it has grown



into a national league with 16 teams from the five mainland states.

But more than that, the "product" is increasingly complex in the way it is consumed - be it in the form of spectators attending games or supporters watching on television, buying AFL licensed product or taking up club memberships. Today, as indicated by the sheer number of television programs dedicated to AFL, football is more than a game. It's a way of life.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The last decade has seen more development of AFL football than the preceding one hundred years of the competition. And while the game enjoys a fiercely loyal following, change is still accepted as an inevitable fact of life.

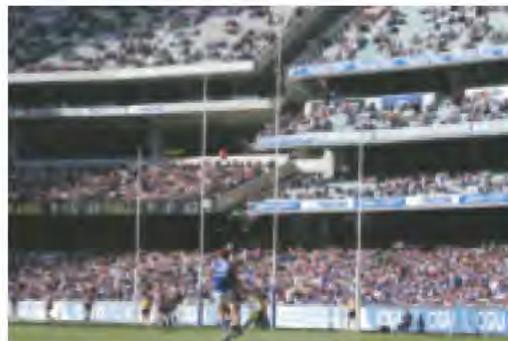
Recent developments at the AFL are broad and varied. With the AFL's desire to provide world class facilities for patrons, ground amenities continue to be a priority. The heartland of AFL, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, underwent a major renovation of its members area and northern stand making up half of the ground. The stadium is a state of the art facility and a delight for AFL supporters to watch the game.

More and more night games are being scheduled to fit in with supporters' entertainment preferences, as well as more televised games being broadcast on the Seven, Ten and Foxtel networks. Visitors to the AFL website ([www.afl.com.au](http://www.afl.com.au)) are treated to streamed footage of marks and goals of the week to highlights of the national draft competition where serious footy fans can watch the stars of tomorrow.

International coverage is still a priority with a record 150 countries now televising highlights of the game. As well, the AFL has recently undertaken a reciprocal series of composite rules games with Ireland's Gaelic Athletic Association.

## PROMOTION

Since its national expansion in 1987, concerted efforts have been made to improve the image of AFL football. Recognising the competitive emergence of many local and global sports, the AFL's challenge has been to develop its national market potential. Therefore, penetrating the Rugby



League dominated states of New South Wales and Queensland has become a key objective.

In 2007, the Kangaroos will play three home and away games at the Gold Coast Stadium, Carrara. Over 13% of the Kangaroos membership base now resides on the Gold Coast providing the club with many new business opportunities.

- Football as a game will celebrate its 150th year in 2008 (note: it is not the AFL which is celebrating its 150th year as a league - rather it is football as a game)

- Themed Rounds: aim to highlight and celebrate particular areas of the game that make it what it is:

- Rivalry round
- ANZAC Day
- Indigenous round
- Heritage round
- Women's round

## BRAND VALUES

It is sometimes difficult to reconcile the two elements of the AFL - the corporate body responsible for administering the competition and the game itself. Therefore, in defining the AFL's brand values, the one statement that AFL football is "the people's game" represents both aspects.

Like a reflection of the country in which the game was born, AFL football is big, sprawling and egalitarian. It is fast moving, incredibly skilful, athletic and passionately tribal in its following.

While it is undeniably Australia's most popular sport, to the millions of loyal supporters, it is also the greatest game on earth.



## THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE AFL

- In 1897 the newly established Victorian Football League, the AFL's predecessor, implemented the world's first finals system for a team sport where a series of play-off matches was played by the top four clubs at the conclusion of the season.
- Australian football reached a low ebb in 1916. Only four of the ten established League clubs were able to compete due to the fact that so many players had enlisted in the military forces at the height of World War I.
- 581,839 people played Australian football regularly throughout the nation in 2006. On a pro-rata basis, more spectators attend matches at the elite AFL level than any other team sport in the world.
- In 2007 (up until round 12) the average match attendance was 36,400.
- The largest match attendance in Australian football occurred at the 1970 Grand Final, when 121,696 fans squeezed into the MCG to watch Carlton defeat Collingwood by 10 points in a thrilling encounter.