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# Football Federation Australia free-to-air rights bids due by Easter

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Bids for Football Federation Australia's free-to-air broadcast and telecommunications rights are due by Easter and a deal could be wrapped up by the end of next month.

[The FFA signed a record \\$346 million television broadcast deal with Fox Sports and Foxtel](#) in December, but the free-to-air rights remained up for grabs. It's understood the sporting body, which recently issued a tender document to broadcasters, is keen to have a deal for free-to-air wrapped up by the end of May.

The tender is understood to have three or six-year contract options.

The tender for the telco rights, including live streaming matches, is also understood to have been issued. Telstra is considering a bid and will weigh up the cost, the appeal to its mobile customers and how they could use the rights.

Optus is also known to be scanning over the rights, [having flagged interest in the entire lot last year](#). However, the Singtel-owned telco may be hampered by a rumoured first rights clause Telstra has.

[FFA is being advised by Adara Partners](#), which used UBS bankers Matthew Grounds and Guy Fowler on FFA's deal with Fox in December.

The deal is expected to have one Saturday evening A-League match, some Socceroos 2022 World Cup qualifiers and friendlies, Matildas, W-League, club friendly matches and an expansion clause, allowing for new teams to enter the A-League. It may also include exhibition matches played in Australia featuring international teams.

FFA has been in talks with Nine Entertainment, Seven West Media and Ten Network.

It is understood Nine will consider bidding, but will weigh up how it can profitably exploit the rights and what the advertising potential would be.

[Ten flagged an interest in the A-League last year](#) and has ties to Fox Sports, Foxtel and News Corp. Foxtel, which is 50 per cent owned by News Corp, has a 14.9 per cent stake in Ten, and Fox Sports shares V8 Supercar rights with the network.

Seven, which is expected to mull over a bid, has spent big on sport recently and the broadcaster has flagged its [earnings will be down up to 20 per cent this year because of a softer advertising market and the millions of dollars it is spending on rights to the AFL and Olympics](#).

The challenge for the FFA will be selling the non-exclusive game, with no catch up or replay rights. There is also the question of which matches will be included in the deal; an FTA bidder will be keen on local derbies, such as Sydney versus Western Sydney Wanderers, which Fox will likely be keen to keep exclusive.

The match is simulcast with Fox Sports and the question will be around costs, including an additional \$2 million annually to be paid to Fox Sports for the winning FTA bidder, versus commercial outcome for the networks.

However, [Ten is in a difficult financial position. It has a looming December deadline for its \\$200 million loan](#), guaranteed by Lachlan Murdoch, James Packer and Bruce Gordon and in [February it warned it would have a full-year earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation loss of up to \\$30 million](#).

Ten is understood to have engaged the three billionaires about refinancing the \$200 million loan from the Commonwealth Bank, of which \$65 million has been drawn on, which they backed so the network could secure the loan back in 2013.

While sources have suggested Mr Murdoch, especially, is unlikely to let Ten get to the point where it can't pay back its loan, the FFA would likely be aware of the financial position of all potential rights acquirers.

Ten will also face a fight to hold onto the rights for the Big Bash League cricket tournament, the value of which is expected to inflate substantially from the \$20 million per year it is currently paying. [Nine has already flagged it is keen on the Big Bash](#), as part of its overall cricket offering and [Fox Sports is understood to be planning an aggressive bid for cricket, with Nine as a potential partner](#).