**Transcript**

***Dr Liam Lenten – Unbalanced scheduling systems and demand for professional sport***

With Geordie McKenzie from the University of Sydney I have a current research project whereby we attempt to look at the nuances of AFL fixturing policy for two reasons. One to identify to what extent these policies maximise attendance which is a very important stated objective of theirs as well as identify possible room for improvement to these policies to increase attendance even more as well as being able to simultaneously satisfy other objectives of theirs.

We achieve these aims by estimating statistical regressions of attendance, and from this we’re able to identify a few very key findings and from these we make inferences about certain improvements that might be made to the scheduling policy. One thing we find specifically is that the so called “Attendance Premium” from the policy of having Carlton, Collingwood and Essendon guaranteed to play each other twice in the season is rather overblown. However, one thing that they’re not doing at the moment that they should be doing is making sure that the previous season’s grand finalists play each other twice in the season. And we also identify some very radical and very different alternatives to scheduling policies that could be used and a couple have the attendance to increase the demand for Australian Rules football even above current levels.

Well recently this has become very topical yet again mainly because of the expansion of the AFL from 16 to 18 teams necessitating a number of changes to the scheduling policy. Unfortunately for a lot of fans they see scheduling policies as somewhat of a black box. There doesn’t seem to be any way for them to know how the fixture was designed. And to that end it’s very important for this kind of league policy to be very transparent to fans and we believe that there are ways that this can be done better than currently is the case as well.