



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2024–25
Tuesday, 5 November 2024
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.00am to 11.03pm.

The committee released the following agencies from the program: Australian Classification Board and the Bundanon Trust.

The committee called the following departments and agencies:

- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)
- Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS)
- Australian Communications and Media Authority
- Australia Postal Corporation (Australia Post)
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner
- NBN Co Limited
- National Gallery of Australia (NGA)
- Creative Australia

DITRDCA – Corporate matters and general questions, Commenced 9.00am, Concluded at 9.27am

- Nondisclosure agreements in relation to gambling and wagering discussions;
- Potential conflicts of interest in the engagement of high level staff;
- Department staff signing the open letter criticising the government’s policy towards Israel; and
- Work from home arrangements for staff in the department.

DITRDCA – Outcome 5 Program 5.1, Commenced at 9.27pm, Suspended at 10.47am, Resumed at 11.03am

- Gambling advertising reform: Implementation of the recommendations of the Murphy Report and government actions;
- Meetings between departmental staff, ministers, stakeholders and the office of the Prime Minister in relation to gambling reform;
- Broader policy work of the department to address harm from gambling and gambling advertising;
- Submissions and comments that the department received in relation to departmental consultation on the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024;
- Current age assurance trials being undertaken by the department including consultation with consumers and companies;
- Timeline for the introduction of online age limiting legislation into Parliament;
- Progress on the rollout of the Mobile Black Spot Program following the pilot audit in May 2024 and engagement of Australia Post to assist in the collection of data;

- Progress on the streaming regulation legislation, following the 1 July 2024 target set by the government for introducing that legislation;
- Consequences of mis- and disinformation on the online environment if regulations are not reviewed;
- News Media Assistance Program, and legislation that would be required to facilitate the program and support for the associated grants program;
- Allegations of inappropriate behaviour (bullying) by departmental staff; and
- Anti-siphoning legislation, roundtables the department has held with the ACMA and submissions by relevant parties.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC): Commenced at 12.37pm, Resumed at 2.00pm, 4.15pm and Concluded at 4.42pm

- Independent Review into ABC coverage of the 2nd Commando Regiment operation of 2012;
- Historical weather records;
- Diversity on the board of ABC;
- Changes in funding for the ABC;
- Delivery of regional broadcasting and equipping of regional broadcasting teams;
- ABC reporting and editorial conduct surrounding the conflict in Gaza;
- Recruitment process and progress for new Managing Director of the ABC; and
- Rebranding of ABC News online and TV.

Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS) – commenced at 4.42pm, Concluded at 5.03pm

- SBS reporting and code of conduct surrounding reporting of the conflict in Gaza;
- Closed captions on the SBS On Demand app; and
- Advertising on the SBS On Demand app.

Australian Communications and Media Authority – Commenced at 5.03pm, Concluded at 6.35pm

- ACMA actions to strengthen safeguards for those undergoing domestic violence;
- ACMA's role regarding the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024 currently under consideration, and how that role may change;
- Draft update to the FreeTV code of practice, specifically surrounding alcohol advertising;
- Any actions ACMA has taken in relation to comments made on air on the Kyle & Jackie O radio show;
- Shutdown of the 3G network and issues with some 4G compatible phones being unable to be used; and
- Resourcing ACMA has committed to enforcing activities under the Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code, including alcohol advertising during sporting events.

Australia Postal Corporation (Australia Post)– Commenced at 7.31pm, Concluded at 8.22pm

- Increased utilisation of Bank@Post in rural Local Post Offices (LPOs) following bank closures in those areas;
- Safety issues for post officers, including dog attacks and wildlife;
- The new point-of-sale system being used by Australia Post, and issues being reported by LPOs with system failures;
- Remuneration of the SES and agency head;
- Telstra updates to terms of service preventing paying phone bills in LPOs; and
- Cash use increasing in the demographics that Australia Post regularly interacts with.

Office of the eSafety Commissioner – Commenced at 8.22pm, Concluded at 9.12pm

- Complaints made to the eSafety Commissioner regarding the deletion of Facebook accounts of individuals and records of those complaints;
- Relationship of the eSafety Commissioner with Nina Jenkavits, former Executive Director of the Disinformation Governance Board in the United States of America;
- Costs to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner from recent court cases;
- Updates to transparency powers, and the actions that social media/messaging platforms have taken in response;
- Education work the eSafety Commissioner is undertaking to help inform young people on the harms that can be associated with social media; and
- Reporting of the agency statistics as found in their annual report.

NBN Co Limited – Commenced at 9.25pm, Concluded at 9.50pm

- Timeline for the start of the new CEO of NBN, and the departure of the previous CEO;
- Cash flows of the NBN, and their decrease over time as the rollout has progressed; and
- Planning for potential replacements for the Sky Muster satellite services as they approach the end of their lifespan in the 2030s.

DITRDCA – Outcome 6, Program 6.1 – Commenced at 9.50pm, Concluded at 10.20pm

- Chronic staff shortages in the arts industry;
- Closures of large music festivals in recent years, and funding through the Revive Live program;
- Processes for the appointment of members to the Council of the National Gallery of Australia; and
- Social media posts of portfolio staff.

National Gallery of Australia (NGA) – Commenced at 10.20pm, Concluded at 10.29pm

- Resignation of Mr Abdul-Rahman Abdullah from the NGA Council; and
- Sharing the National Collection Program.

Creative Australia – Commenced at 10.29pm, Concluded at 11.03pm

- Prime Minister’s Literary Awards- process of selection of a shortlist and the winner of the award;
- Funding of applications from First Nations artists;
- Investments made by Creative Australia in the arts sector; and
- Social media posts of Creative Australia staff.