

**Standing Committee on Environment and Communications –
Radiocommunications Bills 2020
ANSWERS TO INQUIRY QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Special Broadcasting Service**

IQ48

Division: Content

Inquiry Name: Radiocommunications Bills 2020

Inquiry Date: 12 October 2020

Topic: Impact of not integrating the management of broadcasting spectrum on SBS and the ABC

Question Type: Hansard Ref: Page 15

Senator Green asked:

Senator GREEN: I want to go back a step. I was wondering whether the ABC and the SBS are impacted, if at all, by the decision not to progress the integration of the management of the broadcasting spectrum and what you think a future time frame for this part of the reform should be.

Mr Morton: I'm not that clear on the question, to be honest. My apologies.

Ms Eves: Can I confirm, Senator Green, that this was a proposal that was in the 2017 proposal for the review of the legislation that hasn't appeared in this version?

Senator GREEN: Correct.

Ms Eves: I'd have to take on notice that impact on us. We've been concentrating on this particular version of the bill.

Senator GREEN: Okay. Thanks. Would the ABC be in the same position?

Mr Bowman: Yes, we will take it on notice as well.

ABC answer:

The decision not to progress the integration of the management of the broadcasting spectrum has the potential to impact the ABC by introducing uncertainty into the future framework for spectrum management decisions. While the Bills are mostly limited in scope there are also changes with broad application, such as the changes to the Object of the Radiocommunications Act, which could change the matters the ACMA takes into account when considering existing provisions.

The ABC has no view on the best timing for making changes to the Radiocommunications Act, but submits that each change that occurs should be carefully considered to ensure they do not unintentionally adversely affect the ABC or other parties.

SBS answer

The timeframe for any integration of the management of the broadcasting spectrum into a new Act is a matter for Government.

Any integration of broadcasting spectrum management into the general spectrum regulatory framework would need to ensure the rights of SBS as a national broadcaster are preserved, with no adverse changes which would impact the quality or quantity of SBS services or on the ability of SBS to determine how the spectrum allocated to it is used.

SBS has submitted that the importance of national broadcasting should be expressly recognised in the objects clause of the *Radiocommunications Legislation Amendment (Reform and Modernisation) Bill 2020*, which is the subject of this inquiry. This new object would guide spectrum management under the new Act as it impacts national broadcasters, assisting decision makers to mitigate the impact of any unintended consequences that may arise from maintaining a separate spectrum framework for broadcasting.