

Questions on notice for ABC regarding fit-out of Parramatta and Ultimo Offices

From Public Hearing 1 November 2022

From p.3.

Mr PITT: My last question is on the specific detail. An eight-person table has been estimated at \$1,000, a 10- person table at \$5,000 and a 20-person table at \$20,000. So that would be \$34,000 for a table and 20 chairs. You don't want to stick a few eight-person tables together at \$1,000 each?

Mr Anderson: We will provide some information on notice, but I do have the head of property here, Neil Skill, who might be able to help further.

Mr Skill: The costings that are included in the WT estimate are derived by a quantity surveyor. However, they are also a right area for value management once we get into the project management space. So whilst there are estimates included in that submission from WT partnership, who are the qualified independent surveyors, we do think that there is some opportunity for us to realise some better value during the procurement and tender phase and the delivery phase.

Mr PITT: To give you a comparison, the per capita income for the people I represent is around \$34,000 a year, and the forecast here is that you'll spend that on a 20-person table and 20 chairs. So I think you can understand why I'm raising the issue.

Mr Anderson: Fair enough. As Neil said, we'll seek to do a lot better than the estimate that's provided in there, in that there are public funds.

Question 1

Can you clarify the estimated costings for tables and chairs?

Answer:

Our external Quantity Surveyor, WT Partnerships, has included the estimated amounts in line with general market costs of such commercial standard furniture. The estimates have been prepared as at Aug / Sept 2022 prices based on the Quantity Surveyor's knowledge of current market conditions and tender pricing on other projects of a similar nature in NSW that they have been involved in. The pricing included has been based on commercial use. Due to the heavy use of furniture in a commercial setting, products of this nature will typically require a more robust design and higher quality materials than typical consumer grade products to ensure their longevity. Additionally, factors such as freightage, hauling and placement are included in the cost estimate. A 20-person table has additional expense as a piece of furniture of that size typically is more complex to build and has additional freight and installation costs. Escalation has then also been factored into all cost estimates (including furniture) to take account of the programme allowed for finalising design / procurement of the builder and the time for the works to be complete. As the project enters the detailed design phase, there will be an opportunity to amend the specifications for furniture to reduce the potential cost. There will also be opportunity to make savings once the project moves into the procurement phase. The ABC will make cost effective choices through both those project phases.

WT Partnerships are engaged to review the fit-out tenders received from the building contractors to ensure the ABC is achieving value for money in line with Government projects of a similar scale and standard of quality.

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Senator REYNOLDS: Thank you very much, Chair. Mr Anderson, I understand you've got 4,200 staff across 58 sites across the nation. First of all, could you—perhaps on notice—provide a breakdown of the locations, the square metreage and how many staff you have and the vacancy? That's just to give the committee an idea of what your current staffing and space footprint is. Would that be okay?

Mr Anderson: Yes, I can do that. Just to clarify: there are a bit over 4,200 FTEs—not headcount—at the ABC and, in terms of the locations we're in, there are 58 regional locations and another eight state and territory capitals, so we're in 66 locations. Yes, I can give you a breakdown of where they are, the disbursement of staff across all of them, and I'll have a crack at what the relative space is of each one of those locations, yes.

Senator REYNOLDS: Thank you. I think that would be very helpful for context in this particular issue, but then also more broadly. Could you also put in there whether those sites are leased or owned?

Mr Anderson: Yes

Question 2

The Committee wants to understand current staffing and space footprint. Can you provide a breakdown of the locations, square meterage, staff numbers and vacancy?

Answer:

The breakdown of ABC sites as at 30 June 2022 by location, square meterage, staff numbers, vacant space and space currently being sub-let is noted in the table below. Note that the staff numbers are headcount by site, not FTE.

Location	Leased/ Owned	Building Area Net Lettable Square Meterage	Employee Headcount	Vacancy Square Meterage	Sub-let Square Meterage
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY					
Dickson	Owned	4,066	129	-	-
Parliament House	Leased	475	52	-	-
NEW SOUTH WALES					
Ultimo, Sydney	Owned	58,042	2,291	1,053*	712
Artarmon**	Owned	8,559	3	-	-
Batemans Bay	Leased	126	2	-	-
Bega	Leased	251	12	-	-

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Location	Leased/ Owned	Building Area Net Lettable Square Meterage	Employee Headcount	Vacancy Square Meterage	Sub-let Square Meterage
Broken Hill	Owned	273	7	-	-
Coffs Harbour	Leased	201	8	-	-
Dubbo	Owned	192	11	-	-
Gosford	Leased	90	5	-	-
Lismore	Owned	395	21	-	-
Muswellbrook	Leased	58	1	-	-
Newcastle	Owned	550	39	-	-
Orange	Owned	203	11	-	-
Parramatta	Leased	115	8	-	-
Port Macquarie	Owned	285	13	-	-
Tamworth	Leased	232	16	-	-
Wagga Wagga	Owned	340	16	-	-
Wollongong	Owned	650	27	-	-
QUEENSLAND					
South Bank, Brisbane	Owned	9,978	382	-	1,419
Brisbane Parliament House	Leased	19	-	-	-
Bundaberg	Leased	217	10	-	-
Cairns	Owned	327	21	-	-
Charleville	Leased	71	2	-	-
Gold Coast - Mermaid Beach	Owned	315	26	-	-
Hervey Bay	Leased	62	2		
Ipswich	Leased	82	2	-	-

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Location	Leased/ Owned	Building Area Net Lettable Square Meterage	Employee Headcount	Vacancy Square Meterage	Sub-let Square Meterage
Longreach	Owned	245	9	-	-
Mackay	Owned	554	10	-	-
Maroochydore	Owned	480	23	-	-
Mount Isa	Owned	420	7	-	-
Rockhampton	Owned	672	13	-	-
Toowoomba	Owned	385	19	-	-
Townsville	Owned	1,183	21	-	-
NORTHERN TERRITORY					
Darwin	Owned	2,783	108	-	-
Alice Springs	Owned	356	19	-	-
Katherine	Leased	24	2	-	-
VICTORIA					
Southbank, Melbourne	Owned	29,318	832	-	1,044
Ballarat	Owned	487	22	-	-
Bendigo	Owned	218	13	-	-
Geelong	Leased	17	3	-	-
Horsham	Leased	288	6	-	-
Mildura	Leased	260	9	-	-
Noble Park	Leased	929	-	-	-
Sale	Owned	400	15	-	-
Shepparton	Leased	238	5	-	-
Warragul	Leased	20	2	-	-
Wodonga	Owned	226	14	-	-

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Location	Leased/ Owned	Building Area Net Lettable Square Meterage	Employee Headcount	Vacancy Square Meterage	Sub-let Square Meterage
Warrnambool	Owned	202	7	-	-
Yarraville	Leased	203	-	-	-
SOUTH AUSTRALIA					
Collinswood, Adelaide	Owned	22,116	280	1,482	1,587
Mt Gambier	Owned	289	11	-	-
Port Lincoln	Leased	175	7	-	-
Port Pirie	Owned	405	11	-	-
Renmark	Leased	300	10	-	-
TASMANIA					
Hobart	Owned	6,496	126	12	2,040
Burnie	Leased	143	3	-	-
Launceston	Owned	3,943	22	-	-
WESTERN AUSTRALIA					
East Perth	Owned	10,571	189	628	702
Albany	Owned	330	17	-	-
Broome	Owned	499	11	-	-
Bunbury	Owned	366	17	-	-
Carnarvon	Leased	68	2	-	-
Esperance	Leased	155	3	-	-
Geraldton	Owned	290	12	-	-
Kalgoorlie	Leased	222	8	-	-
Karratha***	Owned	330	-	-	-
Karratha	Leased	290	8	-	-

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Location	Leased/ Owned	Building Area Net Lettable Square Meterage	Employee Headcount	Vacancy Square Meterage	Sub-let Square Meterage
Kununurra	Leased	92	2	-	-

* Vacant space in Ultimo relates to one vacated floor being prepared for sub-letting. This vacant space is part of the proposed space to be sub-let as identified in the submission to the Committee.

** Held for divestment (Under Contract)

*** Currently being divested (For Sale)

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Senator REYNOLDS: Currently, on all levels at Ultimo, in two buildings, how many workstations do you have, and how many are you proposing to go to under the new arrangements?

Mr Anderson: I'm not ready for that one. Can I provide that to you on notice? Of the 2,200 people, you could estimate that there are 2,000 workstations at the moment, as a broad brush stroke, but I will confirm that number.

Senator REYNOLDS: That would be great, thank you, because that's a key question underpinning, I would have thought, the rationale for moving 300 people out. With the refurbishment, would you actually have enough workstations, under these hybrid working arrangements, to keep the 300 in Ultimo?

Mr Anderson: I think it would be difficult, to be honest, because the way we are configured at the moment is in part administrative and in part production specific and production related. So my initial response to you is no. That gets tricky, as to the way we're going to use the space, after those 300 people relocate—those being the Sydney newsroom, as well as Radio Sydney, which need dedicated production facilities. I'll get back to you with a more sophisticated response, but it's a bit tricky—

Senator REYNOLDS: If you could, Mr Anderson, that would be very helpful, thank you, because one of the threshold questions that's important for the committee to look at is why it's necessary to move 300 people out when you're doing significant refurbishment and putting more workstations in.

Question 3:

- a. Can you explain how many workstations there are currently in Ultimo and how many there will be after the new fit-out?**
- b. Why is it necessary to move 300 people out of Ultimo when you are refurbishing the space?**

Answer:

- a. The most recent manual assessment identified 2,181 work points (including workstations and offices) in Ultimo across the entire building floorplate. After the refurbishment has been completed, there will be 1,751 work points across the consolidated floorplate of Ultimo for ABC use. This figure includes the 1,200 identified in the submission, which will be in the areas being refurbished. The remaining 551 work points are in areas within the consolidated floorplate that are out of scope of the project as they do not require refurbishment. This number of work points will promote more efficient space utilisation and reflects the expected actual on-site usage by ABC staff at any given time having adopted Activity Based Working.
- b. Part of the ABC's delivery of the Five-Year plan includes the objective of 75% content makers based outside of Ultimo and reflecting contemporary Australia. The decision to establish a new bureau in Parramatta and relocate up to 300 ABC staff from Ultimo to Parramatta, will boost the ABC's presence and effectiveness in Greater Western Sydney. With 2.6 million people, Greater Western Sydney is Australia's fastest growing region. The ABC has always

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had a Western Sydney presence, but the growth of the region and its increasing significance means there is a compelling case to make this even bigger.

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Senator REYNOLDS: I have one final question. Mr Anderson, could you confirm the amounts—is it about 75 per cent of the content being moved out of Ultimo? Could you confirm, perhaps on notice, what percentage Parramatta will represent with this move of that 75 per cent out of Ultimo?

Mr Anderson: Yes, certainly.

Senator REYNOLDS: Thank you very much

Question 4:

Can you confirm what percentage of Parramatta will represent with the move of 75 per cent out of Ultimo?

Answer:

The move of content teams from Ultimo to Parramatta will move the ABC's proportion of content makers around the country out of Ultimo by a further 8%, bringing the total proportion of content makers outside of Ultimo up to approximately 73% (based on ABC employee data as at 30 June 2022).

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Senator REYNOLDS: That's right. Could you also take on notice the breakdown of what the 100 per cent comprises in total for the ABC and where that is distributed around the country.

Mr Anderson: Yes, I've got that one as well. I will definitely get back to you on that

[...]

Senator REYNOLDS: You're right. In the submission it's about 75 per cent of content makers working outside of Ultimo by 2025. That's the move, as I understand the submission, from Ultimo to Parramatta, which is the subject at the moment, but then what is the remainder of the content production nationally? This is to put it in context. How much of the national content will be going to Parramatta in this refurb?

Mr Anderson: I've got it.

Question 5:

- a. What is the breakdown of where ABC staff are distributed around the country?**
- b. How many staff do you have at the 58 sites across the nation?**
- c. How much of the national content production will be based in Parramatta as a result of this refurbishment?**

Answer:

- (a) Please refer to the table in response to Question 2 for a breakdown of staff by state/territory and individual location.
- (b) Please refer to the table in response to Question 2 for a breakdown of staff by each regional location.
- (c) The driving purpose of the ABC's Parramatta move is to directly connect journalism and content teams to the community in Western Sydney. As such, the largest teams planning to relocate to Parramatta are ABC Local Radio Sydney, who intend to produce and broadcast most of their weekday daytime schedule from the new production centre, and much of ABC News's Sydney newsroom, including newsgathering teams and the production of local radio and digital news and the nightly 7pm television News for NSW.

At a national level, it is envisaged the ABC News Channel will broadcast a portion of its daytime programming from Parramatta. Radio National intends to have a sequence of its production and broadcasting teams locating to Parramatta around specific events and around a calendar of content initiatives targeted at community collaboration and public interaction. ABC News, ABC Local Radio Sydney and Radio National production will take place in public-facing studios on the promenade in Parramatta Square, directly accessible to the community and at times, utilising Parramatta Square itself for special broadcasts and events.