

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2015

Communications Portfolio

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 31

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: 24/02/2015 Page 73

Topic: *Antiques Roadshow vs Collectors*

Senator Xenophon asked:

Senator XENOPHON: Those longer bulletins on the weekends run an extra 10 minutes. On those can you please provide the number of reports and the minutes of airtime filed to news bulletins in each capital city by former current affairs reporters. In other words, to what extent has it filled that gap left by the local editions of 7.30? ABC management closed down Tasmanian television production in 2012, and perhaps it is a harbinger of what could occur in South Australia. It ended the popular antiques program, *The Collectors*. I note that the ABC now broadcasts every day a 60-minute program, called *Antiques Roadshow*, brought in from the UK. It is the case that the ABC axed a Tasmanian based program and now screens five hours of antique related content every week from the UK. How much does *Antiques Roadshow* cost the ABC? Are you able to tell us that? And which program, *Collectors* or *Antiques Roadshow*, does the ABC consider better serves the ABC charter to reflect the diversity of Australian society?

Mr Scott: We will give you that detail. I can tell you that acquisitions like *Antiques Roadshow*, which has run for about 20 years and has been different networks here, cost a fraction of the cost of creating a program like *Collectors*, and that is the reality. Acquisitions are cheaper than creating content, and with finite budgets there is always a trade-off that is concerned.

Answer:

In response to the budget announcements in November 2014, the ABC will provide more coverage of local events and issues as they unfold, across all platforms.

The ABC has appointed State Coverage Producers in all capital city newsrooms, assessed the available resources, and mapped a significant but achievable workload for daily, weekly and monthly production. Under this model, State and Territory Coverage Producer will be expected to produce a minimum of one news special, two original news stories, two features and one news-making interview per month.

In total, the eight State and Territory Coverage Producers and the production resources will produce **80** news specials and almost **500** additional stories or interviews per year.

The schedule for all of the State and Territory Coverage Producers is:

- 1 x 2-3 min original local story with associated digital and/or radio **each fortnight**, for inclusion in 7pm
- 1 x 6-8 min original local picture-rich and/or narrative-driven feature story with associated digital and/or radio **each fortnight**, for inclusion in weekly State to State replacement program (working title is Australia Wide) which will be shown on ABC TV and News 24
- 1 x 6-8 min set piece interview with local politicians/identities **each month**, for inclusion on ABC News Sunday

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These add up to:

- 24 in-depth exclusive local television stories a year with associated digital and radio stories (some of these might be part of a series on a particular issue run in two or three parts)
- 24 original local feature stories a year with associated digital and radio stories
- 12 set-piece studio interviews a year with local politicians or identities

The program *The Collectors* concluded in 2011 after seven series, with an average of 21, 30 minute episodes per series of the program produced by the ABC.

In making production decisions, the ABC must balance all its charter obligations, and ensure that the Corporation functions efficiently with the maximum benefit to the people of Australia. The cost to internally produce a program like *The Collectors* is on average \$253,000 per hour. In comparison, the ABC can acquire a program like *Antiques Roadshow* for approximately \$10,000 per hour, or the equivalent of 4 per cent of the total internal production costs.