

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016
Communications Portfolio
Australian Communications and Media Authority

Question No: 14

Australian Communications and Media Authority

Hansard Ref: Page 19, 9/02/2016

Topic: Local Content – Ownership rules

Senator McKenzie, Bridget asked:

Senator McKENZIE: Okay. Thank you.

This is also topical at the moment, which is why we are here. In that same report, when speaking about a loosening of the regulation around media ownership laws—and that is only one aspect of media reform, obviously—you noted that approaches would have 'both positive and negative effects on the delivery of local content. Allowing the market to decide, for example, would deliver flexibility for licensees but would risk reducing local content.' I would like to know if, three years down the track that is still the view of ACMA.

Ms McNeill: I would have to go back to the passage in the report to—

Senator McKENZIE: I have just read a direct quote.

Ms McNeill: to test its context. To the extent that changes in ownership rules would see a reduction in stand-alone—

Senator McKENZIE: I do not necessarily think that that holds.

Ms McNeill: Is that the angle that you are pursuing?

Senator McKENZIE: No, what I am asking is: ACMA itself, when it looked into the issue of local content, said we have an anachronistic system of ownership rules which provides some level of comfort for local content. If that is still in modern times the way we need to be regulating this thing—I would argue it is not, but it is filling a role. So, my question is: when you say negative effects on the delivery of local content and we remove those, I want to know what those negative effects are. ACMA also says 'risk of reducing local content'—is that still the view of ACMA?

Ms McNeill: I will take that on notice.

Answer:

The ACMA's *Regional commercial television local content investigation – December 2013* (the Report) did not canvas the loosening of the regulation around media ownership laws or the potential effects of any loosening of such regulation on the delivery of local content.

The references to removing or relaxing regulation in the final chapter of the Report, 'Alternative approaches to underpinning the provision of local content to regional Australia', were references only to removing or relaxing local content regulation.

Otherwise, the ACMA has nothing to add to the findings of the Report.