

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: 17

Australian Communications and Media Authority

Hansard Ref: Pages 22-23, 9/02/2016

Topic: The ACMA report 2013

Senator Smith, Dean asked:

Senator SMITH: The ACMA report of 2013 which is titled *Regional commercial television local content investigation*, at page 19 talks about levels of satisfaction with local content arrangements.

...

Senator SMITH: Further on in the document it talks about 'Findings of fact', and there is a number that I just want you to comment on. Time might be against us, but there are four that I would particularly like you to comment on. The first is 'finding of fact' No. 7:

Funding pressures affecting regional broadcasters are likely to continue

Advertising revenue projections indicate that advertising revenue for commercial television overall will continue to decrease.

Is that still a finding or a statement of fact?

Mr Chapman: We will take it on notice to the extent that we will double-check it, but my impression, my understanding, is that that continues to be the circumstance, yes.

[...]

Senator SMITH: And my final point goes to fact No. 4:

Television is the source most used by regional Australians for news—
not surprising—

and is the preferred source for local news—

not surprising—

However, with some exceptions, the audience for commercial television local news bulletins is declining.

Is that still a true statement, and, if it is, to what extent are those audiences declining, and why?

Ms McNeill: I am not aware that the ACMA has updated its research into audience numbers, but I can check and see whether we have access to ratings figures that would assist in answering the question.

Answer:

The 'finding of fact' No. 7 was a projection of advertising revenue based on the information available to the ACMA at the time. Specifically, an analysis of financial returns submitted by broadcasters over the previous five years and on a report prepared for the ACMA by PricewaterhouseCoopers.

With respect to the 'finding of fact' No. 4, the ACMA has conducted an analysis of free-to-air television viewing over the period from 2010-11 to 2014-15 using OzTAM and Regional TAM figures. The analysis compared regional and metropolitan TV audiences and was initially reported in the ACMA's 2015 Communications Report, which is available on the ACMA's website:

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<http://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/Library/Corporate-library/Corporate-publications/communications-report-2014-15>

The analysis showed a gradual decline in free-to-air television viewing over the last five years, in both metropolitan and regional markets.

84 per cent of Australian adults in combined regional markets watched at least five minutes consecutively of free-to-air television in an average week in 2014-15 compared to 87 per cent in 2010-11. A similar trend was observed in metropolitan markets.

The ACMA analysis did not cover revenue, or the breakdown of audiences for local news bulletins.