

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016**

**Communications Portfolio**

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Question No: 40**

**Australia Broadcasting Corporation**

**Hansard Ref: Page 63, 9/02/2016**

**Topic: Staff employed in local radio – outside capital cities**

**Senator McKenzie, Bridget asked:**

**Senator McKENZIE:** Could the ABC please provide me on notice, unless you have the figures here,—and I would love to have the figures—over the last decade the trend of staff employed in local radio outside of capital cities, the proportion of your overall budget spent on local radio service provision outside of capital cities and the minutes of local content aired by local radio outside of capital cities? I asked this question on notice and it was just under three per cent of your total operating budget that was set aside for the provision of local radio services outside of capital cities, which I would argue is not enough, so I would to, as you say, flesh that out over time.

**Mr Scott:** You are excluding transmission, clearly, in that?

**Senator McKENZIE:** Yes.

**Mr Scott:** You do not think transmission is a cost of a rural service?

**Senator McKENZIE:** I base my questions on the answer to the question on notice, so if I could get the trend over the last 10 years, that would be fabulous, because it is very hard to find that data publicly.

**Answer:**

ABC Regional began operations on 1 July 2015. Prior to that time, regional radio services outside of capital cities were run by the Radio Division. The number of Radio Division full time equivalents (FTE), based outside of capital cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Darwin and Canberra) has increased by approximately 3% per year, on average, over the previous 10 years. Following the commencement of ABC Regional in July 2015, there are now more than 400 staff in the Regional Division, which includes not only Local Radio staff but also regionally based news reporters, Open Producers, Cross Media Reporters and staff who produce content for programs such as Saturday Night Country, Australia All Over, Landline and Back Roads.

ABC Regional's budget for 2015-16 is \$51.6 million. Taking into consideration funding for content, transmission and other infrastructure costs, the ABC investment in services to regional audiences is in excess of \$385 million.

In relation to local radio specifically, the percentage of the overall Corporation's budget (excluding transmission) spent on local radio outside the capital cities has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years.

ABC Regional will broadcast 58,335 minutes of unduplicated regionally based radio broadcast content per week in 2016, 0.6% less than in 2006, but as advised in answer to Question 42, a 13 per cent increase over the period since 1996. Over the same period there has been a substantial increase in ABC online and mobile content services in regional areas.