

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2014
Communications Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 5

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Pages 59-60 (28/5/2014)

Topic: Enhanced news services

Senator Ruston asked:

Senator RUSTON: So in terms of that efficiency study, I am interested that there has been additional money allocated—\$79.4 million—in 2013 for enhanced news services and enhanced current affairs programming. Can you let us know what has happened to that money? Has it all been allocated?

Mr Scott: Yes, it has been. We have established new units. We have employed more reporters. We have put more facilities into the regions. We have invested in technology. We have expanded our current affairs programs. I am able to provide you with more detail on that on notice if you would like.

Senator RUSTON: That would be great. I would be interested in the number of staff and what the ongoing cost of those salaries are now and over the next five years.

Mr Scott: Sure.

Answer:

In early 2013, the ABC was allocated \$10 million in additional funding for news services. These included:

- New news bureaus in Ipswich, Geelong and Parramatta;
- Investment in regional areas, including the recruitment of video journalists in Bunbury, Renmark and Newcastle, and the installation of television reporting capacity in regional areas around the country;
- New reporters; and
- ABC Fact Check.

In the May 2013 Federal Budget, the ABC received \$57.6 million as part of its allocation for additional news services and \$1.8m for related capital; a total of \$59.4 million over the triennium.

These additional funds have been put towards a range of initiatives, including:

- Providing online ABC audiences with State Editions - integrated local, national and international news and information sites;
- The Interactive Digital Storytelling Unit, creating digital-first content that tells original, impactful and relevant news stories using innovative tools and techniques;
- Extended current affairs programming, including additional episodes of *Four Corners*, *Australian Story* and *Foreign Correspondent*;

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- Additional NewsRadio programming, including the creation of a weekday national evening shift to increase the output of Australian news;
- documentary series exploring issues such as Australian politics; and
- Australia's economic boom.

The funding and the staffing of these initiatives (Newsgathering 2 and Newsgathering 3) are in the tables below:

New news services

Early 2013 (Newsgathering 2)

	Annual cost (\$m)	Ongoing FTE Staff
Total Salaries & FTEs	7.0	64

New news services Budget 2014 (Newsgathering 3)

	Annual Cost (\$m)	FTEs
Total Salaries & FTE's	4.2	34