

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Budget Estimates May 2017**

**Communications Portfolio**

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Question No: 109**

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Hansard Ref: Page 117-118, 04/05/2017**

**Topic: Editorial Policies**

**Senator Hanson, Pauline asked:**

**Senator HANSON:** I have to say that public opinion of the ABC is not really good. A lot of people are saying you are very biased in your reporting. People feel that you do not have a balanced view in the programs that you put across, especially some of the shows. It is being talked about constantly on talkback radio, and a lot of people are asking something that I also say: how do you define a program that you put across as having a balanced view about it, whether it be from the right or from the left of politics?

**Ms Guthrie:** Let me just start, and Mr Sunderland can go into details around our editorial policies. Let me start by reiterating that, in the independent surveys that we conduct regularly of the Australian population, more than 80 per cent of the population believe that the ABC provides good value to Australia, and 80 per cent of the population also trust our news coverage. So I fundamentally agree with your opening statement that the majority of Australians believe that we are biased. That is not borne out by any of the either independent or other objective surveys that are conducted. But Mr Sunderland go through our editorial policies in more detail.

**Mr Sunderland:** I do not propose to take up the committee's time by going through all of our editorial policies, but there are a couple of things—

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Sunderland!

**Mr Sunderland:** I might be able to, usefully, say. First of all, I am more than happy to take on notice and provide to you, Senator, a fair amount of detail on where you can find—they are very easy to access—our editorial policies, our guidance, a whole wealth of information about how we approach these issues, and then, if there are more specific questions you have, I can take them on notice. But there are a couple of points I need to make at the outset in relation to your opening comments. We do not, and I am sure you would not expect us to—nobody would—divide the world up into left wing and right wing and give them 50 per cent of our time. Nobody would expect us to. That is not the way to do good programming and good journalism. We have a set of policies which inform us so that on each and every issue we are covering the issues accurately, with a balance that follows the weight of evidence and with an appropriate diversity of perspectives and with due impartiality over time. That is how we aim to approach it. I well understand that everyone will have their own opinions on how well we succeed at that, but those are the standards we hold ourselves to.

**Answer:**

The ABC has a set of editorial policies which contain principles and standards, including standards of accuracy, independence and impartiality in the provision and broadcast of news and information. In addition, the ABC has also produced a range of guidance notes which assist staff in meeting those editorial standards. This material is publicly available, and can be found at <https://edpols.abc.net.au/>

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Budget Estimates May 2017**

**Communications Portfolio**

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

The ABC's principles, standards and guidelines in regard to impartiality refer to the recognised standards of objective journalism, which are:

- a balance that follows the weight of evidence;
- fair treatment;
- open-mindedness; and
- opportunities over time for principal relevant perspectives on matters of contention to be expressed.