

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: 112

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Page 127, 24/05/2017

Topic: Keysar Trad story - Coverage

Senator Abetz, Eric asked:

Senator ABETZ: At estimates last time, ABC took on notice a question, which is question No. 100, and you provided a written answer to that. This was the non-reporting of the Keysar Trad story about the acceptability of domestic violence. The very last paragraph of the answer tells us: Nonetheless, ABC News management acknowledge that the story should have been given coverage across a greater number of ABC News outlets.

I am wondering who is 'ABC news management' in that answer. Is it a number of individuals who came to that conclusion, and how did they come to that conclusion? Was it formally minuted anywhere?

Mr Sunderland: You are testing my memory on the precise details of that.

Senator ABETZ: If you could take that on notice, please.

Mr Sunderland: I can certainly describe the process more completely. What I can tell you tonight is that I know there were more than one manager involved in those discussions. I will try to flesh that out.

Senator ABETZ: If you could provide that in detail, please, I would be much obliged. And then we are told ... the story should have been given coverage across a greater number of ABC News outlets.

I was wondering possibly, given time, if you could take on notice which ABC news outlets you believe should have also carried this story. And then:

The program teams have subsequently discussed this matter as part of regular editorial meetings.

I always get very satisfied when I am told that people have discussed an issue. I am really more interested in what was actually decided and what will change as a result of the discussion. If you could take that on notice, please.

Mr Sunderland: Certainly.

Answer:

ABC News management undertakes regular and ongoing reviews of its editorial content and coverage.

On this occasion the matter of the level of coverage given to Keysar Trad's comments by ABC News was discussed by Editorial Director Alan Sunderland, the Director of News Gaven Morris, the Executive Producer of Media Watch Tim Latham, and the Head of Network Coverage for News, Craig McMurtrie. There were also wider discussions involving news staff, including reporters and producers who had filed some of the coverage run across radio and online platforms.

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Although the story was run nationally across the ABC News online platform and on NewsRadio, the ABC determined that the story deserved broader coverage. This did not result in the production of a list of programs that should have run the story, but an acknowledgement that it should have been more prominent across ABC radio and television news bulletins.