

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2014
Communications Portfolio
Special Broadcasting Service

Question No: 465

Program No. Special Broadcasting Service

Hansard Ref: Hansard Page 94, 20 November 14

Topic: Funding

Senator Dastyari asked:

Senator DASTYARI: I am asking about what the minister said yesterday. There are two separate matters here. One is a reduction of \$53 million in budgets over five years that the government will be providing to SBS. The other is the passage of this legislation. The consequence of it would be that failure to pass the legislation would mean that the process you are now going through would have to then find an extra \$20 million to \$30 million.

Senator Fifield: My understanding is that they are two separate decisions in parallel. There is the decision in relation to the funding reduction and there is the decision in relation to advertising. We are going to seek to pursue both of those in tandem.

Mr Khalil: From our perspective, we were pleased that the minister split the figures in his speech yesterday. He was very clear about saying that the advertising increase was predicated on passing in the Senate.

Senator DASTYARI: Explain that again, sorry.

Mr Khalil: In his speech, the minister did split the figures. He talked about having to pass these changes in the act.

Senator DASTYARI: If the act is not changed, then you will still have a \$53 million cut regardless of that advice?

Mr Khalil: It is a matter for the government. We would be very concerned, because suddenly we have to find another \$20 to \$30 million.

Senator DASTYARI: If you could take that on notice. That is the live question. The live question, just to be very clear, is whether or not the \$53 million cut or reduction is predicated on SBS also being able to have the increase in revenue or whether or not the two are going to be separate, which would necessitate the decision about the SBS finding these savings obviously being a much bigger thing. That would create concern for people like myself, who we will debate this in the chamber. We would feel like we are put in an unenviable position where we are being forced to make a decision about the future of programming in our broadcaster we care deeply about. But that is a matter for the chamber.

Answer

Should the legislation not pass, SBS would have to find savings in other areas, including, content, to meet the value of the cut unless the government was to reconsider the savings in light of the legislation failing to pass.