

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

Question No: 555

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation

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Topic: Programming

Senator Ruston asked:

CHAIR: and I would like the answer to it as well—in appendix G there are a whole series of things that summarise the itemisation of the things that the Lewis review has come up with; I would be interested, on notice, if you could come back and tell us, for each one of those, what you think are the ones that are going to have programming and content impact.

Mr Scott: Sure. We will look at that on notice.

Answer:

With reference to Appendix G in the ABC and SBS efficiency study, the ABC believes that the following items have the potential to have a content impact if implemented.

ABC Innovation: The efficiency study suggests that that savings could be made from the cessation of the Digital Education initiative – ABC Splash and the abolition of the Strategic Development team. This team has been responsible for developing content such as the The Brief and the Play School App where additional funding was not provided.

Digital audio broadcasting services: The item identifies transmission savings from the cessation of DAB+ broadcasting in mainland capital cities. DAB+ broadcasting allows capital-city audiences to receive several services that are not available on analogue radio such as Double J, triple j Unearthed and the ABC Extra pop-up stations. It should be noted that these digital stations are also available online and through the ABC Radio app. DAB+ also provides enhanced quality for existing analogue services. Industry reports state that three million people are now listening each week to DAB+ digital radio in the five metropolitan capitals.

Retransmission on Foxtel: This item posits savings based on the ABC and SBS ending their Foxtel retransmission contracts with Optus. In the event that ABC services were not received by some other arrangement, for example through VAST or terrestrially, this proposal could leave households that rely on satellite subscription services unable to receive ABC television.

Production Resources: This item suggests that the ABC could achieve savings of up to 45 FTEs from the ‘implementation of the vertical integration project or by benchmarking against other networks’. The ABC has investigated this proposal and does not believe that savings of this magnitude are possible without effecting content.

Outsourcing outside broadcast vans: The cost of OB facilities is a significant factor in some ABC content decisions particularly the case in relation to sports coverage. In some cases, the cost of acquiring facilities to broadcast an event that is likely to attract small audiences will be prohibitive.