

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings 2015
Communications Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 153

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Written, 7/12/2015

Topic: Media Watch - statement

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ: I was wondering, Mr Scott or anybody from the ABC, whether you can confirm the correctness of ABC's *Media Watch* statement of 17 August 2015: Amazingly, the ABC has not interviewed Sophie York from the Marriage Alliance even once— despite 16 interviews with Forster and Croome— both of whom are well-known for advocating a change in the definition of 'marriage'.

Mr Scott: I recall the *Media Watch* episode, which was critical of the ABC's coverage, but I do not have a subsequent tally from August, I am afraid. I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The *Media Watch* story was in response to issues in the marriage debate that arose in early August, including the launch of the Marriage Alliance campaign on 2 August, the decision by some commercial TV broadcasters to not run Marriage Alliance advertisements and the newspaper print campaign coordinated by the Marriage Alliance Forum on 10 August.

During this period News coverage was generated by the launch of the Australian Marriage Alliance on 2 August and the push by Warren Entsch MP for a conscience vote in the Liberal partyroom and the plebiscite proposal made by the Prime Minister on 11 August.

The launch of the Australian Marriage Alliance was covered by News principally by a packaged story that featured comments by Mr Hinton-Teoh. The ABC considers that this was an appropriate level of coverage at the time. The proposals for a conscience vote and plebiscite were extensively covered by both news and current affairs programs. The coverage included a broad diversity of perspectives on the issues without favouring any one perspective. News is satisfied that its coverage was balanced and impartial.

The ABC did not specifically interviewed Ms York on these issues, however ABC News covered the Marriage Alliance campaign launch in its 7pm ABC TV bulletin on 2 August and the story included comments from Australian Marriage Alliance deputy national director, Ivan Hinton-Teoh.

ABC Radio also conducted interviews with Dr David van Gend, president of the Australian Marriage Forum, on 10 and 12 August, and with Peter Kentley, Executive Director of Christian Federation, on 10 August in regard to marriage debate issues.