

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2016

Communications Portfolio

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 107

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Page 71 – 72, 18/10/2016

Topic: ABC – Comment from Nauru Government

Senator Hume, Jane asked:

Mr Sunderland: I am sorry, can I ask who said that?

Senator HUME: Anna Henderson from the ABC tweeted at 11.20 this morning in response to a statement by the Nauru government, 'The interviews with the children were conducted remotely by *Four Corners*, and their stories were subjected to the program's usual rigorous fact-checking processes.' I am after an answer on what those rigorous fact-checking processes are.

Mr Sunderland: You would appreciate that they vary very much depending on the story and the circumstances. I am not in a position to describe precisely what happened with this particular story, but what I can tell you is that whenever any interviews are done on any subject matter then there is a range of things that you would do, depending on the circumstances, to satisfy yourselves that the person is who they say they are and that where you are able to substantiate facts and other information that supports it, that that happens, and of course, at all times, that appropriate attribution is given so that you know who is making these claims, who they say they are and to the extent that we can support them we do. Now, that will vary greatly depending on the information available to us, our ability to check information out direct hand, or to look at substantiating situations on what we are aware of and what is on the public record, so there is a range of things that happen.

Senator HUME: So did the ABC approach the government of Nauru for comment?

Mr Sunderland: I do not believe so but I would have to take that on notice to be absolutely sure. Obviously on many occasions in the past on this issue we have approached the Nauru government for information on a range of issues. On this particular story I do not believe we did. I believe that is because we felt the issues the story raised were particularly relevant to the Australian government, whom, of course, we did approach.

Answer:

The program did not approach the government of Nauru. The primary focus of the story was the Australian Government's policy on border protection and so it was an appropriate course of action to approach Australian authorities to respond to the substantive issues raised.