

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 28

Program No: ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 80

Topic: Q&A audiences

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—Can I move on to the helpful answer I was given to question No. 151, which is, once again, the break-up of Q&A audiences. Can I ask you to give me an update from episode 41 onwards to date. Can you take that on notice.

Mr Scott—I have material here, Senator.

Senator ABETZ—Take it on notice, because time is very short. But could you confirm that, in relation to episodes 15 through to episode 40, not one of the audiences, even by accident, was a coalition majority audience?

Answer:

EPISODE 1/ 2011 – FEBRUARY 7

VOTING INTENTION	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
COALITION	32
ALP	40
GREENS	17
OTHER	1
NOT SPECIFIED	9

EPISODE 2/ 2011 – FEBRUARY 14

VOTING INTENTION	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
COALITION	32
ALP	40
GREENS	18
OTHER	4
NOT SPECIFIED	6

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

EPISODE 3/2011 – BRISBANE FEBRUARY 21

VOTING INTENTION	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
COALITION	39
ALP	40
GREENS	16
OTHER	1
NOT SPECIFIED	4

Audience figures in 2011 are based on confirmed RSVPs by members of the participating Q&A audience. They do not include the new group of spectators sitting behind the set who cannot ask questions, make comments or participate in the discussion.

No political party has ever enjoyed a majority in the Q&A audience. In 2010, the Coalition enjoyed the largest number of audience members in 23 of the 40 weeks that the program went to air.

Q&A continues to distinguish between The Greens, the ALP and the Liberal National Party Coalition. While the Greens and the ALP have an agreement on policy and political issues, they are separate political entities. The ABC had adopted the same approach as other media organisations and independent polling companies.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 29

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Q&A

Senator Abetz asked:

Are there any plans for Q&A to come to Tasmania?

Answer:

Yes. Q&A will be broadcast from Tasmania in 2011. The date for this broadcast is not yet finalised.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 30

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 81

Topic: Program *Laid*

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—Can I move on to the program *Laid*. I understand that you are a fan of *Laid*.

Mr Scott—I have seen an episode.

Senator ABETZ—But I understand that you are a fan of it.

Mr Scott—I thought it was quite funny. Have you seen an episode, Senator? I am happy to send you a tape if you have not seen it and you want to comment on it.

Senator ABETZ—Please, Chair – time is very short.

Senator Conroy—I thought Mr Scott was being very helpful.

Senator ABETZ—Mr Scott, I understand you are a fan of *Laid*. You in fact tweeted on the night of the first episode, did you not?

Senator Conroy—Are you stalking Mr Scott?

Senator ABETZ—Given the distasteful Facebook page of *Laid*, which includes references to necrophilia and smothering your ex with a pillow – and they are available on Facebook and YouTube – can you explain the reason for the decision not to place an age access restriction on the content?

Mr Scott—On the Facebook page?

Senator ABETZ—Yes.

Mr Scott—I have not seen the Facebook page. My reference was to the first episode of the program that went to air, which I thought was, appropriately, adult content.

Senator ABETZ—That is right. I am asking about the Facebook page.

Mr Scott—I will have to take that on notice.

Senator ABETZ—Because, as I understand it—though I have never claimed to be a tech-head—with three clicks you could ensure with a Facebook page that, if they are registered correctly, anybody under a certain age would be denied access.

Mr Scott—Okay. Let me take that on notice.

Answer

The ABC's Use of Social Media Policy encourages the use of social media to engage existing and new audiences with ABC content and to seek and share user-generated content. Facebook was selected as an appropriate medium to publicise the program and to encourage user-generated content and viewer feedback from what is a clearly-targeted audience.

Facebook registration is intended to be available only to persons over the age of 13. However, it is widely acknowledged that these mechanisms are not, in themselves, effective. Facebook has no process for verifying age or identity at registration and, in any case, much of the content is available for viewing without registration.

As such, the producers of *Laid* chose to apply a moderation plan tailored to the audience and content and in accordance with ABC's editorial policies.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 31

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Program *Laid*

Senator Abetz asked:

1. What was the total cost of bringing *Laid* to the ABC (including production, staff costs, marketing etc)?
2. Is this series coming out on DVD? If so, what is the cost of production of the upcoming DVD and will this be covered by the ABC?
3. What is the estimated size of the ABC1 audience for the timeslot in which *Laid* was broadcast?
4. To date, how many times have the episodes been watched on iView or downloaded in their entirety?
5. Who was responsible for posting the official updates on the ABC TV Laid Facebook page?
6. Can you explain the decision not to place age restrictions on the content containing adult themes, coarse language and sexual references on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and iView?

Answer:

1. Total Production budget for series 1 of *Laid* was \$2,230,000. The ABC provides editorial, management and marketing services to projects such as *Laid*, but these costs are not attributed per program, rather are managed across the entire produced and acquired slates.
2. The series is being released on DVD in early April 2011. The production costs of making the physical DVDs is borne by ABC Commercial's sub-distributor under their commercial arrangement with them.

ABC Commercial provided a distribution advance of \$35,000, which forms part of the original production budget of the series noted above.

3. The average figure in the 9.30pm Wednesday timeslot for 2010 was 650,000 (Source: OZ Tam Consolidated Data).
4. The first three episodes of *Laid* in February were viewed 50,160 times in total. Downloads of the first three episodes in February totalled 3,990.
5. The producers of the series wrote *Laid*'s official Facebook updates. These Facebook updates were approved by the ABC's Head of Comedy.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

6. See ABC response to question on notice 30. Further, the ABC notes that YouTube does not have age restrictions or classification requirements and that episodes of the series available on ABC iView display appropriate classification and viewer advice before each episode.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 32

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 81-82

Topic: References to Egyptian/Israeli blockades

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—Despite repeated ABC denials about anti-Israel bias, I draw your attention to yet another of many examples—but we will try to limit it because of time restraints—the story on 24 January 2011 about the flotilla raid which was on the *AM* program. There are many aspects to the story but I will just deal with two of them. The ABC broadcast mentions both the misery of the Gaza Strip and the Israeli blockade, and by implication attributes the former to the latter. No mention whatsoever is made of the Egyptian blockage. I then did a search of the ABC websites et cetera and could locate only one solitary instance where the ABC refers to an Egyptian blockade of Gaza; by comparison, there are literally hundreds in relation to Israel's Gaza blockade. I am sure that that is not indicative of bias and you will have all the rationale that you have previously provided, but I point that out to you as an example—

Mr Scott—There have been numbers of other reports though, Senator, where references have been made to an Egyptian blockade.

Senator ABETZ—Could you please provide them on notice—an example of all the references to the Egyptian blockade and all the references to the Israeli blockade. The same story on 24 January referred to the flotilla as aid ships and we were told that this was bringing humanitarian aid to Gaza. The organisers of the flotilla have admitted that the purpose of the flotilla was in fact to break the blockade, and Israel had agreed to deliver any humanitarian aid that was on board the ships to the people. They were enforcing the blockade and were not seeking to deny the humanitarian aid getting through. So why do we describe the flotilla as aid ships bringing humanitarian aid to Gaza when the actual organisers said that this was about trying to break the blockade?

Mr Scott—I do not have a copy of the transcript of that program, nor do I recall hearing it. I simply say that I accept that you may have criticisms of it. There has been criticism of our coverage of that from both sides. We have had some very strong criticism of a television documentary put to air in, I think, the *Four Corners* slot which I think is currently being investigated by the Independent Complaints Review Panel or by ACMA—I am not quite sure which—that says we were very pro-Israel in our coverage of that. There has been criticism on both sides and I accept your concerns on that.

Answer:

In relation to the *AM* item which aired on 24 January 2011, this story was about the result of an Israeli inquiry into the raid on the flotilla – that was its news angle, the reason it was filed.

It included principal relevant views, including the Israeli Government and Israeli human rights activists. It also reported new claims from the Egyptian Government which lent support to Israel's views about the kind of activities typically undertaken by militants in Gaza, which underpinned the need for a blockade.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

In providing background on the reasons put forward for the raid on the flotilla, it was relevant to include Israel's claim that it was justified in the interests of enforcing the Israeli blockade of Gaza. That is why the Israeli blockade was mentioned in this particular report – it was directly relevant to the reasons identified by Israel itself in support of the flotilla raid.

Both the blockade and the impact of it were included in the story for the same reason. The flotilla was correctly described as being made up of vessels delivering humanitarian aid. While it may be clear that there were other aims in attempting to draw attention to the blockade and breach it, this was done through the delivery of aid.

ABC records indicate there are almost 4,000 stories related to the Israeli and Egypt blockade of Gaza. Examples of the most recent stories are as follows:

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/15/2953943.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/08/2947677.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/14/2926049.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/01/2915586.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/01/07/2787048.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/09/27/3022400.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/09/21/3017133.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/19/2957157.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/06/27/2610345.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2006/01/04/1541980.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2005/11/25/1517226.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/17/2929067.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/12/10/2442672.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/01/21/2143392.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/10/10/2055564.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/25/2429354.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/04/12/2215263.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/01/31/2151657.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/04/23/2224653.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/22/2397785.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/02/2915638.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/08/2920922.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/30/2913327.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/17/2930025.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/21/2851891.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/19/2495384.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/06/18/2601411.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/12/24/2454909.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/21/2932071.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/22/2282184.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/07/30/2640417.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/12/31/2783377.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/18/2279105.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/01/27/2147548.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/04/25/2227158.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/17/2421297.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/01/21/2142955.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/05/23/2906845.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/24/2283639.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/02/2479494.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 33

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 82

Topic: ABC's coverage of Operation Cast Lead

Chair asked:

CHAIR—On Senator Abetz's previous question, Mr Scott, can you provide some details of the ABC's coverage of Operation Cast Lead, in which hundreds of civilians were killed and there was massive damage of civilian residences and various government establishments—and where it was found that the Israeli forces had overreacted and that there had been war crimes as part of that process. When you are answering Senator Abetz, can you advise the committee as well what the follow-up coverage of Operation Cast Lead has been.

Mr Scott—I will take that on notice.

Answer:

The ABC has provided substantial coverage of Operation Cast Lead across a range of platforms and programs- from the initial period of formal hostilities between December 2008 and January 2009, through to the subsequent discussions, debates and inquiries.

Examples of ABC coverage during the period of the conflict follow:

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/05/2459625.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/26/2474650.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/15/2466390.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/17/2468208.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/09/2462035.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/24/2473610.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/19/2469527.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/03/2481560.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/08/2461367.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/08/2461986.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/02/2458401.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/01/2457850.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/06/2459664.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/07/2461137.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/13/2464397.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/05/2458867.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/16/2468123.htm
www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/11/2463103.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Examples of ABC coverage and exploration of the issue following the initial hostilities follow:

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/03/23/2524133.htm

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/09/09/2681353.htm

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/03/2480535.htm

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/23/2550344.htm

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/06/01/2915547.htm

www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2008/s2467100.htm

www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2008/s2483720.htm

www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2008/s2460257.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 34

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 82

Topic: Election complaints 2010 (refer QoN 156 - October Hearing)

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ—On question 156, you kindly provided us with a breakdown of figures on complaints from the last election. There were 982. Of those, 55 per cent were in relation to anti-coalition bias and 33 per cent in relation to anti-Labor bias, and we were told there were five complaints—which is one for each Greens senator—about anti-Greens bias. In relation to those five complaints—take this on notice—did any of them assert that the interviewer or presenter displayed a bias against the Greens as opposed to being about lack of time that may have been afforded to the Greens?

Mr Scott—I would have to take that on notice.

Senator ABETZ—Yes, of course. Technically and statistically I think five out of about 1,000 is insignificant but, nevertheless, as it represents one for each Greens senator, I thought I should ask about it.

Answer:

Of the complaints received by the ABC in relation to the ABC's 2010 federal election coverage which alleged anti-Greens bias, none asserted that an interviewer or presenter displayed a bias against the Greens. All of the complaints received by the ABC in relation to this coverage were that the Greens were not afforded adequate time or were excluded from discussions on various programs.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 35

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 82

Topic: ABCs role as emergency broadcaster

Senator Abetz asked:

Senator ABETZ -I will finish by asking about the role of the ABC as the emergency broadcaster. In my speech to the Senate about the flood I in fact paid tribute to the role of the ABC. However, I have received a complaint that on 14 January 2011 a farmer in Elmore rang the ABC regarding the impending threat of floodwaters in Rochester. What action was taken as a result of this call, and were hourly flood updates being broadcast on ABC radio during the Twenty20 international coverage in January?

Mr Scott—I will take that on notice.

Answer:

The ABC received many calls from concerned members of the community on 14 January 2011; however our staff in Bendigo have no recollection of a specific call from an Elmore farmer about impending threat of floods in Rochester.

Anecdotal and local concern along with community experience was taken into account when our broadcasters were assessing the severity of the situation and questioning incident controllers. The ABC's emergency coverage was based on information provided by the SES, North Central Catchment Management Authority and the Bureau of Meteorology.

Hourly flood updates were broadcast on ABC Local Regional Radio across Victoria during the Twenty20 game between England and Australia on 14 January 2011 and updates were broadcast across the weekend during the flood emergency (15-16 January 2011).

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 36

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Election Review

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Can you please advise the outcome of the investigation of election-related complaints mentioned on page 5 of the 2010 Election Coverage Review Committee's report?
2. How were each of these complaints categorised and what are the quantities of complaints received within each category?
3. Can you please provide the names and positions of the members of the ECRC? Why was this not disclosed in the report?

Answer:

1. 679 complaints were investigated by Audience and Consumer Affairs. Ten complaints were upheld for inaccuracy across six items of News content. One complaint was upheld for failure to signpost opinion content. This complaint was also upheld on complaint handling grounds for failure to provide a response within sixty days. There were two other complaints upheld on complaint handling grounds; in both cases the substantive aspects of the complaints were not upheld.
2. The 679 investigated complaints were categorised: bias (485); factual inaccuracy (51); standards of interviewing (50); balance (45); inappropriate content (17); unfair treatment (10); incidental advertising (7); news values (6); customer service/complaint handling (4); failure to disclose (3); and management issues (1).
3. The ABC convenes an Election Coverage Review Committee (ECRC) for each federal, state and territory election. Members of each committee are nominated by the Divisional Directors of the ABC. The ECRC is not a decision-making committee; it is not empowered to make day-to-day editorial decisions about election coverage. Its role is to monitor and advise in relation to adherence with ABC editorial standards.

Members of the ABC's 2010 Federal Election Coverage Review Committee were as follows:

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Director Editorial Policies (Chair)	Paul Chadwick
Manager Research and Policy, Editorial Policies	Michelle Fisher
Head Audience & Consumer Affairs	Kirstin McLiesh
Director Communications	Michael Millett
Head of Public Affairs & Strategy	Sophie Mitchell
Head Audience Research	Lisa Walsh
State Director, Tasmania	Fiona Reynolds
Content Director/ Manager Regional Local Content	James O'Brien
Manager Editorial Policy	Kylie Burke
Head TV Scheduling	Helen Matthews
Head of Policy and Staff Development, News	Alan Sunderland
News Online	Stuart Watt
Editorial Manager, Innovation	Stephen Rapley
Chief Executive Officer Radio Australia/ Manager Policy & Cross Platform	Mike McCluskey/ Tony Hastings

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 37

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Utilising resources from other networks

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Does the ABC ever utilise resources such as cameras and crew from other television networks?
2. If so, which networks and at what cost to the Australian taxpayer?

Answer:

1. 2.

The ABC refers to its response to Senator Abetz' question on notice (q178) from the Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing, October 2010.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 38

Program No: ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: ABC News 24

Senator Abetz asked:

Do ABC and ABC24 send separate reporters to cover the same event in regions within and outside of Australia?

Answer:

ABC News does not automatically send separate reporters to cover stories for ABC News 24. ABC News 24 is part of the ABC News Division and one of the outlets for ABC News content. ABC News 24 needs to be served by the ABC reporters in the field as do all News outlets such as ABC Radio News, ABC's 7pm News and *Lateline*.

When major stories break, increased resources may be fielded to provide additional material for ABC News 24. For example, when Cyclone Yasi hit Queensland in February 2011, the ABC news team ensured that enough ABC reporters, producers and crews were sent to enable all ABC news outlets to be properly serviced.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 39

Program No: ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Al Jazeera

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Does the ABC have any agreements with the Al Jazeera network for sharing news footage, photos, facilities or information?
2. Does the ABC utilise the Al Jazeera Creative Commons Repository?

Answer:

1. ABC News has no formal ongoing arrangements in place to share news footage, photos, facilities or information with Al Jazeera. On occasion, specific one-off access may be arranged to Al Jazeera material. For example, during the recent Egyptian uprising, ABC News accessed Al Jazeera English's Egyptian coverage and used some Al Jazeera footage in its coverage.
2. ABC News is unaware of any instances where we have made use of this material.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 40

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: ABC 774 Commentary

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Can you confirm that a comment was made during a “continuity” or during the broadcast of ABC 774 Melbourne on the morning of 26/10/2010 implying that it was unfortunate that the shoe thrown at The Hon John Howard AC missed its mark?
2. Who said this and in what context?

Answer:

The 774 ABC Radio Morning program spoke to anti-war activist Peter Gray on 26 October 2010, the morning after he had thrown a shoe at the former Prime Minister John Howard during a live broadcast of Q&A on ABC TV. Peter Gray was questioned by presenter Jon Faine about what motivated him to take such action. There was no comment within this piece that implied it was unfortunate that the shoe thrown at Mr Howard missed its mark.

In questioning Peter Gray about his intentions, Jon Faine asked whether he was “really trying to in fact even connect with the...former Prime Minister?” Peter Gray responded that he was aiming to throw his shoes at Mr Howard. Jon Faine said that he wondered if Peter Gray had missed or whether he “didn’t in fact want to hit him”. Gray confirmed that he didn’t want to create chaos on the set but that he certainly did want to throw his shoes at John Howard and have the rest of the world see it.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 41

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: ABC Twitter Accounts

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Is the Twitter user, @QandARockstars, affiliated with the ABC in any way?
2. If so, why isn't it identified as such?

Answer:

1. The @Q&ARockstars account was not initiated or administered by Q&A or the ABC.
2. Not applicable.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 42

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: ABC Innovation Department

Senator Abetz asked:

Can you provide a breakdown of the costs of each project undertaken or managed by the Innovation Department this financial year?

Answer:

Innovation has an annual budget for the Financial Year 2010/2011 of \$10,840,000 and as of 28 February 2011 had spent \$7,492,748. Of this amount, \$250,186 was allocated to special projects (3.34 per cent of total spend to date).

ABC Innovation is responsible for the following day to day activities:

- Technology
 - o Technical development, management and support of ABC Online and ABC Mobile infrastructure
 - o Content distribution and delivery for all ABC Online and ABC Mobile
- Networks
 - o Strategic co-ordination and management of ABC Online and ABC Mobile
 - o ABC Online Home page
 - o ABC Best Of site
 - o Science Online
 - o Environment portal
 - o The Drum/Unleashed sites
 - o Environment portal
 - o Tech & Games portal
 - o Religion portal
 - o Ramp up – disability portal
- Strategic Development
 - o Exploration and development of new tools, interfaces, websites, platforms, and applications for use by ABC Innovation and other ABC output divisions.

In addition to business as usual activities, the following projects have been undertaken and managed by Innovation in the 2011/2012 financial year:

- WCMS – new web content management system
- ABC News 24 (online, streaming and mobile components)
- Foodi – iPad application
- Days That Changed Our Lives – website surfacing ABC archive content
- Ushahidi – crowd source map for Queensland floods and Feral Month
- Digital Citizens – digital literacy modules for ABC Online

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

- Bushfires – Black Saturday website
- Regional Health website
- The Big Diary – web (web/online diary)
- The Big Diary – mobile (standalone mobile site/diary)
- iView on the iPad
- iView on the iPhone
- ABC iPad app v1.0
- ABC iPad app v1.1
- ABC iPad app v1.2
- ABC iPhone app v2.4
- ABC iPhone app v2.5
- ABC iPhone app v2.6
- Samsung widget (ABC News widget for Samsung smartphones)
- Australia Votes 2010 Election application (on iPhone, Android, Blackberry and Java phones)
- Pluck – new user generated content upload system
- Unearthed website (rebuild and refresh)
- Unearthed iPhone App
- Religion Portal
- Technology & Games Portal
- Ramp Up – Disability portal
- Radio Streaming Project
- Inlets technology project
- Campaign Pulse – Federal Election 2010 social media website
- Children in Detention project for News Investigative Unit
- Timeline for News Online’s 2010 Year in Review Site
- Education pilots with NSW Centre for Learning Innovation and Education Services Australia
- Open Access Archives project
- 4 Corners Wikileaks Explainer
- Audio Boo trial with Radio National (audio-sharing between ABC & audience)
- Accessibility audit and improvements for ABC Online
- Corporate Website (rebuild and refresh)
- Bluebird – archive site

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 43

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Abolition of the Independent Complaints Review Panel

Senator Abetz asked:

1. When does the ABC intend on discontinuing the Independent Complaints Review Panel?
2. Will this be replaced with an independent body for complainants to turn to if they are not satisfied with the ABC's internal complaints handling procedures?

Answer:

1. The ABC is making changes to its editorial policies in 2011, including to the Independent Complaints Review Panel (ICRP). The changes the ABC is making to its self-regulatory framework were set out in '*Changes to ABC's self-regulatory Framework*', published in September 2009 (see: www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/documents/review_of_the_abc_self_regulation_framework_1009.pdf).

The changes to the ICRP commenced on 10 March 2011. It is no longer receiving new complaints and will be discontinued after it has completed its deliberations in relation to all pending complaints.

2. If complainant is not satisfied with a response to a complaint by the ABC, they may take their complaint to the Australian Communications and Media Authority for external, independent review.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 44

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Water Usage

Senator Abetz asked:

The ABC's latest Annual Report states that "Total water usage and comparative data is not available."

Can the ABC provide figures for its water usage for the 2009/10 period, and can you explain why these figures were not available for the Annual Report?

Answer:

At the time of compiling the ABC's Annual Report, only 78 per cent of actual billed water consumption data for Capital City sites and 38 per cent for Regional sites was available. As a result, only 46 per cent of the ABC's water consumption was actual billed data and the remainder was forecast usage.

The ABC's total known water consumption for Financial Year 2009/10 was 78,722¹kL (41 sites); Capital City water consumption for Financial Year 2009/10 was 71,754²kL (9 sites); and Regional water consumption for Financial Year 2009/10 6,968³kL.

¹ based on 88 per cent of sites actual billed consumption and 12 per cent of sites forecasted pending invoice receipt and based on historical use patterns

² Based on 100 per cent of actual billed consumption at capital city sites.

³ based on 84 per cent of actual billed consumption sites and 16 per cent sites forecasted pending invoice receipt and based on historical use patterns

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 45

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Promotion of New Matilda

Senator Abetz asked:

The Online website New Matilda, which has a history of complaints against it for anti-semitic content, received free publicity and a backlink on The Drum on 10 December 2010.

1. Were there any complaints about this?
2. Has there been any action taken in relation to the article, and specifically, the editorial policy 16.2.4 ABC presenters must avoid any endorsement of any commercial organisation, product or service by themselves, their guests or contributors in ABC broadcasts or ABC Online.

Answer:

1. 2.

The article "Love, money and independent media" was published on 10 December 2010 on the ABC's Unleashed website. Unleashed is an ABC website forum for commentators to present their opinions and for public debate of a broad range of issues such as politics, business, sport, the environment, media, entertainment and the arts.

The relationship of the two authors to New Matilda was disclosed on the article page. They are clearly identified as "Marni Cordell is editor of New Matilda. Catriona Menzies-Pike is managing editor of New Matilda." They are not ABC staff members.

The article discussed a new proposed model for funding online journalism and commentary. New Matilda was taking a new approach by inviting supporters to make donations to its site. Given broad public discussion in recent times about financial models for online journalism, the article offered a new perspective. Publication of an article explaining this approach does not imply ABC endorsement of either the fund-raising or of New Matilda.

There were 8 complaints that the article 'Love, money and independent media' promoted an independent organisation for fundraising activities which are commercial in nature. All were investigated; none were upheld.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 46

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Sentiment Analysis

Senator Abetz asked:

The report of the Election Coverage Review Committee makes little effort to analyse the balance of articles published on its online opinion sites. However, the ABC did perform Sentiment Analysis on social media websites.

1. Is there any prospect of using Sentiment Analysis on the ABC's online opinion websites, The Drum and Unleashed?
2. What other measures are used to ensure balance on the online opinion websites?

Answer:

1. 2.

Sentiment analysis is an embryonic technology that the ABC used for analysing social media on the election page "Campaign Pulse". It is potentially useful for analysing fast moving and transitory digital conversation on sites like Twitter and Facebook. The ABC clearly labelled this module as an experiment.

There are no proposals to implement formal sentiment analysis on ABC online sites such as The Drum or Unleashed. Editors will continue to monitor and maintain a balance of diverse opinions appearing on discussion sites.

ABC editors and managers constantly monitor the range of views and perspectives published on opinion and analysis sites, including during the 2010 election period.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 47

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 83

Topic: Q&A Twitter account

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—I would like to ask about Q&A and its Twitter account. I do not Twitter, myself, Mr Scott, but—

Mr Scott—It is a big universe; you are welcome, Senator. You need a tutorial.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—I know, I know. I still believe that tweeting is for the birds. There is a Q&A account and I would like to take you to one example, on 10 February, where it says ‘odds on that the impact of cutting back funding will be very bad.’ Of course this was in relation to the coalition’s plan to defer water buybacks so that the new flood tax would not have to be raised. Whose views does this Twitter account represent?

Mr Scott—These are not the tweets that go to air on the program down the bottom of the page are they? Is that what you are referring to?

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Someone just printed this for me. Mr Jones’s portrait is on the side—

Mr Scott—Oh, that account. I suspect it is not Mr Jones himself.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Whose views does this Twitter account represent?

Mr Scott—I will have to take that on notice. I am not aware of the origins of that account, so I will find out.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Who physically issues these tweets?

Mr Scott—I will have to find that out for you.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—When you do find that out, could you tell me whether these are the views of Mr Jones, given that his portrait appears on the site, and whether it is the view of the Q&A program that deferring water buybacks is a bad idea or whether it is the view of the ABC that deferring water buybacks is a bad idea?

Mr Scott—Let me investigate the origins of that.

Answer:

A large number of journalists and others have taken to a live twitter commentary on events in parliament during Question Time using this hashtag, a project sometimes called “twitsard”.

This tweet was part of a commentary of Question Time (the full tweet is identified as such with the #qt hashtag).

This tweet refers to the fact that a Dorothy Dixier Question was asked of the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

The comments are often wry and also, like all twitter, very short and so difficult to understand outside the context of the experience of watching Question Time simultaneously.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

The view expressed in the tweet is a comment of Question Time - that Dorothy Dixers lead to predictable answers and that the response to the Dorothy Dixer by the Minister would be that the Opposition policy to cut back funding was a bad idea.

This tweet was not a comment on Coalition policy.

The tweets were published by a Q&A producer who was monitoring Question Time on 10 February 2011.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 48

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 83

Topic: ABC Policies governing Twitter accounts

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Do programs such as *7.30 Report* and *Four Corners* have Twitter accounts?

Mr Scott—In the main, a number of programs have Twitter accounts and, in the main, they are used to promote forthcoming episodes – to, in a sense, market the program and explain what is going on. Often you will find that members of the audience send questions through to the program using the Twitter account. So it is a way of responding to questions or issues that are raised. I do not have the complete list in front of me of official ABC Twitter accounts, but many programs do. Local radio is using it very extensively and numbers of our news programs do as well.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—My concern is: do they comment directly on policies of political parties? Could you review those accounts.

Mr Scott—Sure, Senator.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—, I notice that Ms Fran Kelly has one that pertains to Radio National-

Mr Scott—To the breakfast program.

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—and then one that pertains to herself. Could you also take on notice what ABC policies govern such tweeting?

Mr Scott—Absolutely. We have clear social media policies and I am pleased to make them available for you, Senator.

Answer:

Yes. Both *7.30* and *Four Corners* programs have Twitter accounts.

Such official ABC Twitter accounts are covered by the ABC's Editorial Policies, and as such it would be inappropriate for them to engage in direct comment on policies of political parties outside the normal parameters set by these editorial policies.

Beyond these "official" program twitter accounts, a wide range of individuals associated with those programs have their own twitter accounts. These personal accounts are covered by the ABC's Code of Conduct and by the ABC's Social Media Policy (see www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/documents/useOfSocialMedia.pdf).

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 49

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Outcome 1 – Survey by ABC News Watch

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

A survey by ABC News Watch of the number of stories reported by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in June 2009 showed 7.8 stories per staff member, compared with 10.3 stories per staff member for the same month in 2008. Does the ABC keep such figures?

Answer:

No.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 50

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Outcome 1 – No. Of Stories Produced by ABC

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

If the ABC is producing less stories with more staff, can Mr Scott explain how the Australian taxpayer is getting value for money?

Answer:

The ABC does not accept this premise. The apparent methodology to which the Senator refers is to count stories from individual months, however, it does not specify whether this count is based on the number of individual items posted to ABC websites or stories filed in each international, national, state or regional newsroom, the output of specific programs, or reporter pieces filed outside of scheduled news bulletins across radio platforms.

In its annual reporting, the ABC outlines the range of material produced by the News Division. For example, in the most recent Annual Report the ABC reported that the News Division produced more than 19,000 hours of unduplicated news and current affairs programming on its domestic television and radio services and internationally on Australia Network and Radio Australia in 2009/2010.

The ABC has substantially expanded its creation of news content to new platforms and new channels, with no increased funding. This represents excellent value for money for Australian taxpayers.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 51

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Outcome 1 – Measurement of Efficiency

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Is this the best way to measure efficiency? If not, how is it measured?

Answer:

See response to question on notice 50.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 52

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Outcome 1 – Climate Change Reporting

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

What policies does the ABC have in relation to climate change reporting?

Answer:

The ABC's Editorial Policies set out the key policies of accuracy, balance and impartiality which underpin all our reporting on all important public issues.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 53

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Outcome 1 – Complaints about Climate Change Reporting

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

How many complaints has the ABC received about its climate change reporting?

Answer:

During the three month period from 1 December 2010 to 28 February 2011, Audience and Consumer Affairs logged 46 written complaints from 37 different complainants about 24 separate pieces of content related to climate change.

The complaints were logged as:

- Bias (24);
- Factual inaccuracy (12);
- Balance (6);
- Standards of interviewing (3); and
- Customer service/complaint handling (1).

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 54

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Outcome 1 – Moderation of ABC websites about Climate Change

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

What processes are in place to moderate comments made at ABC online websites about climate change?

Answer:

The ABC has consistent moderation policies for all of its online websites, and these policies operate in the same way for climate change as for all other issues and topics. The ABC has experienced staff who monitor comments in line with the principles set out in the ABC's Editorial Policies at <http://abc.net.au/corp/pubs/edpols.htm>

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 55

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Outcome 1 – Defamation on ABC Opinion and Blog Pages

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

What recourse is there for individuals who feel they have been defamed on opinion and blog pages?

Answer:

Individuals who have concerns about ABC content may complain to the ABC.

The ABC welcomes comments, complaints and concerns both officially and unofficially through a range of communication options, and undertakes to deal as quickly as possible with any issues as they arise.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 56

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Outcome 1 – Management of Blog Comments

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

Is the ABC leaving itself open to defamation cases because of poor management of blog comments?

Answer:

No. The ABC takes seriously its role as a provider of news and commentary in the online environment, including blog posts. This is reflected in the ABC Editorial Policies.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 57

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Outcome 1 – Legal Action Arising from Blog Comments

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

What, if any, legal action is the ABC defending at present arising out of blog comments?

Answer:

The ABC is not engaged in any legal action related to or arising out of blog comments.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 58

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 86-87

Topic: Soapbox program complaints

Senator Xenophon asked:

Senator XENOPHON—Mr Scott, recently the ABC cancelled the *Soapbox* program on 891 local radio in Adelaide and replaced it with *Conversations with Richard Fidler*. Can the ABC describe how this program, which recently interviewed Northumbrian folk singers, is more relevant in terms of local content than a program which included feedback from the entire state?

Senator FISHER—Hear, hear!

Mr Scott—I appreciate that this is of concern to some of the good senators from South Australia.

Senator XENOPHON—It is a big concern.

Mr Scott—Yes, I understand that. If you look at our local radio format right through from the smaller local radio stations to the main ones in the metropolitan areas you will see that we have local coverage and we have national coverage. In the heart of the breakfast program we cross to AM, and AM goes around the country. And on the weekend, of course, there is extensive national coverage on local radio through *Grandstand* and other programs as well. The Richard Fidler conversations program is one of those national programs. It comes out of Queensland and goes, I understand, at the moment through New South Wales, Tasmania and now South Australia. As I said to you earlier, I do not think there is another program on local radio on which I get more unsolicited comments of praise and support than I do for that detailed conversation he has. In a sense it is the radio equivalent of the kinds of interviews that Andrew Denton used to run on television. I think he is very gifted. I appreciate that this change has generated concern in South Australia and that there is a feeling that something about the collective conversation element that Matthew Abrahams and David Bevan's *Soapbox* program used to bring has been lost. I know that our radio management team in South Australia is looking at that. We are aware of the concerns. We have had complaints raised and phone calls—

Senator XENOPHON—Can you provide—again, you may wish to provide this on notice—how many complaints were made to the ABC switchboard about this.

Mr Scott—We got a lot of them.

Senator XENOPHON—Perhaps on notice you could provide how many complaints and how that tallies as a proportion of national complaints about any particular issue.

Mr Scott—I would say that it is a significant level of complaint but is at about 10 per cent of the level we get when things really happen. I think it runs into the hundreds but there have been issues on which we have had thousands and thousands of complaints. But I will give you that detail.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Answer:

Overall, the ABC received 423 complaints about changes to morning programming on 891 ABC Adelaide. Of these, 226 were from listeners who specifically made reference to the inclusion of Conversations and or the loss of Soapbox from the line up.

With regard to how this tallies with the proportion of national complaints about any particular issue, the 2010 ABC Annual Report reports that 1556 written and telephone complaints were received when the presenter of *The Good Game* was changed and 405 written and telephone complaints regarding changes to the scheduling of *Time Team*.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 59

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 85

Topic: Transcript of Doorstop Interview in Cairns

Senator MacDonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Maybe my invite got destroyed in the cyclone or something. Can I leave you with a transcript of a doorstop interview in Cairns on 17 February 2011. It was done by a local reporter, not an experienced political reporter, I understand, using questions provided by ABC News 24 – you can see the interview and the prepared questions. This was a press conference with the Prime Minister. There were no other journalists there. It ran all day on 24 but was also syndicated to every other channel, which means that this was the story of the day. It was a day when there was lots of talk around uranium in the ALP, criticism of Craig Emerson and quite a number of other stories.

Senator Conroy—Surely you are not now trying to tell people what they should be asking?

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Let me ask my question, Minister. Time is short.

Senator ABETZ—That is what you are doing to the senator.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—What I am saying is that this was a very important trendsetter of the news for the day. None of the questions were about the other major issues. It was all about the Leader of the Opposition.

Senator Conroy—You can criticise what is asked, but you cannot start telling them what to ask.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I am going to give this to you, if I may, Mr Scott-

Mr Scott—We will take a look at it, Senator.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—and ask, in view of the circumstances and the background that I portrayed, whether you think that was a fair distribution of questions-

Senator Conroy—You think it is important – I do not.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—from ABC News 24 to a local reporter-

Senator Conroy—That is an outrageous question that goes to your political bias-nothing else, Senator Macdonald.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I am just ignoring you, Minister.

Mr Scott—The only thing I would say about News 24 is that we are using our local reporters in the regions to conduct interviews when leading figures are outside the major capitals. So that would not be unusual and it would not be unusual that areas of questions are provided. But I am happy to take that on notice.

Answer:

Yes, the ABC considers the questions asked of the Prime Minister were reasonable and reflected issues of note and which featured heavily in other news organisations media reports on that day.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 60

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 87-88

Topic: New 7:30 structure

Senator Xenophon asked:

Senator XENOPHON—On the issue of local content, what guarantees are there that the new 7.30 structure will give what I think is known at the ABC as the BAPH states—named for the capitals Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart—greater editorial control and time for stories from those states?

Mr Scott—As we reviewed the *7.30 Report* with the changes that were inevitably going to happen at the end of last year, one of the things we were very conscious of is how you give appropriate weight to state based current affairs stories. I think there is an argument, and it is an interesting debate, as to whether in fact focus on state based current affairs issues was diminished with the loss of the state based *7.30 Report*, but that was almost 15 years ago now. We are keen in our format, particularly on a Friday night but certainly at other times during the week, to be able to allow a focus on appropriate state based issues where important. We will have a mechanism whereby we can do that and we will be able to measure local content and need to justify the decisions we make on local content.

Senator XENOPHON—In the old *7.30 Report*—again, on notice unless you have it at your fingertips—what percentage of stories came from the BAPH states and what percentage from South Australia, as a standalone figure? To what extent will the local state edition of 7.30 on a Friday be subject to greater editorial control or instruction from producers in Sydney? That is a concern that has been expressed to me.

Mr Scott—I can understand that. I will get those first figures back to you on notice. The new 7.30 program hosted by Leigh Sales and Chris Uhlmann goes to air on Monday week. There will of course be some strong local issues in some states. State elections are looming in some states. There are the critical local issues we have been dealing with in recent months that will need to be followed up on. I think the best test of how we go in delivering the national and the local will be evident as that program goes to air, as it beds down and as we look at the data that emerges from that. We looked seriously at how you increase local input and coverage of local stories. The creation of the new 7.30 has certainly not been driven by an attempt to increasingly centralise and nationalise.

Senator XENOPHON—You can understand the fear that it would be.

Mr Scott—I can understand that, but that has not been a driver. In fact more of our conversations have been around how you ensure that when there is a significant local story that is of importance at a state level but does not pass the national threshold you can get that to a significant audience at 7.30.

Senator XENOPHON—I look forward to those figures. Finally, is there a commitment to review the issue of the loss of *Soapbox* on 891?

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Answer:

By combining the old *7.30 Report* and *Stateline* teams into one unified program team, while at the same time preserving Friday night as the night for state-based coverage, the ABC aims to provide more state-based coverage, not less.

Each of the smaller states will, in effect, have a bigger and more unified team to produce state-based current affairs. This is intended to result in three things:

- (1) These larger teams will be able to offer stories to the four-night-a-week national program more often than in the past. A new producer position in Sydney has been created to specifically seek out and commission more state-based stories for the national program.
- (2) When not required for national stories, these larger state-based teams will be dedicated to producing the Friday night programs, to enhance the quality and content of these programs when compared to the *Stateline* programs they replace.
- (3) When a major story breaks at a state level (including during key moments in a state election campaign, for example), these teams will be resourced to take over the timeslot on nights other than Fridays to provide tailored local programming in place of the national program. By definition, this will not happen often, but on those occasions when it is justified it will be easier to do than it was under the old program model.

Of the stories aired on the *7.30 Report* last year:

- 20 per cent of all the items were studio interviews conducted by the program host
- 15 per cent were political stories done from Canberra.
- 10 per cent were international stories done from the ABC's overseas bureaus
- 7 per cent were a range of other items including the regular contributions from *Clarke and Dawe*.

The remaining portion of the program comprised stories filed by individual reporters in individual states. Taking all of those stories together, roughly one third were produced in Melbourne, one third in Sydney and the remainder in the other states combined. This not only reflects the weight of national stories produced in Sydney and Melbourne, but also the number of reporters based in those areas. Of the stories produced outside of Sydney and Melbourne, the breakdown is as follows:

Queensland	-42 per cent (where there are two reporters based – other smaller states only have one reporter each. This number was also affected by major stories occurring)
Tasmania	-18 per cent (slightly higher than usual due to state political issues)
South Australia	- 16 per cent
Western Australia	- 14 per cent

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Northern Territory - 10 per cent

In relation to the changes to 891 ABC Adelaide's schedule, these will be reviewed at the end of 2011 in ABC Radio's program evaluation and commissioning process.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 61

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 89

Topic: What percentage of ABC1 on-air time is currently dedicated to first run Indigenous content?

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM—I might ask you to take the next question on notice because I do not know if you will have it in front of you. Can you tell us what percentage of ABC 1 on-air time is currently dedicated to first-run Indigenous content?

Mr Scott—I will have to take that on notice. The one thing I would say is that it is going to increase with the slate that we are developing now. In part, it is about how you define Indigenous content. But we have a significant amount of drama that is under way. These issues are being extensively addressed in Television's strategic plan. We will be able to give you the current numbers.

Senator LUDLAM—And also any definitions that you stick to.

Mr Scott—Sure.

Senator LUDLAM—Either a percentage or as hours would be helpful.

Mr Scott—Yes.

Senator LUDLAM—While we are on that subject, in the past 12 months, how much of that content was broadcast in prime time or during the official ratings period?

Answer:

Indigenous content has been defined as content where 2 of the 3 key creatives - writer, director or producer- were Indigenous or the program was primarily concerned with Indigenous issues, culture, heritage or characters.

In the 2009-2010 financial year, approximately 19 hours or 0.3 per cent of total programs consisted of first run Indigenous content. Twenty-two hours of repeated Indigenous programming was also broadcast on ABC1 over this time.

In the first half of the 2010-2011 financial year, approximately 10.5 hours of first run Indigenous content was broadcast.

None of this programming was broadcast in prime time or during the official ratings period.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 62

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: EC 90-91

Topic: 2009 Budget Papers savings

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Thank you. I have previously pursued—I think this was all tied up at one stage into the illustrious program W and so on, and I will not try to go back there. In the 2009 budget papers there were some departmental savings identified for the ABC described as distribution and transmission efficiencies. At that stage they were earmarked in the budget papers as not for publication because they were part of commercial negotiations that were occurring.

Mr Scott—Commercial in confidence, yes.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Were those savings realised?

Mr Pendleton—There are two levels of savings that have been identified within the budget papers. One relates to the commencement of switch-off of some of the analogue around the transmission. There were other savings contemplated in terms of synergistic benefits or efficiencies that could be found in the transmission services. Partly those come from looking at working with SBS in delivering some of that benefit. We are on track to deliver, for our part anyway, a number of those efficiency savings. The joint ones we are still working with SBS on and talking to SBS about what scope and opportunity there is. We have yet to really identify anything that comes from working together. It is the nature of the contracts we have with the service providers and the confidentiality clauses that sit within them. But certainly the savings that we are required to find for the budget we will find from those line items.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—By when are you required to find these? They were identified for the 2009–10, 2010–11 and 2011–12 financial years.

Mr Pendleton—Definitely within the triennium. There would be some due, I think, next year.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—There were some due in each year. There was a not-for-publication amount for each of those three years. One has well and truly gone and the second is almost complete. So have savings been returned to government as a result of that?

Mr Pendleton—I would have to take on notice whether we have actually returned anything as yet from it. But certainly over the triennium we will return the required amounts from the transmission line.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—If you could provide us with some detail in relation to that on notice it would be appreciated.

Answer:

The savings for distribution and transmission efficiencies mentioned in the 2009-10 Budget listed as ‘not for publication’ involved several areas of efficiencies being pursued, partly in conjunction with the SBS. These savings have already been reduced against the ABC budget appropriation.

Savings are also on track to be achieved for 2010-11 and are being pursued in respect of 2011-12. The ABC remains confident that the level of savings required in the Budget will be achieved.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 63

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: ABC

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Please detail savings made by the ABC through its cost sharing arrangement with SBS announced in the 2009-10 budget, but listed 'not for publication'.
 - a. Have savings been made through this arrangement?
 - b. In what areas?
 - c. Have savings been returned to the government or reduced the ABC's budget appropriation?
 - d. Are any further savings expected?
2. What funds were budgeted for the establishment of News24?
 - a. Have costs been within originally budgeted funds or have additional funds been required?
 - b. If so, how much?
3. What ABC divisions have faced reduced funding this year?
 - a. By what amounts?
 - b. How much of these funds have been redirected to fund News24?

Answer:

1.
 - a. Yes.
 - b. These savings involved several areas of efficiencies being pursued, partly in conjunction with the SBS. These include discussions and negotiations with transmission and distribution service providers to examine business circumstances where lower fees might potentially be achieved.
 - c. The savings have already been reduced against the ABC's budget appropriation.
 - d. Savings have been achieved for 2009-10 and are also on track to be achieved for 2010-11, with some issues still being pursued in respect of subsequent years, particularly in respect of any joint savings with the SBS. The ABC remains confident that the level savings required in the Budget will be achieved.
2.
 - a. ABC News24 commenced without any increase in the ABC's appropriation funding.
 - b. Not applicable.
3.
 - a. No ABC divisions have faced reduced funding this year.
 - b. Not applicable.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 64

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Australia Network

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How many viewers each week on average is the Australia Network attracting?
2. Has there been a steady build up of audience numbers?
3. What causes increases in audience numbers – i.e. is it the AFL grand finals, civil unrest, trade visits?
4. Can I get a breakdown of where viewers are coming from and what their interest are?
5. Can you give me an example of what types of specific program activities the channel undertook during for example the Bangkok Uprising?
6. How did the channel through its programs “present an Australian perspective” on what was happening?
7. How many people in Thailand watched the channel during that time?
8. Was this an increase in its audience?
9. Are there other examples you can give of how the channel covered a specific event and was able to increase its audience share and “present an Australian perspective?”
10. (If the answer is only through ABC correspondents’ NEWS REPORTS – were these news reports vetted by DFAT ? How was this the “Australian” perspective on the civil unrest?
11. Who does ABC see as its competitors in the region, i.e. Al Jazeera CCTV, DW, BBC World, and France24?
12. How have those channels grown their market share in contrast to the ABC?
13. At the start of the contract was the ABC given a specific target for audience numbers?
14. If so have you reached that?
15. If not why?
16. Has the ABC improved its channel ranking? (The measurement is down by Synovate and PAX.)

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

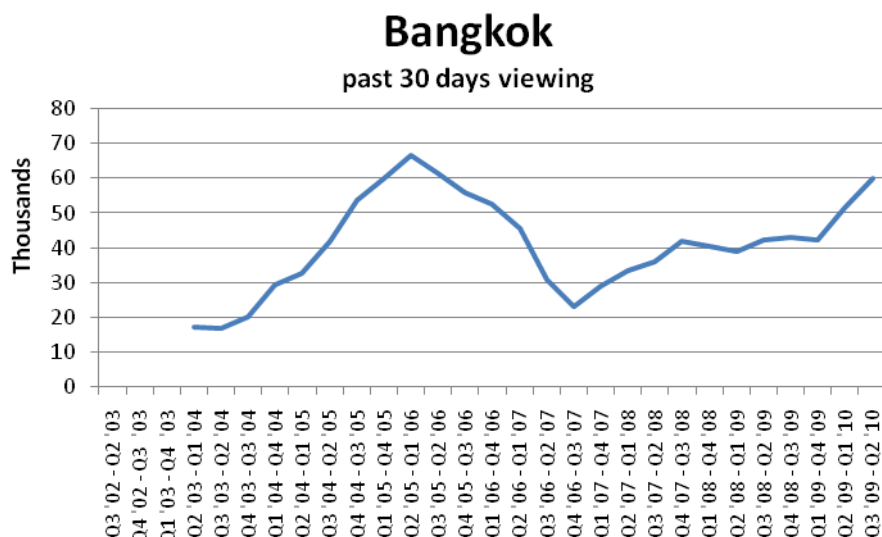
17. How has the ABC gone attracting advertising?

18. Were there targets set for advertising?

Answer:

1. In 2009-10, the weekly viewing base of Australia Network was almost one million.
2. Yes.
3. Australia Network's expanded distribution has resulted in higher audience figures. The distinctive news and current affairs offering, regionally relevant factual and lifestyle programming, children's programming, and English Language Learning, have all proved popular with viewers based on audience feedback.
4. Under its current contract, DFAT specifies that the target audience should represent the political, academic, and economic leadership communities and the young and aspirant groups of the Asia Pacific region. While Australians living and travelling in the region are an important audience, they are not the primary focus for the service.
5. Australia Network *News* and *Newsline* provided extensive coverage of the Bangkok protests. Australia Network drew on a range of sources and production techniques to provide up-to-date and relevant coverage, including reports from the ABC's Bangkok correspondent, Zoe Daniel, packages made by staff at the ABC's Asia Pacific News Centre and interviews with leading figures in the protests including Sean Boonpracong, spokesman for the pro-Thaksin United Front for Democracy (Red Shirts). Coverage included the precincts to avoid, travel warnings and the international response. *Newsline* host Jim Middleton presented the program from Bangkok as the tensions were building.
6. Australia Network presented an Australian perspective on what was happening in Bangkok through news and current affairs reports provided by Australian ABC reporters. The network's coverage also covered over time the principal relevant Australian reactions including, interviews with relevant Australian politicians, officials, analysts and witnesses, as well as the provision of consular information for Australian citizens in Bangkok.
7. & 8. The Australia Network audience data is based on a quarterly telephone survey of respondents. Australia Network enjoyed solid audience growth in Bangkok during the relevant quarter according to audience data. "Past 30 day "viewing rose 16 per cent, the highest level in four years. Penetration was now 5.6 per cent.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation



9. There is a wide range of stories that reflect the value of an Australian perspective. Examples include Australia Network's coverage of the protests in Egypt and Libya, activities by opposition leaders and activists in Malaysia, the nature of the National People's Congress in China, the Queensland floods, Australia's role at the East Asia Summit, Australia's border security measures or the debate in Australia over a carbon tax.
10. Under the current contract and the ABC Editorial Policies, Australia Network is required to provide an independent, reliable and credible news service. Australia Network's News reports are not vetted by DFAT.

An Australian perspective is achieved by independent reporting by Australian ABC journalists and by reporting over time the principal relevant Australian views. Depending on the nature of the story, these could include, amongst others, the views of the Government, Opposition, analysts, business people, community leaders or Australians in the street etc.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

11. The ABC sees a range of competitors for Australia Network, including international public broadcasters from other countries. It should be noted, however, that unlike most other international channels, Australia Network is a multi-genre service, including news, drama, documentaries, children's programs and English lessons, rather than a predominantly news service such as the BBC, CNN, NHK World and Al Jazeera.

12. Australia Network has maintained its relative share of audience compared to other publicly funded international broadcasters.

13. The DFAT contract provides for target audience numbers.

14. Yes.

15. Not applicable.

16. At 30 June 2010 Australia Network was ranked at 26 among the top 50 international English language channels available in the region, ahead of Al Jazeera (36), Deutsche Welle (42), France's TV5 Monde, (40), Japan's NHK World (44) and France24 (48).

On 30 June 2009 Australia Network was ranked at 24. However, it should be noted that since the contract commenced, the number of measured international and local channels has increased threefold.

17. Australia Network's revenue in 2009-10, including advertising, sponsorship and program sales totalled just under \$1.01 million.

18. Yes, a target revenue figure is set in the DFAT contract.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 65

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: China

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Obviously a very important political, economically and social market for Australia is China. What sort of impact has the channel had in reaching a Chinese audience?
2. How close are the ABC to achieving landing rights in China?
3. How does the ABC match its goal of frank and fearless reporting in China with their role in achieving diplomacy outcomes for the Australian government?
4. How would Australian exporters to China say the Network benefitted them?
5. The Network receives \$20 million a year from Australians tax payers. Have you been able to quantify your value-add to Australian trade, etc?

Answer:

1. Australia Network does not have landing rights in China and therefore does not have a television audience that can be measured. It is known, however, that there are some viewers in China who directly access the Australia Network satellite signal in international compounds or in their homes.

Australia Network's website is accessible in China and during 2010 the site registered 397,000 page views in China. Australia Network also provides a range of online video content, mainly English language lessons, that can be streamed or downloaded (vodcast) by Chinese audiences. In January 2011 alone there were 26,000 views of this video content in China.

2. Chinese approval for "landing rights" remains a challenge. No foreign television channels are permitted on China's domestic cable television networks which reach the largest proportion of Chinese viewers.

In 2006, the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party issued an edict that no additional foreign channels would be permitted to broadcast in China and no "landing rights" applications by any foreign channel have been approved since this time.

The ABC hopes that, should there be any change of media policy, Australia Network would be well placed to be granted "landing rights".

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

3. The ABC will not compromise the independence and integrity of Australia Network's news gathering in order to gain access to any market, including China.

The ABC does not consider that restrictions on Western media organisations by China will prevent ABC journalists from providing coverage which is accurate and independent. Australia Network has provided coverage of a broad range of issues related to China including corruption, human rights abuses, clashes involving security forces, environmental degradation and social concerns. At the same time, it has also provided coverage which has helped improve understanding of political, economic and social reform in China, the nature of the bilateral relationship and the contribution both countries make to regional and international affairs.

4. As noted above at (2), Australia Network does not have television 'landing rights' in China, so its capacity to benefit Australian exporters to China is mainly limited to its online presence. This includes:

- Reporting on Australian economics, business and commercial relationships with the region in its daily *Business Today* website as well as in its online news.
- The online presentation of series including *This Australian Life* and *My Australia*—following the experiences of recent arrivals, mainly overseas students, as they participate in daily Australian life.
- A range of online English language lessons, such as *Passport to English* which focuses on helping prospective overseas students attain the level of English required to study in Australia, and which offer positive portrayals of Australia as a destination and of the Australian education sector in particular.
- Links to Radio Australia's Mandarin online content including news, information about Australia and bilingual English lessons.

5. Under its contract with DFAT, Australia Network is required to support the national interest by "raising awareness in the region of Australia's economic and trade capabilities, including the education and tourism industries". It has done this by:

- Reporting on Australian economics, business and commercial relationships with the region in its daily *Business Today* program as well as in its daily news bulletin.
- The broadcast of the ABC's *Landline* program covering Australia's rural sector.
- The production, broadcast and online presentation of series including *This Australian Life* and *My Australia* – following the experiences of recent arrivals, mainly overseas students, as they participate in daily Australian life.
- A range of English language lessons, such as *Passport to English* which focuses on helping prospective overseas students attain the level of English required to study in Australia, and which offer positive portrayals of Australia as a destination and of the Australian education sector in particular.
- A rapid response to the Indian student crisis to present a fair portrayal of the safety of Indian students in Australia with the support of the education sector.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 66

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Digital Media

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Over the past couple of months in particular we have seen the impact of digital media in countries like Egypt. Twitter especially has played a big role.
 - a. What digital media assets does the ABC operate for the Australian Network?
 - b. How important does the ABC see twitter? If important: Why then does the Australia Network have less than 200 followers? Why is there no content on the Australian Network Facebook site?
 - c. Does the Australia Network have a dedicated social media unit?
 - d. Given the lack of seriousness with which the ABC has approached this channel so far, isn't it just using the contract as a form of cross-subsidization of its other services?

Answer:

1. a. The ABC operates the following Australia Network digital assets:
 - Australia Network website including:
 - o A dedicated video page called WatchNow including news and current affairs, English language learning, the arts and programs which allow viewers to experience Australia
 - o News updated 24/7, including frequent video updates
 - o Dedicated Australia Network current affairs – Newline program and Business Today including video
 - o Program pages for Australia Network-produced programs including Pacific Pulse magazine-style program on people making a difference in the Pacific Islands, including video episodes and contributions from viewers. My Australia- featuring video and extra information from the program which shows people from our region experiencing Australia.
 - o The Sports Lounge including the latest sports stories and information about sports broadcasts.
 - o One of the largest online libraries of free English language video lessons for streaming and downloading. There were over 3 million views of this content in 2010.
 - Australia Network has a YouTube presence with 804,000 views of Australia Network produced content up to March 2011. A presence is also being developed on Facebook and Twitter (see below).

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

- b. Social Media is becoming an integral tool for Australia Network which allows it to engage closely with its diverse audiences. A new social media strategy is currently being rolled out which includes branded Facebook pages with links to new content, Twitter links to content and allowing more participation, and YouTube channels which will host Australia Network produced content.

Australia Network's WatchNow twitter account (AN_WatchNow) was launched in February 2011. It is intended to build an audience over time and cross promote Australia Network's other social media properties, Australia Network online, as well as the satellite television service. Up- to-date the follower numbers are relatively low because the service is new, but there have been a successful number of interactions. AN_News already has some 700 followers. A further initiative currently in progress is the direct targeting of Indonesian audiences with the popular *English Bites* video language lessons. These will include English language dialogues combined with instructions and explanations revoiced in Indonesian. The rollout of the videos will be entirely online, in particular on Facebook, which is extremely popular in Indonesia. In undertaking this overall strategy, the ABC has built into its plan methods to accurately and monitor and analyse audience engagement to provide optimum results and allow deeper insights into changing audience behaviours.

- c. Under the current funding arrangements, Australia Network has a small digital team that has responsibility for the website and social media. The ABC understands the importance of social media for international audiences and has given it a high priority in its future strategy for Australia Network. If the ABC is the successful tenderer for the next DFAT-Australia Network contract, additional resources will be dedicated to social media.
- d. Australia Network has a record of considerable achievement both on air and online and out performs many other international channels that have considerably greater resources.

In line with its contractual obligations, the ABC has ensured that funds provided by DFAT for the provision of Australia Network have not been used for other purposes. The ABC is subject to the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*. The Act sets out the governance framework to which the ABC must adhere. The Act requires the ABC to submit an Annual Report including financial statements, which is audited by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO). In addition, Australia Network submits Annual Reports to DFAT. It also prepares a separate set of financial statements that are subject to audit by the ANAO.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 67

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: 7:30 Program

Senator Fisher asked:

1. What was the original projected start date for the new 7:30 program on ABC TV?
2. Have there been any delays in the buildings of the sets for the 7:30 program?
3. What has been the total cost of building the sets for 7:30?
4. Can a break-down be provided of all costs in the construction of the new set?
5. Is it expected that the building of the sets come in under budget?

Answer:

1. The projected start date set by the ABC for 7:30 was Monday 7 March 2011. The launch date was fixed due to the time required to design and build a complete new set for 7.30 featuring the latest technology.
2. There were no delays in the building of the set for 7:30. The project proceeded as planned and was completed on schedule.

The works related to building the new 7.30 set provided the opportunity for the ABC to undertake a much needed studio modernisation for all of the programs that use the studio, including *Lateline*, *Lateline Business*, *Four Corners*, and a range of other programs outside News, including Australia Network programming.

Changes were also made to the Canberra Parliament House bureau set, including the installation of a new video wall in that facility.

Adjustments were also made to the old *Stateline* sets in all capital cities and territories, to re-design them for the new state-based 7.30 editions.

3. This information was recently sought from the ABC under a *Freedom of Information Act* (the FOI Act).

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Under section 7(2) and Part 2 of Schedule II of the FOI Act, the ABC is exempt from the operation of the Act in relation to documents that relate “to its program material and datacasting content”. The Federal Court of Australia considered the scope of this exclusion in *Australian Broadcasting Corporation v The University of Technology, Sydney* [2006] FCA964, and decided that the exclusion applies not just to “program material” (such as scripts and tapes) but also to any document that has a “direct or indirect relationship to program material”. In interpreting the meaning and scope of the exclusion, the Court held that “the repeated use of “in relation to” reinforces an intention to exempt not only the category of documents specified but also documents that relate to that category”.

Accordingly, this information has not been made publicly available.

4. See above (3).
5. The building of the set did not exceed ABC budget estimates.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 68

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: *AM* and *PM* Programs on ABC Radio

Senator Fierravanti-Wells asked:

1. How long has the ABC radio's *AM* and *PM* programs current presentation format been in place?
2. How long have the producers of those programs been in their current positions as producers of the shows?
3. Is the ABC looking to change the presentation format in the future?
4. If not, why not?

Answer:

1. The presentation formats of all programs have undergone a degree of change over the years, with new producers, new presenters, new editions in different timeslots and different program durations. However, the fundamental format of reporter-presented stories, studio interviews and live Q&A-style discussions with reporters has been consistent throughout.
2. *AM* has had the same producer for approximately ten years. *PM* has recently seen its producer take up a new position as Executive Producer of 7.30 and is in the process of identifying a replacement.
3. The presentation formats are constantly being reviewed and adapted to take account of new technology, new styles and new content. This is a continuing process achieved through regular program reviews and peer-led discussions, as well as changes in audience feedback and industry standards. For example, the highly experienced *AM* production team has recently led the way in taking the program on the road, and providing fresh styles of presentation and content delivery using online content as well as travelling program presentation.
4. See above.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 69

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Cyclone Season

Senator MacDonald asked:

1. Why did ABC decide to wait until the beginning of the 'cyclone season' to start refurbishments at the Townsville office?
2. When will the refurbishments be complete at the ABC Townsville office?
3. What is the current cyclone category rating at the Townsville office – and what will it be after the refurbishment is complete?
4. What is the cyclone category rating of premises in Mackay, Cairns and Rockhampton?
5. Are there any plans to upgrade offices in North and Central Queensland to increase the cyclone category rating of the buildings?
6. If any ABC offices in North Queensland need to be evacuated as a cyclone approaches (as in the case of Cyclone Yasi) are plans set in place to move staff to another building or premises?

Answer:

1. In October 2008, the ABC commissioned an independent assessment of the cyclone readiness of properties owned and rented by the Corporation that were located in cyclone prone areas. At that time, the ABC premises at Townsville were assessed as being able to withstand wind speeds associated with a Category 2 to 3 cyclone, however, there was uncertainty over the structural integrity of the walk-way structure linking the radio and television buildings which required further investigation before rectification works could commence. In mid-2010, structural strengthening of the radio building commenced. This was completed by early December 2010. Parallel to the strengthening of the building, an electrical infrastructure upgrade was undertaken in conjunction with the local electrical supply authority and the construction of a new computer equipment room to house the digital equipment necessary for digital broadcasting was also completed.
2. The entire works program – external structural works and radio fit out – is scheduled to be complete by November 2011.
3. Prior to works, the radio facility was rated Category 2- 3 and the adjacent television facility was rated to Category 2.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

After works, the radio facility will be rated at Category 3, and television building will remain rated to Category 2. In order to upgrade the ABC Townsville facility to Category 4 or Category 5, the Corporation would have to demolish current structures and build new premises. The cost to do this is estimated at \$10 million. The Corporation does not have access to this level of capital funding.

4. Structural engineers from GHD North Queensland have undertaken a detailed assessment of the sites and have provided the following cyclone ratings.
 - Mackay – Category 3
 - Cairns – Category 3
 - Rockhampton – No structural ‘design’ information is available in relation to the premises and it is not cyclone rated. The ABC is currently considering structural advice from Structural Engineers GHD in relation to the building’s cyclone preparedness.
5. A new site has been purchased by the ABC at Mackay. It is the Corporation’s intention to construct a Category 4 rated building at this site. There are no plans at this stage to increase the ratings at Cairns or Rockhampton. As noted above, works have recently been undertaken at Townsville.
6. Yes. In the event we need to evacuate buildings, ABC Radio looks to relocate staff to the nearest and safest premises from which to mount emergency broadcasts. For example, in the recent case of Cyclone Yasi, a temporary broadcast point was established in Cairns at the Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) facility (rated by EMQ at Category 5), allowing two ABC staff to feed information and live content into our broadcasts from that location throughout the cyclone.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 70

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: ABC Canberra Digital Stream

Senator Humphries asked:

When will ABC Canberra transmit via digital stream?

Answer:

Commercial Radio Australia, the industry body representing the commercial radio sector sought approval from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in early 2010 for a technical trial of Digital Radio (DAB+) transmissions in Canberra and Darwin. A special scientific license was granted for these trials by ACMA for a limited period of time.

The ABC chose not to participate in both trials as the technology was extensively tested and proven in Sydney and Melbourne prior to the Government's decision to introduce DAB+ as the digital radio standard for Australia and now that digital radio has been rolled out in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

At this stage the ABC is not aware of any Government plans to extend the existing capital city digital radio coverage areas. While the ABC is committed to digital radio, it can only continue the roll out of digital radio services around the country if the Federal Government commits funding for the roll out of transmission outside of Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.