

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

Question No: 195

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: News Related Programs

Senator Cameron asked:

- a. Can the ABC confirm that there is a 1.5% hole in the News Budget?
- b. What is the value of this hole in dollars?
- c. What is the cause of this budget hole?

Answer:

The ABC News Division is currently revising its expenditure by approximately 1.5 per cent in order to ensure that it operates within its budget in the current financial year.

The value of this reduction is approximately \$2.5 million dollars.

Like all media organisations both public and private, the ABC regularly needs to examine its expenditures to ensure it is operating efficiently, effectively and within budget. The past twelve months has seen a number of major news stories both domestically and internationally, including the Federal Election, the floods in Queensland and Victoria, Cyclone Yasi, the Christchurch Earthquakes, the Japanese tsunami and nuclear incident and the Arab Spring. All news organisations have experienced an increase pull on their budgets due to the number of these events.

Covering major rolling news stories is expensive, and coming out of this period of intense activity the News Division has, quite properly, assessed its budgetary pressures and decided to take a number of small but important steps to better align its spending with its budget, to ensure it can meet its normal budget targets. There have been no cuts to the News budget within the ABC – quite the reverse; there have been increases in recent years to fund new activities. However, all budgets must be responsibly managed to ensure a sustainable output.

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Question No: 196

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: News Related Programs

Senator Cameron asked:

Can the ABC confirm that programs have been told to:

- a. cut casuals by 20%?
- b. cut overtime?
- c. restrict access to live financial information?

Answer:

The ABC refers to its response to Question on Notice 195.

Additionally, it notes that no programs or newsrooms have been directed to make any specific changes to any specific programs or activities. The process has been that all newsrooms and programs have been asked to take on a share of efficiencies, and to come up with their own ways of making savings. The aim in asking each program area to come up with its own plan was to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach, and to ensure that whatever measures were suggested were designed to suit the particular program or newsroom and have the minimum operational impact, as far as possible.

In relation to the restriction of live financial information, the ABC tries to ensure we have no more than we need in terms of licenses and terminals. The ABC does not consider that there has been any impact on audience or viewer access to financial information in news coverage.

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Question No: 197

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: News Related Programs

Senator Cameron asked:

What other cuts have been ordered?

Answer:

The ABC refers to its response to Question on Notice 195.

All ABC newsrooms and programs have been asked to take on a share of efficiencies.

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Question No: 198

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: News Related Programs

Senator Cameron asked:

What will be the impact of these changes on the capacity of the ABC to collect and disseminate News?

Answer:

As noted in ABC's response to Question on Notice 197, all ABC newsrooms and programs have been asked to take on a share of efficiencies. In some states, the changes have included regional areas, but the ABC does not consider that coverage has been significantly affected.

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Question No: 199

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: News Related Programs

Senator Cameron asked:

Can the ABC confirm that there have also been cuts to regional areas and that the ABC has left regional news areas unstaffed?

Answer:

As noted in the ABC's response to Question on Notice 198, all ABC newsrooms and programs have been asked to take on a share of efficiencies. In some states, the changes have included regional areas, but the ABC does not consider regional offices have been left unmanned because of those cuts.

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Question No: 200

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: News Related Programs

Senator Cameron asked:

Have the cuts been extended to Landline?

Answer:

The ABC refers to its response to Question on Notice 195.

The only impact of these measures on *Landline* has been by way of a temporary delay in filling a vacant position on the program, but this has had no impact on the program's operations, as the delay chiefly occurred over a period when the program was not on air.

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Question No: 201

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: News Related Programs

Senator Cameron asked:

Has the travel budget of Australian Story been cut? If yes, had this resulted in any regional stories being cut or postponed?

Answer:

The ABC refers to its response to Question on Notice 195.

The travel budget of *Australian Story* has not been reduced, and as a result there has been no impact on the coverage of regional stories.

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Question No: 202

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: South Australian National Football League broadcast 2012-2013

Senator Nash asked:

What is the status of negotiations with the South Australian National Football League to broadcast that league's games on ABC television in 2012 and 2013? Will the league be required to contribute any funding in order to ensure coverage continues?

Answer:

Negotiations are ongoing with South Australian Football League regarding broadcast of the 2012 and 2013 SANFL seasons.

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Question No: 203

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Victorian Football League broadcast 2012/2013

Senator Nash asked:

What is the status of negotiations with the Victorian Football League to broadcast that league's games on ABC television in 2012 and 2013? Will the league be required to contribute any funding in order to ensure coverage continues?

Answer:

Negotiations are ongoing between the ABC and Australian Football League Victoria regarding broadcast of the 2012 and 2013 Victorian Football League seasons.

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Question No: 204

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: West Australian Football League broadcast 2012-2013

Senator Nash asked:

What is the status of negotiations with the West Australian Football League to broadcast that league's games on ABC television in 2012 and 2013? Will the league be required to contribute any funding in order to ensure coverage continues?

Answer:

Negotiations are ongoing with West Australian Football Commission regarding broadcast of the 2012 and 2013 WAFL seasons.

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Question No: 205

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Queensland Rugby League Broadcast 2012-2013

Senator Nash asked:

What is the status of negotiations with the Queensland Rugby League to broadcast the QLD Cup games on ABC television in 2012 and 2013? Will the QRL be required to contribute any funding in order to ensure coverage continues?

Answer:

Negotiations are ongoing with the Queensland Rugby League regarding broadcast of the Queensland Cup competition in 2012 and 2013.

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Question No: 206

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: NSW Rugby Broadcast 2012-2013

Senator Nash asked:

What is the status of negotiations with the NSW Rugby to broadcast Shute Shield games on ABC television in 2012 and 2013? Will NSW Rugby be required to contribute any funding in order to ensure coverage continues?

Answer:

The Shute Shield is contracted for 2012. Negotiations on 2013 will not commence until mid 2012.

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Question No: 207

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Continuation of ABC Television Coverage Sports

Senator Nash asked:

On what dates did the Minister for Sport (or one of his staff) contact the ABC in relation to the continuation of ABC television coverage of the SANFL, WAFL, VFL, Queensland Cup, Shute Shield and/or lawn bowls?

Answer:

Both the Minister for Sport, Senator Arbib and a member of his staff contacted the ABC on 31 August 2011 in relation to its then recent sports programming changes.

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Question No: 208

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: ABC – NSW News

Senator Xenophon asked:

I refer to an internal ABC email that was recently sent to my office, written by a senior member of the NSW news department. It refers to the effect of the recent budget cuts on the NSW news operation.

I quote:

"Overtime and TOIL - We will seek to avoid overtime payments wherever possible. Pre-approval for overtime must be sought from the NSW News Editor. Individuals will be offered TOIL rather than overtime"

"Rostering - Staff will be asked to be flexible in their rostering and may be asked to fill shifts that they ordinarily would not perform. We will try to accommodate staff requests for leave over Christmas and New Year but this will not be possible in every case. Priority will be given to those who missed out on Christmas leave in previous years."

"Travel - All travel must be pre-approved. It is important that staff use available station cars in preference to taxis wherever possible."

- a. Are the changes in NSW News common across all states?
- b. What are the reasons for these changes?

Answer:

The ABC refers to its response to Questions on Notice 195(c), 196 and 199.

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Question No: 209

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Internal Programming

Senator: Xenophon asked:

In 2010, the ABC internally-produced 40 episodes of *Talking Heads* and 40 episodes of *Poh's Kitchen* in South Australia, 40 episodes of *Can We Help?* in Perth and 40 episodes of *Collectors* in Tasmania, totalling 160 half-hour episodes of internally produced content.

Should the cuts to internal programming proceed, BAPH states will create 13 episodes of *Poh's Kitchen* and 12 episodes of independently produced and owned programs from the SAFC FACTory initiative, 12 from the ScreenWest initiative and 10 of an auction program in Tasmania.

This equals a reduction of 70 per cent of on-air output for the same cost. Furthermore, only 15 per cent of these programs will be owned in entirety by the ABC.

Can you indicate how this is deemed value for money?

Answer:

The ABC commissions a broad range of content that showcase the best talent, ideas and stories across Australia. The ABC will always make decisions with a financial metric in mind; however the absolute measure must be aligned to audience and network requirements. The lowest cost base does not determine all of the ABC's commissioning decisions.

The ABC has moved from fully internally commissioning some of these programs (noting *Can We Help?* was an external format produced internally) in the regions to a mixed commissioning model.

This enables the ABC to create the best content it can in regional Australia. This also allows the ABC to commission a broad range of skills in these states, providing employment opportunities and economic benefits. It also means that the ABC and its producers can access various funding bodies to support the ABC's investment, thus increasing the budget and production values, allowing this content to be placed in the primetime schedule on ABC1. The ABC has made a decision to commit more funding to the regions to ensure that all of Australia is appropriately represented across the primetime schedule, which showcases great regional Australian stories that will attract the biggest audience possible.

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Question No: 210

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Staffing

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. How many permanent staff recruited this Financial Year to Date (FYTD)?
- b. What classification are these staff?
- c. How many temporary positions exist or have been created this FYTD?
- d. This FYTD, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment?

Answer:

- a. A total of forty three (43) permanent staff were recruited between 20 June 2011 and 25 September 2011 at the classifications shown below:
- b. See below.

PERMANENT STAFF RECRUITED	
20 Jun 2011 - 25 Sept 2011	
Staff Levels	Total
Administrative/Professional	5
Content Maker	22
Head Office Assistant	1
Senior Executive	1
Shop Assistant	6
Shop Manager	3
Technologist	5
Total	43

- c. Five hundred and forty one (541) temporary positions exist at 25/9/2011. Sixteen (16) temporary positions were created between 20/6/2011 and 25/9/2011.
- d. Between 20 June 2011 and 25 September 2011, four hundred and six (406) employees have been employed on contract*. The average length of their employment period is 57 days.

*Employees on contract = Fixed Term + Specified Task + Run of Show + Nominated Long Term Fixed Term + Long Term Specified Task

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Question No: 211

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Staffing

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. How many permanent staff recruited for the year 2010-11?
- b. What classification are these staff?
- c. How many temporary positions exist or have been created for the year 2010-11
- d. For the year 2010-11, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment?

Answer:

- a. A total of one hundred and seventy seven (177) permanent staff were recruited between 21 June 2010 and 19 June 2011 at the classifications shown below:
- b. See below.

PERMANENT STAFF RECRUITED	
21 Jun 2010 - 19 Jun 2011	
Staff Levels	Total
Administrative/Professional	42
Content Maker	73
Head Office Manager	1
Senior Executive	11
Shop Assistant	29
Shop Manager	9
Technologist	12
Total	177

- c. Five hundred and forty nine (549) temporary positions exist at 19/6/2011. One hundred and eight (108) temporary positions were created between 21/6/2010 and 19/6/2011.
- d. Between 21 June 2010 and 19 June 2011, nine hundred and eighty two (982) employees have been employed on contract*. The average length of their employment period is 154 days.
* Employees on contract = Fixed Term + Specified Task + Run of Show + Nominated Long Term Fixed Term + Long Term Specified Task

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Question No: 212

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Staffing

Senator Fisher asked:

Are there any plans for staff reduction? If so, please advise details ie reduction target, how this will be achieved, service/programs to be cut etc.

If there are plans for staff reductions, please give the reasons why these are happening.

Answer:

The ABC, as a tax payer funded Corporation, is mindful of it expenditure.

The ABC has no “reduction targets”. However, mindful of operating efficiently, divisions regularly review their operational requirements. A number of divisions are currently consulting with staff as to their operational requirements.

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Question No: 213

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Efficiency Dividend

Senator Fisher asked:

How has the efficiency dividend been implemented? Please list where and what spending has been reduced to meet the efficiency dividend?

Answer:

As noted in previous Senate Estimates responses, the ABC is not subject to the efficiency dividend.

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Question No: 214

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Government Advertising

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What advertising – Campaign and Non-Campaign – has the Agency undertaken in 2011-2012? Provide details of each advertising, including the program the advertising was for, the total spend and the business that provided the advertising services.
- b. Did the Department of Finance and Deregulation provide any advice about the advertising? Provide details of each advertising item.
- c. Did the Advertising comply with the Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns by Australian Government Departments and Agencies (March 2010)? Provide details for each advertising item.
- d. Provide details for any other communications program, including details of the program, the total spend and the business that provided the communication services.
- e. What advertising – Campaign and Non-Campaign – and other communications programs is the Agency undertaking, or are planning to undertake?

Answer:

None.

For the purposes of answering this question on notice, the ABC has taken guidance from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, that this question relates to Government advertising campaigns and has further assumed that by ‘communications program’ it is meant *“communication of a government message to the public – possibly by advertising (print, television etc), possibly through the erection of signs, plaques etc, or through other mediums”*, as set out in Senator Barnett’s Question on Notice No 38 from Budget Estimates 2010.

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Question No: 215

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Hospitality and Entertainment

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What was the Agency's hospitality spend for the year 2010-11?
- b. Detail date, location, purpose, and cost of all events.

Answer:

The ABC considers hospitality to be a subset of its entertainment expenditure. This subset is not calculated separately.

For the ABC's entertainment spend, please refer to Question on Notice 216.

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Question No: 216

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Hospitality and Entertainment

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What was the Agency's entertainment spend for the year 2010-11?
- b. Detail date, location, purpose, and cost of all events.

Answer:

The ABC spent \$369,000 on entertainment in 2010-11.

It is not feasible to separately identify items of entertainment due to the high volume and small nature of the many transactions.

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Question No: 217

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Hospitality and Entertainment

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What hospitality spend is the Agency planning on spending?
- b. Detail date, location, purpose and cost of all events.

Answer:

As noted in response to Question on Notice 215, the ABC does not spend money on hospitality. The ABC's entertainment budget for FY 2011-12 is noted in response to Question on Notice 218.

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Question No: 218

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Hospitality and Entertainment

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What entertainment spend is the Agency planning on spending?
- b. Detail date, location, purpose and cost of all events.

Answer:

The ABC's budget for entertainment in FY2011-12 is \$373,000. This budget is not determined by specific dates and locations.

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Question No: 219

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Freedom of Information

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. Has the Agency received any advice on how to respond to FOI requests?
- b. How many FOI requests has the Agency received for the year 2010-11? How many have been granted or denied?
- c. How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests for the year 2010-11?
- d. How many FOI requests has the Agency received for this FYTD? How many have been granted or denied?
- e. How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests for this FYTD?

Answer:

- a. The ABC has not received any specific advice. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet provided FOI Guidance Notes to all agencies on 28 July 2011 - www.dpmc.gov.au/foi/guidance_notes.cfm
- b. Between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2011, the ABC received 25 FOI requests and five requests for internal review of previous decisions. The outcome of those requests is set out below. Note that of the 17 requests which were refused, 12 were outside the scope of the FOI Act. Similarly, all of the requests for internal review related to requests which were outside the scope of the FOI Act.

FOI requests	Granted	1
	Granted in part	6
	Refused	17
	Withdrawn	1
Requests for internal review	Granted	0
	Refused	5
TOTAL		30

- c. None. Conclusive certificates were abolished on 7 October 2009.
- d. In the financial year to date, the ABC has received nine FOI requests. The outcome of those requests is set out below. Note that of the three requests which were refused, two were outside the scope of the FOI Act.

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FOI requests	Granted	0
	Provided outside the FOI process	1
	Refused	3
	Not finalised	5
TOTAL		9

- e. None. Conclusive certificates were abolished on 7 October 2009.

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Question No: 220

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Media Monitoring

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What was the total cost of media monitoring services, including press clippings, electronic media transcripts etcetera, provided to the Agency for the year 2010-11?
- b. Which agency or agencies provided these services?
- c. What is the estimated budget to provide these same services for 2011-12?
- d. What has been spent providing these services FYTD?

Answer:

- a. The ABC spent \$265,000 on media monitoring in 2010-11.
- b. The ABC uses Media Monitors as its supplier for these services.
- c. The budget for media monitoring services in 2011-12 is \$60,000.
- d. The ABC has spent \$41,000 FYTD.

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Question No: 221

Program No. ABC

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Social Media

Senator Fisher asked:

Has there been any changes to agency social media or protocols about staff access and usage of YouTube; online social media, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter; and access to online discussions forums and blogs since May 2011? Please explain.

Answer:

The ABC's Use of Social Media Policy was originally released in November 2009. It underwent minor and technical changes in December 2009 when it was reformatted to fit the style used for corporate policies. Since then, the policy has been reviewed as part of the ABC's usual policy review cycle [conducted biennially] and also to update it following the introduction of the revised ABC Editorial Policies.

The four overarching standards guiding the use of social media remain the same:

1. Do not mix the professional and the personal in ways likely to bring the ABC into disrepute.
2. Do not undermine your effectiveness at work.
3. Do not imply ABC endorsement of your personal views.
4. Do not disclose confidential information obtained through work.

The policy was revised to:

- more precisely define who the policy applies to ('workplace participants'), consistently with other ABC policies;
- more clearly distinguish official ABC accounts from personal accounts. 'Official ABC accounts' are those over which the ABC exercises editorial control. Editorial control involves making decisions to –
 - establish the account;
 - publish content generated, produced, commissioned or acquired by the ABC;
 - moderate user-generated content posted on the account to the extent permitted by the third party site and in line with the conventions and expectations of users of the site; and
 - modify or close down the account; and
- clarify that the ABC does not become editorially responsible for content posted on personal accounts simply by virtue of those accounts being referred to in ABC content. This is the same way we treat external websites.

The revised policy is available on the ABC's corporate website.