

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts**  
**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**  
**Additional Estimates Hearings February 2009**  
**Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio**  
**Special Broadcasting Service Corporation**

**Question No: 124**

**Hansard Ref: ECA 63**

**Topic: SBS Complaints**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Can you take on notice to provide the committee with details of the extent of complaints that may have been received in relation to coverage of the conflict in Gaza and the recent Israeli elections, and particularly provide details of any complaints that have been upheld in the resulting action that SBS has taken in that regard?

**Answer:**

SBS has received five complaints in relation to the coverage of the recent Israel/Hamas conflict.

Four complaints claimed bias was shown against Israel, and one complaint claimed bias towards Israel.

At present, three of these complaints have been dismissed and two are still being finalised.

As no breaches have been found so far, no action has been required.

There were no formal complaints made regarding the recent Israeli elections.

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**Question No: 125**

**Hansard Ref: ECA 63**

**Topic: SBS News**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

In relation to captions on SBS news, it has been put to me by a constituent that on 24 November, in looking at issues in Gaza, one interview with somebody carried the caption 'Jewish squatter' and yet another interview with a Palestinian carried the caption 'house owner'. That does not sound to me to be a particularly balanced assessment of such matters in relation to such basic things as captioning. Do you consider that to sound balanced?

**Answer:**

This story, by Yaara Bou Melhem, ran on the 6.30pm bulletin of *World News Australia* on 24 November 2008.

It concerned a disputed house in Hebron, on the West Bank, which was occupied by Jewish settlers, but which a Palestinian claimed to own.

The word "squatter" was not used anywhere in the story, either in the script or in any captions.

The Jewish "settlers" were called "settlers" throughout the story. Their spokesman was captioned 'Jewish Settlement in Hebron'. The Palestinian was captioned 'Owner of the House'.

Subsequently, in early December, Israeli troops evicted the settlers from the house, acting on a court order from the Supreme Court of Israel.

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**Question No: 126**

**Hansard Ref: ECA 63**

**Topic: Program - *Dateline***

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

In relation to George Negus's interview with Shimon Peres on *Dateline* on 8 February 2009, could you have a look at the conduct of that interview and complaints that may have been received in relation to it, and advise the committee if it believes that that was conducted in an appropriate fashion?

**Answer:**

SBS has received no formal complaints relating to the interview with Mr Shimon Peres. The Director of News and Current Affairs believes the interview was conducted in a fair and professional manner.

A representative from the office of Mr Peres sent a letter to the Producer of *Dateline* thanking her for the professional manner in which the interview had been conducted.

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**Question No: 127**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: *Dateline* interview**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

In addition to checking whether there were complaints made in relation to George Negus's *Dateline* interview with Shimon Peres broadcast on 8 February, and with reference to Mr Brown's 23 February characterisation of it as a classic devil's advocacy style interview, can SBS identify any similar devil's advocate style interviews being applied to someone expressing opposing views to those of Mr Peres, especially spokespeople of Hamas, the Palestinian Authority or opponents of Israeli military action?

**Answer:**

The Director of News and Current Affairs believes the interview was conducted in a fair and professional manner.

A representative from the office of Mr Peres sent a letter to the Producer of *Dateline* thanking her for the professional manner in which the interview had been conducted.

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**Question No: 128**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Efficiency dividend**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

How has SBS implemented the one-off two per cent efficiency dividend (ED)?

Where have savings been achieved – i.e. which programs/resources have been cut?

Has SBS had to reduce any activities that it considers to be ‘core business’ or has it had to reduce service standards as a result of the ED?

**Answer:**

SBS is not subject to the efficiency dividend.

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**Question No: 129**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Efficiency Dividend – Staffing**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Have staffing numbers been reduced as a result of the efficiency dividend and/or other budget cuts? If so, where and at what level?

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

What changes are underway or planned for graduate recruitment, cadetships or similar programs? Are such employment programs being reduced? If so, by how many and has SBS done an analysis on long term effect on retention and attrition?

**Answer:**

No. SBS is not subject to the efficiency dividend.

No changes or reductions in staffing are planned.

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**Question No: 130**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Consultancy Expenditure**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Has SBS's consultancy expenditure increased due to reduced staffing?

**Answer:**

No.

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**Question No: 131**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Appropriations**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Noting the Government's *Federal Financial Relations Bill 2009*, which appropriates money to Treasury to pass on to the States;

- Does SBS receive any appropriations that will be transferred to the Treasury Dept?
- What are those?

**Answer:**

No.



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**Question No: 132**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Budget**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Does SBS have enough analytical resources at its disposal? For example, the Government has cut funding to the ABS – is SBS provided with enough data collection for evidence-based policy making and evaluation?

**Answer:**

SBS conducts its own research into areas related to broadcasting, which informs our decision-making process.

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**Question No: 133**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Depreciation**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

- a) Did SBS use any depreciation funding for recurrent expenditure in 2007-08?
- b) Has SBS used any depreciation funding for recurrent expenditure this year?
- c) Has any depreciation funding been used for purposes other than the replacement of capital items in 2007-08?
- d) How much has SBS spent on the replacement of capital items in the first six months of 2008-09?

**Answer:**

- a) No.
- b) No.
- c) No.
- d) \$1.39 million has been spent in the first six months of 2008-09.

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**Question No: 134**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Stimulus Package**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Does SBS have any involvement in measures announced as part of the \$42 billion budget stimulus package?

If so, was (and when was) SBS asked for input before the stimulus package was announced?

When did SBS know details about the stimulus package affecting its portfolio?

**Answer:**

SBS had no involvement in the measures announced as part of the stimulus package.

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**Question No: 135**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Staffing**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

What is the current staffing for SBS – permanent and temporary?

What was the total Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing level for SBS on 1 July 2008?

How many permanent staff were recruited in calendar year (CY) 2008 and in financial year (FY) 2008-09 to date? What level are these staff?

How many temporary positions exist or have been created in CY 2008 and in FY 2008-09 to date?

For CY 2008 and FY 2008-09 to date, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment period?

**Answer:**

Current staffing: 883 (as at 11/03/09).

FTE staffing level on 1 July 2008: 769.22

Permanent Staff CY 2008: 40 recruited.

SBS Level 2: 2  
SBS Level 3: 19  
SBS Level 4: 7  
SBS Level 5: 2  
SBS Level 6: 5  
SBS Level 7: 5

Permanent Staff FY 08-09: 39 recruited.

SBS Level 2: 3  
SBS Level 3: 17  
SBS Level 4: 5  
SBS Level 5: 4  
SBS Level 6: 6  
SBS Level 7: 4

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Temporary positions CY 2008: 124.

Temporary positions FY 08-09: 81.

Contracts CY 2008: 38, with average length of employment period of 1.56 years.

Contracts FY 08-09: 17, with average length of employment period of 1.77 years.

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**Question No: 136**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Program Underspends/Lapses**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Which programs are currently tracking for an underspend this financial year?

How many of SBS's funding programs/budget measures lapse this Financial Year and what are they?

**Answer:**

No programs are tracking for an underspend.

No funding programs lapse this financial year.

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**Question No: 137**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Gershon Review**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

What impact will the Gershon Review have on SBS?

How much money will be saved?

Will SBS be required to return any money to Budget for 2009-10?

**Answer:**

The Government is currently considering the findings and recommendations – until this is finalised it is not possible to determine what impact it will have on SBS.

No, there is no requirement to return funding built into the 2009-10 Budget.

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**Question No: 138**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Media Monitoring**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

How much was spent on media monitoring in CY 2008?

How much has been spent on media monitoring in FY 2008-09 to date?

How many staff in SBS are employed for media related duties?

**Answer:**

SBS has a media monitoring contract with Media Monitors. In 2008 SBS spent, on average, \$9,000 per month. In total SBS spent \$108,000 with Media Monitors in CY 2008.

Additionally, SBS spent \$10,000 on ethnic press monitoring in FY 2008-09. This amount may increase in FY 2009-10 due to the introduction of an email-alert service.

Approximately \$80,000 has been spent on media monitoring to date in FY 2008-09 (an average of \$9,000 per month) and the \$10,000 fee for ethnic press monitoring was paid in September 2008.

SBS employs a Corporate Communications Manager who handles media calls related to SBS as a whole.

SBS's marketing department also employs five publicists. These publicists only deal with the media on program related matters.



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**Question No: 139**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Government Advertising**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

What communications programs has SBS undertaken, or is planning to undertake?

For each program, what is the total spend? Please detail including media advertisements (where placed and costs).

What was the total spend on advertising by SBS in CY 2008 and for FY 2008/09 to date?

**Answer:**

SBS does not conduct specific public communications programs as an organisation. SBS does undertake publicity and marketing campaigns for some of its programming.

In 2008, SBS released its *Plans for the Future* document which outlines a vision for SBS and its services up to 2013, the proposed digital switchover date.

A series of community consultations to discuss SBS's plans were held across Australia during 2008.

Specific costs for the consultations are listed below and some have been provided in response to a previous Question on Notice. These costs include catering and room hire costs. No advertising was placed as participants were personally invited by SBS.

24/07/08 - Sydney - \$444.00  
6/08/08 - Brisbane - \$1456.06  
20/08/08 - Melbourne - \$391.00  
29/10/08 - Perth - \$286.00  
30/10/08 - Adelaide - \$690.00  
17/11/08 - Darwin - \$562.00  
25/11/08 - Canberra - \$948  
28/11/08 - Hobart - \$540

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The Table below includes the spending on consumer and trade media for SBS. This advertising spend relates to publicity for SBS programming.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Spend (incl. GST)</b>
<b>Jan-08</b>	\$365,854.05
<b>Feb-08</b>	\$12,920.92
<b>Mar-08</b>	\$0.00
<b>Apr-08</b>	\$103,931.23
<b>May-08</b>	\$182,570.23
<b>Jun-08</b>	\$370,455.47
<b>Jul-08</b>	\$312,957.15
<b>Aug-08</b>	\$173,230.24
<b>Sep-08</b>	\$211,145.65
<b>Oct-08</b>	\$626,809.43
<b>Nov-08</b>	\$115,726.89
<b>Dec-08</b>	\$58,753.69

**TOTAL = \$2,534,354.95**

<b>Jan-09</b>	\$50,912.49
<b>Feb-09</b>	\$146,886.25
<b>Mar-09</b>	\$78,638.17
<b>Apr-09</b>	\$45,560.52
<b>May-09</b>	\$4,054.75

**TOTAL = \$326,052.18**

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Question No: 140

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: Hospitality

Senator Birmingham asked:

What is SBS's hospitality spend for CY 2008 and for FY 2008/09 to date? Please detail date, location, purpose and cost of all events.

Answer:

Date	Location	Purpose	Cost
21 February 2008	Sydney	Function for production partners at Australian International Documentary Conference	\$2,200
28 April 2008	Sydney	Function for independent production community as part of SBS Commissioned Content National Roadshow	\$2,156
30 June 2008	Sydney	Function with commercial partners and stakeholders to celebrate SBS rebranding project	\$4,659

**Total Calendar Year 2008**

**\$28,516**

17 July 2008	Sydney	End of financial year function with commercial partners.	\$10,000
25 October 2008	Sydney	Function co-hosted with NSW Film & Television Office for production partners at SPAA Fringe Festival	\$1,818
25 October 2008	Melbourne	Corporate suite A League – Melbourne v Sydney	\$3,500
15 December 2008	Sydney	End of year publicity function with journalists	\$4,183
15 February 2009	Sydney	Private suite 20/20 Cricket – Australia v New Zealand	\$11,000

**Financial Year 2008-09 as at 15/2/2009**

**\$30,501**

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**Question No: 141**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Board Appointments**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

What is the gender ratio on each board across the portfolio, and what is the total ratio across the portfolio?

In which states/territories do these Board members reside?

**Answer:**

As at 27 March 2009, the SBS Board has nine members.

Four of the nine board members, including the Chair of the Board, are female.

The Board members reside in the following States:

- 6 – NSW
- 1 – Victoria
- 1 – Western Australia
- 1 – South Australia

The question regarding the total gender ratio across the portfolio is a matter for the Department.

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**Question No: 142**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Freedom of Information**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

Has SBS received any advice on how to respond to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests?

How many FOI requests has SBS received?

How many have been granted or denied?

How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests?

**Answer:**

SBS relies on guidelines issued by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Since the beginning of October 2008, SBS has not received any FOI applications or requests.

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**Question No: 143**

**Hansard Ref: Written**

**Topic: Consultancies**

**Senator Birmingham asked:**

How many consultancies have been undertaken or are underway since November 2007?

Please identify the name of the consultant, the subject matter of the consultancy, the duration and cost of the consultancy, and the method of procurement (i.e. open tender, direct source, etc). Please also include total value for all consultancies.

How many consultancies are planned or budget for this calendar year?

Have these been published in SBS's Annual Procurement Plan (APP) on the AusTender website? If not, why not? In each case please identify the subject matter, duration, cost and method of procurement as above, and the name of the consultant if known.

**Answer:**

How many consultancies have been undertaken or are underway since November 2007?

<b>Consultant</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Method of Procurement</b>
Access Public	Corporate public relations services	12 months	\$100,800	Direct source
And Associates	Brand and website promotion and development	As required	\$50,100	Competitive quotes
Brandhook	Client Insights	As required	\$6,000	Direct source
Brief Group	Occupational Health & Safety	12 months	\$60,000	Competitive quotes
Ceresio	Executive presentation and development	4 weeks	\$2,812	Direct source
Crescendo Consulting	Strategic Planning	8 weeks	\$198,310	Competitive quotes
Data Organisation	Development of Rights management database	As required	\$18,047	Competitive quotes
Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu	Professional and Consultancy Services for SBS2	2 months	\$192,509	Direct source
Deloitte Touche	Valuation & Accounting Advice on Associated	4 weeks	\$73,500	Direct source

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Tohmatsu	Company			
Digital Sports Management	Sports Rights consultancy	12 months	\$50,000	Direct source
Full Circle	Media consultancy	As required	\$2,500	Direct source
Gavin Anderson	Counsel regarding Triennial Funding	13 months	\$80,678	Direct source
Nullcube	IT security review of newly developed digital broadcast architecture	3 weeks	\$10,150	Limited RFP
The Nous Group	Review of IT Branch	3 months	\$ 82,000	Limited RFP
The Nous Group	5 year strategic planning	4 months	\$40,102	Competitive quotes
The Nous Group	Radio Content Strategy	4 months	\$32,000	Direct source
Torque Solution	Database consultancy	As required	\$10,050	Competitive quotes
Waterfield Consulting	Business Planning – facilitation	12 months	\$50,000	Competitive quotes
			<b>Total</b> <b>\$1,059,558</b>	

How many consultancies are planned or budgeted for this calendar year?

Consultant	Subject	Duration	Budget	Method of Procurement
tba	Assist IT Strategy Sub Committee in the development of the IT Strategy by providing subject matter experts as required	4 months	\$ 25,000 - \$30,000	Open RFP
Rogen International	Business Planning and integration	3 months	\$50,000	Direct source
The Nous Group	Radio Divisional Strategy	3 months	\$40,000	Direct source

SBS does not publish an Annual Procurement Plan on the AusTender website. This website is only for departments and agencies coming under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, whereas SBS comes under the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*.