

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Budget Estimates Hearings February 2010
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 25

Hansard Ref: ECA 24

Topic: Hopman Cup Tennis Coverage 2010

Senator Cormann asked:

Can you describe the most recent Hopman Cup event from the ABC's point of view, including ratings, format etc

Answer:

The ABC broadcast the Hopman Cup from 2 January to 9 January 2010. The event was broadcast live on ABC1.

The ABC attracted an average of 190,000 viewers over the event. Daily average audience figures (5-city) Metro and session times are as follows:

Day	Date	Times (WA time)	Average
1	2 Jan 10	10:00 - 1600	343,000
2	3 Jan 10	10:00 - 16:00	174,000
3	4 Jan 10	10:00 - 16:00	88,000
4	5 Jan 10	10:00 - 16:00	155,000
5	6 Jan 10	10:00 - 16:00	99,000
6	7 Jan 10	10:00 - 16:00	158,000
7	8 Jan 10	10:00 - 16:00	138,000
8 (Final)	9 Jan 10	09:30 - 16:00	367,000

The highest audience figures recorded were on Day 1 of the event and Day 8 of the event (the Final).

It is considered that ratings over Day 2 to Day 7 suffered from competing sporting events which were broadcast on free to air television over the same period. For example, over the same period, Channel Nine had strong rating for its test cricket coverage and Network Seven had strong ratings for an alternative tennis tournament. Additionally, audience figures were higher when Australia was in competition at the Hopman Cup. When there were no Australian competitors, audience ratings were down.

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Question No: 26

Hansard Ref: ECA 25

Topic: ABC Production in Western Australia

Senator Cormann asked:

What percentage of ABC programs have been produced locally in Perth over the past two or three years, how many programs previously produced in Perth are no longer produced there, and how many programs are planned for future production.

Answer:

Over the past 3 years, WA has the highest output percentages of the states outside of NSW and Victoria. Of the total hours commissioned in each financial year from 0607 to 0910 YTD the percentage of output in WA is as follows:

- 12% of the total output in 2006/07
- 12% of the total output in 2007/08; and
- 16% in 2008/09.

Over the last 3 years, Perth has continued to produce a weekly factual program (*Can We Help?*) has been a contributor to *Gardening Australia* (one host Josh Byrne is based in Perth), *Catalyst* and *Collectors* as well as providing stories and resources associated with arts, Indigenous (*Message Stick* documentaries such as *Before Gallileo*) and sporting and events content, including the Hopman Cup, WAFL, Bowls and extensive coverage of Anzac Day.

“*Rollercoaster*” which was produced in Perth is no longer in production.

The ABC is committed to continued production in Western Australia. In addition to sporting and events coverage, factual and arts programs and an ongoing commitment to a regular magazine type program from Perth, the ABC is working in partnership with the independent production sector to maintain production in WA. The documentaries *Homeward Bound* and *Deadly Yarns* stem from that partnership and there are a number of projects that the ABC has in development in drama, documentaries and children’s production. Announcements are expected in the next few months.

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Question No: 27

Hansard Ref: ECA 26

Topic: ABC Coverage of Women's Sport - Ratings

Senator Lundy asked:

With regard to the Women's National Basketball League (WNBL), how does coverage of the WNBL rate in comparison to events like the Hopman Cup Tennis. Could you provide a snapshot as to the ratings of other major women's sports events covered by the ABC.

Answer:

The average ratings for the Hopman Cup 2010 were 190,000. By way of comparison, the average ratings for:

- a) The WNBL 2009/10 season is 39,000 (season ends 6 March 2010).
- b) The W-League 2009 season was 54,000.
- c) Australian Women's Golf Championships 2009 was 237,000.
- d) Women's Soccer International 2009 was 130,000.

The WNBL and the W-League are national events whereas the Hopman Cup, the Australian Women's Golf Championships and the Women's Soccer International are international events.

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Question No: 28

Hansard Ref: ECA 29

Topic: ABC Presenters – Speaking Engagements

Senator Abetz asked:

Can you advise which high profile ABC presenters undertake paid speaking engagements?

Answer:

The following high profile ABC presenters have undertaken paid speaking engagements or been MCs at functions during the last 12 months:

Steve Austin
Jennifer Byrne
Gary Bryson
Barrie Cassidy
Tim Cox
Andrew Daddo
Jason Di Rosso
Geraldine Dougue
Richard Fidler
Peter Goers
Richard Glover
Hillary Harper
Kelly Higgins-Devine
Tony Jones
Madonna King
Rachael Kohn
Ramona Koval
Dr Karl Kruszelnicki
Christopher Laurence
Louise Maher
Simon Marnie
Natasha Mitchell
Kerry O'Brien
James O'Loughlin
Tony Jones
Leigh Sales
Ross Solly
Adam Spencer

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David Stratton
Norman Swan
James Valentine
Russell Wolf

In addition to the presenters listed above, many ABC presenters and managers, including the Managing Director and Chairman, undertake speaking engagements for which they do not receive payment.

Section 8 of the *ABC Workplace Values and Code of Conduct 2000* governs ABC employees' engagement in work outside the Corporation. It provides that full time ABC employees may engage in outside work only with prior approval from their Divisional Director and that non-full time employees must seek approval for outside work if it might give rise to a conflict of interest. When assessing a request for approval of outside work, the Divisional Director will consider whether the work would interfere with the employee's normal duties or create a conflict of interest.

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Question No: 29

Hansard Ref: ECA 32

Topic: Online Correction- *Lords of the Forest*

Senator Abetz asked:

With regard to the ABC's answer to Question No. 89 at Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing in October 2009, who had the authority to make the online correction and from which ABC studio or office was the correction made?

Answer:

The Executive Producer of the program has authority for arranging the online posting of the correction after the correction has been cleared by ABC management (by either the Head of National Programs or the Director of News).

Owing to the lapse in time and to changes in staff over time, the ABC's current Head of National Programs, News and Current Affairs is unable to confirm on this occasion:

- who, out of the then Executive Producer, the then Head of National Programs or the then Director of News, authorised the correction; and
- whether the online correction was, once approved, uploaded either in Brisbane (by News Online) or in Sydney (by *Four Corners*).

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Question No: 30

Hansard Ref: ECA 33

Topic: Report of Off the Record Discussions – Mr Brissenden

Senator Abetz asked:

- (a) With regard to the ABC's answer to Question No. 90 at Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings in October 2009, did the correction show the actual date of the document or just state that the date was incorrect?
- (b) Did *Media Watch* ever run a segment on this particular report? Can you confirm that the specific issue of the date was raised.
- (c) Did the ABC look at the fact that Mr Brissenden falsely claimed that the note was his own, rather than a collective note prepared by someone else?

Answer:

- (a) The on-air correction corrected the record in relation to the date of the dinner and acknowledged that the date was wrong.
- (b) *Media Watch* did a segment relating to the Costello dinner on 27 August 2008 (see: <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s2016918.htm>). The segment did not discuss the issue of the date.
- (c) In the days immediately after the story went to air, the following statement by the ABC's Head of National Programs for News, Alan Sunderland, was placed on the *7.30 Report* website:

There has been some dispute about the precise nature of the notes taken on the night. The journalists present at the dinner have indicated that the notes were prepared on the night in question as a result of input from all three reporters, circulated to each of the three reporters, and retained as a contemporaneous record of the matter. The set of notes which Mr Brissenden produced and referred to in his story was his copy of this contemporaneous record. It is clear from the subsequent commentary that viewers may have been left with the impression that each of the reporters took separate notes and that Mr Brissenden was showing his own individual notes from the evening. This was not the case.

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Question No: 31

Hansard Ref: ECA 34

Topic: *The Chaser's War on Everything*

Senator Abetz asked:

Has ABC management from time to time condoned what is ultimately a trespass on private property because [The Chaser] are uninvited, not entitled to be in the place, but they gatecrash?

Answer:

The ABC does not condone breaches of the law by ABC staff or on-air talent.

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Question No: 32

Hansard Ref: ECA 38

Topic: ABC programs about China

Senator Ludlam asked:

Regarding an article in *The Australian* newspaper by Rowan Callick claiming the ABC was running pro-Chinese military propaganda in the form of historical documentaries, how did the ABC come to purchase the documentaries?

Since ABC management visited China in September 2009, has the ABC run anything by way of drama, documentaries or current affairs that have been critical of China?

Answer:

Both documentaries referred to in Rowan Callick's article, *The Secrets of the Forbidden City* and *The Great Wall of China*, were acquired from All3Media, in the UK.

The ABC's documentary acquisition assessment process is as follows:

1. Completed programs for consideration as acquisitions come to ABC TV in a number of ways, for example from:
 - producers and filmmakers who send in their programs unsolicited;
 - established suppliers such as BBC Worldwide, All3Media and Fremantle Media;
 - attendance at international markets such as MIP TV, MIPCOM and BBC Showcase;
 - researching catalogues, television schedules of overseas channels, trade magazine articles, reviews in the media; and
 - mail-outs from program distributors.
2. Programs are assessed by the members of an assessment panel. The assessor considers the program against a range of criteria, such as:
 - the schedule requirements;
 - the ABC Charter;
 - scheduled timeslots;
 - the quality of the production;
 - the program's relevance to Australian viewers; and
 - the accuracy of information and balanced reporting within documentaries.

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3. The assessor will report his or her assessment at a weekly meeting attended by the assessment panel and chaired by the Head of Programming. The assessed program is then either:
 - selected for purchase by either ABC1, ABC2 or both;
 - rejected;
 - referred to another member of the panel for a second opinion;
 - deferred while further information about the program is sought.
4. If the documentary is selected at the meeting of the assessment panel, the intended timeslot and start date for the licence period of the successful applicants is decided, using the generic schedule and the schedule requirements as guides.

The ABC broadcasts programs and news reports about newsworthy issues and events, some of which might be seen to contain criticism of China, some of which might be seen to contain praise of China and some which might be seen to contain both.

Between September 2009 and 8 February 2010, the ABC broadcast some programs and reports which might be seen to contain criticism of China or Chinese policy, for example:

ABC TV

- *Lateline*, report on trafficked children in China, 29 October 2009.
- *7.30 Report*, a review of 60 years of Communist rule in China (contained positive and negative views), 1 October 2009.

ABC Radio

- Reports about the jailing of dissident Liu Xiabo on 26 December 2009.
- Reports on Google threatening to pull out of China because of government sanctioned interference with its business on 13, 14, 19, 20, 21 and 22 January 2010.
- Report regarding China's decision to execute a British man for drug smuggling 29 and 30 December 2009.
- Reports about Russian claims that Chinese poachers are threatening the survival of black bears in the wild, 29 December 2009.
- A series of stories leading up to the Copenhagen Summit reporting on China's status as the world's biggest polluter, its reluctance to change and its determination not to reach agreement at Copenhagen, 11-13, 16-17 and 24 December 2009.

Australia Network

- Reports on civil unrest in Xianjing Provinces on 12, 13, 16 and 22 October 2009, 1 and 10 November 2009 and 23 December 2009.
- Human rights
 - Freedom of speech in China 16, 22, 23 and 25 December 2009;
 - Execution of people involved in contaminated milk scandal on 25 November 2009; and
 - Internet freedom in China on 5 January 2010.

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- Climate change in China on 8, 16, 17 and 18 December 2009.
- Cyber attacks on Google and other American companies by China on 15 and 22 January 2010.
- Public health and HIV in China on 13 November 2009 and 2 December 2009.
- Taiwan calling on China to scrap missiles aimed at Taiwan on 20 December 2009.
- Breach of copyright and intellectual property in pirated goods produced in China on 28 December 2009.

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Question No: 33

Hansard Ref: ECA 39

Topic: ABC Documentary *The 10 Conditions of Love*

Senator Brown asked:

- (a) Was the documentary scheduled for broadcast in December 2009; if so, why wasn't it shown.
- (b) Have there been any representations by Chinese officials to the ABC about that documentary.
- (c) Do you know when the documentary will be shown?

Answer:

- (a) A number of different dates for screening the documentary *The 10 Conditions of Love* were considered and tentatively placed on the programming schedule, including 17 December 2009. However, the program's producer John Lewis indicated a preference for screening in 2010 and the documentary was never locked into a 2009 screening date.
- (b) No.
- (c) ABC Programming is considering the best date to air the documentary. The ABC purchased the documentary with the intention of screening it and it will do so at some date this year. An announcement will be made shortly.

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Question No: 34

Hansard Ref: ECA 40

Topic: Promotion of Greens Party Fundraiser on 936 ABC Hobart

Senator Bushby asked:

With regard to presenter Andy Muirhead's interview with Rod Quantock on 936 ABC Hobart on 11 November 2009 which promoted a Greens Party Fundraiser, what action did the ABC take with regard to this breach of editorial policies?

Answer:

The matter was raised with the presenter and the program team by the Tasmanian Local Content Manager and it was made clear that incidental publicity for non-ABC events, including political events, is in breach of ABC Editorial Policies and is not acceptable.

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Question No: 35

Hansard Ref: ECA 40

Topic: Promotion of play *Keating! The Musical* on 936ABC Hobart

Senator Bushby asked:

With regard to presenter Tim Cox's mention of the play *Keating! The Musical* on 936 ABC Hobart on 2 February 2010, was he promoting the play specifically in its role as a fundraiser for the State Labor candidate?

Answer:

There was no on-air discussion about *Keating! The Musical* on 936 ABC Hobart on 2 February 2010, or in early February 2010.

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Question No: 36

Hansard Ref: ECA 41

Topic: ABC Open

Senator Lundy asked:

How do regions attain the status of being regional and rural for the purposes of this project? Will Canberra be considered as a region for the purposes of ABC Open?

Answer:

The ABC has 60 ABC Local Radio sites across Australia, of which 9 are in state or territory capital cities. ABC Open regions align with those ABC Local sites which are not state or territory capital cities. Accordingly, Canberra is not considered 'regional' for the purposes of ABC Open.

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Question No: 37

Hansard Ref: ECA 44

Topic: Australian Content on ABC3

Senator Wortley asked:

Can you divulge some of the programming on ABC3 with regards to the Australian content section of it?

Answer:

The following Australian content programming was broadcast on ABC3 between 4 December 2009 and 8 February 2010:

- Antarctica Special
- Barney's Great Barrier Reef
- Black Knight White Witch
- Blue Water High
- BTN Extra
- Casa De Evil
- Chuck Finn
- CJ the DJ
- Countdown to 3
- Creature Features
- Dead Gorgeous
- Desdemona
- Dex Hamilton
- Don't Blame the Koalas
- Dukes of Broxstonia
- Escape from Scorpion Island
- Eugenie Sandler PI
- Figaro Pho
- Flipper & Lopaka
- Genie From Down Under
- Good Game SP
- Heartbreak High
- Itty Bitty Ditties
- Laser Beak Man
- Letterbox
- Mega Bites
- Misery Guts

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- Monster Chef
- My Place
- News on 3
- Old Tom
- Prank Patrol
- Rollercoaster
- Round the Twist
- Rush TV
- Spellbinder
- Studio 3
- Sweat
- The Sleepover Club
- Trapped
- Worst Best Friends
- Yakkity Yak

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Question No: 38

Hansard Ref: ECA 44

Topic: Australian Greens - Share of ABC TV Voice Coverage during 2007 Federal Election

Senator Brown asked:

- (a) During the last election the Greens got 3.9 per cent share of voice coverage on TV and some eight or nine percent of the vote. Do you know why that shortfall occurred in the coverage of the election campaign?
- (b) On *Lateline*, *7.30 Report* and *Insiders*, it fell to 2.3 per cent. Have you got any explanation for that?

Answer:

- (a) Coverage of politics and political parties on ABC programs during any election campaign is based on the news value of the story, not the percentage of the vote a political party might receive or may have received in previous elections.
- (b) See above (a).

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Question No: 39

Hansard Ref: ECA 45

Topic: ABC NewsRadio report on forest certification

Senator Brown asked:

In a recent announcement about forest certification, ABC News Radio referred to the protection of forests-for example in reserves and national parks-as 'locking up' forests. In other words it has taken on the logging industry's spin as a news factual matter. Is there some means of assessing when that happens?

Answer:

It is unclear how many times the phrase "locking up" forests has been used. However, ABC News Radio reporters and producers were advised by the ABC's News Radio Network Co-ordinator at an editorial meeting in late February to avoid the phrase unless it is attributed.

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Question No: 40

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: ABC 24hr News Channel

Senator Fisher asked:

With regard to the 24hr News Channel:

- a) Where will the funding for the new channel be sourced from?
- b) Will this have an impact on any current or future ABC programming?
- c) Will this require efficiency dividends in other areas, such as staffing reductions?
- d) What will be the ratio of new content to existing ABC content expected to be shown on the new channel?
- e) Will the new channel show any content from overseas? If so, what will these programs be?
- f) How many new staff will be employed to work on the new channel?
- g) Will the ABC be using content produced by the news channel for on-sale by the ABC's commercial arm to third party providers (eg Telstra's content businesses)? How will you calculate pricing?
- h) Will ABC News Radio revert to an audio feed of the television News Channel?
- i) High Definition TV spectrum was given by the Government to the ABC to "highlight the benefits of HD and drive digital take-up". Does the ABC consider broadcasting news in HD is the best programming to showcase the benefit of the format?
- j) When the ABC launches its 24-hour news channel, will ABC1 no longer be broadcast in HD?
- k) Will loyal ABC viewers who invested in HD receivers to watch high quality documentaries and dramas on ABC1 now lose that HD service?
- l) Did the ABC consult with the Department prior to the announcement of the ABC News Channel and in particular, the loss of HD on ABC1?

Answer:

- (a) The new 24 hours news channel will be funded from savings made as a result of recent changes to television and television news production, including automated studios and desk-top editing.
- (b) The new 24 hours news channel will have no impact on current ABC programming. Resources will not be taken from other program areas.
- (c) No. The commencement of the new 24 hour news channel will involve the ABC hiring more staff.
- (d) The program schedule for the new channel is not yet confirmed. It is intended that there will be a mix of new and existing ABC programs broadcast on the new 24 hours news channel.
- (e) See above (d).
- (f) 17 new staff will be employed by ABC to work on the new channel.

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- (g) Program schedules for the 24 hours news channel have not yet been determined. While it is possible that some news channel content could be licensed by ABC Commercial to third-party providers, no decisions have been made on this issue.
- (h) ABC News Radio will not become an audio feed of the TV News channel. News Radio will remain a separate network, scheduled and run separately from the news channel.
- (i) The ABC's broadcast aims and schedule is constrained by the amount of spectrum to which it has access. The ABC considers the benefits of providing a new broadcasting service on the HD channel outweighed those of disenfranchising ABC2 viewers who do not have a HD receiver (and who may not purchase one until switchover).
- (j) Yes.
- (k) Upon the launch of the ABC news channel, ABC viewers will no longer have access to ABC1 in HD, however, they will instead gain access to a new free-to-air 24 hours news service in HD.
- (l) The ABC is in regular communication with the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. The ABC raised the concept of a 24 hour news channel on its HD channel with the Department, prior to its announcement on 21 January 2010.

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Question No: 41

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Staff Elected Director

Senator Fisher asked:

At the most recent election for a staff-appointed Director to the ABC board, how many staff voted in the ballot?

What was the percentage of staff who voted as a proportion of:

- i. All staff eligible to vote?
- ii. The total ABC workforce?

Answer:

The last election for a Staff-elected Director was held in 2006. During this election, 1554 ballot papers were returned.

The percentage of staff who voted as a proportion of:

- i. All staff eligible to vote was 37%.
- ii. The total ABC workforce was 31%.

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Question No: 42

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Portfolio Staffing - ABC (1)

Senator Fisher asked:

- a) What is the total expenditure on staffing for the Department and for all portfolio agencies? What is the SES and non-SES breakdown?
- b) What are the current staffing levels for SES and non-SES officers? What is the breakdown by location?
- c) What have been the changes in average staffing levels since November 2007? Why have these changes occurred? What have been the Budgetary implications?
- d) In the case of reductions in staff numbers, how have these reductions been absorbed by the Department? What functions have been sacrificed and why?
- e) Has there been a target for staff reductions to achieve savings? What is that target and what strategy is being implemented to achieve this?
- f) Have any voluntary or involuntary redundancies been offered to staff? If so, how have staff been identified for such offers? Are there such plans for the future?

Answer:

- a) The ABC does not use APS level classifications for staff as its staff are not employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*. The ABC uses Senior Executive and Non-Executive level classifications for its staff.

Total expenditure on staffing for the ABC in 2008/09 was \$418.6 million. The breakdown of which was Senior Executives - \$42.1m and Non-Senior Executives - \$376.5m.

As at January 2010, the ABC had 301 Senior Executives (291 FTE) and 5081 Non-Executives (4086 FTE).

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b) See (a) above. Following is the breakdown by location:

Senior Executives		<i>As at January 2010</i>	
		Non-Executives	
ACT	7	ACT	194
NSW	214	NSW	2341
NT	5	NT	145
O/S	6	O/S	27
QLD	8	QLD	467
SA	15	SA	400
TAS	7	TAS	199
VIC	32	VIC	975
WA	7	WA	333
Total	301	Total	5081

- c) Average staffing levels have increased by a total of 53 between November 2007 and January 2010. These changes in staff numbers have occurred due to additional activities for which the ABC was provided additional funding in the 2009/10 Budget, and to other operational changes within the Corporation. Apart from additional funding provided to the ABC by the government for specific activities, there are no other implications for the Federal Budget, as other changes in staffing represent reallocation of resources within the Corporation, depending on changes in operational activities and requirements.
- d) Not applicable.
- e) Not applicable.
- f) Not applicable.

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Question No: 43

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Portfolio Staffing - ABC (2)

Senator Barnett asked:

- a) How many permanent staff recruited since the supplementary budget estimates?
- b) What level are these staff?
- c) How many temporary positions exist or have been created since budget estimates?
- d) Since supplementary budget estimates, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment period?

Answer:

- a) Thirty-five permanent staff were recruited between October 2009 and January 2010.
- b) The staff were recruited at the following levels:

Staff Levels	Full Time	Part Time	Total
Administrative/Professional Band 4	3		3
Administrative/Professional Band 5	1	1	2
Administrative/Professional Band 6	3		3
Head Office Manager Grade 3	1		1
Program Maker Band 3	3	1	4
Program Maker Band 4	4		4
Program Maker Band 5	3		3
Program Maker Band 6	2		2
Program Maker Band 8	1		1
Senior Executive Band 2	2		2
Shop Assistant		5	5
Shop Manager Grade B	2		2
Stock Assistant		1	1
Technologist Band 6	1		1
Technologist Band 7	1		1
Total	27	8	35

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- c) Three hundred and eighty-four temporary positions existed in February 2010 and 59 temporary positions were created between October 2009 and February 2010.
- d) Between the October 2009 and February 2010, 415 employees were employed on contract. The average length of their employment period is 190 days.

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Question No: 44

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Portfolio Staffing (efficiency dividend/ budget cuts) - ABC

Senator Barnett asked:

- a) Have staffing numbers been reduced as a result of the efficiency dividend and/or other budget cuts?
- b) If so, where and at what level?
- c) Are there any plans for staff reduction? If so, please advise details ie. reduction target, how this will be achieved, services/programs to be cut etc.
- d) What changes are underway or planned for graduate recruitment, cadetships or similar programs? If reductions are envisaged please explain including reasons, target numbers etc.

Answer:

The ABC is not subject to the 2% efficiency dividend.