

OFFICE OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

Senator Alan Eggleston
Chair, Environment, Communications, Information Technology
and the Arts Legislation Committee
PO Box 984
South Perth WA 6951



18 December 2003

Dear Senator Eggleston, *Alan*

Having reviewed the proof copy of Hansard for the Committee Hearings SBS attended on Monday 3 November 2003, there are a number of matters I would like to clarify for the Committee.

- By way of a small correction, on **page 5**, where the proof issue of Hansard states:

Mr Milan – Many members of the Vietnamese community put up expensive satellite dishes so they can actually get VM4...

VM4 should read VTV4.

- On **page 17**, the proof copy reads as follows:

Mr Milan – Just to complete the answer on protests and objections: the biggest organised campaign we have had against one of our *WorldWatch* products was from the Polish community when we changed the supplier. They felt that the new program was not of the same quality. We had several hundred complaints at that time.

On a point of clarification, SBS received a petition in the form of roughly 5000 newspaper coupons requesting the reinstatement of the previous news program from the Polish state broadcaster. SBS received only a small number of written complaints.

- On a more substantive matter, on a number of occasions I was asked about consultation with the Vietnamese community in Australia undertaken by SBS prior to the introduction of the *Thoi Su* service.

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Senator Conroy – What consultation did you undertake with the Vietnamese community before you broadcast this program, given the position you have just described?

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Senator Tchen – Before the service was provided, did you consult with the Vietnamese community?

Mr Milan – There was no formal consultation, although I was aware of the views of a couple of the leaders who have been articulate in the protest.

Senator Tchen – But did you or your management try to ascertain whether in fact there were opinions in the community actually welcoming the retransmission of the news broadcast sourced from Hanoi?

Mr Milan – There is no paper trail to substantiate that...

Senator Tchen – However, my question concerned whether you actually established any community support before you decided to provide that particular service.

Mr Milan – No, we felt that the numbers alone within the Vietnamese community supported that...

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Senator Tchen – More relevantly, has SBS conducted any independent survey of the Vietnamese community to see what their views are?

Mr Milan – Yes, we have, but not on this issue.

Following the 3 November Hearings, it was brought to my attention by the former SBS Head of Television that, in 2000, SBS commissioned a survey of the Vietnamese community in Sydney. The purpose was to determine whether a Television news bulletin produced in Vietnam would be acceptable to Australian audiences of Vietnamese background.

A Sydney sample was asked the question:

If the television news bulletin shown each day in Vietnam could be seen in Australia, would you be interested in watching it?

The Report into Research amongst Vietnamese People in Sydney (April 2000) found that 60% of respondents favoured such a news bulletin compared to 34% opposed.

As a result, my responses to the questions above were inadvertently incorrect, and I wish for the above matters to be noted for the record.

I hope these comments clarify matters for the Committee. Should you have any questions, please contact me on (02) 9430 3801.

Yours sincerely,



Nigel Milan
Managing Director