

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2014
Communications Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 204

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

Hansard Ref: Page 101 (25/2/2014)

Topic: Asylum Seeker reporting

Senator Williams asked:

You said there were allegations. Mr Palmer said that it appears to back the asylum seekers' claims, which to me is a step further to taking a side. The reason I raise this with you, Mr Scott, is that the inquiry is underway under the department, and, if the Navy personnel are totally exonerated, I think it is a terrible smear on them and terribly embarrassing. But time will tell that story, no doubt.

Mr Scott: We will fully report the details of any official inquiry on this as it emerges. In reporting this story, we have been seeking the truth. We want to know in detail what happened on that boat, if anything happened on that boat. The context of all our stories have been the pursuit of that. But you have got to put it in context. The Australian media had widely reported these allegations. It was not just the ABC; the Australian media had widely reported these allegations.

CHAIR: Did you report them first?

Mr Scott: No, it was reported at the same time in Australia and in Indonesia, and I do not think the ABC was first on that at all.

CHAIR: You do not 'think'? Can you check that out for us and take it on notice, please?

Answer:

Allegations of mistreatment by Australian Navy personnel in regards to asylum seekers on boats turned back to Indonesia were first reported by Indonesian news outlets, including Kompas, on 7 January 2014. Agence France Press, xin.msn and SBS reported these allegations on 8 January 2014.

ABC's *PM* program ran a story on 8 January 2014. Channel Seven reported similar allegations on 9 January 2014, as did *The Australian* on 10 January 2014.